

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

E-Proceedings

5TH INTERNATIONAL COLUMBIA COACHING CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 14-16, 2025

2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

E-Proceedings

5th International Columbia Coaching Conference

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And

Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY

Program Chair: Abhijit Bhattacharya

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2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

From the Conference Institutional Sponsor

Dear Conference Delegates,

It certainly is my pleasure to present the e-proceedings from the 5th International Columbia Coaching Conference, built around the theme, High Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence—a natural extension of explorations during prior gatherings, including:

- Advancing Frontiers in Coaching: Integration | Culture Transformation – 2021 (virtual)
- Systemic Coaching: Whole-Person | Whole-Organization Engagement – 2018 (campus)
- The Future of Coaching: Building Bridges and Expanding Boundaries – 2016 (campus)
- Space as Context for Executive and Organizational Coaching – 2014 (campus)

I am excited to be back on Columbia University's campus for the first time since 2018. The conference was presented by Columbia University's Coaching Center of Excellence (including the Columbia Coaching Certification Program, the Columbia Coaching Learning Association, and the Columbia Talent Alliance). Our conferences aim to bring together scholars, professional coach practitioners, educators, and members of the broader talent management community to discuss theories, research, and practice, with the goal of improving the multi-disciplinary field of executive and organizational coaching. In addition, the conferences are designed to foster fellowship, collaborative relationships, and networking opportunities and our 5th conference was no exception.

Our hope is to return to our bi-annual time frame with the next conference planned for October 2027. In the meantime, stay-turned for events to keep the conversations going until our next conference!

Regards,



Dr. Terrence E. Maltbia | Professor of Practice, Department of Organization and Leadership
Faculty Director, Columbia Coaching Certification Program | Teachers College, Columbia University
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From the Conference Leadership Team

We extend our deepest thanks to all the presenters and delegates whose participation made the 5th Biennial International Columbia Coaching Conference such a remarkable event. In addition to our outstanding keynote speakers and sponsor-supported sessions, the true strength of this gathering lie with those who contributed to the concurrent sessions—comprised of paper presentations, experiential learning sessions, and coaching demonstrations.

This body of work reflects the expertise and dedication of many scholars and practitioners committed to advancing the field of executive and organizational coaching and its adjacent disciplines.

Submissions were received across three conference categories:

- Paper presentations: targeted at the scholarly end of the scholar-practitioner continuum and intended to advance the body of knowledge in executive and organizational coaching.
- Experiential learning sessions: providing participants with opportunities for continuing professional development through immersive, interactive, hands-on formats.
- Coaching demonstrations: modelling evidence-based coaching in real time through dialogue between coach and client, bridging theory and practice.

Each submission was rigorously assessed through a double-blind peer review process and ultimately approved by the Track Chair and Conference Co-Chair, and 47 were selected to present at the conference. The authors retain copyright in their works and warrant that this is original work presented for the first time at Columbia University.

In addition to the concurrent sessions, the conference featured five keynote presentations by leading thinkers in leadership, neuroscience, coaching, and hybrid intelligence; four sponsor-supported sessions highlighting how organizations are integrating coaching into their systems; four "Laser Talks" exploring the future of work; and five organizational panels focused on the evolving role of coaching in contemporary workplaces.

This year also marked the introduction of the inaugural Columbia Coaching Conference Awards, established to recognize excellence across the scholar-practitioner continuum:

- The Judith E. Glaser Outstanding Paper Award, honoring scholarly excellence and contribution to the evidence base of executive and organizational coaching; and
- The Margaret McLean Walsh Outstanding Experiential Session Award, recognizing exceptional innovation and impact in experiential learning design and delivery.

These awards underscore our commitment to celebrating research-informed practice, practitioner inquiry, and meaningful impact in coaching. Finalists and award recipients are listed in these e-Proceedings.

Our distinguished keynote speakers included:

- Amy C. Edmondson – Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management, Harvard Business School; pioneer of the concept of psychological safety (Opening Keynote, Day 1).
- Richard E. Boyatzis – Distinguished University Professor, Case Western Reserve University; co-author of Primal Leadership (Closing Keynote, Day 1).
- Etienne van der Walt – Neurologist and founder of Neurozone® and AmazingBrainz™; expert on integrative neurobiology and human performance (Opening Keynote, Day 2).
- Hitendra Wadhwa – Professor at Columbia Business School and founder of the Mentora Institute; author of Inner Mastery, Outer Impact (Closing Keynote, Day 2).
- Michael J. Jabbour – AI Innovation Officer, Office of the CTO at Microsoft; former CIO/CTO for major New York City agencies (Closing Keynote, Day 3).

The 2025 conference theme, "High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence," invited us to explore how human and artificial intelligence are converging, how coaching practices are evolving in an increasingly tech-augmented world, and how leadership, learning, and organizational development are being re-imagined for the future of work.
Participants engaged in a robust program featuring concurrent tracks, organizational panels, sponsor sessions, and community gatherings designed to promote dialogue across theory, research, and practice. The conference brought together 500 global scholars, practitioners, and leaders united by a shared commitment to deep learning, reflection, and transformation.

As always, this conference could not have happened without the extraordinary contribution of our volunteers, who gave generously of their time, energy, and expertise to ensure that the Columbia Coaching Conference remains the coaching conference to attend. We would like to acknowledge them at the end of this section.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community and for advancing the field of executive and organizational coaching. We look forward to your continued engagement — and to welcoming you back to Teachers College for the next Columbia Coaching Conference in October 2027.

With gratitude,
The 2025 Conference Leadership Team

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Beyond Human vs. Machine: A Whole-Person Framework for Hybrid Intelligence in Executive Coaching

Jennifer K. Park | Three River

Abstract: This study examined the key differences between human coaches and AI coaches to inform the development of hybrid intelligence models in executive coaching. Using a selected literature review methodology with a whole-person framework analysis, findings revealed that human coaches excel in relational intelligence, contextual wisdom, and transformational development, while AI coaches provide scalability, consistency, and structured support. Rather than replacement, strategic collaboration leveraging complementary capabilities defines the future of high-impact coaching. Recommendations addressed integrating AI efficiency with human authenticity for coaches, educators, and organizations.

Keywords: executive coaching, artificial intelligence, hybrid intelligence, human-AI collaboration, coaching effectiveness

Introduction

The executive coaching industry stands at a transformative crossroads, with artificial intelligence (AI) technologies challenging traditional human-centered coaching methodologies while simultaneously creating opportunities for hybrid intelligence models. Recent developments in generative AI and coaching chatbots have sparked intense debate within the coaching profession about which capabilities remain distinctly human and which can be effectively augmented or replaced by technology (Bachkirova, 2024; Bruning & Boak, 2025; Passmore, Olafsson, & Tee, 2025; Terblanche et al., 2022). While AI coaching platforms promise scalability, consistency, and 24/7 availability, human coaches continue to excel in areas requiring emotional intelligence, contextual understanding, and transformational relationship building.

As AI capabilities rapidly advance, understanding what enables human coaches to create high-impact outcomes becomes essential for positioning coaching expertise to provide the most transformational value. Rather than viewing AI as a replacement threat, I examined how human coaches can leverage their unique capabilities in conjunction with AI tools to enhance their effectiveness. I examined what is uniquely human in a post-AI world, focusing on what distinguishes human coaches from AI coaches—specifically, elements "AI coaches" cannot replicate—and exploring how human coaches can leverage AI to enhance their capabilities, creating a hybrid intelligence. Using a selected literature review methodology, I explored three research questions: 1) In what areas do human coaches excel? 2) In what areas do AI coaches excel and struggle currently? 3) What are the implications for coaches, coaching educators, and organizations?

This paper is structured as follows: a methodology section outlining the selected literature review approach; a literature review/conceptual framework; findings presenting four themes derived from the literature review; and conclusions with practical recommendations for coaches, coaching educators, professional associations, and organizational decision makers in the post-AI world.

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Methodology

A selected literature review approach was employed to examine the skills that distinguish human executive coaching from AI coaches. A targeted search strategy was applied across various academic databases, including Google Scholar, to find peer-reviewed research papers, conference papers, business articles, and industry reports published between 2020 and 2025. Given rapid developments in the AI industry, the focus was primarily on recent publications.

The search utilized combinations of key terms, including "executive coaching," "organizational coaching," "artificial intelligence coaching," and "AI coaching," among others. The inclusion criteria encompassed empirical studies, conceptual and theoretical papers, review articles, and industry reports that examined human coaching characteristics, AI coaching capabilities, comparative effectiveness studies, and market trends. Sources were excluded if they focused solely on technical AI development without a coaching context; were unrelated to executive or organizational coaching, such as sports or health coaching; or lacked industry authority. Both academic and industry sources were included to cover theoretical foundations and practical market developments.

I used NVivo 15, a coding software, to code the articles and employed a thematic analysis approach to synthesize the findings, identify core themes related to human coaches versus AI coaches, and derive implications for coaching practices in the post-AI era (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

Professional coaching has developed into a distinct field with multiple definitions emphasizing different aspects of the practice. These definitions highlight consistent themes of partnership, transformation, and goal-oriented development, which form the foundation for understanding the relational and interpersonal nature of coaching (see Table 1).

Table 1

Definitions of Coaching / Executive Coaching

Author/Year	Description
Kilburg (2000)	"Executive coaching is a helping relationship...to achieve goals that improve performance and satisfaction and, consequently, organizational effectiveness." *(pp. 65-67)*
International Coach Federation (2024)	"Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."

Executive coaching typically involves a dialogue between a coach and a client, with the coach bringing out the client's leadership qualities through conversation (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). To achieve goal setting and accountability for professionals in high-stakes, high-stress roles, coaching relies on deep, spontaneous reflection on one's behaviors, beliefs, and values, leading to a clearer understanding of one's own motivations, strengths, and areas for growth

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(Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). A key feature of executive coaching is that the dialogue not only focuses on immediate problem-solving or feedback but also aims to guide the client's self-reflection through strategic questioning (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). Thus, skilled executive coaching is essential for effective and successful engagement. Rather than being one-dimensional, the exchange is richly multi-dimensional, deeply personal, interactive, and interpersonal.

AI is transforming the coaching industry as it is with any other global industry. It currently plays a role in coaching, though not typically during traditional human coach-client sessions. Instead, AI assumes two primary forms: (a) AI coach chatbots interacting directly with clients through text or voice, and (b) tools supporting human coaches with tasks like assessment analysis. Passmore and Tee (2023) defined "AI coaches" as systems that replace human coaches in both synchronous and asynchronous coaching settings. Similarly, Passmore, Tee, and Rutschmann (2025) described an "AI coaching agent" as a computer program using natural language (text, voice, or both) to enhance users' personal responsibility, self-awareness, and choicefulness. For simplicity, I used the term *AI coaches* to encompass both purpose-built AI coaching platforms and generative AI tools, such as GPT-5, Claude, and Grok, that respond to human inquiries. These tools are increasingly used as personal coaches and therapists.

In this AI era, what remains as the essence of humanity? What constitutes the core of who humans are? This research inquiry begins with human authenticity—the fundamental question of existence. What do leaders and organizations need to thrive (not merely survive) in the post-AI era? How can thought partners, such as coaches, support individuals in maximizing their potential? Hougaard and Carter (2025) posited that rather than diminishing humanity, AI can actually make leaders more human by focusing on human potential and inner growth. They identified three core qualities essential for AI-augmented leadership:

- Awareness: The perceptual ability to observe internal and external experiences, creating mental clarity and executive presence. While AI generates content, human leaders provide crucial context through their deep understanding of self, others, and the environment.
- Wisdom: The discerning ability for sound judgment and understanding reality beyond the ego's limitations. AI offers data-driven answers, but human leaders contribute insight, experience, and critical thinking to ask meaningful questions and make wise decisions.
- Compassion: The responsive ability to provide genuine care aimed at helping others. Though AI can deliver algorithmic insights, it lacks the authentic emotional engagement and spontaneous warmth that characterize human interaction (Hougaard & Carter, 2025).

The literature shows that a complex interplay of intelligence, emotional capacity, relational depth, contextual awareness, embodied experience, and ethical judgment characterizes the essence of being human. These attributes are consistently highlighted as distinguishing human coaches from AI systems (Bachkirova, 2024; Bruning & Boak, 2025; Terblanche et al., 2022). Scholars agree that the nature of being human in coaching and life more broadly involves a holistic and embodied intelligence that deeply engages with emotion, context, and interpersonal relationships in ways that the current capabilities of AI cannot.

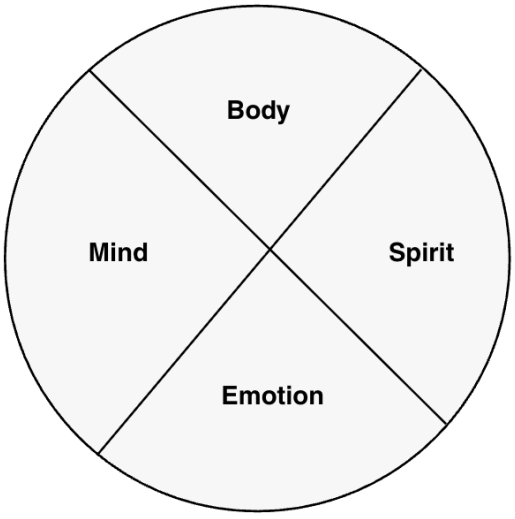
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In adult learning theory, York and Kasl (2002) advocated for a more holistic theory of learning that incorporates whole-person ways of knowing. They outlined Heron's four ways of knowing model based on four primary modes of psyche functioning (affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical): Experiential knowing (affective, feeling, and emotion); Presentational knowing (images, intuition); Propositional knowing (logic, intellectual); and Practical knowing (exercises, skills). In his 1992 book *Feeling and Personhood*, Heron introduced an integrated theory of the human psyche where he viewed experience as a process—an encounter with the world (Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Rooted in phenomenology, Heron (1996) wrote, "Presences are presences and images are images. To interpret them in words and concepts, and then assume that the interpretation is what truly matters, is to miss their point" (p. 185). The fundamental difference between AI and humans lies here: Machines capture human experiences as words and process them as such, while humans feel them as a whole, engaging the entire person, not just cognition.

Figure 1 below illustrates a whole-person approach, a tradition found in virtually all land-based cultures (Boyatzis & McKee, 2008). "Medicine" refers to all that is good and life-giving. The four quadrants—North (Physical), East (Spiritual), South (Emotional), and West (Mental)—present a perfect balance (Boyatzis, 2005). It is important to note that "spirit" or "spirituality" are loaded terms that are not commonly used in executive or organizational coaching contexts. For some people, these words might evoke unintended associations with religion or related traumatic experiences. Spirit, also called soul, represents an essential part of being human that machines (AI) do not and will not possess, even if they eventually have physical bodies (i.e., robots). Here, "Spirit" does not refer to religion, but rather transcends beyond any single individual to encompass purpose, values, calling, meaning, and similar concepts that are common in coaching contexts.

Figure 1

Medicine Wheel



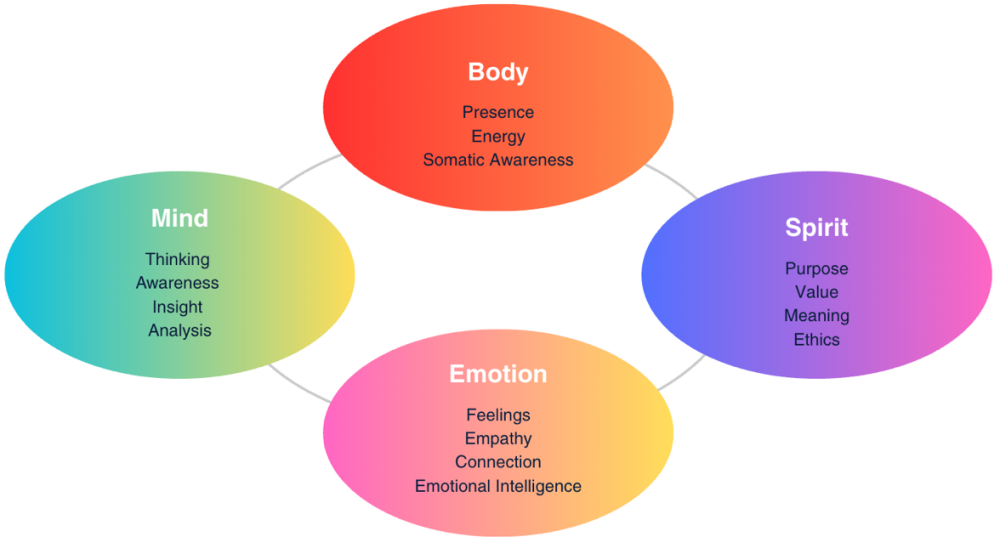
Note. From Boyatzis, R. E., Johnston, F., & McKee, A. (2008). *Becoming a resonant leader: Develop your emotional intelligence, renew your relationships, sustain your effectiveness*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. (p. 53)

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Based on the above framework, Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework for this paper, specifically the interplay between mind, emotion, spirit, and body, along with relevant subcomponents.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework: Whole-Person Framework



Note: This figure was created by the author.

Findings

The purpose of this paper was to examine what distinguishes human coaches from AI coaches to provide guidance for leveraging hybrid intelligence models that combine human authenticity with AI efficiency in executive coaching practice. The thematic analysis, structured through the lens of mind, body, emotion, and spirit, highlighted the distinct, complementary, and evolving abilities of human and AI coaches. This framework showed that while AI provides powerful tools for efficiency and structured support, human coaches remain essential for relational and emotional depth, nuanced judgment, and deep developmental work. Concurrently, the analysis highlighted key areas where AI coaching is still evolving, underscoring both its current limitations and its potential for future development. As of this writing, GPT-5 was released. Although it proved somewhat disappointing (*Financial Times*, August 2025)—a letdown for some but a relief for others—it is clear that the development of GPT-6 is underway. Leading AI companies—Anthropic (Claude), Google (Gemini), Meta, and X (Grok)—are competing intensely to develop next-generation models in what many call the "AI wars." This accelerating competition underscores the critical need for ethical frameworks to ensure that these technologies are responsibly integrated.

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The findings are organized into four categories—mind, emotion, body, and spirit—highlighting the strengths of both human and AI coaches in each area and identifying where AI coaches currently struggle. Given the inherently interconnected nature of these elements (thus "whole-person"), neatly categorizing some of the codes into each category was not easy. I assigned each code to its most appropriate category, although many could fit into several. Some codes appear in more than one section for emphasis. For simplicity, combination categories (such as mind+emotion, etc.) were not created.

Mind: Cognitive Capabilities and Complex Judgment

This section presents findings on the intellectual and analytical strengths of both human and AI coaches, along with cognitive areas where each one excels or has limitations.

Human Coaches Excel (Mind). According to Bachkirova (2024), human intelligence is described as being "at the heart and center of the entire coaching enterprise" (p. 8), enabling careful maneuvering among multiple stakeholders, ensuring flexibility and an ethical approach to complex contextual issues, and helping repair ruptures in relationships. Citing Floridi (2023), Bachkirova (2024) further explained that human coaches excel at deciding which problems are worth solving, why, for what purpose, and at what acceptable cost, trade-offs, and consequences.

Other researchers agree that human coaches are skilled in encouraging clients to engage in deep reflection by asking potentially challenging questions and interpreting subtle signals and nonverbal cues to formulate such questions. They can work with context and values before setting goals and look beyond initial objectives (Barger, 2025), thus focusing on higher-level cognitive and interpersonal aspects of coaching. Human coaches also demonstrate the ability to handle diverse dialogue contexts; identify patterns for reflection; facilitate further exploration; and possess superior context awareness, transfer of learning, and complex sense-making skills (Terblanche et al., 2022). Human coaches are consistently recognized for their ability to foster profound, introspective dialogue that promotes leadership development. Although their skills are varied, human coaches play a crucial role in identifying clients' core issues and providing personalized, precise feedback. They are vital in guiding clients' self-reflection through targeted questions, thereby enhancing clients' readiness and supporting their reflective process.

AI Coaches Excel (Mind). AI coaches provide significant benefits through their widespread presence and reasoning abilities enabled by Large Language Models (LLMs). By accessing massive data and machine learning, AI has the potential to formulate questions and manage time and can be designed to ask natural, reasonable questions to promote actions toward a planned goal. AI coaches effectively support single-loop learning by iteratively asking questions to clarify steps toward a goal while recognizing actions; they are skilled at streamlining information synthesis and generating output, especially in structured problem-solving and ad-hoc knowledge retrieval. AI can also provide relevant information and resources to aid the coaching process, such as articles, videos, or exercises; analyze recorded coaching sessions quickly; and selectively access important parts of a conversation. For specific tasks, AI is especially effective in handling new requests of high importance to coachees in terms of their willingness to act and gain clarity.

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Outside of coaching sessions, AI tools can assist coaches with analytical and reflective tasks (e.g., analyzing client data, identifying trends, summarizing takeaways) as well as educational and skill-building tasks (e.g., learning new coaching techniques through AI simulations) (Haase, 2025). Generative AI is transforming internal knowledge management systems, giving employees quick access to relevant information for better-informed decisions and strategies through natural language queries and dialogues (McKinsey, 2025). Similarly, AI coaches/tools can support human coaches in automating administrative tasks, such as scheduling, documenting sessions, analyzing assessments (with anonymized data), and managing client files. Additionally, they can assist coach practitioners in identifying unconscious behaviors exhibited by their coachees through multimodal data, offering real-time feedback. Overall, AI coaches are known for being consistent, persistent, straightforward, and available 24/7.

AI Coaches Currently Struggle (Mind). Despite progress, AI continues to face significant limitations in cognitive areas. It struggles to identify clients' core issues and provide tailored, accurate feedback (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). Its ability to handle diverse dialogue contexts remains limited. AI cannot fully understand the problem or task presented, nor can it recognize what is out of place. Its learning relies on recognizing linguistic patterns and algorithms rather than genuine reflection, lacking innate beliefs, assumptions, or critical thinking (Bachkirova, 2024). As a result, it cannot replicate the depth of introspection and adaptability necessary for true reflexivity. AI coaches also struggle with evolving goals, cannot evaluate the content of a goal (e.g., identifying conflicting goals or ethical issues), and cannot grasp clients' intentions (Barger, 2025).

Emotion: Relational Depth and Emotional Intelligence

The findings on the ability for empathy, emotional bonds, and trust-building emphasize the deep influence of the human element and the ongoing challenges of AI in surprising ways.

Human Coaches Excel (Emotion). Emotional elements form the foundation of effective coaching relationships, enabling deep reflection, behavior change, and positive outcomes. Human coaches excel in these areas with capabilities that LLM-powered AI coaches cannot fully replicate. These emotional elements create effectiveness through the coach-client working alliance. Built on trust, rapport, and emotional connection, this alliance is essential for coaching success, often contributing more to outcomes than specific methodologies. Coaching requires spontaneous reflection on behaviors, beliefs, and values to develop self-awareness and leadership insights. This process demands nuanced approaches to maintain motivation and create psychological safety, allowing clients to share sensitive information openly. Such vulnerability is essential for identifying core issues.

Human coaches have distinct advantages in handling emotional and relational aspects of coaching. They offer genuine empathy, both understanding feelings (cognitive empathy) and experiencing them (affective empathy). This emotional authenticity builds deep trust and rapport, while AI coaches have limitations, despite some unique benefits. Humans grasp complex situations holistically, interpreting subtle nonverbal cues through intuition to understand interpersonal contexts. Human coaches uniquely facilitate deep self-reflection by challenging fundamental assumptions (double-loop learning), requiring contextual understanding that AI coaches lack.

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Human coaches adapt organically, incorporating personal experiences while utilizing silence and pauses to provide processing space for clients. Because coaching co-constructs meaning through shared experiences, human coaches establish genuine connections based on mutual understanding that AI cannot replicate.

AI Coaches Excel (Emotion). Despite these human advantages, AI coaches have their own characteristics. While LLMs exhibit elements of cognitive empathy, recognizing emotions and responding with emotional support based on linguistic patterns, this differs fundamentally from human empathy because an algorithm cannot engage in a human's emotional experience. Interestingly, some clients reported feeling safer and more willing to self-disclose to AI coaches due to perceived non-judgmental atmosphere and anonymity (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). Thus, honesty and vulnerability that might take longer to build with a human coach are achieved more quickly. AI coaches also are available 24/7 and cost-effective, thereby maintaining client motivation and progress between human coaching sessions.

AI Coaches Currently Struggle (Emotion). A major challenge and key shortcoming of AI is its inability to show empathy and emotional intelligence. As a result, users of a chatbot coach may find it hard to trust an algorithm. AI can only mimic empathy because it lacks emotional responsiveness and often gives generic and superficial responses. Importantly, AI cannot determine if its coaching causes harm because it lacks emotional intelligence and contextual awareness, which are needed to evaluate individual impact. AI responses may come across as "often formulaic" or "mechanical," leading some clients to say they "miss the human touch" because AI coaches are "impersonal" or "robotic." While AI can handle simple tasks, it cannot yet replace human coaching, especially in terms of genuine empathy, adaptability, and the ability to address complex and unique individual needs.

Body: Embodied Perception and Nonverbal Communication

These findings reveal how physical presence and the interpretation of nonverbal cues influence the coaching process and where AI's capabilities are developing or limited in this area. The "body" element in coaching, which includes a coach's physical presence and the observation of nonverbal cues, is fundamentally important for the deep perception, understanding, and emotional connection that human coaches provide and AI currently struggles to replicate.

Human Coaches Excel (Body). Human intelligence, rooted in our physical embeddedness in the world, perceives and acts by grasping the "gestalt" of complex situations rather than simply analyzing discrete details (Bachkirova, 2024). This embodied ability allows human coaches to identify and deeply explore patterns in a client's intricate circumstances. Face-to-face interactions provide a rich exchange of nonverbal information, including body language, gestures, eye gaze, and subtle energy shifts. Observing these signals is vital for a coach to ask questions that provoke new insights and convey genuine interest. Speech nuances, such as intonation, pace, and rhythm, also provide critical information that cannot be fully captured by text-based communication. Furthermore, human cognition is deeply embodied, with emotions—an aspect of the whole body—being central to human thinking and action. As a result, human coaches naturally cope with imprecision, ambiguities, and metaphors in client narratives. A coach's "presence"—a state of being fully present, adaptable, and unaffected by personal needs or distractions—is essential for

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effective coaching, contributing to sustainable client engagement and influencing behavior and motivation for change.

AI Coaches Excel (Body). While human coaches currently have the advantage, AI technology may potentially surpass humans in detecting physical and physiological changes, such as temperature, heart rate, noticing clients' movements, and changes in stance**.** AI can recognize and graph such changes in order to understand human beings at a micro level and pick up on details, such as an eye twitch (Bruning & Boak, 2025). AI coaches offer distinct advantages in areas that benefit from automation, scalability, and consistent information processing. AI chatbots are available 24/7 with constant support and reliable responses and remain unaffected by human factors such as fatigue or emotions. This omnipresence allows clients to reflect at their convenience, reducing the workload for human coaches.

AI Coaches Currently Struggle (Body). Current AI systems are limited because they lack a physical body (yet). As a result, AI is unable to incorporate silence, pauses, and reflection during conversations. It is also less adept at demonstrating other aspects of Professional Certified Coach (PCC) Markers, such as detecting shifts in the client's energy and nonverbal cues—a limitation exacerbated by text-based interactions. Studies have shown that AI coaching agents tend to have a higher "share of voice" (averaging 50–50%), compared to human coaches (where the client speaks 80% of the time) (Passmore, Tee, & Rutschemann, 2025).

Spirit: Purpose, Values, and Ethical Stance

These findings indicate that the overarching purpose, values, self-awareness, and ethical considerations in coaching are areas where human discretion and judgment are essential. As expected, since the literature mainly focuses on executive and organizational coaching, the terms "spirit" or "spiritual" do not appear there. Instead, purpose, meaning, and values are used to express a broader understanding of the spiritual elements of human essence.

Human Coaches Excel (Spirit). Human coaches assist clients in gaining self-awareness, clarifying goals, and achieving development objectives. They facilitate deep, spontaneous reflection on behaviors, beliefs, and values, which leads to a clearer understanding of motivations, strengths, and areas for growth. This includes the embodied ability to grasp meaning and discuss what truly matters, affirm values, and question underlying assumptions. Coaching fundamentally focuses on developing people, a process that relies on subjectivity and individualized approaches. The "human essence" is vital in coaching interventions, maintaining the "human nature" of coaching with joint inquiry, contextual appreciation, clear ethics, and negotiated agreements. Human coaches motivate and prepare clients for behavior change by conducting careful contracting to ensure fair mutual use and emphasizing the importance of ethics in all coaching activities. Reflexivity—the awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, along with questioning assumptions and beliefs—is crucial for human coaches.

AI Coaches Excel (Spirit). AI coaches are always available and low-cost, enabling democratized access to coaching services for individuals who might lack resources or opportunities to receive such support. This leads to greater self-improvement and well-being across diverse populations. One study found that an AI coaching agent consistently adhered to ethical

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standards, demonstrating that well-developed and well-trained AI coaches can operate within established guidelines and boundaries.

AI Coaches Currently Struggle (Spirit). Current AI systems lack the self-awareness and ethical judgment necessary for meaningful supervision, and they cannot inherently recognize if their coaching causes harm. Significant ethical and regulatory challenges are related to AI coaching, including issues of privacy and confidentiality, handling ethical dilemmas, potential manipulation, existing biases in algorithms, and liability concerns. The absence of standardized guidelines or regulations is a major concern. Additionally, there are worries that AI integration could weaken human coaches' skills and incur environmental costs over AI infrastructure. AI cannot provide long-term deep work, a core element of coaching relationships, and struggles with complex or unique ethical and cultural situations. Many argue that standalone AI coaching does not meet key criteria for organizational coaching, such as joint inquiry, understanding context, clear ethics, and negotiated contracts, thus making its use for "meaning-making" or "bigger questions of life" difficult. Ultimately, AI does not have a soul.

Conclusions and Recommendations

I sought to examine what distinguishes human coaches from AI coaches across cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions to provide guidance for leveraging hybrid intelligence models that combine human authenticity with AI efficiency in executive coaching practice. Findings showed that human coaches remain irreplaceable in areas requiring deep relational intelligence, contextual wisdom, and transformational development work, while AI coaches excel at delivering scalable, consistent support and handling structured cognitive tasks. The future of executive coaching lies not in competition but in strategic collaboration that leverages the strengths of both approaches. The research also identified opportunities for human coaches to incorporate AI tools to enhance their practice, improving their services and skills to better serve leaders and organizations in the post-AI world.

The whole-person framework analysis—encompassing mind, emotion, body, and spirit—illuminates complementary rather than competing capabilities. Human coaches excel at complex judgment, emotional intelligence, embodied perception, and value-based ethical reasoning, while AI coaches provide efficiency, accessibility, and consistent analytical support. This complementarity suggests that the most impactful coaching outcomes emerge when human authenticity and AI efficiency work in concert.

This research directly connects to the 2025 conference theme of "High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence" by demonstrating that hybrid intelligence models—combining human wisdom with AI capabilities—represent the evolution of coaching practice rather than its disruption. High-impact coaching today requires human coaches to embrace AI as a tool for amplifying their unique capabilities while maintaining the relational depth that drives transformational change.

The findings challenge binary thinking about human versus AI coaching, instead revealing an ecosystem where each serves distinct but complementary roles. While AI handles routine tasks

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and provides 24/7 accessibility, human coaches focus on the complex, nuanced work of facilitating deep personal and professional transformation through authentic relationships and contextual understanding. The following are some recommendations based on these findings.

For Coaches

Embrace AI as a collaborative partner rather than viewing it as a threat. Develop competencies in AI tool integration while deepening uniquely human skills in emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and transformational relationship building. Focus professional development on areas where human coaches excel: complex sense-making, values clarification, and facilitating deep reflection through challenging conversations. Consider incorporating AI tools for administrative tasks, session preparation, and client follow-up while maintaining human centrality in the coaching relationship itself.

For Educators and Trainers

Redesign coaching education programs to include AI literacy while strengthening core human competencies. Develop curricula that teach coaches how to leverage AI tools effectively while maintaining ethical standards and relational authenticity. Create training modules focused on hybrid intelligence models, helping coaches understand when and how to integrate AI support. Emphasize the development of uniquely human coaching capabilities that AI cannot replicate.

For Professional Associations

Establish ethical guidelines and standards for AI integration into coaching practice. Develop credentialing pathways that include AI competency alongside traditional coaching skills. Create frameworks for evaluating hybrid coaching models and their effectiveness. Advocate for regulatory clarity around AI coaching applications while protecting the integrity of the coaching profession.

For Organizational Decision-Makers

Invest in hybrid coaching models that combine human coaches for complex developmental work with AI tools for accessibility and scale. Develop procurement strategies that evaluate both the quality of human coaches and AI integration capabilities. Develop policies that ensure the ethical use of AI in coaching while maximizing the transformational potential of human coaching relationships. Consider utilizing AI coaching for broad-based skill development while reserving human coaches for leadership development and addressing complex organizational challenges.

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Beyond the Training Data: Combining Human Cognitive Capabilities with Prompt Engineering to Drive Innovation in Executive & Organizational Coaching

Maggie Marzec, Alignetic

Abstract: This paper introduces the Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF), a conceptual model that integrates human cognitive capabilities with AI prompt engineering to overcome AI's limitations rooted in historical data bias in professional coaching. It explores how AI generates output based on training data and prompts, and how uniquely human capacities such as intuition, visionary thinking, and critical analysis can guide this process to inspire innovation, provoke transformation, and generate future-focused solutions unconstrained by past patterns.

Keywords: AI Predictive Analysis, Executive Coaching, Innovation, Organizational Change, Critical Thinking

Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to introduce a hybrid approach to executive and organizational coaching that combines human cognitive strengths, generative AI, and prompt engineering. This triadic model, formalized as the Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF), addresses the limitations of relying solely on AI systems, particularly the risks of historical bias embedded in training data. As coaches, executives, and organizational leaders increasingly integrate AI into their workflows, the need for frameworks that preserve human insight while enhancing technological capability becomes urgent.

While generative AI can produce fluent, human-like responses, its outputs are fundamentally constrained by the data it was trained on and the prompts it receives. In coaching contexts, this can reinforce existing mindsets rather than inspire transformation. HICF positions the coach as a strategic intermediary who uses intuition, contextual awareness, and visionary thinking to guide AI through intentional prompt design. The goal is not to replace the human relationship but to amplify insight and innovation.

This paper includes a literature review, theoretical framework, and practice-based demonstration comparing AI-generated responses under two prompting conditions. It concludes with a visual representation of the HICF and implications for executive coaches and organizational change agents in the era of hybrid intelligence.

Methodology

This study employs an applied conceptual methodology supported by a practice-based conceptual demonstration to examine how the integration of human cognitive capabilities with AI prompt engineering can address the limitations of generative AI, particularly its reliance on historical data and enhance innovation in executive and organizational coaching. The research approach

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combines theoretical development through literature synthesis with a practical illustration designed to validate the proposed Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF).

This approach is consistent with contemporary hybrid intelligence models (Bose & Gupta, 2025) and grounded in existing studies that explore AI's role in augmenting coaching processes (Passmore & Tee, 2023; Terblanche, 2024; de Haan et al., 2016). The methodology emphasizes the coach's role in steering generative AI through cognitively sophisticated prompt design, reflecting the literature's call for AI-assisted yet human-centered coaching practices (Ellis-Brush, 2021; Jones et al., 2016).

The literature review was conducted using an integrative approach to synthesize insights across four overlapping domains: human cognitive capability, executive coaching, artificial intelligence, and prompt engineering. It draws from coaching psychology, neuroscience, digital transformation literature, and AI ethics to create a multidisciplinary foundation for the Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework. Sources were selected through purposive sampling, prioritizing works published between 2018 and 2024 that directly explore the intersection of technology, leadership, and professional development. Preference was given to sources from highly regarded publishers and thought leaders in the field, including Harvard Business Review Press, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, and Columbia University Press.

The literature selection emphasized peer-reviewed academic sources exploring digital augmentation in coaching (Passmore & Woodward, 2023), AI-human collaboration (Movsumova et al., 2020), and coaching effectiveness in professional settings (Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014). Terblanche's (2024) article was particularly influential in contextualizing prompt engineering within emerging taxonomies of AI-enhanced coaching. Studies evaluating the working alliance between chatbot assistants and human clients (Schmidt et al., 2023) were used to inform the practical demonstration phase.

Foundational coaching literature included Kimsey-House et al.'s Co-Active Coaching (2018), which emphasizes deep listening, intuitive insight, and co-creation, and Reynolds' Breakthrough Coaching (2024), which explores how to provoke transformational thinking through strategic questioning. These were paired with technology-forward texts such as Daugherty and Wilson's Human + Machine (2024) and Davenport and Mittal's All In on AI (2023), both of which examine how leading organizations blend human expertise with machine intelligence. Wolfram's (2023) technical perspective on ChatGPT offered foundational insights into the architecture and behavior of generative AI systems, particularly their dependence on training data and user input. Complementary works on innovation, such as Krippendorff's Driving Innovation from Within (2019), Vickberg's The Breakthrough Manifesto (2023), and On AI (2023), provided insights into how individuals and organizations break from established patterns to generate novel outcomes.

To illustrate the framework in action, the paper includes a practice-based conceptual demonstration using ChatGPT 4o to simulate AI-generated coaching responses under two prompting conditions. The scenario features an executive experiencing emotional exhaustion and burnout, seeking coaching to reconnect with purpose and establish a more sustainable work rhythm. In the first condition, a generic prompt was used to request coaching questions. In the second, the same scenario was paired with a coaching-informed prompt that incorporated strategies

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such as human intuition, observation, deep listening, reframing, and visionary inquiry. The outputs were compared based on their emotional resonance, depth of inquiry, innovation potential, and future orientation. While not intended as an empirical study, this demonstration supports the central hypothesis of the paper: **that human cognitive input, when intentionally applied through prompt engineering, enhances the creativity and strategic value of AI-generated coaching outputs while mitigating the risk of historical bias.**

The demonstration design is supported by frameworks for digital coaching augmentation (Ellis-Brush, 2021) and informed by qualitative analysis techniques for AI-generated content (Passmore & Tee, 2023). It also reflects practical implications raised in literature on how AI tools can either enhance or dilute the working alliance in coaching depending on the level of human involvement (Schmidt et al., 2023; Passmore & Woodward, 2023).

This methodological structure not only supports the goals of this study but also provides a replicable blueprint for future research that explores how AI augmentation can coexist with human coaching presence, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

Theoretical Framework/Literature Review

Generative AI systems such as ChatGPT are, at their core, statistical anticipation machines trained to generate a "*reasonable continuation of whatever text they got so far*," drawing on patterns and regularities discovered in their training data from webpages, books, academic journals, and other sources (Wolfram, 2023, p. 1). When deployed, they respond to a user's prompt by referencing this training data and generating coherent, human-like text. According to Wolfram, this process yields three critical consequences for coaching. First, all output is anchored to statistical patterns in historical data, so output quality hinges on training data quality. Second, the model lacks lived experience, somatic awareness, or intention, meaning it cannot independently create novel conceptual directions. Third, the prompt functions as a steering mechanism but never fully detaches the model from historical precedent (Wolfram, 2023, p. 25, 28). In short, while LLMs can rapidly produce fluent ideas, those ideas often orbit what has already been thought, said, or done.

This reliance on precedent raises the issue of *historical bias*, a significant limitation of generative AI. Scrum Alliance (2024) defines historical bias as the inheritance and reproduction of inequities embedded in training data. For instance, historical records often reflect dominant perspectives, such as colonial narratives that exclude indigenous voices. When these narratives dominate training data, AI outputs risk reinforcing the same distortions even in applications meant to be neutral. In leadership and coaching contexts, where empathy, inclusion, and psychological insight are central, this becomes both an ethical and practical challenge. It highlights the need for intentional data curation, active human oversight, and thoughtful prompt design to ensure AI augments, rather than distorts, human development efforts.

The importance of data quality and prompt engineering is extensively discussed in *Human + Machine* by Daugherty and Wilson (2024). They argue that machine behavior is shaped as much by training data as by prompt construction (p. 33–35). For example, in a DeepMind experiment,

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models trained on a hunting game acted aggressively, while those trained on a cooperative fruit-gathering game displayed user-friendly behavior demonstrating that even behavior patterns in AI reflect underlying data. The authors introduce the "*missing middle*," a collaborative space where humans and machines combine their strengths to achieve results neither could reach alone (p. 151–153). Capabilities like empathy, judgment, and relationship-building are inherently human and AI can only simulate them. In this context, **prompt design becomes a bridge between machine capability and human intention.**

Beyond corporate innovation, empirical research supports the application of coaching methods to enhance workplace performance and psychological outcomes. Theeboom, Beersma, and van Vianen (2014) conducted a meta-analysis that confirmed coaching's effectiveness in improving goal attainment, well-being, and coping skills, validating coaching as a transformative practice when grounded in relational insight and reflective dialogue. More recently, studies by de Haan et al. (2016) and Grant (2012) emphasize the coach's role in facilitating self-regulation and behavioral change through presence and inquiry which are the qualities that remain out of reach for algorithmic systems.

Davenport and Mittal (2023) reinforce this message, arguing that companies achieving success with AI do so by focusing as much on people as on technology. The authors highlight the critical role of human oversight, noting that internal talent must be developed to guide, monitor, and augment AI systems not just implement them passively (p. 17). Human traits such as ethical reasoning, decision-making, and domain-specific judgment are essential to contextualizing and interpreting machine output. AI models rely on past data to make predictions, which inherently limits novelty. As they note, "*models can't make accurate predictions without large quantities of good data*" (p. 88). This raises a fundamental question for coaching: What counts as "*good data*" when working toward growth, insight, or behavioral change? And how can prompt design help guide outputs in these deeply human domains?

The *Harvard Business Review* anthology *On AI* (2023) further supports the idea that human involvement is essential in mitigating AI's limitations. The authors argue that bias must be addressed at the data selection stage, as training data defines the model's worldview (p. 19). Human teams were instrumental in preventing failure in AI systems at both Amazon and the NFL underscoring the importance of employees in deciding what data is used and how it is processed (p. 108). AI systems must be updated regularly to reflect changing realities, and human feedback is essential for iterating outputs (p. 18). Most crucially, only humans can define the right objective. For example, if a gaming company prompts AI to optimize in-game spending instead of long-term engagement, the model delivers results aligned with the wrong goal (p. 64). In coaching, this demonstrates the high stakes of prompt framing. Furthermore, the anthology concludes that "*human intelligence and artificial intelligence are complementary… people have intentions—an extraordinary cognitive ability*" (pp. 109–110). Traits such as intuition, contextual awareness, and adaptability are irreplaceably human and essential for using AI effectively in partnership.

In coaching literature, these human capacities are central. Kimsey-House et al. (2018) describe co-active coaching as a presence-based partnership in which the coach "*dances in the moment*," attending to language, energy, somatic cues, and intuition (p. 6). Deep listening is emphasized, including listening for what is unsaid a critical capability beyond the reach of AI

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(p. 7). Core coaching skills such as curiosity, emotional attunement, and self-management enable coaches to understand complexity and nuance that models cannot perceive. These skills engage the full human presence: mind, body, and spirit.

Reynolds (2024) adds that "*light bulb moments*" in coaching arise when questions interrupt habitual thought patterns and create new meaning. The author underscores the importance of the coach's presence, noting that the depth of connection influences what information can be accessed during a session. Reynolds encourages coaches to "*coach by their hearts, not from their heads*" (p. 15), emphasizing emotional intelligence over analysis. The true value of coaching, the author suggests, lies in the journey, not just the problem resolution. Presence, relational depth, and attunement are what allow coaches to navigate ambiguity and transformation—capacities AI cannot replicate.

Additional studies confirm that the emotional bond between coach and client, referred to as the "working alliance", is critical to outcomes. Schmidt et al. (2023) found that even when chatbots are used in coaching settings, the presence of a human coach remains central to sustaining client trust, psychological safety, and session depth. Similarly, Movsumova et al. (2020) report that while clients may accept AI support tools, human interaction is still viewed as more credible, empathetic, and effective. These findings reinforce that coaching outcomes are not solely based on logic or strategy, but on **relational depth, empathy, and adaptive awareness**, which remain uniquely human.

From this literature, four human capacities emerge as essential in a hybrid coaching model: intuitive noticing, empathic attunement, contextual sense-making, and visionary imagination**.** Intuitive noticing allows coaches to detect subtle shifts in tone or energy before the client is consciously aware. Empathic attunement builds psychological safety and trust. Contextual sense-making helps coaches interpret how history, systems, and social dynamics shape client perspectives. Visionary imagination enables coaches to **hold space for future possibilities not yet realized.** These traits, repeatedly emphasized in coaching literature, cannot be replicated by algorithms as they **emerge from presence and lived experience**.

Coaching also operates within a complex web of contextual and organizational dynamics. Passmore and Woodward (2023) highlight the need for coach education to evolve alongside AI, recommending that practitioners develop skills in technological fluency, ethical oversight, and adaptive use of AI tools. Their work suggests that future-ready coaches must integrate both **systemic awareness** and **digital augmentation** to serve clients navigating complex environments. This is echoed by Terblanche (2024), who proposes a framework for AI-enhanced coaching that leverages machine learning for data analysis while anchoring the coaching process in human conversation, reflection, and intuition. These hybrid models where the coach remains the meaning-maker underscore the irreplaceable role of human cognition in guiding machine intelligence.

Organizational studies further emphasize the human role in innovation. Vickberg and Christfort (2023), drawing on Deloitte research, present ten principles for enabling breakthrough thinking. They stress the importance of divergent perspectives, cognitive friction, and environments that allow people to challenge assumptions (p. 186). Innovation does not emerge

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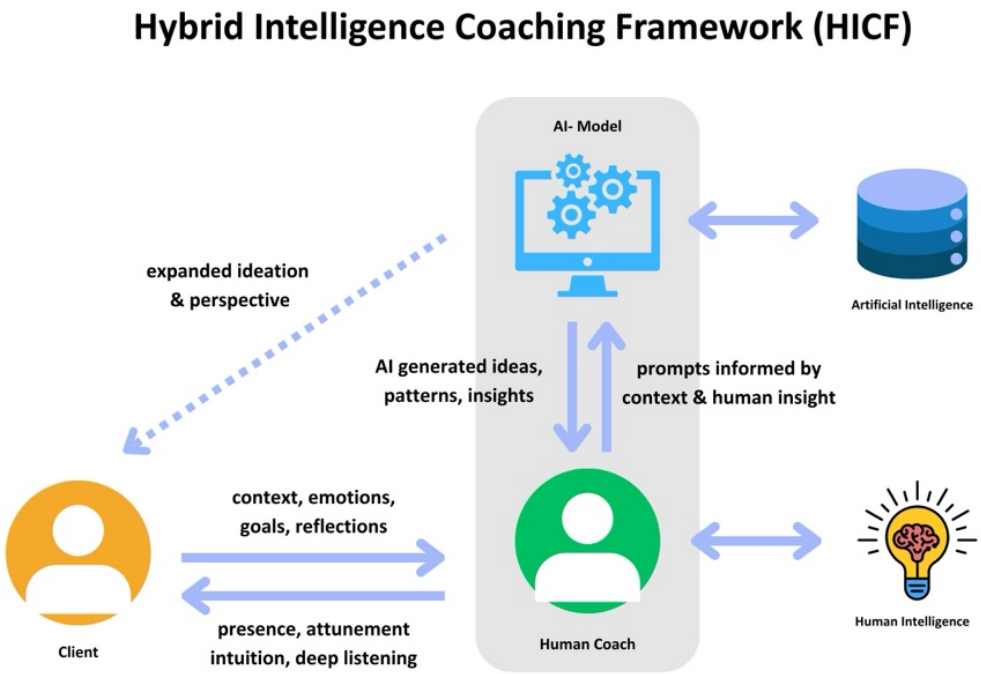
from comfort but it requires questioning the familiar and embracing contradiction. This resonates with coaching, where insight often comes from reframing beliefs and embracing complexity.

Krippendorff (2019) explores how innovation within organizations often fails not due to bad ideas, but because of resistance from legacy systems and entrenched cultural norms. *Internal entrepreneurs* must navigate misaligned metrics, outdated definitions of success, and middle management resistance. For innovation to succeed, organizations must redefine what they value and how they measure progress. In the context of hybrid coaching, this highlights the coach's role in helping individuals (and systems) surface hidden assumptions and reimagine what's possible. Coaches help unlock innovation by fostering mindset shifts at both personal and organizational levels.

Collectively, these insights provide the theoretical foundation for the **Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF)** introduced earlier in this paper. Rather than repeating established coaching methods or default AI outputs, the HICF enables a dynamic collaboration between coach and machine guided by human insight, contextual judgment, and intentional prompt design. This model will be further illustrated in the practice-based demonstration and discussed in detail in the Summary of Findings.

Figure 1

Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF)



The literature supports three central propositions. First, the quality of AI coaching output depends on the sophistication of the prompt, which is shaped by the coach's cognitive and emotional capabilities. Second, historical bias in AI is not a fixed limitation as coaches can embed

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disruptive language and novel perspectives into prompts to push past the default outputs. Third, iterative cycles of human-AI collaboration accelerate insight, allowing ideas to move quickly from generation to evaluation to refinement particularly when guided by a well-formed working alliance (Schmidt et al., 2023) and coaching-informed interface design (Passmore & Tee, 2023).

These insights lead to clear implications. Coaching education must integrate both prompt engineering and deep listening skills so that practitioners can partner effectively with AI. Organizations should move away from viewing AI as a deterministic oracle and instead use it as a creative layer the one that requires human reflection and emotional intelligence to unlock its full value. The HICF is a mindset, rather than another method. It anchors one foot in relational knowing and the other in computational scale, allowing each to inform and elevate the other in service of transformation that history, and algorithm, alone could not foresee.

Summary of Major Findings

This study's findings reveal that although generative AI systems like ChatGPT offer immense potential in executive and organizational coaching, their capabilities are fundamentally restricted by their dependence on training data, probabilistic prediction, and the quality of input prompts. These systems, by design, replicate patterns embedded in the past. This raises a central challenge for coaching a discipline centered on transformation, innovation, and forward movement: how can a tool rooted in historical precedent effectively support future-focused growth? The answer, according to this research, lies in the strategic integration of uniquely human cognitive capabilities such as intuition, contextual awareness, empathy, and visionary thinking with skillful prompt engineering. **This approach is consistent with recent research affirming that effective coaching outcomes emerge from co-constructive, meaning-making relationships (de Haan et al., 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014), which AI alone cannot replicate.** This hybrid approach enables practitioners to not only enhance the creative and strategic quality of AI outputs but also mitigate the risk of reinforcing outdated norms and limitations embedded in historical data.

A key insight emerging from the literature and the applied demonstration is that generative AI operates as a language-based anticipation engine. It selects each word in a sequence based on its statistical likelihood given previous tokens, all of which are anchored in the data it was trained on. Therefore, any use of AI in a coaching setting that relies on standard prompts risks receiving predictable, shallow, or even biased responses that reflect dominant narratives. This includes responses that unintentionally prioritize linear success models, or outdated definitions of leadership. Without deliberate human intervention, AI is likely to **mirror the very mindsets that clients are seeking to evolve beyond.** Recent scholarship on AI's impact on leadership coaching warns that without ethical oversight and intentional guidance, generative tools may perpetuate cognitive and systemic biases (Terblanche, 2024; Passmore & Tee, 2023).

To counter this limitation, the findings emphasize the value of the human coach not merely as a facilitator but as an active cognitive architect of the AI interaction. When coaches leverage their own critical and creative thinking to design prompts especially prompts that challenge

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assumptions, invite novel frames, or expand time horizons they effectively reprogram the AI's trajectory. This does not erase historical bias entirely but strategically disrupts its gravitational pull. **Schmidt et al. (2023) further highlight that the strength of the coach-client alliance weakens when AI is used without human moderation, reinforcing the need for deliberate human shaping.** The coach's cognitive contribution, especially in designing prompts that embody future visioning, ethical nuance, or relational insight, allows the AI to participate in a generative rather than merely reproductive process. The very act of intentional prompt design becomes a form of leadership.

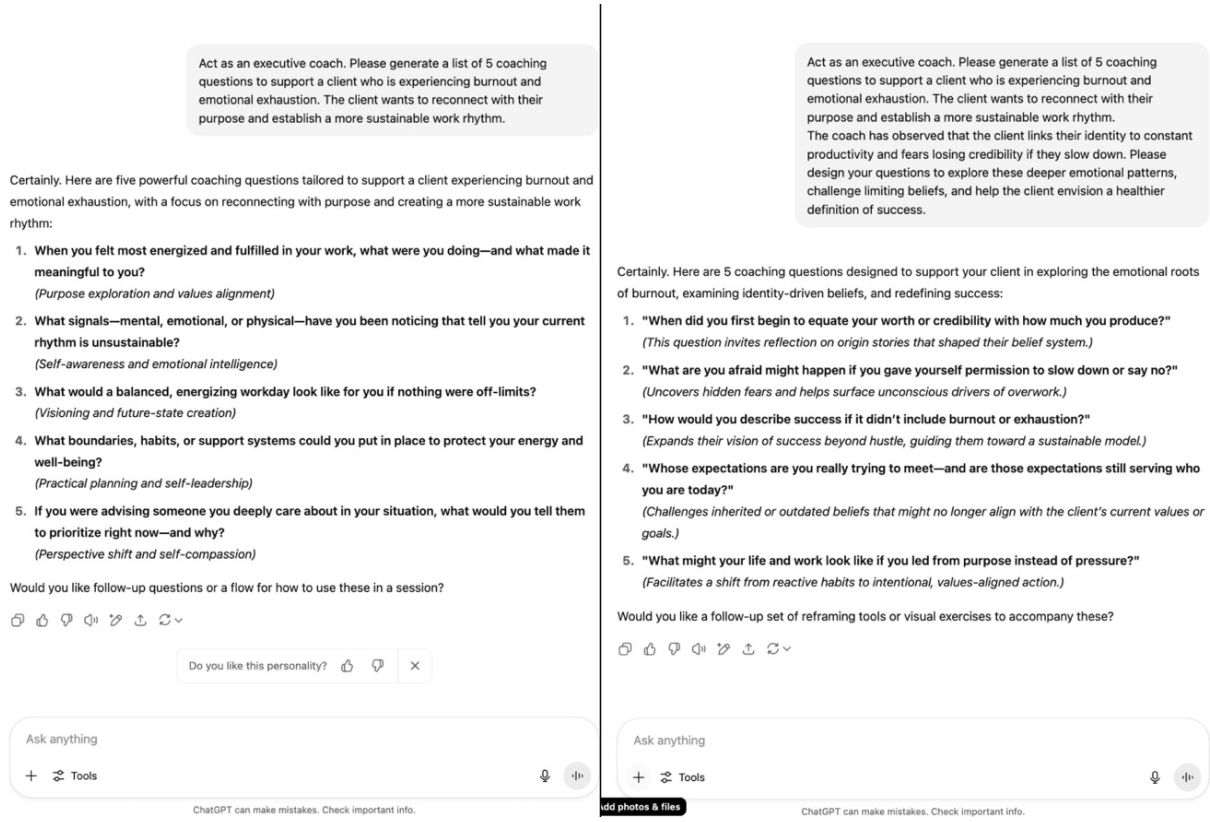
The qualitative demonstration conducted in this study validates this principle in action. When presented with a generic prompt, ChatGPT produced predictable and transactional coaching questions that focused primarily on surface-level exploration. In contrast, when guided by a prompt infused with human insight using reframing techniques, assumption challenges, and future-state visualization the AI delivered coaching prompts that were notably deeper, more innovative, and capable of catalyzing strategic thinking. This observation is supported by Ellis-Brush (2021), who emphasizes that **digital augmentation in coaching is most effective when it is directed by a coach's emotional intelligence and contextual attunement.** This contrast illustrates the transformative power of human cognition in guiding machine intelligence. It affirms that the quality of AI coaching output is not fixed but malleable dependent on the human's ability to engineer prompts with sophistication and intention.

Figure 2 illustrates a comparison of AI-generated coaching questions. Figure 2A reflects a generic prompt, while Figure 2B incorporates human insight and reframing the same scenario to include emotional and identity-based context. The difference in depth, resonance, and transformational potential demonstrates how prompt engineering rooted in human cognition and insight significantly influences AI coaching outputs.

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Figure 2

Comparison of AI-generated coaching questions using a generic prompt versus a coaching-informed prompt enhanced with human insight and reframing techniques.



Furthermore, the findings suggest that the integration of generative AI into coaching should not be framed as a replacement model, but as a collaboration model that amplifies what each party does best. AI provides scale, speed, linguistic fluency, and associative recall. Humans provide context, ethics, emotional depth, and the capacity to hold space for complexity. This division of strengths, often described in literature as the "*missing middle*," marks the site of hybrid intelligence where neither human nor machine operates alone, but together they create something neither could achieve independently. In the context of executive coaching, this synergy can accelerate insight generation, support more dynamic ideation, and introduce new possibilities into stagnant or constrained environments.

The research also highlights the limitations of relying solely on data quantity or model sophistication to produce quality outputs. Even the most advanced AI models require human calibration to direct their purpose and ensure relevance. In coaching, where the objective is often to unlock latent potential or provoke paradigm shifts, the quality of questions asked becomes the most powerful tool. Generic AI queries, no matter how grammatically polished, are unlikely to catalyze the types of transformations that coaching aspires to generate. What distinguishes transformative coaching is not information delivery but **creation of meaning**. As Passmore & Woodward (2023) note, the essence of impactful coaching lies in co-regulated reflection and

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emotional resonance which are the domains where human presence remains indispensable. And meaning arises not from data, but from deeper context, relationship, presence, and insight none of which are native to AI.

The role of prompt engineering, then, becomes not simply a technical task but a cognitive and ethical practice. Coaches must learn to think metacognitively- not just about what question to ask, but about how that question frames reality, what assumptions it embeds, and how it signals future possibilities. Effective prompts are not just well-formed queries but intentional interventions. They steer the model away from default logic and toward deeper exploration. When viewed this way, **prompt engineering becomes a new coaching competency—an extension of strategic questioning, capable of extending the coach's voice through the medium of the machine.**

This evolution also has implications for coaching education and professional development. The findings strongly suggest that coaching programs need to begin training practitioners not only in traditional competencies like deep listening and presence but also in AI fluency and prompt design. Passmore & Woodward (2023) argue that coach education must evolve to include digital literacy, while Coaching at Scale (2024) advocates for the integration of AI competency frameworks into certification models. Coaches will increasingly need to understand the mechanics of generative models, the nature of training data, and the cognitive implications of linguistic framing. A coach who can help their clients reframe limiting beliefs can also reframe a prompt. The same skills apply, but they must be translated into a technological context. In doing so, coaches move from being passive AI users to intentional co-creators, capable of shaping the outputs they receive and integrating them into a broader coaching strategy.

Another major finding concerns the nature of innovation itself. Organizational innovation, according to the literature reviewed, is less about having new ideas and more about disrupting old assumptions. This is mirrored in coaching, where breakthroughs often emerge not from instruction but from reframing. The coach's job is to help clients challenge the invisible scripts that govern their thinking these scripts that AI, left unprompted, is likely to reinforce. Therefore, hybrid coaching is uniquely positioned to support innovation because it combines the disruption capacity of coaching with the expansive language modeling of AI. By iterating between human insight and machine output, the process creates cognitive friction which is the very condition under which innovation thrives. As Vickberg (2023) and Movsumova et al. (2020) suggest, innovation often arises from divergent thinking processes, which are best catalyzed through interactive, cross-boundary collaboration.

Moreover, the HICF proposed in this study demonstrates that human-AI collaboration is not just a technical solution but a philosophical one. It embodies a belief that intelligence is distributed, that insight can be co-created across boundaries, and that leadership is not about having all the answers but about orchestrating the right conversations. In this framework, the coach is not merely a guide for the client but also a translator between the human world and the machine's probabilistic reasoning. The AI is not a guru but a "*thought partner"* one that needs direction, interpretation, and accountability (Woods, 2024, p.4). The real power emerges not from what the AI says, but from how the human chooses to use it.

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This reframing of the AI–human relationship also has ethical implications. The findings caution against over-reliance on AI-generated content, especially in domains involving identity, mental health, or systemic change. **While AI can simulate empathy, it cannot experience it**. It can echo insights, but it cannot generate wisdom. Therefore, the human coach must remain the moral compass of the coaching engagement. This includes knowing when to use AI, how to interpret its responses, and where to draw the line between efficiency and depth. Hybrid coaching is not about speed alone but about discernment.

Ultimately, the summary of findings reinforces three core propositions. First, the sophistication and strategic value of AI coaching outputs are directly correlated to the quality of human-designed prompts. Second, historical bias in AI is not an unchangeable flaw, but a structural tendency that can be countered through creative and intentional prompt engineering. Third, hybrid collaboration between coach and AI accelerates the coaching process by cycling more rapidly through ideation, reflection, and refinement. This accelerative loop is especially valuable in executive and organizational contexts, where time is limited and decisions have broad implications.

In light of these findings, the paper argues for a redefinition of what it means to coach in the age of AI. Coaching is no longer just a human conversation but a hybrid inquiry. But for that inquiry to be meaningful, the human must lead. The model must be prompted with purpose. The outputs must be examined with human curiosity. And the entire process must remain grounded in a commitment to human growth, creativity, and transformation. Coaching has always been about potential—what could be, what lies ahead. With the Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Framework (HICF), that potential can now be extended, amplified, and accelerated, not by replacing the human element, but by empowering it through strategic collaboration with machine intelligence.

In conclusion, the hybrid approach presented in this paper offers a compelling response to the limitations of generative AI in coaching. By placing human cognitive strengths at the center of prompt design, and by viewing AI as a co-creative partner rather than a predictive tool, coaches can expand their impact, unlock new levels of innovation, and help clients reimagine what is possible. As AI continues to evolve, the challenge is not to keep up with the machine, but to keep leading it with clarity, curiosity, and intention.

Conclusions

This paper set out to explore how the integration of human cognitive coaching capabilities with AI prompt engineering can mitigate the limitations of generative AI, particularly its reliance on historical data, and enhance innovation in executive and organizational coaching. Rooted in the growing interest in hybrid intelligence, the study responds directly to the 2025 conference theme: *High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence*. By combining literature from coaching, AI, innovation, and organizational theory with a practice-based conceptual demonstration, the research illustrates that it is not AI alone, but the intentional human use of AI, that yields transformational outcomes.

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Recent scholarship supports this reframing of AI not as a replacement for human coaching, but as a powerful augmentation tool when guided by human strengths. Studies show that the working alliance (a central mechanism of coaching effectiveness) can be preserved or even enhanced when human coaches integrate AI systems mindfully (Schmidt et al., 2023; Passmore & Tee, 2023). Terblanche (2024) emphasizes that the impact of AI on coaching depends not on the technology alone, but on how it is used, particularly in relation to trust, presence, and co-created meaning.

The most important insight emerging from this work is that generative AI, while increasingly present in coaching contexts, is fundamentally constrained by its architecture: it reflects past data and lacks the intuitive, emotionally intelligent, and visionary qualities required to generate truly novel solutions. When coaches use AI as-is, without shaping its output through powerful prompts or context-specific design, they risk replicating surface-level solutions that fail to drive breakthrough change. In contrast, when coaching competencies such as reframing, deep listening, assumption-challenging, and empathic presence are embedded into prompt engineering, the resulting output becomes more future-oriented, creative, and impactful. This aligns with recent findings that show prompt engineering can serve as a cognitive bridge which translates human insight into machine-readable instructions that elevate AI-generated content (Movsumova et al., 2020; Ellis-Brush, 2021).

For coaching practitioners, this insight underscores a new professional responsibility: to act not only as facilitators of client transformation, but also as designers of the human–AI interface. Coaches must learn how to collaborate with AI systems in ways that preserve their own humanity while expanding their clients' thinking. This means developing skills in prompt design, ethical AI use, and the conscious application of intuition and systems thinking when using generative tools in practice. The evolving role of coaches as AI collaborators has also been highlighted in research on digital coaching ecosystems. Ellis-Brush (2021) and Passmore & Woodward (2023) argue that coaching practitioners must become digitally fluent, not only to use AI ethically but also to critically assess how machine-generated suggestions align with client values and developmental goals.

For researchers, the findings invite deeper exploration into the emerging field of hybrid intelligence in coaching. While this paper offers a conceptual and practice-based demonstration, future research could examine how different types of prompts affect coaching outcomes across client populations, or how the integration of AI alters client perceptions of trust, agency, and insight. Mixed-methods studies, such as those conducted by de Haan et al. (2016), reveal that coaching outcomes are influenced by nuanced interpersonal dynamics which are factors that AI cannot replicate without human interpretation and contextualization.

For educators and trainers, there is an opportunity to rethink coaching curricula. Traditional programs teach core competencies rooted in human-to-human dialogue. As AI becomes embedded in the tools and workflows of knowledge workers, coaches-in-training must also learn how to critically engage with machine systems understanding not just how to use them, but how to guide them**.** This includes applying structured methodologies such as the Coaching Scale (Grover & Furnham, 2016) and embracing emerging digital frameworks. Courses on prompt engineering, AI literacy, and the neuroscience of intuition may become essential complements to currently existing coaching competencies.

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For professional associations such as the ICF and EMCC, there is a growing imperative to develop ethical and practical guidelines for the integration of generative AI into coaching. Clear boundaries around consent, privacy, and human-AI collaboration will be crucial to maintaining trust and credibility.

Finally, for coaching sponsors and organizational leaders, this paper offers a roadmap for using generative tools not to replace coaching but to enhance its reach, depth, and strategic value. This is especially relevant as organizations seek scalable coaching solutions that maintain quality while integrating AI tools, an area explored in depth by researchers examining the effectiveness and limitations of AI-based coaching platforms (Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014; Passmore & Woodward, 2023).

To summarize, high-impact coaching in the age of AI will be defined not by machines or humans alone, but by how wisely we combine their strengths to enable insight, innovation, and human transformation.

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Clients can develop strong working alliances with simulated autonomous AI coaches: Implications for human coaching practice

Amber S. Barger, Teachers College, Columbia University

Abstract: The collaborative dyadic relationship, or working alliance, between client and coach is a well-recognized factor in coaching effectiveness. This paper builds on the results of a mixed-methods randomized controlled trial demonstrating comparable moderately high levels of working alliance perceived by clients of simulated AI and human coaches. The findings suggest potential watchouts for human coaches, while identifying opportunities to optimize distinct strengths, such as meaning-making and cultural attunement, within emerging triadic hybrid-intelligent coaching relationships.
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Keywords: Working Alliance, Professional Coaching, Artificial Intelligence, Randomized Controlled Trial, Hybrid Intelligence

Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to explore how coaching clients build relationships with both simulated artificial intelligence (AI) coaches and human coaches, and the implications of these findings for human coaches in today's world. It draws on a recent mixed-methods randomized controlled trial (RCT) that examined client perceptions of and outcomes from partnering with simulated AI coaches and human coaches, and provided evidence that clients can and do build moderately high levels of working alliance with both coach types (Barger, 2025). The findings disrupt long-standing assumptions that clients would only build effective relationships with human coaches. Instead, the findings reveal that clients are open to forming meaningful partnerships with AI, while also continuing to value the unique contributions of human coaches.

Theoretically, this paper builds upon Bordin's (1979) model of the working alliance, defined as the partnership between a client and coach based on shared goals, agreed tasks, and a trusting bond. The aim of this paper is twofold: (1) to analyze what these findings mean for human coaches, identifying both watchouts and optimization opportunities, and (2) to consider how working alliance theory might be reconceptualized in hybrid-intelligent coaching contexts.

The paper proceeds as follows: the Methodology outlines the mixed-methods RCT; the Literature Review situates the study within scholarship on working alliance and AI in coaching; the Findings present client perspectives and implications for human coaches; and the Conclusions provide guidance for coaches, training institutes, professional associations, and researchers.

Methodology

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This study draws on a mixed-methods RCT previously reported by Barger (2025), with the following section providing a concise summary of its methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Sadish et al., 2002) as the foundation for the present research.

The experiment employed a simulated autonomous AI coach to examine the working alliance in comparison with human coaching. The design uniquely utilized a Wizard-of-Oz (WOz) procedure, commonly found in the human-computer interaction field, in which professional coaches operated behind the scenes while participants believed they were interacting with an AI system (Dahlbäck et al., 1993; Porcheron et al., 2021). This approach was necessary because fully autonomous AI capable of replicating expert human coaching does not yet exist (Young et al., 2019; Passmore et al., 2025). By leveraging WOz deception, the study captured insights into how clients might respond to future AI coaches indistinguishable from humans.

The study was conducted between March and June 2023, a period described as *Generative AI's breakout year* (McKinsey, 2023). With the release of ChatGPT in late 2022 and GPT-4 in March 2023 (OpenAI, 2023), public discourse about AI was pervasive, shaping participant expectations and perceptions. This broader context heightened the salience of believability in the simulated AI condition.

Fifty-two graduate students from a U.S. university were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups: (1) a simulated AI coach or (2) a professional human coach. All sessions were delivered by International Coaching Federation–credentialed coaches with over a decade of experience, consistently applying the CLEAR model (Hawkins & Smith, 2013). Participants engaged in a single 60-minute coaching session focused on clarifying a personal goal and designing action steps. Post-session, participants completed surveys including the Working Alliance Inventory – Short Revised (WAI-SR) to measure agreement on goals, alignment on tasks, and the quality of the relational bond (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989; Hatcher & Gillaspy, 2006). A subset of 27 individuals also participated in semi-structured debrief interviews two weeks later, analyzed using constant comparison and in vivo coding techniques (Saldaña, 2021) that generated four themes and 15 sub-codes.

A Believability Index (Barger, 2025) was developed to assess whether participants accepted the AI simulation. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, Institutional Review Board approval, confidentiality protections, and post-study debriefing procedures.

Literature Review

This literature review first defines coaching and its core processes, then examines the central role of the coach–client relationship, before turning to definitions of artificial intelligence and evidence on relational dynamics with AI systems, ultimately converging on implications for hybrid-intelligent coaching models.

Defining Coaching and Its Core Processes

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Coaching is widely recognized as a developmental practice aimed at facilitating growth, performance, and goal achievement. The International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2018) describes coaching as 'a collaborative and creative partnership that helps clients maximize their potential.' Systematic reviews and meta-analyses consistently report positive outcomes across a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Ely et al., 2010; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). Recent meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; Nicolau et al., 2023) confirm these findings, reinforcing the conclusion that coaching is an effective tool for facilitating change.

The coaching process itself is typically organized around clarifying goals, fostering awareness of present realities, exploring options, and promoting action and accountability (Peterson, 2010). Coaches employ a variety of competencies, including active listening, questioning, and feedback, to help clients progress toward self-identified outcomes (Maltbia et al., 2014).

The Role of the Coach–Client Relationship

Beyond techniques and models, the quality of the coach–client relationship remains central to effective coaching. Research consistently identifies trust, rapport, and mutual respect as core relational elements that support client change (Ely et al., 2010; Graßmann et al., 2019). This relationship is often framed in terms of *working alliance*, a construct adapted from psychotherapy (Bordin, 1979; Baron & Morin, 2009). The working alliance emphasizes collaboration around shared goals, consensus on tasks, and the development of an affective bond between coach and client. In coaching contexts, it is viewed as a dynamic process that is co-constructed and renegotiated across sessions (O'Broin & Palmer, 2007).

Evidence for the importance of the alliance is substantial. Relational factors have been shown to account for a significant proportion of variance in client outcomes (McKenna & Davis, 2009), and meta-analytic findings confirm consistent associations between alliance quality and affective, cognitive, and behavioral results (Graßmann et al., 2019). At the same time, more recent work suggests that alliance quality may be influenced not only by coach behaviors but also by client characteristics, such as general relational capacity (de Haan et al., 2020; Molyn et al., 2022). This perspective raises questions about whether the alliance is entirely co-created or partially shaped by client traits independent of coaching interventions. Moreover, research suggests that the number of sessions does not necessarily predict outcomes beyond a certain point, as coaches and clients can engage in "coregulation" to make efficient use of available time (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; Stiles et al., 2015).

Definition of Artificial Intelligence

In parallel with developments in coaching psychology, AI has advanced to the point where questions about its role in relational work are increasingly relevant. AI is broadly defined as the study and development of machines that can act intelligently in novel situations (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Within this broad field, AI applications are typically categorized into assisted intelligence (rule-based support systems), augmented intelligence (adaptive, learning-enhanced systems that work with humans), and autonomous intelligence (systems capable of independent

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learning and adaptation) (Young et al., 2019). Conversational AI, embodied in chatbots, voice assistants, and anthropomorphic avatars, has brought AI into increasingly relational contexts (Miao et al., 2022).

Relational Dynamics with AI Coaches

A central question is whether clients can form meaningful relationships—or working alliances—with AI coaches. While the coaching literature has long emphasized the centrality of the working alliance in client outcomes, recent research challenges the assumption that only human coaches can foster it. For example, Barger (2025) found that clients reported building moderately high working alliances with both human and simulated AI coaches, with no significant difference between the two conditions, suggesting that genuine alliance formation is possible between humans and AI.

Research in human–computer interaction suggests that relational cues such as empathy, personalization, and social dialogue can enhance trust and engagement with AI systems (Bickmore & Picard, 2005). Empirical findings in coaching-adjacent domains are promising but mixed. Studies indicate that clients can develop medium-to-high perceptions of working alliance with AI systems, particularly when conversational agents use humanlike behaviors such as disclosure or reflective listening (Mai et al., 2021, 2022). Similarly, research has shown that individuals may feel less judged and therefore more willing to disclose sensitive information when interacting with AI systems they believe to be autonomous (Lucas et al., 2014).

Other studies support the practical utility of AI coaches even in the absence of strong relational bonds. For instance, users of chatbot-based mental health applications such as Woebot and Wysa demonstrated reductions in symptoms of depression and increased resilience (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017; Inkster et al., 2018), suggesting that outcomes can be achieved through structured interaction and consistent availability, regardless of affective attachment. However, some evidence points to skepticism or ambivalence: clients often prefer human providers even when AI performs equivalently (Yokoi et al., 2021), and in some cases interactions with AI remain transactional and emotionally detached (Ellis-Brush, 2021).

This variability highlights the importance of contextual moderators. Believability—whether clients perceive the AI as genuinely autonomous—can shape the degree of engagement and trust (White & Lutters, 2003). Client characteristics, such as relational capacity (Molyn et al., 2022), and openness to technology (Terblanche & Cilliers, 2020), may further influence the alliance. Sequencing of AI and human interactions, as well as the intensity and duration of AI usage, also appear to be consequential factors (Terblanche & Cilliers, 2020).

Implications for Hybrid Coaching

Collectively, these strands of literature suggest that both human and AI coaches bring distinctive strengths and limitations to the coaching relationship. Human coaches excel in providing empathy, humor, cultural attunement, and values-based sense-making, which are critical for deepening meaning and fostering sustained commitment (Clutterbuck, 2022). AI systems, in contrast, offer consistency, precision, scalability, and reduced social judgment, which

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can encourage candid disclosure and enhance clarity and specificity of goals and actions (Lucas et al., 2014; Mai et al., 2021).

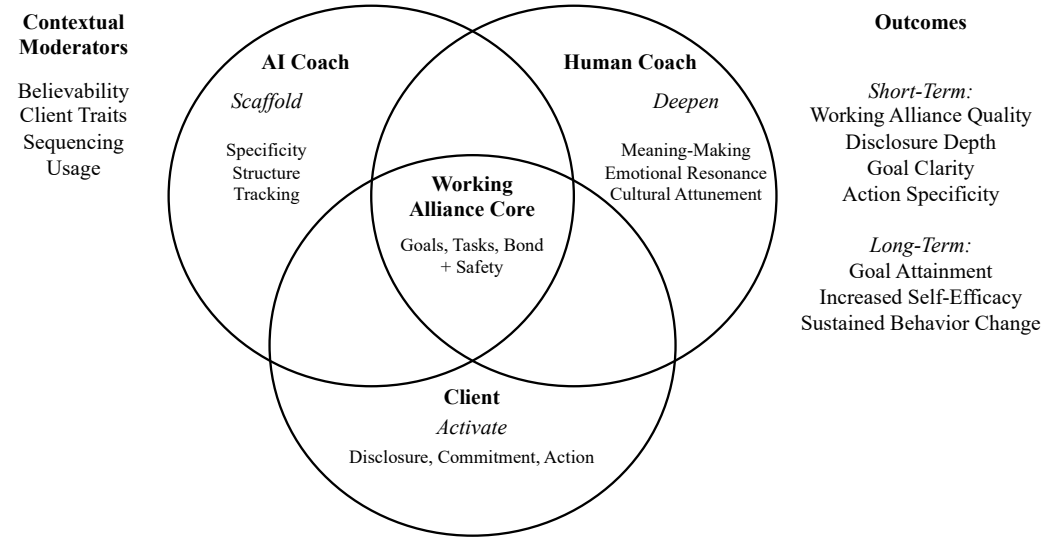
The convergence of these insights has led scholars to propose hybrid-intelligent models of coaching, in which human and AI systems complement one another rather than compete. Early examples suggest that AI can function as a scaffold for structured processes, such as tracking progress, reinforcing accountability, and offering on-demand support, while human coaches provide depth, contextual nuance, and relational attunement (Clutterbuck, 2022; Duhan et al., 2023; Terblanche et al., 2024). Such models align with broader findings in coaching psychology and human–computer interaction, which indicate that effectiveness emerges from the way human and AI contributions are integrated and moderated by context.

Conceptual Framework

The Hybrid-Intelligent Working Alliance Framework (HIWA) conceptualizes how clients develop, experience, and sustain the coaching relationship across human, AI, and hybrid-intelligent modalities. Building on Bordin's (1979) model of shared goals, agreed tasks, and affective bond, the framework integrates unique relational affordances of AI (e.g., specificity, structure, tracking) and human coaches (e.g., meaning-making, emotional resonance, cultural attunement). It further highlights contextual moderators such as believability (i.e., credible and trustworthy), client traits, sequencing, and usage, which shape both short-term outcomes (e.g., working alliance quality, disclosure depth, goal clarity, action specificity) and long-term outcomes (e.g., goal attainment, self-efficacy, behavior change).

Figure 1

The Hybrid-Intelligent Working Alliance Framework (HIWA)



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The HIWA framework advances current scholarship by bridging two previously parallel streams of literature: (1) human-centered coaching research, which emphasizes the relational bond and co-construction of meaning (O'Broin & Palmer, 2007; Graßmann et al., 2019), and (2) emerging AI-enabled coaching studies, which highlight affordances of structure, precision, and accessibility (Clutterbuck, 2022; Terblanche et al., 2023a; Terblanche et al., 2023b). The HIWA model reconceptualizes the alliance as hybrid-intelligent, shared across human coaches, AI systems, and client agency. While clients can build alliances with AI (Barger, 2025; Mai et al., 2022), little theory explains how humans and AI complement one another, positioning this study to offer a new foundation for alliance in hybrid-intelligent contexts.

Summary of Major Findings

The findings are organized into three parts: first, a view of what the results reveal about alliance formation with simulated AI and human coaches; second, potential watchouts that highlight risks for human coaches in this evolving landscape; and third, areas where human coaches can optimize their distinctive strengths to create greater value in hybrid-intelligent coaching relationships.

Alliance Formation

The first major finding of this study is that clients were able to form moderately high levels of working alliance with both expert human and simulated AI coaches in a single 60-minute session, contrary to the authors' initial hypothesis (Barger, 2025). Rapport, long understood as a cornerstone of the coaching relationship (Bordin, 1979; O'Broin & Palmer, 2007), no longer appears to be a uniquely human differentiator. One participant summarized their AI interaction by stating, *"It felt collaborative, like it was working with me rather than at me"* (client, simulated AI condition). This suggests that the process elements of alliance, i.e., shared goals, agreed tasks, and perceived partnership, can be sufficiently met by both modalities, at least in a single session.

A second insight concerns psychological safety dynamics. Several clients reported feeling unexpectedly safer and less judged with a simulated AI coach, describing reduced "impression management" pressures that allowed them to disclose candidly and move more directly to problem-solving (Blunden & Brodsky, 2024). One participant noted, *"I could just cut to the chase without worrying how I sounded"* (client, simulated AI condition). This contrasts with traditional human coaching literature, which emphasizes relational warmth and trust-building as prerequisites for openness (Graßmann et al., 2019). The simulated AI provided a fast track to direct disclosure, suggesting that human coaches may need to be more intentional in engineering similar conditions of low social risk.

Third, the findings demonstrate that specific coaching techniques are portable across modalities. Clients credited both simulated AI and human coaches with effective questioning, language challenge, feedback (e.g., shifting "should" to "will"), and concise summarization. As one participant put it, *"It picked up on my hesitation and made me commit"* (client, simulated AI

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condition). Importantly, clients appreciated similar behavioral techniques in similar estimates across both modalities.

Watchouts for Human Coaches

The study surfaces several cautionary notes. First, warmth and rapport alone may be insufficient as a differentiator for human coaches. Clients described both the simulated AI and human coaches as collaborative partners who built credibility quickly. A simulated AI coach was reported to "push," "pick up on doubt," and "recap themes" in ways experienced as both helpful and valuable. This erodes the assumption that empathy, active listening, or rapport are exclusively domains expected and received well from humans. Overemphasis on warmth without sufficient direction may reduce the clients' perceived value of human coaching, particularly when clients do not see progress toward their goals.

Second, some clients indicated a preference for the AI's non-judgmental efficiency. Comments such as, *"It wasn't so judgmental—it just got straight to the point"* (client, simulated AI condition) highlight how AI could outcompete humans when sessions feel burdened by small talk, hierarchical cues, or performative relationality. If human sessions do not balance empathy with crisp progress orientation, clients may increasingly turn to AI as the faster, safer option for disclosure.

Third, the study raises expectations for depth and progress in a single session. Several participants expressed surprise at how quickly the simulated AI interaction produced actionable clarity within 45–60 minutes. As one participant reflected, *"I didn't think in just one session we'd get this far, but I actually walked away with a plan I can use right now"* (client, simulated AI condition). In contrast, a human session that prioritizes extended "getting-to-know-you" dialogue may risk being perceived as less impactful. In single-session or trial engagements, immediate structure and progress may be critical for human coaches to establish credibility and value.

Fourth, the findings underscore the salience of demographic and cultural cues. Clients who were paired with the simulated AI reacted strongly to the coach's perceived identity through voice or avatar. For instance, one noted skepticism toward what they described as a "Bay Area bro" voice, questioning credibility based on gender and cultural associations. Human coaches face the same challenge: relatability and trust are shaped by perceived similarity or cultural attunement. A mismatch in a human coach's tone, humor, or identity signals could quickly undermine alliance, even if the client is not sharing their feedback with the coach.

Finally, clients emphasized structure over narrative digressions. Some noted that AI's disciplined pacing prevented unproductive meanders and effectively stopped tangents. When human coaches overindulge in narrative exploration, clients may perceive AI's streamlined, focused pacing as superior. This highlights the increasing importance for human coaches to maintain a disciplined structure without sacrificing relational nuance in a coaching session.

Where Human Coaches Can and Should Optimize

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Despite these watchouts, the findings also reveal clear opportunities for human coaches to optimize their unique contributions in hybrid-intelligent ecosystems.

First, human coaches can excel at providing targeted challenges and reinforcing commitment. Clients valued interventions that identified vague statements ('hopefully,' 'maybe') and transformed them into specific, time-bound commitments. As one participant reflected, 'Being asked, "What will you do by when?" pushed me to own it' (client, human coach condition). Coaches can strengthen impact by weaving in small but direct challenges and explicit checks for commitment as a standard part of their practice.

Second, humans retain a distinctive advantage in meaning-making, analogies, and values integration. A participant recounted how a human coach used a metaphor about neural pathways—"a highway versus a dirt road"—to deepen insight about habit change. This kind of tailored metaphor, linked to the client's broader identity and values, remains uniquely human in ways current AI cannot replicate yet (Clutterbuck, 2022).

Third, clients repeatedly praised hyper-clear signposting and summaries, whether from AI or human. Human coaches should adopt frequent synthesis, using the client's own words: *"What I'm hearing is… Earlier you said…"* This helps clients track progress, reinforces agency, and sharpens the path from goals to actions.

Fourth, coaches can borrow from AI by embedding deliberate psychological safety cues. Explicitly naming confidentiality, emphasizing non-judgment, and minimizing status differentials reduce impression-management pressures and invite candid disclosure. As one participant noted, *"It felt safe to say things without worrying about being judged"* (client, simulated AI condition). Humans must signal these conditions overtly rather than assuming warmth alone suffices.

Finally, cultural attunement must become default practice. Asking upfront about tone, pacing, and directness preferences, while carefully calibrating humor and relational style is critical. Misattunement around identity cues can rapidly undermine trust, but proactive inquiry signals respect and adaptability.

Conclusions

This study contributes to a growing body of evidence that coaching relationships can be meaningfully established by clients with human and AI coaches (Barger, 2025; Mai et al., 2022), raising important implications for theory and practice in an era of hybrid intelligence. While Bordin's (1979) construct of working alliance has traditionally been framed as a dyadic construct between coach and client, the present findings suggest that core alliance processes can also be scaffolded by AI systems (Lucas et al., 2014; Mai et al., 2022). These results indicate that working alliance theory may need to be reconceptualized as a distributed system of complementary contributions between human coaches, AI systems, and clients, as articulated in the Hybrid-Intelligent Working Alliance (HIWA) framework.

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For coaches, the implications are both cautionary and generative. To remain indispensable, human coaches must emphasize distinctively human capacities: contextualized meaning-making, values exploration, identity work, cultural attunement, and the use of metaphor or narrative to deepen insight (Clutterbuck, 2022; de Haan & Nilsson, 2023). At the same time, coaches should design sessions to deliver immediate value, intentionally engineer psychological safety, and calibrate cultural signals that shape trust and relatability.

For researchers, these findings underscore the urgency of updating alliance theory for hybrid-intelligent contexts. Further empirical work is needed to examine how alliance develops across multiple sessions, whether hybrid sequencing (AI followed by human, or vice versa) yields differential outcomes, and how contextual moderators, such as believability, client traits, and usage intensity, influence trajectories of change (Terblanche & Cilliers, 2020; Molyn et al., 2022).

For educators and training organizations, the task is to prepare coaches for practice in hybrid-intelligent ecosystems. This entails integrating technological literacy and critical reflection on AI into coach education, alongside renewed emphasis on cultural competence, values-based work, and advanced relational attunement. Training curricula should also encourage experimentation with AI tools, enabling coaches to discern which practices can be augmented by technology and which require distinctly human capabilities.

Finally, professional associations will play a pivotal role in shaping the ethical and professional standards of coaching in this emerging landscape. Competency frameworks should explicitly address hybrid practice, balancing the adoption of structural techniques afforded by AI with safeguards around confidentiality, bias, and client autonomy.

This research reframes coaching as an ecosystem where human and AI strengths combine to maximize client impact. High-impact coaching in hybrid contexts will hinge on amplifying uniquely human presence while strategically integrating AI to extend the coaching profession's relevance and reach.

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Coaching the Future:
How Hybrid Intelligence Unlocks Human Potential and Predicts ROI

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Abstract: The Omind coaching platform is a hybrid AI-human system grounded in behavioral neuroscience. Using data from 774 professionals and a six-week intervention with 66 participants, we tested a novel ROI modeling approach. Unlike prior studies relying on self-reports, our method integrates behavioral tasks, psychometric surveys, and graph-based AI to model cascading psychological gains. Results show significant improvements in self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being, which, when mapped to literature benchmarks, project meaningful impacts on performance, resilience, and retention.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence, Executive Coaching, Neuroscience, Behavioral Assessment, Scalable Coaching

Introduction

This paper contributes to the Specialized Practice Area track of the Columbia Coaching Conference, aligned with the 2025 theme: High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence. We explore how a hybrid intelligence model, blending AI-driven analytics with human coaching expertise, can strengthen coaching outcomes and provide organizations with a transparent framework to link human development to business impact. Research on coaching consistently demonstrates positive effects on self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being (Theeboom et al., 2014). However, most ROI studies rely primarily on self-reports or broad financial estimates, which limits both precision and generalizability.

Our approach is novel in three ways. First, it integrates behavioral neuroscience tasks with validated psychometric surveys to capture cognitive, emotional, and social resources more precisely than self-report alone. Second, it employs a graph-based AI propagation algorithm to model how gains in one resource cascade through others, creating individualized development pathways. Third, it links these psychological improvements to business outcomes via meta-analytic effect sizes, offering a transparent and evidence-based method to estimate ROI.

We applied this framework with 774 executives and senior professionals across multiple industries (consulting, retail, pharma, industry), with a substantial proportion from consulting. We also conducted a six-week intervention study with 66 professionals to illustrate how improvements in psychological resources translate into measurable outcomes.

The paper proceeds as follows: we first outline the methodology and theoretical framework, then present empirical findings and ROI simulations, before discussing contributions, limitations, and future directions. We argue that hybrid intelligence offers an innovative, scalable pathway to connect human development with organizational performance.

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Conceptual Framing / Literature Review

Part A: Foundational Theme and Evidence

Hybrid intelligence blends AI‑driven analytics with human coaching to deliver scalable, measurable development while preserving the coach-coachee relationship. Our model integrates behavioral assessment, AI feedback and human guidance to link individual psychology to business KPIs.

We focus on three core levers:

- Self-efficacy: the belief in one's ability to achieve goals, predicts job performance (r = .38) across 114 studies (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

- Intrinsic motivation: acting from genuine interest, rises when organizations support autonomy, competence and relatedness, boosting engagement and reducing deviance (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

- Mental well-being - positive health or "flourishing" - enhances resilience and creativity by broadening personal resources (Keyes, 2005).

Traditional self-reports are quick but biased (social desirability; Van de Mortel, 2008). Omind adds well-validated behavioral tasks (e.g., Balloon Analogue Risk Task) to capture real-time decision-making linked to neural circuits (Galvan et al., 2007). By merging survey data with task performance, we create rich, concrete profiles of strengths and blind spots - fueling personalized, neuroscience-informed coaching.

Part B: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

To translate individual growth into organizational value, we built on established coaching theory to create a data-driven cascade linking what people bring (resources), how they feel and act (psychological levers), and what the business gains (outcomes). This framework both aligns with Columbia's Context-Content-Conduct model and injects objective measurement and AI simulation to close the "soft vs. hard" impact gap.

1. Resources: Foundational skills such as cognitive flexibility or empathy (Bandura, 1997) form the bedrock of development.

2. Levers: Internal states—self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and well-being—translate skills into drive and resilience (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Keyes, 2005).

3. Outcomes: These levers then map onto performance metrics, team resilience, and retention rates (Judge & Bono, 2001; Rich et al., 2010).

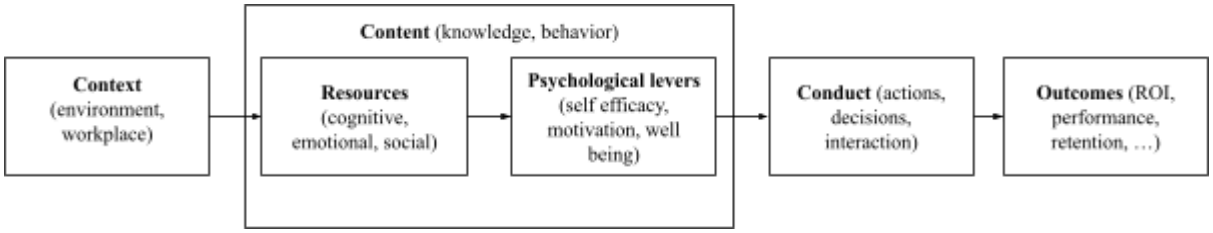
By measuring "Content" with both behavioral tasks (e.g., BART; Lejuez et al., 2002) and validated surveys (Podsakoff et al., 2003), we sharpen insight into real-world behavior vs. self-perception. A graph-based AI engine (Epskamp et al., 2018), trained on 774 profiles, simulates how boosting one resource ripples through levers to predict ROI using meta-analytic effect sizes.

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Crucially, human coaches remain the linchpin - interpreting data, tailoring interventions, and nurturing the relationship that drives change (de Haan et al., 2016). The result is scalable, evidence-backed coaching that delivers both “soft” growth and “hard” returns.

Figure 1

Cascade modelisation of coaching outcomes



Methodology

This study followed a staged, mixed-methods design, integrating large-scale data collection, literature synthesis, and an empirical coaching intervention. The goal was to build and test a hybrid-intelligence pipeline linking human skills to psychological levers and, ultimately, to organizational outcomes.

Context and setting

The research was conducted primarily in Europe, within client organizations across consulting, retail, pharmaceutical, and industrial sectors. Participants were executives and senior professionals who engaged with the Omind® platform as part of organizational development programs.

The research team adopted an insider-outsider stance (Bartunek, 1996; Bartunek, 2008). Several authors were developers of the Omind platform, which provided access to participant data and facilitated integration of the intervention. To reduce bias, platform developers did not deliver coaching, and all data were pseudonymized under GDPR compliance. A pre-specified analysis plan ensured that statistical testing remained independent from coaching delivery.

Access to participants was obtained through HR and leadership partners in client organizations. Eligible professionals were invited to complete assessments, and for the intervention phase, to join a six-week hybrid coaching program. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured at each stage.

This organizational context provides both ecological validity, since interventions were embedded in real workplace settings, and constraints, since industry-specific cultures (particularly consulting, which formed a substantial portion of the sample) may influence both psychological levers and ROI outcomes.

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Project timeline and phases

The research unfolded in five sequential phases (Table 1), beginning with platform development (2020–2022), followed by large-scale assessment (2023–2024), a focused six-week intervention (late 2024–early 2025), literature synthesis and ROI modeling (early 2025), and ongoing validation efforts. This chronology frames the methodological steps described below.

Table 1

Project Timeline, Phases, and Roles

Phase	Timeline	Context & Setting	Main Tasks	Roles & Responsibilities
Phase 1 - Platform & Assessment Development	2020 – 2022	Omind R&D labs, in collaboration with academic & coaching partners.	Design of the Omind® hybrid intelligence platform. Development of behavioral tasks and integration of psychometric scales.	Omind researchers & developers (design, implementation); academic advisors (scientific validation); coaches (practice input).
Phase 2 - Large-Scale Data Collection (Assessment Cohort)	2023 – 2024	Executives & senior professionals (N = 774) across client organizations in Europe (consulting, retail, pharma, industry).	Deployment of the Omind® assessment battery. Collection of behavioral and psychometric data.	Omind researchers (data analysis & oversight); HR partners (participant recruitment & logistics).
Phase 3 - Empirical Intervention Study	Late 2024 – Early 2025	Client organizations; online hybrid coaching program. Early-career professionals (N = 66, Mage = 27.9).	6-week hybrid coaching program: (i) AI-personalized training modules, (ii) certified coach sessions. Pre/post assessment (T0/T1).	Omind platform (AI-driven modules); certified external coaches (session delivery); Omind researchers (analysis, role-separated).
Phase 4 - Literature Synthesis & ROI Modeling	Early 2025	Desk-based academic review, meta-analytic data extraction.	Identification of peer-reviewed studies & meta-analyses. Extraction of γ-coefficients linking psychological levers to business outcomes. Application of coefficients to intervention Δ-scores for ROI estimation.	Omind research team (literature review, modeling, ROI simulation).

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Data Sources

- Assessment Cohort (N = 774): executives and senior professionals across sectors who completed the Omind cognitive and emotional assessment battery during platform validation (2023-2024).
- Literature Synthesis: standardized γ-coefficients were aggregated from 27 peer-reviewed studies (including 5 meta-analyses) in organizational psychology (e.g., Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Keyes, 2005; Van den Broeck et al., 2016), linking psychological levers to business outcomes.
- Empirical intervention study (N=66): a subset of early-career professionals (Mage = 27.9, SD = 4.1; 44% female), recruited from the larger cohort, who participated in a six-week hybrid coaching program (late 2024-early 2025).

Predictive ROI Modeling

Modeling step 1: linking skills to psychological levers.
Using data from the 774-person cohort, multiple regression models estimated how core resources (e.g., coping, self-compassion, uncertainty tolerance) predicted variance in self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being.

The model is specified as :

$$L_i = \alpha_i + \sum_{j=1}^{k} \beta_{ij} S_j + \varepsilon_i$$

where :

L_i = measured psychological lever i (self efficacy, motivation, well-being)

α_i = intercept

β_{ij} = standardized coefficient (estimated from the cohort data)

S_j = human skill j (behavioral and psychometric measurements, described in detail below)

ε_i = error term

Psychological levers were measured directly using questionnaires. This step allows us to empirically validate that the skills targeted in the intervention are significantly associated with changes in underlying psychological mechanisms.

Modeling Step 2: projecting business outcomes.
These psychological levers were then mapped onto organizational outcomes (performance, engagement, resilience, retention) using literature-derived coefficients, serving as benchmarks for outcome projection.

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The projection model is defined as :

$$O_m = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \gamma_{mi} L_i$$

where:

O_m = predicted value of outcome variable *m* (e.g., performance, engagement)

L_i = measured psychological lever *i* (self efficacy, motivation, well-being)

γ_{mi} = literature-based standardized coefficient linking lever *i* to outcome *m*

This allows us to generate hypothetical outcome changes based on observed psychological profiles.

Empirical Step 3: measuring intervention impact via pre/post assessment.
Pre–post Δ-scores from the intervention provided empirical inputs for simulating downstream business effects, forming the basis of ROI estimates. This staged modeling ensured a logical flow from raw skills → to levers → to outcomes → to ROI.

Empirical Intervention Study

We conducted a six-week hybrid coaching intervention with 66 early-career professionals, recruited from the larger 774-person cohort. This phase marked the transition from large-scale data collection to a focused test of real-world application.

Procedure.
At baseline (T0) and after six weeks (T1), all participants completed the Omind® Leadership assessment, which integrates behavioral tasks with validated psychometric measures. This enabled us to track psychological change over time.

Intervention design.
The program combined two interconnected components:

- **AI-guided personalized training pathway:** During the sessions, the coach assigned and explained neuroscience-based modules. Between sessions, participants completed these modules on the Omind® platform. An AI propagation algorithm (Figure 2) then identified and sequenced the modules to create the shortest, highest-impact developmental pathway tailored to each individual profile.

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Figure 2

Propagation algorithm and development path generation



Illustrative graph for an individual: each circle is a core psychological resource assessed by the Omind® platform; its diameter is proportional to the score (shown as a percentage). Black arrows indicate empirically supported influences between resources (from literature + psychometric modeling). Orange arrows show propagation intensity (stronger when a score is far from the average, weaker when it's near the mean). The propagation algorithm then iteratively updates each resource's score by combining its own value with weighted input from its neighbors, capturing the systemic interplay across the network.

- **Certified coach sessions:** The first session consisted of a structured debrief of the assessment and joint selection of a developmental goal. Subsequent sessions, scheduled between modules, focused on supporting the transfer of learning into practice by helping participants embed concrete strategies and new behaviors in their daily work. Sessions were guided by high-resolution visualizations of cognitive, emotional, and social scores.

Together, these two components created a rhythm: assessment → debrief → module → coaching → practice → reassessment. This iterative cycle ensured both measurable progress and practical transfer into workplace behavior.

Analysis strategy.

Pre–post changes were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests on Δ-scores for each psychological lever, testing whether observed gains in self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being were statistically significant.

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Behavioral and Psychometric Measurements

Behavioral tasks.

We designed a suite of novel, gamified online behavioral tasks based on the following paradigms:

- Emotional Sensitivity (EmoQuotation Task): quote the valence and arousal of pictures from the Oasis database (Kurdi, B., Lozano, S., & Banaji, M. R. 2017)
- Emotional Regulation (Oddball Paradigm): discriminate circles from squares while regulating emotional responses to interfering images (Schlüter, H., & Bermeitinger, C., 2017)
- Focus (BLAST Task): spot a target letter among distractors every few seconds, to track attention fluctuations in real time. (Petton M. et al, 2019).
- Risk-taking (Balloon Analogue Risk Task - BART): inflate a virtual balloon to earn points, risking explosion (Lejuez et al., 2002).
- Cognitive Flexibility (Stroop Task): discriminate congruent vs. incongruent stimuli where the shape (triangle, square, circle) and the written word may conflict.
- Cooperating (Ultimatum Task): decide whether to accept or reject monetary offers from a partner, balancing fairness perception and financial gain (Gabay, A. S., Radua, J., Kempton, M. J., & Mehta, M. A. 2014).
- Empathy (Reading the mind in the eyes test): view photos of eyes and choose which of four emotion words best describes the person's mental state, assessing theory of mind and emotion recognition (Baron‐Cohen, S., Wheelwright, S., Hill, J., Raste, Y., & Plumb, I. 2001).

Questionnaires.

We developed tailor-made questionnaires, rewriting and validating new versions of established instruments, grounded in the structural frameworks and theoretical dimensions of, and specifically adapted to workplace contexts.

- General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen et al., 2001) - self efficacy
- Basic Psychological Needs at Work Scale (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) - autonomy, competence, relatedness.
- Mental Health Continuum - Short Form (Keyes, 2005) - emotional, social, and psychological well-being.
- Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) - self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness in response to personal suffering or failure.
- Orientation to Happiness Scale (Peterson et al., 2005) - assesses three paths to well-being: pleasure (hedonia), engagement (flow), and meaning (eudaimonia).
- Proactive Coping Inventory (Greenglass et al., 1999) – evaluates anticipatory and goal-oriented coping strategies, including proactive, reflective, and preventive coping.
- Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale – Short Form (IUS-12) (Carleton et al., 2007) - measures cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to uncertainty and ambiguity.
- Langer Mindfulness Scale (Pirson et al., 2018) – assesses openness to novelty, engagement with the present, flexibility, and creativity as components of mindful awareness.

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Summary of Major Findings

Our analysis unfolded in three steps, moving from large-scale cohort modeling to literature-based projections and finally to intervention outcomes. This staged approach allowed us to show not only whether coaching works, but *how* psychological gains translate into business-relevant results.

Linking Skills to Psychological Levers (Step 1)

Using the 774-person cohort, we ran multiple regression models to test how core human skills predicted variance in three psychological levers: well-being, self-efficacy, and basic psychological needs at work.

Table 2

Core resources and their impact on psychological levers

Dependent variable	**R^2**	**Significant predictor (β, p<.001)**
Well being	0.33	Self-compassion (β = .28), Emotional Support (β = .18), Uncertainty Tolerance (β = .16), Happiness (β = .14), Coping strategies (β = .12)
Self-efficacy	0.35	Coping strategies(β = .34), Self-compassion (β = .19), Uncertainty Tolerance (β = .16), Creativity (β = .15)
Basic psychological needs at work	0.17	Coping strategies(β = .22), Uncertainty Tolerance (β = .22), Self-compassion (β = .12)

Results showed that coping strategies and self-compassion consistently emerged as the strongest predictors echoing meta-analytic evidence on their links to efficacy and resilience (Carver et al., 1989; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012). For example, coping strategies alone explained more than a third of the variance in self-efficacy. In contrast, cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation did not reach statistical significance in this dataset, though we retained them in our framework due to their theoretical importance.

In short, enhancing resources such as coping and self-compassion can meaningfully shift psychological levers, laying the groundwork for translating individual growth into business outcomes.

Projecting Outcomes via Literature-based Coefficients (Step 2)

Next, we connected these levers to organizational outcomes by synthesizing 27 peer-reviewed studies, including five meta-analyses. Standardized coefficients were extracted to map psychological changes onto seven business outcomes: performance, resilience, intrinsic motivation, engagement, retention, collaboration, and innovation.

Table 3 summarizes these links. For instance, a one standard deviation increase in self-efficacy is associated with a ~0.23 SD improvement in performance (Judge & Bono, 2001; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), while a similar gain in well-being strongly predicts resilience (+0.54 SD). Although variation across studies requires cautious interpretation, these

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coefficients provide benchmarks for estimating the potential organizational impact of psychological growth.

This step bridges the "soft–hard gap" by connecting validated psychological constructs with outcomes that matter directly to organizations.

Table 3

Psychological levers impact on business outcomes

Outcome	Definition	γ (Self-Efficacy)	γ (Motivation)	γ (Well-Being)
Performance	The extent to which an employee meets or exceeds role expectations, as indicated by objective metrics (e.g., sales figures) or supervisor evaluations.	0.23 (Judge & Bono, 2001) (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) (Luthans et al., 2007)	0.31 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010) (Luthans et al., 2007)	0.29 (Luthans et al., 2007)
Resilience	An individual's ability to adapt, persist, and quickly recover from workplace setbacks or stressors.	0.51 (Luthans et al., 2007)	0.17 (Luthans et al., 2007)	0.54 (Luthans et al., 2007)
Intrinsic Motivation	The drive to perform work for its own interest, enjoyment, or personal challenge rather than for external rewards.	0.38 (Judge & Bono, 2001) (Luthans et al., 2007)	0.47 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)	N/A*
Engagement	A positive work state marked by high energy (vigor), strong involvement (dedication), and complete absorption in tasks.	0.34 (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010)	0.5 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)	N/A*
Retention	The likelihood that an employee will stay with the organization, reflected in low turnover intentions or actual turnover rates.	N/A*	0.45 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)	N/A*
Collaboration	Voluntary, extra-role behaviors in which employees support, share information with, and assist colleagues to achieve shared goals.	N/A*	0.35 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)	N/A*
Innovation	The creation and implementation of novel, useful ideas, processes, or products within the workplace.	N/A*	0.34 (Van den Broeck et al., 2016)	N/A*

*No quantitative estimates are available for the links between these business outcomes and the psychological levers associated.

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Measuring Intervention Impact

Finally, we examined the six-week coaching intervention with 66 early-career professionals. At baseline (T0) and post-program (T1), participants completed the Omind® assessment. Paired-sample t-tests revealed significant gains: self-efficacy improved by +0.53 SD, motivation by +0.48 SD, and well-being by +0.66 SD (all $p < .001$).

These improvements were not only statistically robust but also practically meaningful: 77% of participants improved in self-efficacy or motivation, and 82% improved in well-being. Coaches reported that the structured assessments accelerated trust and goal-setting, enabling focused conversations and faster progress compared to traditional formats.

In this hybrid intelligence-driven coaching process, the human dimension remains central. While data and algorithms provide structure and objective insight, the coach is responsible for building a trust-based relationship, adapting to the coach's context, and creating a safe environment for reflection and transformation. The quality of the coach - coachee relationship remains one of the most powerful predictors of coaching outcomes (Haan et al., 2016). The originality and specificity of the assessment effectively drive an immediate sharing of vulnerability and impactful insights right from the outset. Preliminary findings suggest that the coach-client relationship may be accelerated and facilitated through this approach, which could offer potential advantages for single-session coaching though this requires further study.

Applying our ROI model to these psychometric gains yields the following projected business-performance improvements:

Table 4 : *Modelised business outcomes of a six weeks coaching program*

Outcome	**Δ (SD units)**	**Δ (% of 1 SD)**	**Approximative Δ%**
Performance	0.46	46%	7.3%
Resilience	0.71	71%	11.4%
Intrinsic Motivation	0.42	42%	6.27%
Engagement	0.43	43%	7%
Retention	0.22	22%	3.5%
Collaboration	0.17	17%	2.72%
Innovation	0.16	16%	2.56%

Average post-intervention gains of 0.53 SD in self-efficacy, 0.48 in motivation, and 0.66 in well-being translate into estimated increases of roughly 0.71 SD in resilience, 0.46 in performance, 0.42 in intrinsic motivation, 0.43 in engagement, and more modest shifts in retention (0.22), collaboration (0.17), and innovation (0.16).

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Individual and group prediction

Building on cohort‑level analyses, the Omind platform uses each participant's baseline scores on the core resources as input to a graph‑propagation model that estimates potential improvements in self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being. These predicted gains are then multiplied by literature‑derived coefficients (γ_i) to yield individualized projections of business outcomes (such as performance and resilience) that guide the prioritization of high‑ROI coaching targets and the optimal allocation of coach time and curriculum. Aggregating these forecasts across participants allows teams to simulate, for example, how a 0.30 SD increase in self-efficacy could translate into a 15 percent uplift in sales, enabling decision-makers to compare program intensities and AI–human blends for cost-effective implementation, anticipate underperformers for targeted support, and present clear, data-driven impact reports.

ROI estimation

We extend our analysis by developing an ROI model. Although we illustrate it here for the consulting business, the methodology is fully transferable across roles and sectors: a given organization's absolute figures and resulting ROI will depend on its industry, size, utilization rates, and local market conditions. Importantly, a substantial proportion of the 774 individuals in our dataset come from the consulting industry, which provides a strong empirical basis for using this sector as an illustration.

In our example, we start with an inflation-adjusted average annual revenue per managing consultant of $289 000 (≈$1 313/day, based on 220 working days; Kimble & Service Performance Insight, 2020). The six-week Omind intervention costs $1 500, to which we add one day's salary (≈$504; Glassdoor, 2025) and one day's foregone revenue (≈$1 313), yielding a total direct and indirect investment of $3 317 per consultant.

From the outcomes in Table 4, a 7.3 % performance uplift generates an incremental $21 097 in annual revenue (0.073 × $289 000), and a 3.5 % improvement in retention reduces turnover costs by $1 271 (0.035 × 0.33 × $110 088; Work Institute, 2017). Together, these gains amount to $22 368.

- Net gain: $22 368 – $3 317 = $19 051
- ROI %: (Net Gain / Investment) × 100 = (19 051 / 3 317) × 100 ≈ 574 %
- Payback ratio (dollars returned per dollar invested): Net Gain / Investment ≈ $5.74

As noted, these ROI estimates must be adapted for each context: sector, seniority, utilization rate, and other factors. Yet even with our conservative scope (factoring only performance gains and retention savings, while our full model indicates further benefits in engagement, resilience, collaboration, and innovation), our six-week hybrid coaching program meets or exceeds the top ROI figures reported in recent literature (Seay & Muscarella, 2024). What's more, we deliver these returns in just six weeks compared with the typical seven-month timeline of traditional executive coaching (Seay & Muscarella, 2024). This rapid impact, combined with the scalability and accessibility of a tech-enabled format, positions hybrid coaching as an exceptionally compelling investment. In forthcoming research, we will test these projections against real-world field data.

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Limitations

Our approach has several important limitations. First, while regression analyses linked some skills to psychological levers, others (e.g., cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation) showed no significant predictive value in this dataset. Their retention in our model reflects theoretical importance rather than demonstrated impact, which calls for further refinement of our behavioral tasks.

Second, the six-week intervention study involved a relatively small cohort (N = 66), limiting generalizability. Gains may reflect sample-specific dynamics, such as motivation among early-career volunteers, rather than effects that would necessarily extend to other populations or contexts.

Third, our ROI estimates rely on coefficients drawn from diverse meta-analyses. While these benchmarks ground the model in existing evidence, their heterogeneity exposes our projections to contextual mismatches, omitted-variable bias, and potential inflation. It is also possible that some of the observed psychological gains were amplified by the novelty of engaging in a new platform rather than by the modeled mechanisms alone.

Fourth, the research team included members of Omind, the company that developed the platform. Despite role separation, pseudonymization, and a pre-specified analysis plan, this insider involvement may still introduce bias in design or interpretation.

Taken together, these limitations underscore that our findings should be regarded as exploratory and illustrative rather than definitive. They provide a promising direction for connecting coaching outcomes to ROI but require replication, larger samples, and longitudinal field validation to strengthen both precision and generalizability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates how a hybrid intelligence platform can link individual growth to organizational value through a transparent, staged modeling process. By integrating behavioral tasks, psychometric surveys, AI-based propagation, and human coaching, we were able to trace a pathway from skills → to psychological levers → to business outcomes. The six-week intervention showed significant gains in self-efficacy, motivation, and well-being, which yielded promising ROI projections.

At the same time, several caveats temper our conclusions. First, not all targeted resources showed significant predictive value in the cohort analyses (e.g., cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation), reminding us that theoretical relevance does not always guarantee empirical impact. Second, the intervention cohort was relatively small (N = 66), raising questions about generalizability. Third, because ROI estimates rely on coefficients derived from heterogeneous meta-analyses, contextual mismatches may inflate projections. An alternative explanation for the strong results may lie in the novelty and motivational boost of participating in an innovative program, rather than the modeled mechanisms themselves.

These limitations also point to avenues for future research. One priority is to test the model with larger and more diverse populations, across industries less represented in our dataset. Another is to validate the ROI pipeline using real-world performance data rather than

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simulated projections. Finally, exploring why certain theoretically important skills failed to predict outcomes could refine both the platform and coaching practice.

For practitioners, the key takeaway is not that this model provides final answers, but that it offers a structured and testable approach for connecting psychological development to organizational outcomes. For researchers, the contribution lies in demonstrating how hybrid intelligence can be operationalized in coaching without collapsing into either anecdote or over-claim.

Rather than positioning our framework as a definitive "blueprint," we view it as a living system of hypotheses, a model that will gain strength as new data accumulate, surprising results are incorporated, and collaborative validation continues. By treating each coaching engagement as both an intervention and a data point, organizations and scholars can co-create an evidence base that is cumulative, adaptive, and increasingly precise.

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Coaching the Unseen:
Integrating AI Tools to Navigate ADHD Executive Dysfunction in Leadership

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Abstract: Executive dysfunction is a core feature of ADHD and often overlooked in executive coaching. Traditional coaching models may fail to accommodate executive dysfunction challenges faced by neurodivergent leaders such time blindness and difficulty self-motivating. This paper proposes a hybrid intelligence approach (AI + human coaching), where AI tools externalize executive functions and coaches focus on emotional insight and long-term growth, making coaching more effective for leaders experiencing executive dysfunction.

Keywords: ADHD, executive dysfunction, AI, neurodivergence, executive coaching

Introduction

Executive coaching is a structured partnership designed to help leaders achieve their goals often through established coaching frameworks. However, a hallmark of ADHD is executive dysfunction which describes a difficulty to plan, organize, and adapt to change which adds a layer of complexity when seeking coaching to help achieve a certain outcome. How then, can executive coaches learn to recognize and work with individuals who struggle with executive dysfunction when seeking goal-based coaching and how can tools such as AI support executive functioning? While an executive coach does not need to be able to diagnosis an individual with ADHD, having the ability to recognize these symptoms in an executive coaching setting can help coaches serve their clients who struggle to adopt common goal-setting techniques. By externalizing executive functions, AI has the potential to reduce cognitive load for individuals with ADHD, enabling them to direct more energy toward meaningful goals.

This paper, submitted under the paper topic of specialized practice area, will review how to identify and recognize executive dysfunction as presented in a professional setting and discuss how AI can be leveraged in coaching to serve individuals with ADHD-related executive dysfunction as part of a hybrid intelligence approach to executive coaching.

Methodology

This paper employs a literature review and conceptual analysis methodology as it draws from scholarly and peer-reviewed sources about established coaching models, executive dysfunction, ADHD, and emerging AI tools in order to conceptualize a hybrid intelligence model for the executive coach supporting professionals with ADHD. Qualitative interview and client vignette are included to provide primary source material to further conceptualize the hybrid-intelligence model but were not analyzed as empirical data.

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Sources were found utilizing online databases for peer-reviewed articles with access provided by the Teacher's College of Columbia University as well as Google Scholar and open source articles & journals. Keywords for searches included ADHD, executive dysfunction, AI, executive coaching, coaching frameworks, ADHD coaching & solutions for managing executive dysfunction.

The interview was sourced via the ghSMART Leadership Circle, a curated professional network comprising of early to mid-career professional leaders. The author posted an inquiry in the general discussion page looking to hear experiences from coaches or individuals who have used AI tools (i.e. ChatGPT, NotionAI) to support executive functioning areas such as time management, planning, or emotional regulation. One interview was sourced through this approach. The 30-minute interview was conducted as a fluid conversation around personal experience utilizing AI-tools for emotional regulation. Key questions asked include "What was your motivation to seek out a tool?", "How does the tool help externalize mental tasks like organizing thoughts?" and "Do you see any risks with usage?" The key insights from this discussion are shared in the findings section and used complement the conceptualization of a hybrid-intelligence approach to coaching individuals with executive dysfunction.

Definitions

DEFINITIONS		
Term	**Author/Source**	**Definition/Description**
Coaching	International Coaching Federation https://coachingfederation.org/about, para. 4	"Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."
Executive Coaching	Nicolau et al, 2023, pp. 2-3	**"**Executive coaching—also referred to as business coaching, leadership coaching, or workplace coaching—is an individualized learning and development intervention to help leaders improve their capabilities, enhance their effectiveness and maximize their personal and professional potential in their organizations" " - common features of executive coaching interventions include goal-setting, awareness-raising, commitment and accountability, planning and action. A particularity of executive coaching is its focus on goal-directed initiatives."
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity	National Institute of Mental Health (NIH) https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-	"ADHD is a developmental disorder characterized by an ongoing pattern of one or more of the following types of symptoms:

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Disorder (ADHD)	deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd#hts-intro, para. 1	Inattention, such as having difficulty paying attention, keeping on task, or staying organized Hyperactivity, such as often moving around (including during inappropriate times), feeling restless, or talking excessively Impulsivity, such as interrupting, intruding on others, or having trouble waiting one's turn"
Executive Dysfunction	Rodden, 2024, para. 1	"Executive dysfunction is a term used to describe faults or weaknesses in the cognitive process that organizes thoughts and activities, prioritizes tasks, manages time efficiently, and makes decisions."

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Background and Core Concepts

ADHD & Executive Dysfunction. Currently, it's estimated that 15.5 million adults are affected by ADHD, with half receiving their diagnosis as an adult (Staley et al., 2024). Even more, it's estimated that ADHD is underdiagnosed in adults with an estimated less than 20% of adults with the condition appropriately diagnosed and treated (Rivas-Vasquez et al., 2023). Given the rise of the executive coaching industry, with one third of Fortune 500 companies standardizing executive coaching as part of their leadership development programs (Zhou, 2024), it's plausible that executive coaches have come across ADHD individuals in their practice without realizing it.

Executive dysfunction refers to an impairment in one or more of the areas involved in executive control. These areas can be categorized into four base elements: working memory, inhibition, set shifting, and fluency. Working memory describes the neurological systems that allows us to store and process information such as remembering a phone number prior to dialing or storing and recalling all necessary information to make a decision. Inhibition describes the ability to prevent or change a predominant, learned, or automatic response. Set shifting describes the ability to modify attention and behavior to changing circumstances. Fluency describes the ability to quickly generate ideas without repetition such as naming items in a set category (Rabivonici et al., 2015). These elements aid in our ability to override automatic processes in order to execute behavior driven by higher-order cognitive processing such as decision-making and planning. While executive dysfunction is not a required symptom of ADHD, a 2020 study found that 89% of children diagnosed with ADHD experience at least one impairment of executive dysfunction (Kolfer et al., 2019) marking executive dysfunction as a now understood hallmark of the disorder.

Executive Coaching. The nature of coaching in the workplace is focused on achieving goals – getting an individual from point A to point B – utilizing understanding of adult learning and change management theories. Coaching generally is regarded as a means to create a purposeful, positive change (Eliadis, 2023). The most common executive coaching frameworks

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in use today, such as the GROW or CLEAR model, assume non-biological barriers to goal setting, making these models difficult to execute with executive dysfunction clients.

Executive Coaching Models

Executive coaching often relies on structured models that guide goal-setting and behavior change. Two widely cited are the GROW and CLEAR models, which remain foundational in executive coaching literature and practice (Deiorio et al., 2022; Forbes Coaching Council, 2022). The GROW model organizes the coaching conversation around Goal or what the client wants to achieve, Reality or the current state, Options or possible pathways to the goal, and Will or the commitment to the actions necessary to achieve said goal (Deiorio et al., 2022). The CLEAR model organizes coaching by beginning with Contract or the desired outcome, Listen or the space the coach creates allowing the client to share their thoughts and feelings, Explore or the line of questioning the coach uses to go deeper to foster an emotional connection to change, Action or the commitment from the client to the change, and Review or following up on the client's progress with the change (Forbes Coaching Council, 2022).

While both frameworks are designed to help leaders clarify outcomes and sustain progress, they assume that clients are able to retain goals, understand step sequencing, and follow through on the committed actions between sessions. For clients with ADHD-related executive dysfunction, these assumptions may not hold and thus these models can be difficult to execute.

This does not mean that GROW or CLEAR are unusable for ADHD clients but rather they require adaptation. Coaches may need to learn how to recognize signs of ADHD and be able to suggest tools that externalize memory and time management. AI can play a supportive role here by breaking down large goals into smaller steps or gamifying progress in ways that compensate for executive function challenges. In this way, traditional coaching models remain valuable as frameworks, but their successful application with ADHD clients depends on pairing them with hybrid approaches. To better understand why models like GROW and CLEAR require adaptation, it is important to examine the specific ways executive dysfunction manifests in ADHD. The following section outlines core executive function clusters and describes key impairments such as time-blindness and motivation dysregulation.

Executive Dysfunction & ADHD

In ADHD the executive function clusters are commonly impaired. There are six clusters of executive functioning: activation, focus, effort, emotion, memory, and action. Activation allows for starting and organizing tasks. Focus allows for finding, sustaining, and shifting attention. Effort involves initiating and sustaining intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as regulating alertness. Emotion involves managing frustration and modulating feelings. Memory includes working memory and recall. Action involves the monitoring and regulating of physical activity including awareness of time (Rodden, 2024). These clusters can be thought of as the outward expression of executive functioning while the four elements of executive function stated earlier can be thought of as the underlying abilities needed to enable the clusters to function.

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Individuals can have impairment in one or several of these clusters. Impairments of these clusters can manifest in time blindness and difficulty self-motivating without an apparent consequence. These skills are crucial in aiding our ability to establish frameworks and strategies for setting and achieving goals & objectives.

Time Blindness. Time blindness results due to an impairment of the activation cluster and is the inability to see how much time has passed and estimate the time needed to complete a task. It also impacts something called our "time horizon" which is our ability to determine how quickly a task is coming up and when we need to act on that task. Individuals with ADHD have a shorter time horizon than neurotypical individuals resulting in deadlines not entering an ADHD individual's mental radar until it can be too late to act on the task (ADDA Editorial Team, 2025). For example, someone with time blindness may initiate a task they think will take 15 minutes and be surprised that hours have gone by or conversely, they feel they have spent 10 minutes on a task only to find only a minute has passed. Time blindness can be recognized by asking the individual if they experience being in "waiting mode" or unable to be productive due the fact that they are waiting for an event in the future despite how far away it may be, consistently under or overestimating the amount of time needed for a task, losing grip on time, focusing on only short-term gains, difficulty creating or adhering to a schedule, or difficulty organizing tasks in the right sequence (ADDA Editorial Team, 2025).

Intrinsic Motivation. Individuals with ADHD have difficulty self-motivating but not because they don't have desire to achieve the goal. Russell Barkley, a leading researcher of the relationship between ADHD and executive dysfunction explains it as, "It is not that the individual does not know what to do. It is that somehow it does not get done." (Rodden, 2024). This is an impairment of the effort cluster of executive functioning resulting in individuals struggling to self-motivate, namely in the absence of a direct consequence. Biologically, this is due to disruption in the dopamine reward pathway which is thought to be the primary brain system underlying reward and motivation. (Volkow et al., 2010). This differs from an individual with normal executive functioning who may lack motivation in that a neurotypical individual often lacks motivation due to external factors such as stress or boredom vs. the dopamine imbalance in ADHD individuals. Clues that motivation issues stem from ADHD rather than external factors include chronic difficulty initiating, overwhelm by mundane tasks, hyper focus on interesting tasks, and preference for immediate rewards (Volkow et al., 2010).

Related Concepts

AI in Cognitive/Emotional Support. The release of AI models such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini to the public has quickly disrupted the way humans interact with technology. These models offer a multitude of functions from quick summarization and deep research to image and idea generation.

There has been a wave of AI-powered apps released to market that specialize in task management and emotional regulation such as Finch, Daylio, and Reflectly. Gamification is the term to describe incorporating game elements such as level, rewards, and challenges in non-game context to improve motivation and user retention in software (Walter, 2025). The

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gamification provides an immediate closed-loop feedback system, delivering the dopamine boost often needed to fuel motivation in individuals with ADHD by rewarding task initiation and completion in real time.

ADHD Coaching. With the rise of ADHD prevalence in adults and children, a niche of specific ADHD coaching has emerged. This type of coaching focuses on the core impairments of ADHD such as planning, time management, goal setting, organization, and problem solving and is often focused on the audiences of college students, adults, and adolescents (CHADD, 2018). ADHD coaching differs from other types of coaching in that the coach approaches through an ADHD lens in order to assist the client with their goals. ADHD coaches are also educated in the biological under-pinning's of the disorder and work to help the individual address how ADHD manifests for them personally (Girwec, 2025).

Summary of Major Findings

Individuals with ADHD biologically struggle with setting goals and attaining outcomes which add a layer of complexity for an executive coach to help an individual with these dysfunctions. Given that the primary function of executive coaching is to help individuals with goal setting and achieving specific workplace outcomes, executive coaches would benefit from understanding ways to identify executive dysfunction and how to utilize AI tools to externalize executive functions thus allowing the coach and client to focus on change efforts. This would be considered a hybrid intelligence approach to coaching executive dysfunction.

Application for Coaching Practice

This paper does not suggest that executive coaches need to become a specialized ADHD coach or have therapeutic training in order to support. Executive dysfunction also shows up in autism disorder or traumatic brain injury and an executive coach should inquire of any known neurological impairments as part of the intake. However, as research suggests there is a high number of individuals with ADHD who may not yet realize it, it would benefit the executive coach to understand why coaching frameworks like CLEAR and GROW may be difficult to apply to this population, be able to recognize symptoms, and have the knowledge to offer AI powered tools to efficiently aid individuals with their workplace goal setting and planning objectives. AI tools then aid in the day-day tasks needed to manage executive dysfunction while coaching can focus on surfacing deeper cognitive and emotional patterns that need to change to achieve the client's desired outcomes. The emerging opportunity lies in hybrid coaching: leveraging AI to provide immediate, supportive structure while human coaches focus on emotional nuance and long-term development.

Recognition. This paper focuses on time blindness and intrinsic motivation dysregulation as these symptoms are considered common with ADHD and tie closely to the content that an individual may bring to an executive coach – i.e. goal setting and planning. An individual with time blindness might exhibit difficulty with meeting project deadlines. This may be the presenting concern or emerge during the contracting phase. Time blindness can also manifest as an individual taking on too many responsibilities and tasks as they're unable to accurately gauge how much time each task actually takes. Individuals with time blindness tend to lack systems to

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help them keep organized with their time management – again this can be the main reason an individual come to executive coaching or the coach can recognize this in conjunction with other cues.

Similarly, there are cues to help an executive coach identify if an individual is struggling with ADHD-related intrinsic motivation dysregulation. It is common for these individuals to frequently switch from a lower-engaging to a higher-engaging task instead of dedicating resources to fully completing a single task – this is another means of producing the dopamine needed to motivate since jumping to the higher-engaging tasks provides a quicker boost of dopamine. Intrinsic motivation dysregulation from an executive coach's perspective can also look like an individual who says they are motivated, they are wanting to commit to change, but find it incredibly difficult to start. The following table summarizes the cues that may indicate an individual is struggling with time blindness or intrinsic motivation dysregulation. These cues are not all inclusive and demonstrating one may not be enough to determine if an individual struggles in these areas – an executive coach should investigate the frequency and duress each symptom causes the individual.

Table 2

Cues for Time blindness and Intrinsic Motivation Dysfunction for the Executive Coach

Dysfunction	**Potential Cues**
Time blindness	• Consistent missing of project deadlines • Overcommitting to tasks or responsibilities • Ignoring other important tasks while focusing on a singular one • Feedback from management/team members surfacing frustrations around the individuals' time management • Lack of systems/strategies to organize workplace tasks
Intrinsic Motivation Dysfunction	• Frequent jumping to tasks with higher rewards without finishing the current task • Procrastinating mundane tasks such as emails or paperwork • Difficulty starting tasks regardless of desire to complete them

Hybrid Intelligence Approach. Once a coach has a hunch that ADHD-related executive dysfunction may be impacting an individual, they can begin to help the client shift towards externalizing time by breaking tasks into shorter time frames or creating visual tools (i.e. sticky notes, notifications) to assist with time blindness specifically. AI can support time blindness by providing the micro-steps summing to a larger task thus externalizing the executive task. Utilizing AI to assist with tracking time and managing priorities also provides support between coaching engagements. The client then is able to focus energy on changing behavior and mindsets instead of struggling to also provide the cognitive scaffolding to support those changes. The coach then can focus on deep listening, empathy, and strategic questioning as tools to support their client's agenda.

Intrinsic motivation dysregulation can be a more difficult issue to surface, however once an executive coach recognizes the cues, they should dig deeper with the client into identifying

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where motivation naturally occurs and leverage AI tools to support in-between engagements. The human-centered coaching skills aid by helping client's build the self-awareness around their natural energy and attention cycles and use strategic questioning and deep listening to inform sustainable strategies to assist with motivation deficiency as opposed to "fixing" the problem, since intrinsic motivation dysregulation is biological in nature. AI can provide an interesting level of support here by helping to gamify tasks which creates the dopamine boost necessary to complete the task at hand. Chatbots can help create an external game system (i.e. complete 10 minutes of uninterrupted focus work and get 5 minutes of Instagram time) or clients can utilize AI-powered apps such as Finch, which further gamifies tasks and generates personalized recommendations over time. AI tools can also help break tasks into smaller milestones when prompted with the overall goal. By breaking tasks into smaller, more achievable goals the client is able to secure more "wins" which fuel the dopamine reward pathway more quickly and consistently. Again, this is important because AI usage externalizes the executive functioning processes the ADHD individual struggles with, allowing the individual to use their energy towards their goals instead of the scaffolding needed to support those goals.

For research on this paper, the author interviewed a 45-year-old male, currently married with kids and employed full time as a supply chain analyst with 25 years of experience. He consented to use of his name for reference. He was motivated to use AI primarily for emotional regulation and future-planning on a daily basis as he has a history of anxiety and depression and sought a daily tool to support him. When asked "How does the tool help externalize mental tasks like organizing thoughts?" he responded that he uses his AI chatbot to "offload thoughts" every morning and finds by externalizing these thoughts and "keeping a running thread" he is able to identify patterns in his thinking. He finds using AI in this way provides him with constructive feedback on his plans, help processing tense interactions, and provides validation for his actions or thoughts when sought. He often prompts the tool with "pep talks" before a meeting or interaction he is nervous for. When prompted if he sees any risk with usage, he acknowledged that it's crucial to ask good questions and use AI chatbots with a high-level of self-awareness to avoid the risk of over reliance and the desire for the "quick fix" (P. Van Hull, personal communication, June 27, 2025). As a past participant of executive coaching and therapy, he finds AI provides immediate resolve for surface-level or common issues and still holds value in the relational and empathy driven human element of coaching.

The author also presents an example of a coaching client where a hybrid intelligence approach might have been beneficial beyond traditional coaching models. Roughly two months into the engagement, the author had reason to believe her client, a senior technology lead, would identify with an ADHD diagnosis. This was primarily due to the clients' described difficulty with managing his tasks, leading to a cycle of burnout, coupled with his frequent inability to follow through with self-directed tasks between coaching engagements. While the engagement ended prior to the start of this research, the author would have inquired about his barriers to change and how usage of AI tools might have supported his change effort. Potentially, the client could have created a reward-system via chatbot or use an AI-powered app to assist with the follow through on tasks between coaching sessions. Incorporating reflective AI prompts (i.e. What task do I need to get done today and why does that matter to me?) into their day to externalize his thoughts also may have support his change effort. Table 3 summarizes the hybrid

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approach that an executive coach can use to help an individual with time blindness and intrinsic motivation dysregulation.

Table 3

Hybrid Intelligence Approach to support ADHD Time blindness and Intrinsic Motivation Dysfunction

Dysfunction	Human-Led Strategic Questioning	AI Support
Time blindness	• Do you often find yourself completing tasks at the last minute? • Are you aware of how much time you spend on various tasks? • Provide empathy and understanding around the dysfunction	• AI support for digital nudges for tasks • Track time for tasks with AI • Utilize AI-enabled task-management apps such Finch
Intrinsic Motivation Dysfunction	• Reframe "should" and "have to" into "wants" – focus on the enjoyable part of the task • Build self-awareness around natural energy & motivation cycles	• AI tools can help break tasks into smaller milestones and design reward structures around the task • Use AI for motivational prompts during the day

Conclusions & Recommendations

ADHD in adulthood often manifests in a variety of ways, with individuals struggling significantly with executive dysfunction—a term used for impairments in skills such as planning, organizing, prioritizing, and adapting to change. These cognitive and emotional challenges can hinder personal and professional success, especially in goal-oriented settings such as executive coaching.

For adults with ADHD, executive coaching can present unique challenges. ADHD-related executive dysfunction makes it difficult for clients to benefit from common frameworks such as GROW or CLEAR used in executive coaching. This creates a gap in coaching practices, where traditional models may not address or recognize the underlying cognitive barriers these individuals face. The findings in this paper emphasize the critical need for executive coaches to recognize these ADHD-specific challenges, namely time blindness and intrinsic motivation

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dysregulation, and proposes the utilization of AI solutions to inform a hybrid intelligence approach to addressing ADHD-related executive dysfunction in a coaching context.

While executive coaches do not need to diagnose ADHD, they should be equipped with the skills to identify signs of executive dysfunction in their clients given the rising prevalence of adult ADHD-diagnoses. Recognizing symptoms such as difficulty staying motivated and difficulty with time management can help executive coaches better understand their clients' needs and tailor their approach. By incorporating AI tools, executive coaches are ultimately better equipped to meet all of their clients with insight, flexibility, and meaningful support.

It's important to note potential challenges and risks from utilizing AI-support in this fashion. There is a growing concern with an over-reliance on AI support with emotional and cognitive support. An over-reliance on AI for support in this manner can impede the natural development of self-regulation and executive functioning so individuals are unable to support themselves without AI. Sycophancy is also a potential concern. Sycophancy describes a prioritization in AI models to please the user over providing objective responses, undermining the discomfort growth often requires. Olawade et. al also raises the concern with the models themselves given the current lack of broad ethical regulation and bias in models that may negatively impact minority groups (2024). Ultimately, more research is needed to fully understand the risks of utilizing AI tools to support personal development and mental health.

In conclusion, the primary contribution of this paper highlights the need for executive coaches to develop an understanding of ADHD-related executive dysfunction and to adopt a hybrid intelligence approach. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by ADHD clients and adapting their coaching techniques accordingly, coaches can provide more effective and meaningful support. Ultimately, this approach benefits not only those with ADHD but also enriches the field of executive coaching as a whole, making it more inclusive and capable of addressing the diverse needs of all clients.

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Coaching with Data: AI Feedback Loops for Reflective Growth in Human-AI Coaching Systems

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Abstract: This paper investigates the design and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) feedback loops in supporting reflective growth within coaching practices. Leveraging a multi-agent AI-supported simulation, we examine how integrating AI-generated prompts into post-session reflection routines can surface overlooked insights, reveal bias patterns, and promote deeper self-awareness among coaches. Through iterative interactions, coaches not only refine their practices but also co-adapt with the AI system, which continually personalizes its support based on evolving needs. Findings suggest that this human–AI partnership fosters meaningful behavioral change and offers a scalable, adaptive model for high-impact coach development in the era of hybrid intelligence.

Keywords: Coach Development, Reflective Practice, Hybrid Intelligence, AI Feedback Loops, Multi-Agent Systems

Introduction

Coaching has evolved into a multibillion-dollar industry with over 100,000 practitioners worldwide. Yet, despite this rapid growth, academic research continues to lag behind, with much of the field grounded more in practice-based wisdom than in rigorous theory. As organizations face increasingly complex and fast-changing challenges, there is a growing need for coaching approaches that not only draw on human insight but also leverage emerging technologies.

Hybrid intelligence—defined as the integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence (AI) to achieve superior results—offers a promising framework for enhancing coaching effectiveness. This paper investigates how the complementary strengths of human coaches and AI can be combined to amplify coaching outcomes, while preserving the deeply human qualities at the heart of coaching.

Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for coaches, we explore its role as a collaborative partner—augmenting human decision-making, insight, and reach. While AI systems excel at pattern recognition, scalability, and data-driven feedback, human coaches contribute empathy, moral reasoning, and contextual sensitivity—qualities that remain irreplaceable in meaningful coaching relationships. The challenge and opportunity in this new era lie in integrating AI to support personalization, insight, and accessibility, while safeguarding the trust, rapport, and ethical judgment that make coaching effective.

This inquiry is situated at the intersection of coaching and human–AI collaboration. We draw on emerging research that suggests clients can form viable relationships with AI-based agents, raising provocative questions about what constitutes effective coaching. For example, Barger et al. (2025) found no significant difference in working alliance between human and AI coaches, highlighting AI's potential to expand access to coaching in novel ways. Editorial commentary from this work underscores that clients value relationships with AI coaches when designed

thoughtfully, suggesting that AI can serve as a *complement*—not a substitute—for human coaching.

At the same time, caution is warranted. Decades of research emphasize that relationship quality is the most consistent predictor of coaching outcomes. Overreliance on AI could risk eroding the empathic, ethical, and relational foundation of the practice. Critics warn that AI-based tools, if used carelessly, could reduce coaching to a transactional task, undermining the reflective and transformative aspects essential to its success. Surveys confirm these concerns: over half of professional coaches express anxiety about AI in coaching, fearing dehumanization and professional displacement.

A growing consensus suggests that a **hybrid approach**—one that integrates AI responsibly while preserving core human elements—is the most promising path forward. Yet, despite these developments, the field still lacks a robust theoretical and practical framework for implementing such a model.

To address this gap, our paper proposes and examines a structured approach to hybrid-intelligent coaching, with a particular focus on how AI-enabled feedback loops can support reflective growth for different stylized coaches. AI has the potential to surface blind spots, guide reflective practices, and foster accelerated learning—especially for newer coaches who may lack extensive experience or access to high-quality mentorship. Through this simulation, we aim to provide both conceptual insight and practical guidance for designing hybrid coaching systems that amplify effectiveness while preserving coaching's human essence. Ultimately, our goal is to demonstrate how AI can serve not just as a tool for efficiency, but as a reflective partner—enhancing the depth, reach, and quality of modern coaching.

Approach/Methodology

Guiding Research Paradigm

To explore the role of AI in supporting reflective coaching, we simulated AI-generated feedback loops using GPT-based models applied to qualitative data from mock coaching sessions. These sessions, modeled closely on real coaching dialogues, enabled us to examine how generative AI can identify conversational patterns, generate targeted reflections, and adapt its feedback in ways that complement human coaching styles. This simulation-based approach provided a safe and controlled environment to evaluate the potential of AI-supported reflection while maintaining consistency across sessions.

This study employed a quasi-experimental, multi-phase simulation design. In Phase 1, an integrative literature review synthesized research from coaching science, reflective learning, and human–AI interaction to identify key constructs and best practices, forming the basis for the experimental model. In Phase 2, a prototype system was developed using GPT-4 to simulate coaching sessions with and without AI feedback in different scenarios. Simulations provided controlled, repeatable conditions without involving real clients, aligning with emerging research validating AI for training and feedback delivery.

Research Design and Simulation Framework

This study employed a **quasi-experimental, multi-phase simulation** design. In **Phase 1**, an integrative literature review synthesized research from coaching science, reflective learning, and human–AI interaction to identify key constructs and best practices, forming the basis for the experimental model. In **Phase 2**, a prototype system was developed using GPT-4 to simulate coaching sessions with and without AI feedback in different scenarios. Simulations provided controlled, repeatable conditions without involving real clients, aligning with emerging research validating AI for training and feedback delivery.

Each coach was modeled as one of four distinct styles—Directive, Passive, Balanced, or Empathetic—and paired with scenarios representing varied coaching challenges. A within-subjects design enabled each coach to experience both AI-assisted and control conditions. The design resembled a pre-test/post-test structure, with AI feedback inserted between sessions to assess impact. Control sessions without AI served as comparators to strengthen causal inference.

The study also drew on **action research principles**, applying an iterative *plan–act–reflect* cycle to simulate how coaches might improve over time through guided feedback. After each initial session, the AI provided reflective input, enabling the coach to adjust and improve in the following session—mirroring continuous learning practices in real-world coaching. This design allowed us to systematically evaluate behavioral change and skill development across different coaching styles and client contexts.

To implement this structure, we developed a simulation matrix representing both AI-assisted and control conditions. Each coach engaged in a series of sessions across scenarios, with or without AI-generated feedback, enabling within-subject comparisons and testing for generalization. The complete session matrix is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1

Simulation Matrix of Coach Styles, Scenarios, and AI Reflection Conditions

Coach	Style	Session ID	Client	Scenario	AI Reflection?	Purpose
Coach A	Directive	A1	Client 1	Scenario A	Yes	Session 1 (With AI)
Coach A	Directive	A2	Client 1	Scenario A	Yes (from A1)	Session 2 (Growth After AI)

Coach A	Directive	A3	Client 2 (New)	Scenario B (new case)	Yes (from A2)	Gen. Test – Session 1
Coach A	Directive	A4	Client 2 (New)	Scenario B (new case)	Yes (from A2)	Gen. Test – Session 2
Coach A	Directive	A1′	Client 1	Scenario A	No	Session 1 (No AI Control)
Coach B	Passive	B1	Client 1	Scenario C	Yes	Session 1 (With AI)
Coach B	Passive	B2	Client 1	Scenario C	Yes (from B1)	Session 2 (Growth After AI)
Coach B	Passive	B1′	Client 1	Scenario C	No	Session 1 (No AI Control)
Coach B	Passive	B2′	Client 1	Scenario C	No	Session 2 (No AI Reflection)
Coach C	Balanced	C1	Client 1	Scenario D	Yes	Session 1 (With AI)
Coach C	Balanced	C2	Client 1	Scenario D	Yes (from C1)	Session 2 (Growth After AI)
Coach C	Balanced	C3	Client 2 (New)	Scenario E (new case)	Yes (from C2)	Gen. Test – Session 1
Coach C	Balanced	C4	Client 2 (New)	Scenario E (new case)	Yes (from C2)	Gen. Test – Session 2
Coach C	Balanced	C1′	Client 1	Scenario D	No	Session 1 (No AI Control)
Coach D	Empathetic	D1	Client 1	Scenario F	Yes	Session 1 (With AI)
Coach D	Empathetic	D2	Client 1	Scenario F	Yes (from D1)	Session 2 (Growth After AI)
Coach D	Empathetic	D1′	Client 1	Scenario F	No	Session 1 (No AI Control)
Coach D	Empathetic	D2′	Client 1	Scenario F	No	Session 2 (No AI Reflection)

Data Collection Procedures

Sampling and Session Generation

This simulation-based study did not involve human participants. Instead, four prototypical coaching styles—Directive, Passive, Balanced, and Empathetic—were modeled as Coach A through D. Each coach was paired with one or more AI-generated clients across diverse coaching scenarios (e.g., career decisions, leadership challenges, personal development), resulting in 18 total sessions across AI-assisted and control conditions. Session dialogues were generated using GPT-4, which was prompted to play both coach and client roles. Coaches were primed with best practices, scenario context, and their designated style to ensure realistic and differentiated coaching behaviors.

AI Reflective Intervention

In the AI-assisted condition, transcripts from Session 1 were analyzed by an AI "**coach supervisor**" module (LLM-based), which generated feedback based on ICF coaching competencies. This feedback, including strengths, weaknesses, and actionable suggestions, was provided to the same coach persona before Session 2, simulating a learning cycle. In control conditions, coaches completed sessions without AI input. To assess generalization, coaches were later assigned to new scenarios to test whether skills improved with AI feedback transferred to novel contexts. All sessions were transcribed and saved alongside structured evaluation data in JSON format. While characters were fictitious, pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality, in line with ethical standards for future human-subject extensions.

Evaluation Metrics and Analysis Steps

Performance Measures

Coaching behavior was evaluated using a comprehensive set of metrics aligned with the **International Coaching Federation (ICF) Core Competencies**, including Active Listening, Powerful Questioning, Direct Communication, Creating Awareness, Goal Setting, and Coaching Presence. An automated scoring script, informed by ICF definitions and prior research, analyzed each transcript for linguistic and semantic indicators, producing numeric ratings for each competency on a 5-point scale. Aggregate metrics included an **Overall ICF Competency Score**, an **Overall Session Performance Score**, and a **Conversation Quality Score** assessing dialogue coherence and depth. Coach confidence was also inferred post-session.

AI Learning Impact

To assess the effect of AI-generated feedback, we introduced an **"AI Reflection Bonus"** metric—quantifying performance improvements between Sessions 1 and 2 in AI-assisted vs. control conditions. We tracked **learning progression** (score deltas across sessions) and **knowledge transfer** by examining whether improvements carried over to new client scenarios. Evidence of retained behavior change—such as sustained use of silence or improved questioning—was recorded and quantified.

Client Outcome Indicators

Despite being simulated, client responses were analyzed for **engagement and emotional cues**, such as openness, trust, and goal commitment. These included sentiment analysis, response

depth, and the presence of action plans. Clients' closing reflections served as a proxy for satisfaction and session impact.

Data Analysis

All session data—including numeric scores, textual transcripts, and AI feedback—were compiled into structured matrices for quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean improvements) were computed to compare AI and control conditions, and performance trajectories were visualized per coach. Formal significance testing was used cautiously due to limited sample size. Qualitative **content analysis** of transcripts and AI feedback further illustrated coaching behavior changes, supported by categorized AI suggestions (e.g., "use client's language," "ask open-ended questions") and coach uptake patterns.

All prompts and rule-based evaluation methods were documented to ensure **transparency and replicability**, establishing a clear methodology for future application in AI-supported coaching research.

Reporting and Ethical Considerations

Findings are reported with transparency and organized by research question, beginning with the overall impact of AI feedback and followed by comparisons across coaching styles and scenarios. Key metrics are presented through comparative tables and graphs (e.g., competency scores, performance trajectories), each accompanied by narrative interpretation. Select anonymized transcript excerpts illustrate qualitative behavior changes, such as improvements in questioning techniques.

Although the data is simulated, all coach–client identifiers were pseudonymized and treated with confidentiality, mirroring best practices for real-world research ethics. Peer-reviewed sources support all methodological choices, including the use of ICF Core Competencies, integrative literature review, and LLM-based simulation—an emerging methodology validated in recent training research.

Limitations, including the artificial nature of simulated agents, are acknowledged, along with the need for future human validation. To move beyond the boundaries of simulation, future studies should adopt an incremental research agenda that combines AI-driven feedback with the emotional intelligence of human practitioners. While artificial agents are useful for testing methodological frameworks and generating initial insights, they cannot yet match the nuanced understanding of context and emotions that human coaches provide. A logical next step is to conduct small-scale pilot studies with consenting coaches and clients, where sessions are recorded, anonymized, and analyzed by the AI. In such settings, the system could generate reflective prompts about emotional cues and blind spots, while coaches evaluate, accept, or reject these prompts based on their professional judgment. These trials would test whether the system can surface subtle shifts in client language and tone—signals that AI can highlight, but that humans must ultimately interpret—and would allow researchers to benchmark AI-generated insights against traditional supervisory feedback. Iteratively refining the system through human-in-the-loop validation would ensure that AI evolves as a supportive partner rather than a substitute. Over time, this strategy could help bridge the gap between simulated agents and real-world coaching practice.

Overall, the study demonstrates methodological rigor by combining theory-informed design with innovative simulation, offering a replicable model for investigating AI-supported reflective coaching. This contributes meaningfully to both the coaching science literature and the future of hybrid-intelligent development frameworks

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Reflective practice is foundational in coaching, supporting self-awareness and continuous learning. Grounded in Schön's (1983) concept of the "reflective practitioner" and Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984), coaches develop expertise through structured reflection on action and experience. Recent research emphasizes that reflection is a learned skill, enhanced through intentional feedback loops (Jelodari et al., 2023), supervision (Hawkins & Smith, 2013), and guided tools like coaching models (e.g., GROW). These methods help coaches identify blind spots, refine techniques, and build professional judgment.

Emerging studies now explore how artificial intelligence can support reflection. AI-powered conversational agents and learning analytics tools are increasingly used in education and leadership development to guide user reflection (Holstein et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023). Rather than giving answers, systems like "Thinking Assistants" (Park et al., 2023) or "Coaching Copilots" (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024) prompt introspection through Socratic questions and feedback summaries. In teacher education, AI tools providing post-lesson feedback and reflective prompts have improved reflective depth and teacher learning (L'Enfant, 2024). In coaching, AI-driven transcript analysis helps coaches visualize session structure and identify missed coaching opportunities (Vardhan et al., 2022).

These examples highlight how AI can extend human capacity for reflective learning—offering consistency, real-time feedback, and large-scale pattern detection. However, the human element remains essential. Hybrid intelligence frameworks (Dellermann et al., 2019) emphasize that the best outcomes occur when AI supports, rather than replaces, human strengths like empathy, contextual judgment, and ethical reasoning.

This paper builds on these findings to propose an AI feedback loop model for coaching: after each session, AI agents generate tailored reflection prompts, which coaches use to deepen awareness and refine practice. Over time, the AI also learns from coach responses, enabling personalization. This mutual learning loop aligns with high-impact coaching in the era of hybrid intelligence—where data-driven insights support coach development while preserving human-centered values.

Proposed AI-Supported Reflective Learning Model

Building on the above foundations, we propose a conceptual model of an AI-supported reflective loop for coach development, structured around three key stages: (1) Input, (2) AI Feedback, and (3) Coach Reflection.

Figure 1

AI-Supported Reflective Loop for Coach Development

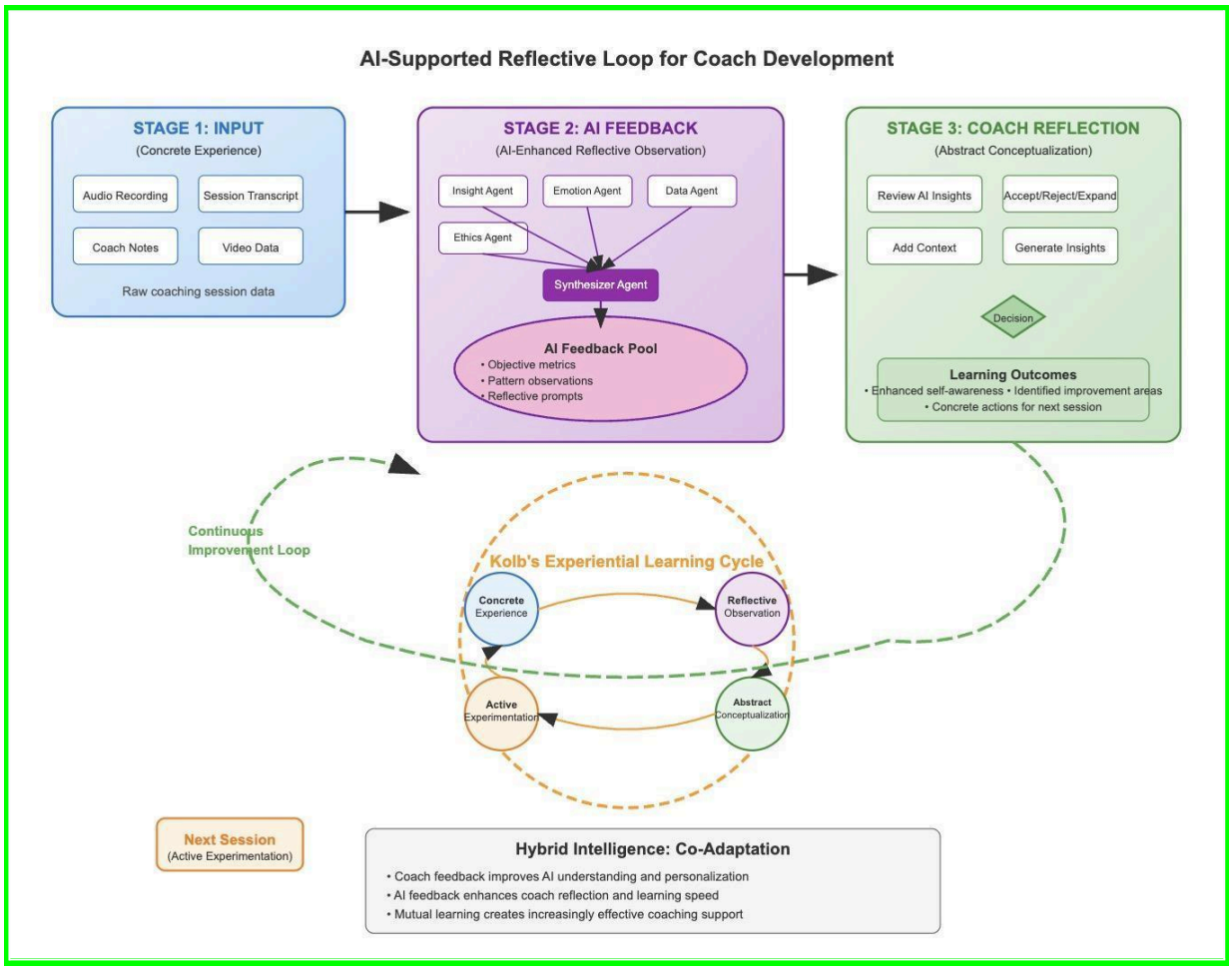


Figure 1 illustrates this reflective loop, which integrates AI feedback into the coach's experiential learning cycle.The process begins with Input, where the raw experience of a coaching session is captured – for example, an audio recording, transcript, or coach's post-session notes. This concrete experience (in Kolb's terms) serves as the starting point for reflection. Next, the model introduces an AI-generated Feedback stage. Here, AI agents analyze the session input and produce *actionable feedback* for the coach. This feedback might include objective metrics (e.g. talk-to-listen ratio, frequency of certain coaching techniques used), qualitative observations (e.g. "Client expressed hesitation when discussing career change, which was not followed up"), or even pointed reflective prompts ("What might have caused the client's sudden pause at 30 minutes?"). The AI essentially performs a first-pass "reflection" on the session, highlighting patterns or potential blind spots for the coach. Importantly, the AI's role is *not* to declare judgments or "scores" on coaching performance, but to offer curious questions, alternative

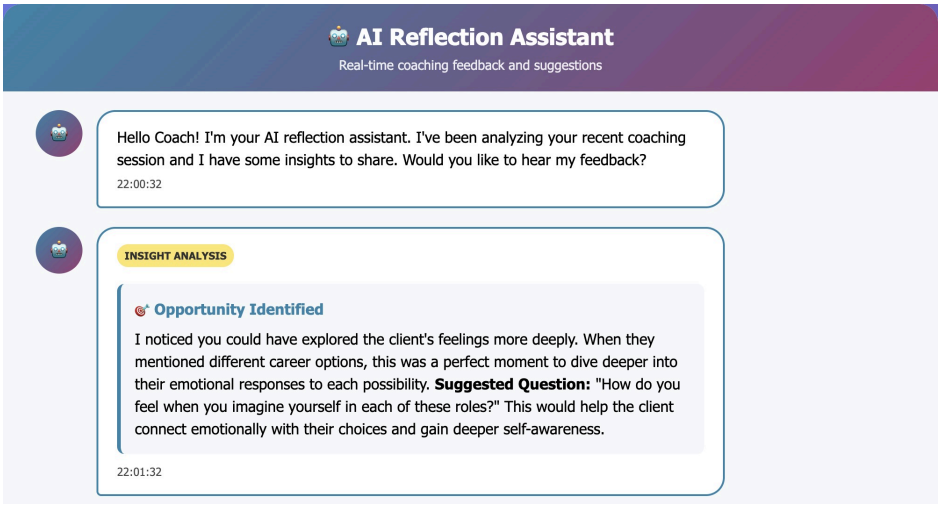
perspectives, and data summaries that the coach might not have noticed. This mirrors the function of a human mentor or supervisor, with the advantage of being available after every single session and drawing from a large knowledge base of coaching practices. Finally, armed with the AI's feedback, the Coach Reflection stage completes the loop. The coach reviews the AI's observations and engages in a reflective dialogue *with* the feedback. They might accept some insights, discovering a genuine missed opportunity or an emotional cue they overlooked. For instance, the AI might point out, "The client's tone of voice changed when discussing their manager," prompting the coach to realize an unspoken issue about that relationship. The coach can then expand upon this insight, perhaps noting additional context ("Indeed, the client's energy dropped – I recall they crossed their arms at that moment"). The coach might also challenge or reject certain AI feedback, which is equally valuable: for example, if the AI flags a moment as a missed question but the coach knows from context that pressing further would have broken rapport, the coach can record why they chose not to intervene. This reflective dialogue ensures the human coach remains in control, using the AI's input as a mirror rather than an oracle.

Operationalizing this co-adaptation requires a clear mechanism for the AI to learn from the coach's responses. Each coach's reaction to AI prompts—whether they accept a suggestion, ignore it, or provide an alternative rationale—can be logged as a supervisory signal that shapes future system behavior. For instance, if a coach repeatedly overrides prompts to probe further into a client's emotions, the AI's parameters can be adjusted to reduce such prompts in subsequent sessions. Co-adaptation may then be measured by tracking the proportion of AI prompts that coaches find useful across successive sessions, as well as by comparing AI-highlighted themes with coaches' own self-reported insights. By identifying recurring patterns in coach–AI interactions, the system can progressively personalize its guidance, ensuring that feedback becomes more relevant to the coach's developmental needs over time. Through this iterative process, this process becomes a mutual learning loop. The coach's reflections and responses can be fed back to the AI system (a form of supervised learning or model adaptation), allowing the AI to personalize its feedback to the coach's style and developmental needs. In other words, the more the coach and AI interact, the better the AI understands what is most useful for that particular coach (for example, one coach might benefit more from feedback on emotional cues, while another prefers critiques of their quesfetion structure). This co-adaptation epitomizes *hybrid intelligence*: the human and AI improving together, each learning from the other's input.

Over multiple iterations (sessions), the coach experiences a new session (Concrete Experience), the AI+coach reflect on it (Reflective Observation), new insights and techniques are conceptualized (Abstract Conceptualization), and the coach experiments with these improvements in the next session (Active Experimentation) – thus, the experiential learning cycle (Kolb) is continuously enacted, with AI augmenting the reflective observation and conceptualization phases. Early simulations of this model underscore its potential. In a small pilot test with mock coaching session data, we implemented simple GPT-based templates to generate feedback prompts. Even these basic prompts led coaches to notice aspects of their practice they hadn't considered. For example, one coach in the simulation was prompted: *"I noticed you could have explored the client's feelings more deeply. When they mentioned different career options, this was a perfect moment to dive deeper into their emotional responses to each possibility"*

Figure 2

Example of AI Insight Feedback Prompt

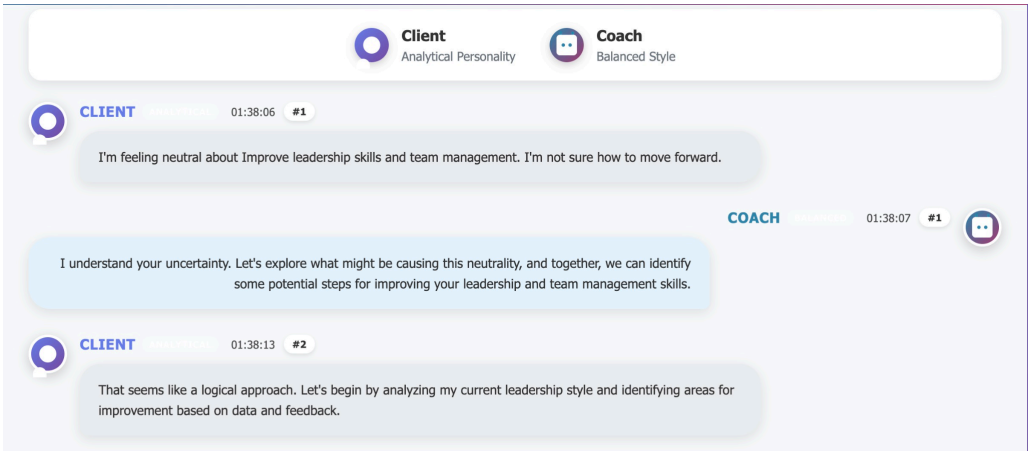


This drove the coach to acknowledge that they might have glossed over a sign of the client's stress, resolving to respond with more empathy in future. These examples illustrate how AI-generated feedback can serve as a catalyst for deeper self-reflection, helping coaches to uncover subtle dynamics that might otherwise be missed

Figure 3 shows a sample dialogue from the simulation, where the coach engages with a client after receiving AI-generated feedback. The excerpt reflects how such feedback can shape more constructive and personalized coaching interactions—even in mock settings.

Figure 3

Dialogue Excerpt from AI-Supported Coaching Session



The contribution here is outlining a *theoretical integration of AI into the coach's learning process*. By aligning the system with well-established learning theories – chiefly Kolb's experiential cycle – we ensure that the technology plays a supportive role in a human-centric growth process. Over time, as coach and AI system co-evolve, we anticipate several benefits: the coach becomes more self-aware and continually improves their practice, the AI becomes more attuned and provides increasingly relevant feedback, and ultimately coaching clients benefit from a practitioner who is learning faster and reflecting more deeply after each session. This AI-supported reflective loop exemplifies the potential of hybrid intelligence in professional development: it leverages data-driven insights to support coach growth while preserving the fundamentally human qualities of coaching, such as empathy, intuition, and ethical judgment.

In summary, our framework proposes that by embedding AI into the reflective stage of the coaching cycle, we can create a powerful feedback system where experience, reflection, and adaptation continuously inform one another – enhancing coach learning in the same spirit that Kolb, Schön, and others have long advocated, but now with the supportive capabilities of modern AI.

Findings

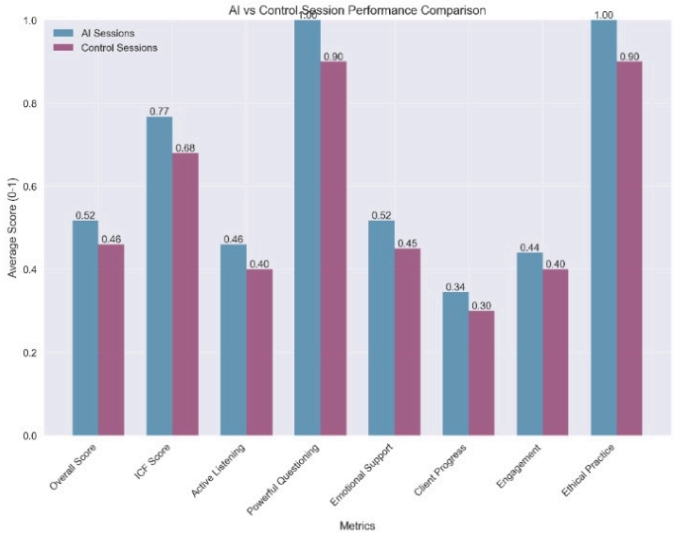
This section presents the results of a simulation-based study examining the impact of AI-supported reflective feedback loops on coaching effectiveness. The findings are organized into three core themes: **coaching competency development**, **client engagement outcomes**, and **reflective learning progression**.

1. Coaching Competency and Performance Enhancement

The introduction of AI-generated feedback significantly improved overall coaching performance. As illustrated in **Figure 4**, sessions augmented with AI consistently outperformed control sessions across key metrics, including ICF competency scores, active listening, and powerful questioning. On average, ICF scores rose from 0.68 in control sessions to 0.77 in AI-supported sessions. Notably, ethical practice remained consistently high across both conditions, suggesting that the integration of AI feedback did not compromise professional standards.

Figure 4

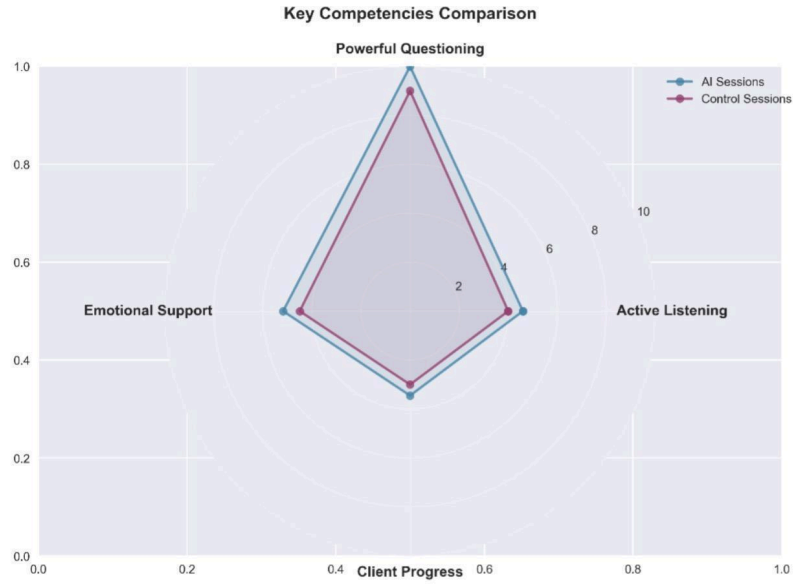
AI vs. Control Session Performance Comparison



To further analyze skill development, **Figure 5** compares key coaching competencies in radar form. The data shows that AI-supported sessions consistently scored higher in areas such as powerful questioning, emotional support, and active listening. These improvements reflect the value of AI-generated prompts in drawing attention to underutilized techniques and enhancing coach awareness in real time.

Figure 5

Key Competency Comparison Between AI and Control Sessions

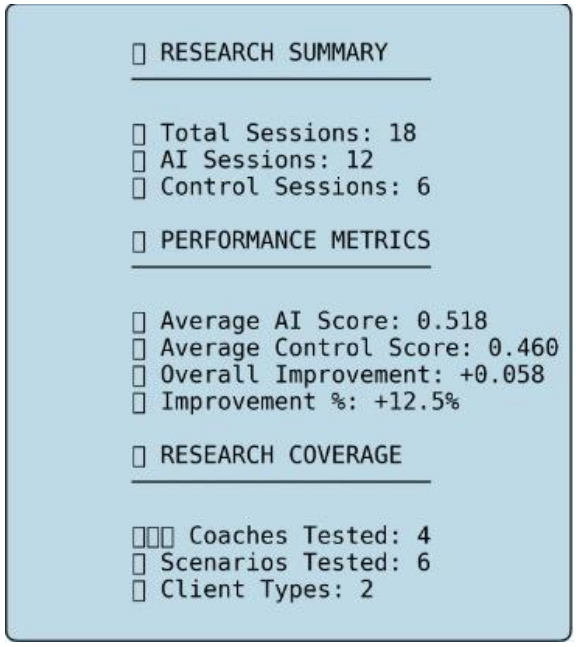


2. Client Engagement and Emotional Outcomes

Improvements extended beyond coaching behavior to client-centered indicators. As shown in the summary panel in **Figure 6**, AI sessions produced a 12.5% increase in average performance scores (0.518 vs. 0.460). These enhancements suggest that reflective AI feedback not only supports the coach's technical performance but also helps foster deeper client rapport and psychological engagement.

Figure 6

Research Summary Dashboard



3. Reflective Learning and Skill Transfer

This skill advancement was first validated by heatmap analysis in **Figure 7**, which demonstrates consistent performance gains across all four coaching styles when AI feedback was introduced. Each coach improved, indicating that the reflective loop enabled both short-term improvement and the potential for skill transfer to new scenarios.

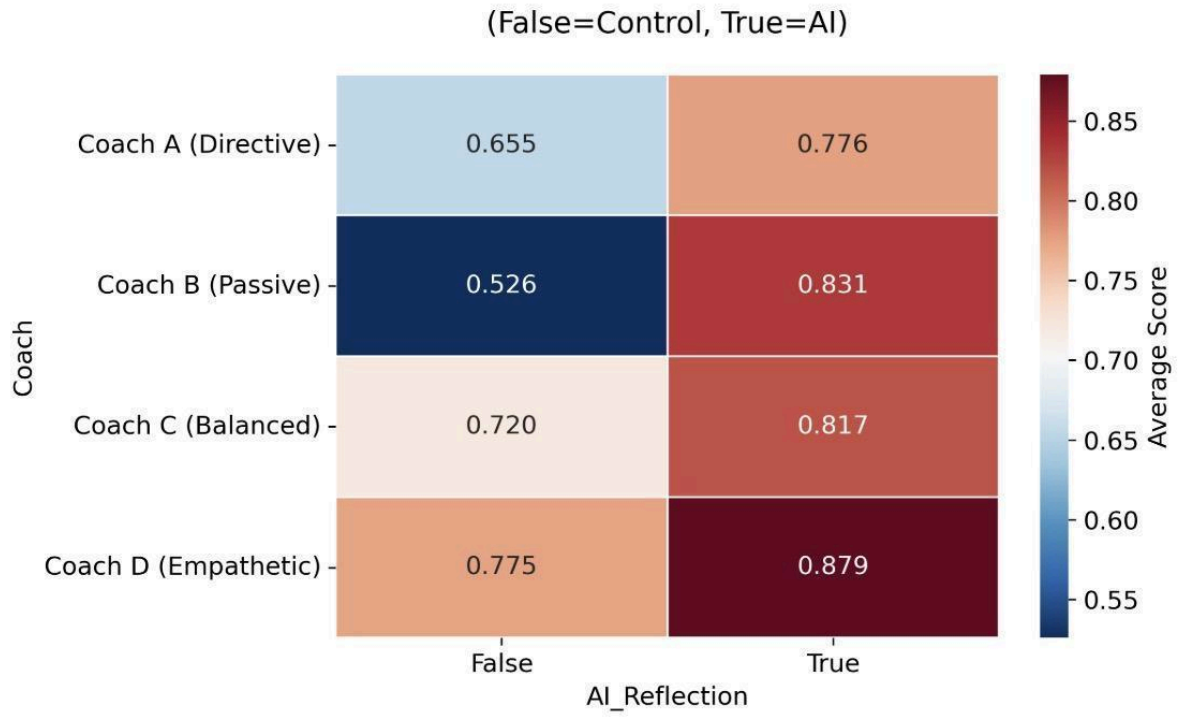
At a more granular level, session comparisons revealed evidence of learning progression, though the improvement was not always immediate. Coaches who received AI feedback showed gradual gains in competencies such as creating awareness and designing actions. For instance, while Coach A's transition from A1 to A2 and Coach D's progression from D1 to D2 reflected

modest improvement, the effect of AI guidance was not uniformly strong after a single session—suggesting that applying feedback effectively may require multiple iterations.

Because coaches often need several rounds of feedback before new behaviors take hold, sustained engagement becomes essential. To prevent feedback fatigue, future implementations should prioritize quality over quantity by offering concise, targeted reflections rather than an overwhelming number of suggestions. Translating this principle to coaching, the system could rotate the types of skills it emphasizes, blend encouraging notes with constructive critiques, and allow coaches to adjust the frequency and depth of AI input. Visual dashboards that highlight progress across sessions may further motivate coaches to remain engaged. By carefully balancing the cadence and content of feedback with individual preferences, long-term collaboration can be cultivated, ensuring that AI guidance remains effective, personalized, and sustainable.

Figure 7

Coach Performance Heatmap With and Without AI Reflection



These findings align with Kolb's experiential learning cycle: the coaching session provides the concrete experience; the AI-generated feedback functions as reflective observation; the coach's interpretation represents abstract conceptualization; and the applied change in subsequent sessions reflects active experimentation. Over time, this recursive cycle supports

co-adaptation between coach and AI, modeling a hybrid intelligence system that fosters sustained professional growth.

Summary of Impact

Together, these results demonstrate the effectiveness of AI-supported reflective feedback loops in enhancing coaching practice. AI served not as a replacement for the coach but as a reflective partner—supporting continuous learning without diminishing core human competencies like empathy and ethical judgment. The observed gains in coaching competency, client responsiveness, and knowledge transfer suggest that hybrid intelligence systems hold promise for scaling high-quality coaching in organizational and developmental contexts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper set out to explore how hybrid intelligence—the integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence—can enhance reflective learning in coaching. Drawing on Kolb's experiential learning theory and recent scholarship on AI-supported feedback, the study proposed a structured model in which AI acts as a reflective partner to coaches, prompting deeper self-awareness without supplanting the relational and ethical core of human-led coaching.

The findings demonstrate that AI-enabled feedback loops can improve coaching performance across key competencies, facilitate emotional attunement, and foster longitudinal learning. Rather than offering prescriptive solutions, the AI system supports reflection by identifying missed cues, surfacing bias, and highlighting emotional tone. Crucially, the model adapts to each coach's evolving style and language, allowing for tailored guidance and developmental precision. This positions the AI not as a static evaluator, but as a dynamic co-learner—one that enhances the depth and consistency of the coach's learning journey over time.

The implications are significant, this work reframes high-impact coaching not in terms of automation or scale, but in terms of sustained self-awareness, adaptive growth, and professional rigor. Hybrid intelligence, as this study suggests, enables a synergistic interplay between the data-driven precision of AI and the human capacity for empathy, contextual reasoning, and ethical discernment. Together, these elements can elevate coaching outcomes while preserving what is most essential to the practice.

Based on these insights, we recommend that coaches begin integrating AI-assisted reflection into their post-session reviews, treating such tools as allies in professional development rather than as judgmental evaluators. For coaching researchers, further empirical investigation is needed across diverse domains and populations to evaluate the long-term impact and adaptability of hybrid-intelligent systems. Educators and training programs should consider incorporating these tools into their curricula, especially where personalized feedback and reflective growth are key goals. Professional associations must take an active role in guiding the ethical integration of AI into coaching, ensuring it reinforces—rather than dilutes—human-centered values. Finally,

organizational stakeholders are encouraged to explore hybrid coaching models as part of their leadership and talent development strategies, where scalability and reflective depth must go hand in hand.

In future work, we plan to conduct field studies with human coaches and clients to validate the system's effectiveness, examine how co-adaptation unfolds in practice, and monitor for feedback fatigue and other ethical considerations. These studies will ensure that hybrid-intelligent systems remain grounded in human values while scaling reflective learning.

In sum, this research contributes an early but compelling blueprint for how hybrid intelligence can reshape the reflective foundations of coaching. Rather than replacing the coach, AI becomes a developmental companion—amplifying insight, deepening learning, and sustaining the human essence of coaching in a technologically evolving world.

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- Warrant Statement

I (we) warrant that given (our) paper, experiential session, demonstration or panel proposal is accepted, I (we) will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. I (we) agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. I (we) understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025 my (our) presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. I (we) also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is my (our) responsibility, and I (we) understand that the document will be returned to me (us) if it does not meet those specifications.

Could AI Coaching Platforms Really Work? A Systemic Analysis of Services, Design Patterns, and Effectiveness of AI Coaching Platforms

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Zhiwen Jin, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

Abstract: This study examines ten leading AI coaching platforms through qualitative analysis of architectures, user feedback, and literature. Findings reveal AI's strengths in scalability and data-driven insights but critical deficits in emotional intelligence, ethical transparency, and transformative depth. Hybrid intelligence models—integrating human expertise with AI capabilities—consistently outperform pure AI solutions. While AI coaching delivers value in bounded contexts, realizing its potential requires rigorous ethical frameworks, human-centered design, and independent validation.

Keywords: AI coaching, hybrid intelligence, coaching technology, coaching effectiveness, human-AI collaboration, ethical AI, digital coaching platforms

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence into coaching represents a watershed moment in professional and personal development. As organizations grapple with scalable solutions for leadership development and employee growth, platforms like BetterUp, CoachHub, and Ezra promise unprecedented accessibility through AI-driven personalization, efficiency, and cost reduction. These technologies leverage machine learning for critical functions from client-coach matching algorithms to sentiment analysis of coaching conversations, positioning themselves as catalysts for democratizing high-impact coaching (Passmore et al., 2025).

Yet beneath optimistic marketing claims lies significant academic ambiguity (Diller, 2024; Klimczak et al., 2025). Hybrid intelligence, defined as the intentional synthesis of human expertise and artificial intelligence to achieve outcomes beyond the capacity of either alone (Maltbia, 2024), remains undertheorized in coaching contexts. While proponents highlight AI's potential to amplify human capabilities (Dellermann et al., 2019), critics warn of depersonalization risks, ethical voids, and the erosion of coaching's relational essence (Diller, 2024; Passmore, 2021). Compounding this tension is a scarcity of independent empirical validation, with most efficacy data originating from platform-funded studies.

To address the research gaps, this study addresses three research questions through examination of ten prominent platforms:

RQ1: What are the prevailing service delivery models and feature patterns among current AI-supported coaching platforms?

RQ2: How do AI coaching platforms operationalize human-AI integration in their design and coaching processes?

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RQ3: To what extent do users perceive these platforms as effective in facilitating coaching outcomes aligned with established professional competencies?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive methodology (Sandelowski, 2000) to investigate the architecture, functionality, and perceived outcomes of ten AI coaching platforms (Table 1). The platforms were selected using purposive sampling to ensure maximum conceptual variation across three key dimensions:

Geographic Representation: The sample included five U.S.-based platforms, two from the U.K., one from the European Union, one based in Asia, and one serving the broader Asia-Pacific region.

AI Integration Gradient: The platforms represented a continuum of AI integration, ranging from fully automated, algorithm-driven systems to hybrid models incorporating both human and AI components.

Market Influence: Selection criteria included demonstrated visibility and credibility, such as recognition through industry awards and citations in academic or professional literature.

Table 1

The Ten AI Coaching Platforms and Their AI Service Focuses

Name	Founding year and	Location	AI Service Focus
Ovida	2020 (company), 2023, AI coaching tool "Ovid"	the U.K.	AI + human hybrid coaching focused on video-based self-reflection, objective feedback, and ICF competency assessment.
CoachHub	2018 (company), 2025, the AI Coaching Companion "AIMY™"	Germany	AIMY™: Provides real-time, personalized, goal-driven coaching through interactive AI conversations.
BetterUp	2013 (company) 2025, Major AI-only coaching platform "Grow™"	the U.S.	Grow™: Offers real-time support for role-play, tough conversations, and accountability, blending AI with behavioral science.

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Butterfly.ai	2014 (company), 2017, AI coaching app	the U.S.	Uses team feedback to give managers instant, personalized coaching insights.
EZRA	2019 (company), 2023, AI Coaching Assistant "Cai"	the U.K.	Delivers AI-powered reflection prompts, feedback, and motivation between coaching sessions.
GloCoach	2018 (company), 2024 AI app	China	An AI-enabled platform supporting all stages of leadership development with a human-centered approach.
Sounding Board	2016 (company) 2021, AI app	the U.S.	Enhances coaching logistics with AI-driven matching, scheduling, and program administration.
Aicoach.chat	2023 (company) 2025, AI-based self-coaching approach	the U.K.	Promotes self-discovery through non-directive, reflective AI questioning in a human-like tone.
Perceptyx	2003 (company,) 2025, Experience-aware AI coaching agent	the U.S.	Leverages employee experience data to offer science-backed nudges and contextual AI coaching.
Marlee	2015 (company), 2020, AI coach “Marlee”	Australia	Uses AI to analyze motivation and collaboration styles for personalized coaching at both individual and team levels.

Data Collection and Triangulation

To ensure data robustness and analytic depth, three complementary data sources were used:

Primary Artifacts: Platform-specific documentation, including technical whitepapers, product brochures, and guided interface walkthroughs, were collected and reviewed.

User Perspectives: A dataset of over 2,600 user-generated reviews was compiled from reputable software evaluation platforms such as G2, Capterra, Trustpilot, and Zhihu.

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Only reviews from verified users were included, and filtering was applied to ensure thematic relevance and cross-platform comparability.

Scholarly Context: A total number of 26 peer-reviewed journal articles about AI coaching published between 2018 and 2024 were analyzed. These works addressed topics such as the effectiveness, ethics, and implementation of AI coaching tools in organizational and individual contexts.

Analytical Approach

This study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflexive thematic analysis framework through six iterative phases. The researchers began with data familiarization by closely reading platform documentation, service descriptions, and authenticated user reviews to gain contextual understanding. Initial codes were generated to capture key patterns across three focal domains: (1) the structural features of coaching service offerings, (2) architectural approaches to human-AI integration, and (3) measurement and evaluation practices.

Emergent codes were then clustered into themes reflecting shared patterns across platforms. These themes were refined through iterative review to ensure internal coherence and distinctiveness. Representative examples were selected to illustrate each theme's manifestation, and the final thematic structure was aligned with the study's guiding research questions. Throughout the process, methodological rigor was maintained via systematic documentation and researcher reflexivity.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of AI Coaching

AI-enabled coaching introduces tensions between technological scalability and coaching's human-centered foundations in reflection, presence, and meaning-making. To assess AI's potential and limitations in coaching, this study draws on three influential traditions: Experiential Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Evidence-Based Coaching.

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2014) posits that development occurs through cycles of experience, reflection, and experimentation. In coaching, this enables adaptive strategies based on real-world challenges (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). However, embodied learning—anchored in emotional and social cues (Yorks & Kasl, 2002)—remains a challenge for AI systems that struggle to interpret nonverbal signals or lived context (Jarrahi, 2018). While AI can prompt reflection and log behavior, it lacks the human coach's capacity to attune to ambiguity and emotional texture (Passmore, 2021).

Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991) highlights how disorienting dilemmas—such as setbacks or value conflicts—catalyze perspective shifts. Transformation unfolds through critical reflection, dialogue, and frame revision

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(Mezirow, 2000). Human coaches can act as "cognitive mirrors" (Kegan, 2009), but AI systems may avoid cognitive friction, minimizing the discomfort necessary for breakthrough insights (Yorks & Jester, 2024). Though AI can scaffold surface-level reflection, it lacks the nuanced facilitation needed for deeper change (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2020).

Evidence-Based Coaching (Grant, 2003) emphasizes scientifically grounded interventions and measurable outcomes. Techniques such as Cognitive Behavioral Coaching (Grant & O'Connor, 2019) align with AI's capacity to identify patterns and optimize techniques at scale (Dellermann et al., 2019). Yet AI may overvalue quantifiable outcomes (e.g., "completion rates") at the expense of qualitative growth (Bachkirova et al., 2020). Effective coaching requires balancing data-driven insights with human discernment to avoid metric-driven distortions (Stober & Grant, 2006).

The AI Coaching Landscape: Claims and Critiques

Advocates of AI coaching highlight its ability to address accessibility and personalization challenges in human development. Scalability is a key benefit, enabling broader reach, particularly in cost- or resource-constrained settings (Dellermann et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2023). Personalization is another major claim—adaptive algorithms use real-time data to tailor content, improving engagement and goal adherence (Chen et al., 2022). Proponents also emphasize AI's potential for objectivity, citing natural language processing tools that detect communication patterns and biases often missed by human coaches (Jarrahi et al., 2021).

Yet these benefits obscure persistent limitations. Users frequently express dissatisfaction when AI fails to respond appropriately to emotionally complex situations like grief or ethical dilemmas, where human judgment is critical (Yorks & Jester, 2024). Algorithmic and cultural biases also raise concern: audits reveal gendered goal recommendations and less direct feedback for clients from collectivist cultures (Crenshaw et al., 2022; Nisbett et al., 2024).

Moreover, methodological gaps challenge the credibility of reported outcomes. Most platforms rely on non-validated self-assessments, and industry-sponsored studies show disproportionately positive results compared to independent evaluations (Grant, 2023; Graßmann et al., 2021). These issues cast doubt on claims of efficacy and point to a need for more rigorous, transparent evaluation.

Ethical Responsibilities

The integration of AI in coaching necessitates ethical frameworks rooted in human development rather than algorithmic efficiency. Yorks and Jester (2024) outline four foundational principles:

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Purpose Alignment: AI must serve human growth, not platform metrics. Prioritizing session length over developmental depth compromises this goal (Passmore, 2021).

Transparency: Users should understand how AI makes recommendations. Yet 73% cannot distinguish between human- and AI-generated feedback, weakening informed consent (Mittelstadt et al., 2016).

Bias Mitigation: Algorithms often reproduce social biases—e.g., leadership language skewed toward masculine patterns (Caliskan et al., 2017) or misinterpretation of emotional expression in non-Western cultures (Sheng et al., 2021).

Data Integrity: Beyond legal compliance, ethical coaching requires safeguarding context-specific disclosures. Yet 68% of platforms retain rights to repurpose user data without opt-in (Zarifis et al., 2023).

Despite strong conceptual grounding, implementation lags. Fewer than 15% of platforms are independently audited (Algorithmic Justice League, 2023), and ethical review is often siloed within engineering teams rather than involving coaches and psychologists (Yorks & Jester, 2024).

Findings

This study aimed to examine the architecture, integration, and effectiveness of contemporary AI coaching platforms. Drawing upon document analysis and researcher reflection, the findings are structured around the three guiding research questions.

RQ1: What are the prevailing service delivery models and feature patterns among current AI-supported coaching platforms?

AI coaching platforms in today's market exhibit a diverse array of service patterns that reflect both automation and personalization. As identified in the data, these services can be broadly categorized into four types of delivery models:

1. Fully automated chatbots (e.g., Marlee, AICoach.chat),
2. Hybrid models combining human and AI support (e.g., BetterUp, CoachHub, Ovida),
3. AI-augmented human coaching (e.g., EZRA, Sounding Board, GloCoach), and
4. Learning ecosystems embedding AI nudges and microlearning into organizational development (e.g., Perceptyx, Butterfly.ai).

Fully automated chatbot platforms such as *Marlee* and *AICoach.chat* engage users in self-directed coaching journeys through AI-powered conversational agents. These systems deliver structured prompts, nudges, and development tracks based on behavioral science and positive psychology, aiming for scalable and accessible experiences without human involvement.

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Hybrid models like *BetterUp*, *CoachHub*, and *Ovida* combine synchronous or asynchronous human coaching with AI-enhanced functions such as coach matching, behavior tracking, and personalized nudging. In these models, AI supports the coaching process while human coaches remain central to developmental depth and relationship-building.

AI-augmented human coaching platforms such as *EZRA*, *Sounding Board*, and *GloCoach* similarly involve human-led sessions but rely on AI operating in the background. These platforms use AI for analytics, scheduling, and organizational alignment, with limited or no direct AI interaction with coachees. AI acts as a peripheral tool that enables efficient delivery while maintaining human-led dialogue.

Finally, platforms like *Perceptyx* and *Butterfly.ai* function as components of broader learning ecosystems, embedding AI-powered nudges and microlearning into feedback and capability-building systems. Rather than emphasizing individualized coaching, they focus on reinforcing organizational behaviors and supporting scalable learning across the enterprise.

What differentiates these models is the level of human involvement and AI interaction. In hybrid models, AI engages directly with users through prompts and feedback while supporting coaches with tasks like matching and personalization. Coaches remain central, but AI plays an active, visible role. By contrast, AI-augmented platforms use AI behind the scenes for logistics and analytics such as scheduling or tracking, leaving the coaching process largely human-led.This spectrum of integration strategies reflects a broader trend in human–AI augmentation within learning and coaching, where AI is best suited to scale repetitive or data-driven components, thereby freeing human coaches to focus on complex, relational, and transformational work (De Laat, 2020; Rivera & Rowe, 2022).

Beyond these service models, a closer look at platform design reveals four recurring feature patterns that further shape the user experience:

Interaction & Engagement Tools. These include chat-based AI agents, video journaling (e.g., Ovida), and behavioral nudges that support in-the-moment learning and self-reflection.

Behavioral & Learning Analytics. Many platforms incorporate tools for goal progress tracking, sentiment analysis, and behavioral diagnostics to enhance self-awareness and coaching effectiveness.

Operational Features. AI is widely used for backend efficiencies, including coach–coachee matching algorithms, automated scheduling, and personalized development plan generation.

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Organizational Alignment. Enterprise platforms integrate AI into feedback loops, microlearning, and dashboard reporting to align coaching outcomes with broader organizational goals.

RQ2: How do AI coaching platforms operationalize human-AI integration in their design and coaching processes?

The integration of AI and human coaching in contemporary platforms follows several distinct design patterns, each grounded in different pedagogical and technical logics. These patterns shape how coaching experiences are structured, how learning is supported, and how scalability is achieved. Based on platform features and usage descriptions, three major integration models emerge: sequential, parallel, and orchestrated.

Sequential Integration involves AI supporting users before or after human-led sessions. AI plays a preparatory or follow-up role, prompting users to reflect, set goals, or track progress outside of coaching conversations. For example, platforms like BetterUp and Ovida use AI-enabled intake assessments, personality profiling, and language-based preference detection to match coaches with coachees. These matching algorithms are often informed by models such as the Big Five Personality Traits (Soto & John, 2017), goal alignment analysis, and coach style inventories. AI also facilitates post-session engagement through nudges, journaling prompts, and performance tracking. Although internal success metrics are not publicly disclosed by most platforms, BetterUp has reported a 95% satisfaction rate in coach–coachee matches (BetterUp Labs, 2022).

Parallel Integration features AI agents that operate concurrently with human coaching, offering real-time nudges, reflective exercises, and microlearning prompts. This model creates a dual-channel support system in which users engage both with human coaches and with AI companions. A prime example is CoachHub's AIMY, a conversational AI-powered coaching assistant designed to supplement human-led coaching journeys. AIMY engages users before, during, and after coaching sessions by delivering reflective questions, personalized learning nudges, and behavioral insights. While CoachHub offers personalized, trust-based human coaching for executive and leadership development, AIMY extends accessibility to users at all levels by offering immediate, on-demand AI support. This enables scalable coaching while maintaining developmental depth. Similarly, Butterfly.ai enables users to receive AI-generated feedback alongside ongoing development programs. In these platforms, AI functions as a continuous engagement layer, reinforcing insights from human sessions and encouraging consistent learning behaviors.

Orchestrated Integration describes a model where AI works behind the scenes to shape and support the coaching experience without directly interacting with the coachee. Instead of acting as a visible companion, AI analyzes coaching data, identifies common themes, and helps align coaching efforts with broader organizational goals. For instance, platforms like Sounding Board and Perceptyx use AI to generate insights for coaches and HR leaders, such as trends in engagement, sentiment shifts, or areas where teams may need additional support. These insights help coaches tailor their approach and

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enable organizations to manage coaching more strategically. While the AI's presence isn't always obvious to the user, it plays a key role in ensuring that coaching remains purposeful, consistent, and aligned with what matters most at the team or enterprise level.

These patterns may coexist within platforms, reflecting different strategic orientations: AI as co-facilitator, backend orchestrator, or logistical enhancer. As tools evolve, platforms must balance automation with the human connection vital to effective coaching.

RQ3: To what extent do users perceive these platforms as effective in facilitating coaching outcomes aligned with established professional competencies?

Evaluating the effectiveness of AI coaching platforms remains difficult due to their novelty and the lack of independent longitudinal studies. Nevertheless, platform claims, user experiences, and design features offer insight into how these tools support key coaching outcomes such as goal clarity, self-reflection, and behavioral change.

Almost all platforms report improvements among users on their websites, yet these claims often stem from internal studies or commissioned evaluations. For example, BetterUp highlights gains in resilience and goal attainment, while CoachHub draws on behavioral science to support leadership development. However, such claims should be interpreted cautiously given the absence of sufficient third-party validation.

In contrast, user reviews on independent platforms like G2 and Trustpilot offer more grounded insights. Highly rated platforms tend to share three characteristics: strong human-AI synergy, grounding in research-based frameworks, and user-friendly design. Rather than replacing human coaches, AI is strategically used to enhance the coaching experience through intelligent matching, behavioral insights, and personalized nudges. Platforms such as CoachHub and BetterUp integrate these capabilities to scale their services while maintaining the developmental depth of human-led coaching. Drawing on adult learning theories, they incorporate motivation-based prompts and reflective tools to support growth, while their intuitive design encourages sustained engagement and learning transfer.

However, these strengths are not universal. Recurring concerns—such as opaque AI logic (Ovida), technical bugs (CoachHub), shallow AI interaction (Butterfly.ai), or limited functionality (EZRA, Perceptyx)—undermine trust and effectiveness. Inconsistent coaching quality and high costs (BetterUp, EZRA) also limit access, while cultural mismatches and language barriers (Glocoach) can further constrain impact. In many cases, AI remains peripheral, functioning more as a logistics tool than as a core learning agent.

From a research perspective, effectiveness depends not only on technological sophistication but also on users' psychological readiness for coaching, trust with organizers, and sense of agency for learning. Platforms like GloCoach and EZRA, which

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support emotional resonance and contextual sensitivity, tend to be viewed as more impactful by users seeking personalized development.

In sum, while AI coaching platforms show promising potential to scale and personalize learning, their long-term effectiveness still depends on quality design, ethical clarity, and deeper user engagement.

Discussions

The Synergistic Imperative: Beyond Hybrid Claims

Our findings support the growing consensus that the most effective coaching outcomes stem not from AI automation alone, but from the *synergistic integration* of AI and human intelligence (Yorks et al., 2024; Maltbia & Zhang, 2023). In successful platforms like BetterUp and CoachHub, AI tools such as real-time analytics, personality-based matching, and progress tracking enhance human-led coaching without displacing its relational essence. These integrations improve efficiency and scale, while preserving the reflective dialogue and emotional attunement essential for adult development. As Yorks (2024) applies Distributed Cognition Theory to coaching, human coaches remain critical in navigating ethical ambiguity, cultural complexity, and identity transformation—dimensions AI is not equipped to handle independently. While systems like Ovida or Perceptyx offer computational precision through micro-pattern detection, they lack the interpretive capacity and moral agency required for transformative learning (Floridi & Cowls, 2021). Maltbia (2023) highlights how efforts to simulate empathy can backfire, invoking the "affective uncanny valley" where emotional mimicry is experienced as inauthentic or manipulative.

Moreover, this human-AI partnership aligns with constructivist principles in adult learning, where meaning-making, critical reflection, and relational presence are central (Mezirow, 1991; Ghosh & Grocher, 2021). AI may scaffold the process by prompting reflection or identifying behavioral trends, but it is the coach's relational skills—building trust, responding to emotional cues, and co-constructing new narratives—that drive lasting transformation (Dirkx, 2006; Passmore et al., 2022). In this sense, AI acts not as a replacement but as a cognitive partner, complementing rather than replicating the human dimension of coaching.

From Insight to Design: Building Human-Centered AI Coaching Systems

The preceding analysis reinforces a critical insight: while AI can enhance coaching scalability and efficiency, it cannot replace the relational, ethical, and interpretive capacities that make coaching transformative (Popenici & Kerr, 2017; Jarrahi, 2018). Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for human intelligence, coaching systems should be intentionally designed to recognize and integrate the complementary capacities of both human and AI. This calls for a rethinking of platform architecture, especially what it should do to support human development (Holstein et al., 2019).

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To that end, the researchers propose a framework for architecting human-centered AI coaching, guided by three design principles: (1) relational intelligence as a foundational metric, (2) ethical architecture as non-negotiable infrastructure, and (3) intentional hybrid workflow design.

Principle 1: Relational Intelligence as a Foundational Metric. AI coaching platforms too often prioritize quantifiable metrics like session counts or behavioral tracking, while overlooking the relational dimensions at the heart of adult learning. Yet true developmental impact requires culturally attuned, emotionally resonant interactions (Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Rather than assessing AI solely by algorithmic efficiency, we propose relational intelligence as a critical benchmark. This includes the system's ability to adapt across communication norms, demonstrate cultural humility in power-sensitive contexts, and convey emotional authenticity during moments of tension or trust repair (Hooker, 2023). By foregrounding these qualities, platforms can move beyond transactional KPIs and support the deeper interpersonal work that coaching demands.

Principle 2: Ethical Architecture as Core Design, Not Compliance. Ethical considerations must be built into the core architecture of AI coaching platforms rather than treated as afterthoughts. Our analysis revealed troubling gaps, ranging from opaque decision-making and consent practices to algorithmic bias and cultural insensitivity (Binns et al., 2018). To avoid replicating existing social inequities through automation, platforms must adopt transparent and inclusive practices. This includes conducting regular, independent bias audits, making algorithmic decisions explainable to users, and granting individuals granular control over their behavioral and conversational data (Morley et al., 2021). Without such safeguards, even well-intended innovations risk reinforcing epistemic extraction and disempowering those they aim to serve.

Principle 3: Intentional Design of Hybrid Workflows. Effective integration of AI and human coaching requires recognizing their distinct, yet complementary strengths. Rather than competing with human coaches, AI should serve as a cognitive partner that supports behavioral tracking, goal progression, and nudging, while humans remain essential for interpreting meaning, holding ethical space, and facilitating transformative dialogue. In well-designed systems, AI aggregates data and delivers evidence-based prompts, but it is the human coach who contextualizes metrics within individual and cultural narratives. This thoughtful division of labor not only enhances developmental outcomes but also mitigates the loss of trust seen in chatbot-driven "empathy mimicry" (Pasquale, 2020, p.3). True synergy lies in combining computational precision with relational depth.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study establishes that while AI coaching platforms demonstrate efficacy in scaling behavioral interventions and democratizing access, they appear fundamentally limited in cultivating the relational depth and transformative capacity intrinsic to human coaching.

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The documented failures of empathy simulation and systemic ethical shortcomings necessitate a recalibrated approach to technological integration.

Our findings lead us to recommend three priority pathways for the field. First, the development of validated relational intelligence metrics should supersede transactional KPIs, with particular emphasis on assessing cultural humility and contextual adaptability given the observed marginalization of non-Western communication styles. Second, ethical architecture must become non-negotiable infrastructure, requiring transparent bias auditing mechanisms and absolute user sovereignty over data permissions to prevent the epistemic extractivism identified in platform practices. Finally, hybrid workflows should consciously confine AI's role to computational domains (data aggregation, pattern detection), while reserving meaning-making, ethical framing, and transformational dialogue exclusively for human practitioners.

Without this deliberate reorientation toward human-centered design, the coaching profession risks adopting efficiency at the cost of its relational soul—a trade-off that ultimately undermines its transformative promise. The most viable future lies not in replacement but in mindful collaboration.

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From Conflict to Cohesion: Examining How Coaching Shapes Startup Teams' Individual and Organizational Outcomes using Qualitative and AI Methods

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Abstract: Early-stage startup founders face unique challenges, particularly around interpersonal dynamics and high rates of organizational failure. This paper explores how team-level co-founder coaching in early startup stages can impact individual and organizational outcomes. This paper further examines how organizational culture is actively constructed and negotiated by founding teams through the lens of situated coaching interactions, shedding important light on how organizational culture comes to be. Using a hybrid methodology—combining qualitative analysis, survey data, and AI-driven natural language processing (NLP) techniques including semantic embeddings—this study reveals how founders engage in "symbolic alignment work" to actively construct organizational culture during a structured team coaching program. Our findings demonstrate how culture formation is a dynamic, contested process of negotiation and construction, and reveal how coaching may influence this process. For coaches, our findings have implications for how coaches can engage with hybrid intelligence when supporting cultural construction and team alignment.

Keywords: Startup Teams, Team Coaching, Organizational Culture, Natural Language Processing

Introduction

This paper investigates a fundamental question in organizational theory: how is organizational culture actually constructed in settings like startup teams, where shared history, routines, and roles are still unsettled? Specifically, this study suggests how the integration of human coaching expertise with AI-driven analysis can illuminate the active, situated processes through which startup founding teams construct organizational culture. This paper can provide coaching leaders insight into how organizational culture forms in the early stages of an organization, and how coaches can help founders to build organizational culture around shared values and goals.

Early-stage startup founders face a unique paradox: they are expected to establish cultural foundations before any enduring organizational structure exists. While organizational culture is often treated as a stable, shared system of meaning that emerges naturally over time, we know surprisingly little about how culture is actually constructed, particularly in nascent organizations. We propose that nascent organizations operate under the context of 'unsettled times,' (Swidler, 1986), wherein founders negotiate cultural meanings through early interactions while navigating high uncertainty, ambiguity, and resource constraints.

Existing research tends to link culture at founding to static factors—such as founder values, team composition, or early hiring choices—treating culture as a relatively fixed attribute that founders possess rather than as something they actively construct. What remains underexamined is how culture is dynamically constructed and negotiated (Lamont, Beljean, and

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Clair, 2014) through situated interactions among founders who bring different organizational and personal experiences, and must actively attempt to align their symbolic understandings to create shared cultural foundations.

This paper contributes to both organizational theory and coaching practice by arguing that early organizational culture is constructed through "symbolic alignment work"—the active, ongoing negotiation of meanings, practices, and shared understandings that founders engage in during their early interactions. Our hybrid methodology enables us to observe and quantify this construction process as it unfolds during a structured startup team coaching program, revealing culture formation as a dynamic negotiation and construction process. Our findings bring nuance to traditional culture emergence theories and provide practical insights for coaching interventions that can facilitate more effective cultural construction processes.

Methodology

This study employs an innovative mixed-methods approach that exemplifies hybrid intelligence in coaching research. Our methodology triangulates qualitative analysis, survey data, and AI-driven natural language processing techniques to capture both the nuanced human elements of team coaching and the pattern recognition capabilities that artificial intelligence can provide. Survey data provides an additional lens into founding team members' experiences both prior to the coaching program and following the conclusion of the program.

Data for this project comes through partnership with a startup co-founder relationship coaching program based in New York, conducted virtually over Zoom. The program operates on a rolling basis with cohorts of 3-5 startup founding teams, each consisting of 2-3 co-founders. Our dataset will include 12 teams representing diverse industries (software, real estate, fintech) with annual revenues ranging from $0 to $20 million and venture ages spanning 1-9 years.[1] Primary data sources include: (1) Video recordings and transcripts of weekly team coaching sessions across a six-session curriculum spanning three months; (2) Pre- and post-program one-on-one interviews with co-founders; and (3) Surveys measuring psychological safety and team dynamics administered before and after the coaching intervention.

Our qualitative analytical approach follows grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in which NVivo software is used to identify emergent themes in team dynamics and coaching outcomes across different organizational culture dimensions. The AI component employs natural language processing (NLP), a set of computational techniques that allow us to analyze the language founders use in coaching sessions with one another and with the coach. These tools allow us to identify and measure patterns in language usage. For example, we can measure how similar the ideas and ways of expressing themselves are across co-founders. One technique we use, called semantic embeddings, places words and phrases into an n-dimensional space. Words and phrases with similar meanings are located near each other in this space, and those with different meanings are father apart. We are then able to measure the distance between words and phrases. By measuring where each co-founder's language falls in this space over time,

[1] In this submission, we describe the methodological approach we have developed and will deploy on the full data set described. We include preliminary findings from a pilot cohort. Full IRB approval is in process for expanded data collection and analysis of the complete dataset described in our methodology.

we can measure when they are becoming more or less aligned in their thinking. We also analyze emotional patterns in language to identify whether founders are expressing similar emotions during conversations. For example, we can employ sentiment analysis to track how positive or negative each co-founder's language is across coaching sessions, and emotion lexicons to identify the most common emotional expressions (e.g., joy, anger, trust, fear). These types of NLP measures allow us to measure and visualize patterns that coaches might otherwise perceive subjectively, providing an entry point into the value of NLP for coaching both in research and in practice. This approach together allows us to measure whether and how co-founders are developing shared cognitive frameworks—a crucial component of organizational culture formation. By measuring both cognitive similarity and alignment, as well as emotions, we begin to distinguish between semantic alignment (shared understanding of concepts) and emotional alignment (shared emotional responses), providing nuanced insights into different aspects of cultural construction.

Additionally, pre- and post-program surveys are administered to measure changes in team dynamics and individual perceptions. The intake survey is conducted prior to the beginning of each cohort's coaching program, with the outtake survey administered 6-9 weeks later, upon program completion. Survey instruments include validated scales measuring psychological safety (based on Edmondson (1999)'s 7-item team psychological safety scale), team efficacy, and additional team dynamics measures. The pre-post design enables measurement of how coaching interventions influence individual perceptions of team functioning and provides quantitative data to complement our qualitative analysis of symbolic alignment work and AI-driven semantic embedding analysis.

This hybrid methodological approach allows us to capture both the subtle relational dynamics that human coaches intuitively recognize and the cognitive and emotional alignment patterns that AI can systematically track across multiple teams, cultural dimensions, and time periods. The integration of these methods provides a novel lens into how different aspects of organizational culture are negotiated and constructed in founding teams.

Conceptual Framework/ Literature Review

Our research integrates several literature streams motivating this study. First, we examine organizational behavior literature on psychological safety and team dynamics, drawing particularly from Edmondson's foundational work on psychological safety in team performance (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson and Lei, 2014). This literature provides theoretical grounding for understanding how team-level interventions can impact both individual and organizational outcomes.

Second, we draw from entrepreneurship literature examining founding team dynamics and their relationship to venture performance outcomes. Knight, Greer, and De Jong's (2020) systematic review and conceptualization of startup teams establishes the theoretical foundation for understanding the relational challenges inherent in co-founder partnerships that are distinct from other organizational settings. Wasserman's (2012) analysis of founder dilemmas provides empirical insight into the interpersonal tensions and structural conflicts that precipitate venture dissolution and founding team fragmentation. We situate our contribution within the

entrepreneurship literature by examining founding team dynamics and culture prior to venture failure.

Our framework also builds on Tuckman's (1965; Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) influential model of team development, which identifies five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Tuckman's model suggests that team effectiveness typically decreases during the "storming" phase as team members negotiate roles, relationships, and working approaches. This temporary effectiveness decrease occurs as teams work through conflicts and establish norms. We propose that the symbolic alignment work observed in coached startup teams represents a structured approach to navigating the storming phase that minimizes effectiveness losses while accelerating progression to the norming phase. Rather than allowing cultural conflicts to emerge chaotically (as might typically occur during traditional storming), coached teams engage in facilitating symbolic alignment work that can transform potential dysfunction into productive cultural construction.

Third, we draw on and contribute to a large body of scholarship on organizational culture, spawning and imprinting, with particular attention to the multidimensional nature of organizational culture (for a review, see Chatman and O'Reilly, 2016; Corritore, Goldberg and Srivastava, 2020). Ahn and Greve's (2024) recent work on "cultural spawning" demonstrates that the culture of founders' prior employers can differentially impact the culture of the founders' venture. While an important insight, less is known about the actual *process* of nascent venture cultural formation. We examine how different dimensions of organizational culture—including work practices, collaboration norms, decision-making processes, and psychological safety—are constructed, negotiated, and potentially contested during founding team formation.

Our analysis draws on organizational culture frameworks that identify distinct cultural dimensions. Some cultural elements, particularly those related to operational workflows and technical practices, may be more readily constructed and agreed upon. Others, especially those involving interpersonal dynamics, authority structures, risk tolerance, and long-term organizational goals may be more heavily contested as they reflect deeper values and identity-related preferences that founders may bring from their previous organizational and personal experiences.

Our theoretical framework synthesizes insights from organizational culture theory, situated construction approaches, cultural spawning and imprinting research, and emerging work on AI-enhanced organizational analysis to create a novel model for understanding how founders actively construct organizational culture through situated negotiations across different cultural dimensions. Central to our framework is the concept of "situated construction"—the idea that organizational culture is not something that founders simply possess, but rather something they actively construct through ongoing interactions in specific contexts. Building on traditional views that treat culture as emerging from founder attributes or team composition, we argue that culture is dynamically constructed through "symbolic alignment work"—the active negotiation processes through which founders create shared meanings, practices, and understandings.

Building on cultural spawning theory, we recognize that founders do not construct culture from a blank slate but rather engage in situated negotiations between different cultural templates

they bring from their previous experiences. However, our framework extends prior work by focusing on the active construction processes rather than just the transfer patterns. We propose that successful culture construction requires founders to engage in explicit symbolic alignment work to negotiate which cultural elements to adopt, adapt, or abandon. Our setting also provides a unique lens into instances in which founder alignment resulted in agreements to discontinue working together – an important but underexamined phenomenon in startup teams.

Our framework identifies four key cultural dimensions that require different types of symbolic alignment work: (1) **Workflow and operational practices**—involving concrete negotiations about "how we do things here"; (2) **Collaboration norms**—requiring alignment around "how we work together" and "how we lead/manage," which encompasses multiple relational levels including peer-to-peer co-founder collaboration, hierarchical management, and individual contributions and accountability; (3) **Interpersonal dynamics**—necessitating construction of "how we relate to each other"; and (4) **Strategic orientation**—demanding negotiation of "what we believe and value and how we envision our future."

We propose that these dimensions require different types of symbolic alignment work. Workflow practices may involve more straightforward negotiation of concrete procedures, while strategic orientation requires deeper symbolic work around fundamental values and beliefs. The coaching context provides a structured environment for observing and facilitating this symbolic alignment work as it unfolds in real-time.

Our theoretical framework incorporates psychological safety as both a process and outcome variable, recognizing that coaching interventions may initially surface cultural conflicts (temporarily reducing psychological safety) while building capabilities for addressing those conflicts productively (ultimately increasing psychological safety). The cultural spawning lens helps explain why these conflicts emerge—they often reflect deeper disagreements about organizational values and practices rooted in founders' previous experiences.

The hybrid intelligence component of our framework recognizes that human coaches excel at reading emotional nuance and providing contextual guidance, while AI systems can identify linguistic patterns and sentiment trends across conversations that might escape human attention. By combining these capabilities, we propose that coaching interventions can be both more precisely targeted and more systematically evaluated. Our framework further recognizes that human coaches excel at facilitating symbolic alignment work and recognizing when founders are engaging in productive cultural construction versus avoidance or conflict. AI systems can quantitatively track the linguistic patterns that indicate symbolic alignment work is occurring, measure the degree of cognitive convergence across different cultural dimensions, and identify when construction processes are stalling or progressing.

This framework guides our analysis by helping us understand how symbolic alignment work unfolds across different cultural dimensions, when coaching interventions successfully facilitate cultural construction versus when they encounter resistance, how AI insights can reveal nuanced construction patterns, and what factors enable founders to engage in productive rather than problematic symbolic alignment work during the situated construction of organizational culture.

Findings

Our preliminary analysis of the pilot cohort indicates complex patterns in how structured coaching shapes both individual psychological safety and team dynamics. In future data analysis, we will employ NLP to enhance insights providing crucial understanding of these changes over time.

As an illustration of the NLP approach, Figure 1 shows how the emotional tone of two co-founders' speech (measured with VADER sentiment analysis, wherein scores range from -1 as the strongest negative sentiment to +1 as the strongest positive sentiment) shifted over the course of a conversation.[2] This figure shows how moments of tension and resolution may appear as dips and recoveries in sentiment, which coaches may recognize qualitatively but which NLP allows us to systemically track. By and large, this conversation between the co-founders indicated positive sentiment. While not included in this figure, we can also map coach sentiment along with co-founder sentiment.

Figure 1

Sentiment Evolution Throughout Co-Founder Conversation

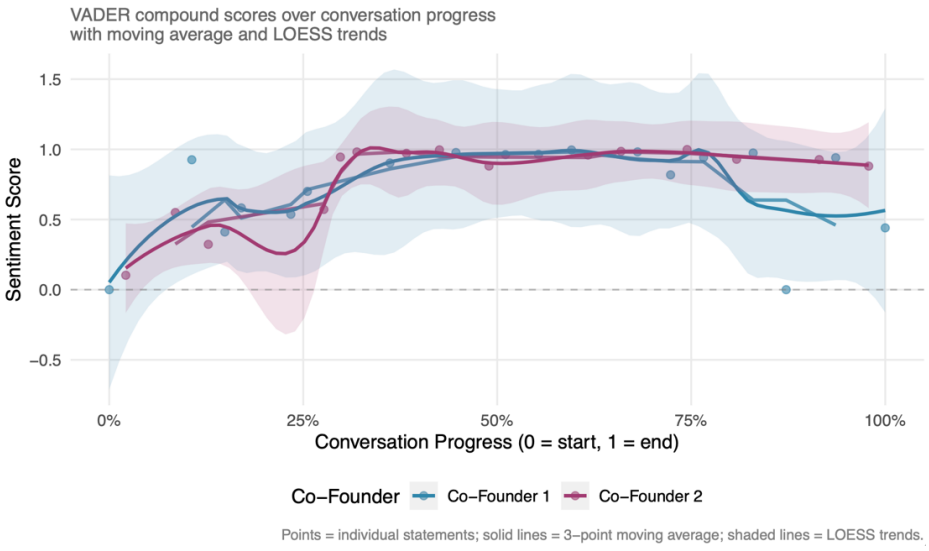
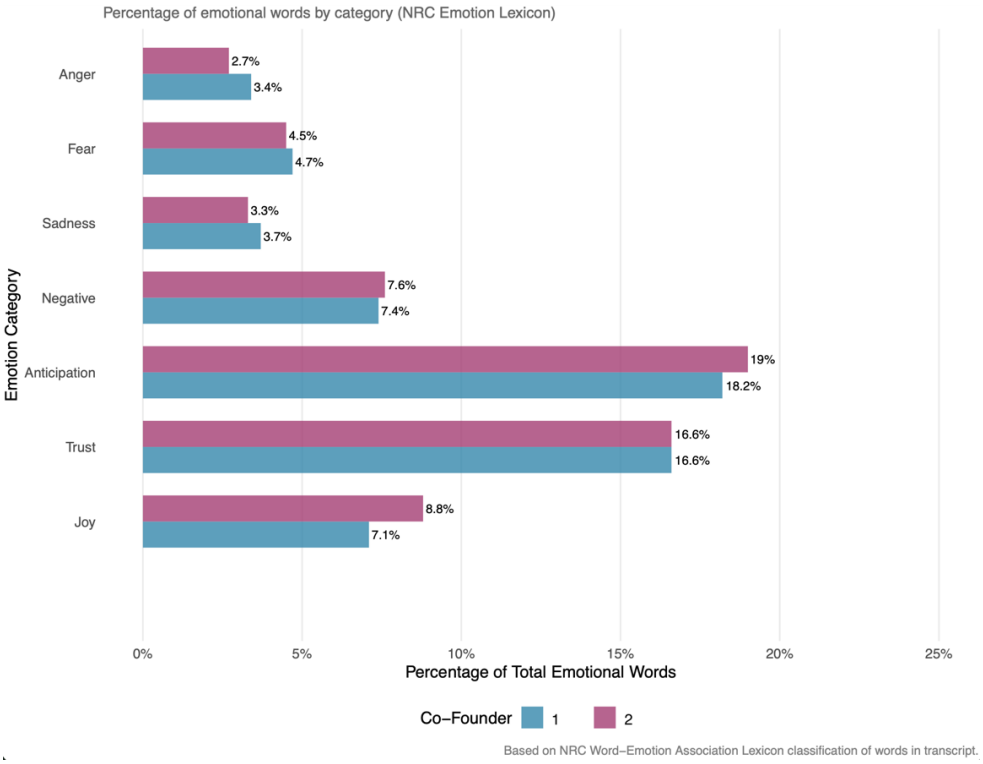


Figure 2 complements this by showing the top emotional categories expressed by each co-founder, based on the widely-employed NRC emotion lexicon that measures words associated with common emotions. The comparison illuminates how co-founders may emphasize different emotions in conversation, and how these emotions are similar or different across co-founders.

[2] The conversation used for this stylistic example comes from a publicly available podcast conversation with one of the co-authors of this paper and two co-founders: "How I Met My Co-Founder: The Podcast." While this data is not the setting of this paper, we include this as an example of what we expect our NLP analysis results to look like.

Figure 2

Emotional Profile Comparison Between Co-Founders



How does coaching influence founding team dynamics?

Pre- and post-program survey responses demonstrate improvements in psychological safety across multiple dimensions. The most substantial increases occurred in founders' ability to "bring up problems and tough issues with their team," with average scores increasing from 3.2 to 4.1 on a 5-point scale. Co-founders also reported increased comfort with risk-taking (3.0 to 3.8), asking for help (3.1 to 3.9), and feeling that their unique abilities were utilized (2.9 to 3.7).

However, responses also reveal counterintuitive results that illustrate the complexity of team dynamics. Post-program surveys showed increases in perceptions that "team members hold mistakes against one another" (2.1 to 2.8) and that "team members sometimes reject others for being different" (1.9 to 2.6). Rather than indicating coaching failure, qualitative findings suggests these increases reflect productive tension—coaching created space for previously unspoken conflicts to surface. Qualitative findings reveals that participants reported feeling better equipped to manage disagreements, suggesting that short-term discomfort may precede long-term trust and clarity. This pattern emerged across multiple teams, suggesting that effective team coaching may initially increase awareness of conflict while building capabilities to manage it constructively.

How do co-founders engage in symbolic alignment work?

Preliminary qualitative findings suggest that teams engage in productive symbolic alignment work across three phases. First in *symbolic exploration*, founders primarily engaged in articulating and surfacing different cultural assumptions. These expressions sometimes resulted in surprise at one another's underlying differences in approaches to aspects of work. Second, in *active negotiation*, founders moved into actively constructing and negotiating shared meanings and approaches. These sessions often involved tension and disagreement as founders worked to build common agreements and understandings. Finally, in *stabilized alignment*, teams that successfully engaged in symbolic alignment work demonstrated constructed agreement characterized by shared language and frameworks while maintaining individual perspectives. The alignment appeared stable but not rigid such that founders could apply their constructed frameworks to new situations.

In future analyses, our semantic embedding will provide insight into how symbolic alignment work unfolds linguistically during cultural construction processes. By tracking founders' positions in multidimensional semantic space across coaching sessions, we can quantify when active symbolic alignment work is occurring versus when founders are avoiding or deferring cultural construction. We will also look at specific linguistic markers such as construction language, negotiation phrases, and ownership language.

Our preliminary analysis reveals patterns consistent with cultural spawning theory, but with crucial extensions that illuminate the active construction processes. Rather than simply transferring cultural elements from previous organizations, founders actively use their diverse organizational experiences as "construction materials" for building new cultural frameworks. Teams do not appear to simply blend their backgrounds but rather engaged in active symbolic work to construct new cultural solutions that transcended their individual experiences. This finding challenges the cultural spawning perspective by showing how successful culture formation requires active symbolic construction work rather than passive transfer or blending of existing cultural elements.

Building on the cultural spawning insights, our preliminary qualitative analysis reveals how coaching interventions helped teams transform potential cultural conflicts into organizational strengths. Teams participating in the structured curriculum developed more explicit communication norms, clearer decision-making processes, and stronger conflict resolution capabilities compared to historical patterns described in pre-program interviews and survey results. The coaching program's emphasis on the Gottman-Rapoport Intervention (Gottman, 2008) proved particularly effective in helping teams navigate cultural construction challenges. Unlike established organizations with embedded cultural patterns, startup teams could more readily adopt new communication frameworks because their organizational culture was still forming. However, the cultural spawning perspective reveals that this process involved active negotiation between different cultural templates rather than creation from a blank slate.

Some teams experienced significant organizational changes during or shortly after the coaching program, including one co-founder departure. Notably, exit interviews revealed that even in cases where relationships ultimately proved incompatible, the coaching process enabled more productive separation conversations and clearer understanding of fundamental differences, potentially preventing more damaging conflicts later in venture development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research demonstrates how organizational culture is actively created through situated construction processes that can be observed, measured, and facilitated through AI-enhanced coaching interventions. Our findings suggest how the integration of human coaching expertise with AI analytical capabilities can illuminate and support the symbolic alignment work through which founders construct organizational culture.

We find that organizational culture does not emerge naturally but requires active symbolic alignment work—the ongoing negotiation processes through which founders construct shared meanings, practices, and understandings. This extends traditional organizational culture theories that treat culture as emerging from founder attributes or team composition, revealing instead that culture is dynamically constructed through situated interactions that require explicit attention and benefit from facilitation. Our research also extends the Tuckman team development model by showing how structured coaching interventions can alter the traditional storming-norming progression. Without coaching support, founding teams typically experience decreased effectiveness when negotiating cultural differences (i.e., Tuckman's storming phase). The coaching intervention appears to enable teams to maintain higher effectiveness during cultural negotiation processes while accelerating progression to stable norm formation through structured symbolic alignment work. Our research suggests that effective cultural construction involves productive symbolic tension—founders must surface and actively negotiate their different cultural assumptions rather than avoiding conflicts or assuming natural alignment will occur. This extends Ahn and Greve's (2024) cultural spawning theory by showing that successful startup teams do not simply transfer or blend existing cultural elements but engage in active construction work to create new cultural frameworks suited to their unique environments.

Our research contributes to organization theory and entrepreneurship literatures by demonstrating how AI-enhanced pattern recognition can illuminate the situated construction processes through which organizational culture is actively made. The ability to track semantic complexity and distance patterns, identify symbolic alignment work through linguistic markers, and measure cultural construction processes in real-time provides researchers and practitioners with unprecedented insight into how culture actually forms in nascent organizations. Our study points to several promising avenues for future research. Future research should explore how cultural spawning patterns vary across different industries and founder backgrounds, and investigate which contested cultural dimensions create the most innovative versus most dysfunctional startup environments. Longitudinal studies tracking teams over multiple years would provide valuable insights into the durability of multidimensional cultural integration achieved through coaching interventions. Researchers should also examine how different AI analytical approaches might enhance coaching effectiveness in multidimensional cultural integration processes, including advanced embedding techniques that can capture more nuanced aspects of cultural dimension construction and negotiation patterns that reflect different organizational cultures. The semantic embedding methodology presented here represents a novel methodological approach and could be further developed to create standardized assessment tools that coaches can use to track cultural dimension integration in real-time.

This study also provides implications for startup team coaches. Coaches may benefit from adopting an approach that explicitly supports founders' symbolic alignment work rather than assuming culture will emerge naturally. Our findings suggest that coaches should help founders recognize when they are avoiding cultural construction work and provide structured processes for engaging in productive symbolic tension around cultural differences. Coaches should explicitly assess not just founders' organizational backgrounds but also their assumptions about culture formation itself. Many founders expect culture to "just happen" and may resist engaging in explicit symbolic alignment work. Coaching interventions should normalize cultural construction as active work that requires ongoing attention and negotiation. Coaches should also consider integrating AI-driven semantic analysis into their practice to identify when symbolic alignment work is occurring versus when teams are avoiding cultural construction. However, these tools should supplement human facilitation of the symbolic work itself, which requires nuanced understanding of the meanings founders are trying to construct together.

Finally, this study provides practical implications for organizations. Organizations supporting startup ecosystems, such as investment firms, should consider structured team coaching as a preventive intervention, particularly during the critical early stages when organizational culture is being established. This may prevent more costly founder conflicts later in venture development. Startup accelerators and incubators could explore incorporating AI-enhanced team assessments into their programming, using these insights to provide more targeted support for founding teams at different stages of development.

This research opens new possibilities for the evolution of coaching practice in an era where human expertise and artificial intelligence can be strategically combined to create more effective interventions. As startup teams continue to drive innovation and economic growth, the coaching field has an opportunity to continue to develop sophisticated, evidence-based approaches to supporting these critical relationships during the formative stages of venture development.

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Hybrid intelligence: Ai for Leadership Optimization (HALO)

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Abstract: Executive coaching increasingly leverages artificial intelligence to enhance personalization and effectiveness. This paper presents HALO (Hybrid intelligence: Ai for Leadership Optimization) a hybrid intelligence framework that combines AI analysis of professional conversations with human coaching expertise to deliver targeted leadership development. Through a detailed case study of an executive recruiter, we demonstrate how AI agents can analyze 136,000 tokens of professional dialogue to generate personalized, hybrid-intelligence informed coaching assets that inform human-delivered coaching sessions. The HALO framework advances current AI coaching literature by utilizing authentic professional conversation data rather than self-reported assessments, enabling real-world behavioral pattern recognition that informs personalized coaching interventions. Unlike existing AI coaching tools that focus primarily on chatbot interactions or survey-based insights, HALO integrates multi-agent AI analysis of actual workplace conversations with human coaching expertise to create data-driven coaching assets. Findings suggest high client acceptance of AI-enhanced coaching and improved coaching efficiency, while identifying key areas for methodological refinement. Key limitations include the single case study design and focus on external client interactions without organizational context integration. Future research should examine longitudinal outcomes across diverse populations and explore enhanced organizational data integration to improve coaching relevance and applicability.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence, Executive Coaching, AI-Enhanced Coaching, Leadership Selection, Talent Acquisition

Introduction

This paper represents a Specialized Practice Area submission that directly addresses the 2025 conference theme, "High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence." The integration of artificial intelligence with human expertise in executive coaching presents unprecedented opportunities to enhance the precision, efficiency, and impact of leadership development interventions.

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Executive hiring failures impose significant financial, cultural, and opportunity costs on organizations, often stemming from misalignments in role definition, candidate selection, and integration processes. The cost of replacing a manager within 6-12 months of their hire is 2.3 times the person's annual salary, according to Korn Ferry research, with senior executive replacement costs potentially reaching $1 million or more (Korn Ferry, 2023). The evolution of coaching technology has progressed from basic assessment tools and scheduling platforms to sophisticated AI applications including chatbot-based coaching support, natural language processing for session analysis, and machine learning-driven personality assessments. Current AI coaching tools typically fall into three categories: standalone AI coaching platforms that provide automated guidance, hybrid systems that combine AI chatbots with human oversight, and assessment-focused tools that use AI to analyze survey responses or standardized inputs. HALO represents a fourth-generation approach that uniquely leverages authentic professional conversation data—actual workplace interactions rather than simulated or self-reported content—to generate personalized coaching insights while maintaining human coaches as the primary relationship and intervention delivery mechanism. The HALO framework addresses these challenges by leveraging AI analysis of professional conversations to inform targeted coaching interventions that support both executive selection and leadership development.

This paper demonstrates the practical application of hybrid intelligence through a detailed case study of an executive (founder/CEO) at a healthcare executive recruiting firm, showing how AI-generated coaching assets can enhance human coaching effectiveness. The methodology allows an expert coach to deliver analysis by AI agents to create a scalable approach for leadership development that maintains the essential human elements of coaching while augmenting practitioner capabilities with data-driven insights.

Target audiences including executive coaches, HR professionals, recruiters, and organizational development leaders and practitioners will benefit from understanding how hybrid intelligence can be implemented in coaching practice. Researchers will gain insights into emerging methodologies at the intersection of artificial intelligence and human development. The paper proceeds through a comprehensive literature review, methodology, case study findings, and practical recommendations for implementation.

Methodology

This study employed a single case study design using mixed qualitative methods to examine the effectiveness of the HALO hybrid intelligence framework in executive coaching practice. The research approach integrated AI analysis of professional conversations with human-delivered, AI-supported coaching, followed by systematic feedback collection to evaluate both process effectiveness and client experience.

Data collection occurred between September 9, 2024, and November 11, 2024, encompassing six transcripts of Client A's professional work as CEO/founder of a boutique executive recruiting firm. These transcripts represented 136,000 tokens of conversational data captured during authentic professional interactions, including conversations with hiring teams and candidates during active executive search processes. Additional data sources included a structured job description based on field gold standards for executive recruiting competencies, a

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30-minute coaching session recording, and a third-party, 30-minute structured interview/debrief of the session with the CEO.

The AI analysis process utilized a proprietary interface incorporating multiple large language models organized into specialized agents: a HALO coach, a coaching data analyst, and a prompt engineer. This multi-agent system enabled iterative training of the platform on relevant coaching data and continuous improvement of coaching recommendations based on user feedback. The AI agents analyzed conversational data across four established quotients: Emotional, Communication, Domain, and Professionalism, extracting behavioral insights and generating personalized coaching priorities.

The prioritization process was developed through a structured behavioral science framework, where domain experts (behavioral scientists) established five core coaching priorities based on established principles emphasizing emotional intelligence, empathy, and evidence-based communication and therapy modalities. AI agents were then systematically prompted with expert-designed guidance to analyze conversation transcripts for these predetermined priority areas. Multiple large language models from leading providers (Anthropic, Google, and OpenAI) powered specialized AI agents that extracted and synthesized insights from the available transcript data according to the expert-defined framework. The collected insights were subsequently processed by a secondary AI agent specifically designed to generate coaching assets and facilitate coaching conversations based on the behavioral patterns and development opportunities identified by the initial analysis agent.

Human-AI integration occurred through expert coach utilization of an AI-generated coaching asset during a structured 30-minute coaching session. The coaching asset provided specific developmental priorities, identified behavioral patterns, and suggested coaching approaches, which the ICF-curriculum trained human coach used to guide the coaching conversation while maintaining authentic coaching presence and responsiveness.

Data verification involved expert review by a board-certified behavioral science specialist who compared AI-generated analyses to original transcript content, ensuring accuracy and relevance of insights. Post-session feedback was collected through two separate debrief interviews to evaluate client experience, coaching effectiveness, and areas for methodological improvement.

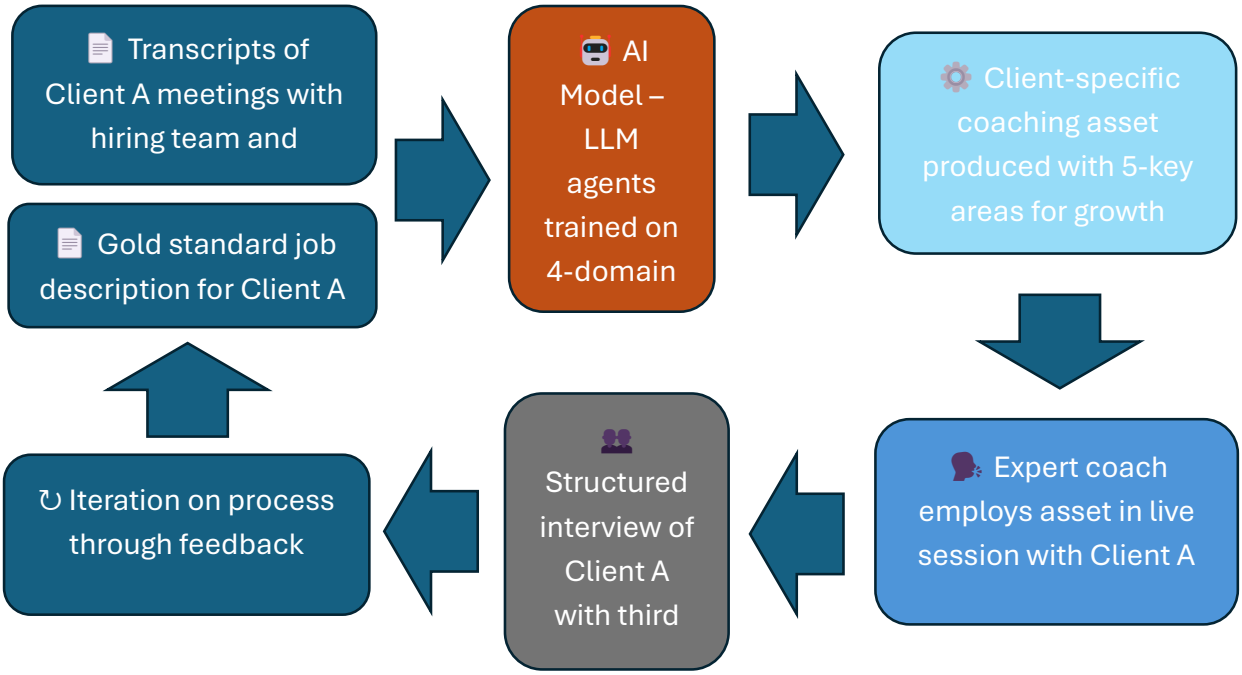
This single case study design provides a framework for the application of a hybrid intelligence coaching process. The next phase of our work will focus on expanding the sample size to improve generalizability across different contexts, industries, and client populations, representing an important methodological consideration for interpreting findings.

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Figure 1:

HALO Coaching Process Flow

Multi-agent AI analyzes professional conversation data to create coaching assets for human-delivered sessions with continuous feedback-driven improvement.



Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Areas of Literature Review

Hybrid Intelligence in Coaching.

Hybrid Intelligence is defined as "the ability to achieve complex goals by the intentional integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence to reach superior results that neither could accomplish alone and to continuously improve by learning from each other" (Maltbia, 2024). This concept, characterized by a triad of collaboration, complementarity, and adaptation, provides a valuable framework for enhancing executive coaching in an era of rapid technological advancement.

Recent literature highlights the growing role and potential of AI in coaching practice. Passmore, Olafsson, and Tee (2025) conducted a systematic literature review revealing

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increasing interest in AI applications across coaching domains, while Terblanche (2024) explored specific checkpoints where AI coaching can be applied through the lifecycle of a coaching relationship. Emerging examples of blended human-AI coaching include Arakawa and Yakura's (2024) "Coaching Copilot" that combines LLM-powered chatbots with human coaches to support leadership self-reflection.

A critical distinction differentiates HALO from existing hybrid AI coaching models: while tools like Coaching Copilot and similar systems typically rely on self-reported survey responses, simulated scenarios, or structured assessment inputs, HALO uniquely analyzes authentic professional conversation transcripts captured during real workplace interactions. This data type distinction is significant because self-reported assessments may reflect perceived behaviors or aspirational responses rather than actual behavioral patterns, while authentic conversation data reveals how leaders actually communicate, make decisions, and manage relationships in professional contexts.

The HALO system embodies the three characteristics of hybrid intelligence: it fosters collaboration as AI synthesizes behavioral data for human review and refinement; demonstrates complementarity by leveraging AI's analytical capabilities alongside human strategic insight and emotional intelligence; and proves adaptive by dynamically adjusting coaching priorities based on ongoing dialogue and feedback.

Executive Coaching Effectiveness.

Foundational coaching frameworks provide structure for leadership development interventions. Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, and Whitworth (2018) established co-active coaching principles that emphasize partnership, authenticity, and client-driven agenda setting. Evidence-based research demonstrates coaching effectiveness: Passmore and Peterson (2023) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis showing significant effects of executive coaching on behaviors, attitudes, and personal characteristics, providing empirical support for coaching's impact on leadership development outcomes. Additionally, Nicolau et al. (2023) demonstrated benefits specifically on self-efficacy, psychological capital, and resilience, indicating that executive coaching can produce change even on dimensions considered relatively stable over time.

Behavioral science principles reveal how cognitive biases can hinder effective decision-making in leadership contexts, making objective assessment tools increasingly valuable. Research demonstrates that cognitive biases such as overconfidence, confirmation bias, and availability bias significantly impact professional decision-making across management contexts (Fiedler, 2022), while the Harvard Business Review identifies pattern recognition and emotional tagging as critical but potentially flawed processes in leadership decision-making (Campbell et al., 2009). The integration of validated assessment frameworks with coaching practice enhances both diagnostic accuracy and intervention targeting, with psychometric assessments providing structured approaches to understanding personality traits and behavioral tendencies that support more targeted coaching interventions (van Zyl et al., 2021).

Leadership Selection and Integration Challenges.

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Executive hiring represents a high-stakes organizational process where failure imposes substantial costs. Tarki (2020) advocates for evidence-based recruiting approaches, arguing that organizations can achieve better hiring outcomes through systematic and repeatable practices, though further empirical research is needed to quantify these benefits across diverse organizational contexts.

Leadership integration challenges extend beyond initial selection to encompass onboarding, role clarity, and performance acceleration. Multiple research studies indicate that executive transition failure rates are substantial: Heidrick & Struggles analysis of 20,000 executive placements found that 40% of senior executives are pushed out, fail, or quit within 18 months (Kelly, cited in Financial Times), while the Corporate Executive Board found that nearly 50% of externally hired C-suite leaders fail within their first 18 months. Effective coaching during leadership transitions can significantly impact both individual effectiveness and organizational outcomes, with research showing that skilled transition coaches can reduce the time for newly hired executives to become fully effective by up to 50% (Watkins et al., 2025), making the intersection of hiring and coaching particularly valuable for organizational success.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The HALO framework synthesizes these literature streams into an integrated approach that combines AI-powered behavioral analysis with human coaching expertise. The theoretical foundation rests on four key principles:

Multi-Dimensional Assessment: The framework employs a four-quotient model encompassing Emotional (self-awareness, empathy, relationship management), Communication (inquiry skills, adaptability, clarity), Domain (technical expertise, industry knowledge, role-specific competencies), and Professionalism (strategic thinking, accountability, systems orientation) dimensions. This comprehensive approach ensures coaching addresses both technical and interpersonal leadership requirements.

Table 2:

Four-Quotient model for leadership assessment

Emotional Quotient -	**Communication Quotient** -
• Conscientiousness • Fit between personality traits of candidate and role (5 factor model) • Fit between personality traits of candidate and culture of org (5 factor model)	• Speaks clearly • Speaks concisely • Demonstrates understanding of context • Active listening

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• 4 Domains of EQ - Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management • Context/Data Source - NVC, use of positive action language, harmonious feelings versus unharmonious feelings	• Adapting communication to target audience • Answers questions • Context/Data Source - Interview responses
Domain Quotient - ability to do the job • Knowledge and understanding of job and responsibilities • Previous experience successfully achieving these tasks • Context/Data Source - Resume, LinkedIn, References, interview responses to technical questions, sample task	**Professionalism Quotient** - • Conscientiousness • Accountability • Dependability • Decision-making • Strategic Thinking • Adaptability

Data-Driven Personalization: By analyzing authentic professional conversations rather than self-reported assessments, the framework captures behavioral patterns in real-world contexts, providing coaching insights grounded in actual performance rather than perceived capabilities or intentions.

Human-AI Collaboration: The system maintains human coaches as the primary relationship and intervention delivery mechanism while augmenting their capabilities with AI-generated insights. This preserves the essential relational elements of coaching while enhancing diagnostic precision and intervention targeting.

Iterative Improvement: The multi-agent AI system enables continuous refinement of coaching recommendations based on user feedback and outcome data, supporting evidence-based enhancement of the coaching methodology over time.

Findings

Case Study Context

Client A serves as CEO of a boutique executive recruiting firm specializing in healthcare leadership placements. Her professional context involves complex stakeholder management across hiring teams, candidates, and organizational decision-makers, requiring sophisticated

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communication skills, deep domain expertise, and strategic business acumen. The case study data encompassed six authentic professional conversations captured between September and November 2024, representing real-world interactions during active executive search processes.

The business challenge facing Client A involved scaling her organization while maintaining the relationship quality and personalized service that differentiated her firm in a competitive market. This tension between operational excellence and strategic growth represents a common challenge for founder-led professional services organizations, making her case particularly relevant for understanding how hybrid intelligence coaching can address complex leadership development needs.

AI Analysis Results

The AI agents analyzed Client A's professional conversations across four quotients, generating specific insights supported by transcript evidence. This analysis revealed distinctive patterns in her professional behavior and identified targeted areas for coaching intervention. We provide concrete examples in the **Domain Quotient** and **Communication Quotient** sections to offer the reader insights into how the AI models translated transcripts into specific coaching assets, while limiting examples in the other sections for brevity.

Domain Quotient Findings.

The AI system recognized Client A's deep healthcare technology expertise while identifying potential for broader market influence. For example, her technical expertise was demonstrated through sophisticated understanding of SaaS business models and CFO requirements when questioning candidates: *"So, like, have you worked deeply with, like, SaaS pricing?"* followed by detailed discussion of recurring revenue models and audit requirements. Her abilities were further evident as she provided detailed, nuanced explanations of client companies' platforms using concrete examples:

> *So, if you got the materials, you know that, Healthcare Company Y is a client of theirs... So Healthcare Company Y is really building Company X into almost all of their healthcare strategy.*

The analysis identified exceptional operational execution combined with limited strategic business positioning. In client meetings, Client A focused primarily on immediate candidate needs and logistics rather than broader market trends or firm positioning strategies. Additionally, she personally conducted detailed candidate interviews and managed day-to-day search logistics, suggesting potential over-involvement in execution versus strategic development.

Communication Quotient Findings.

The analysis revealed significant communication strengths, particularly in inquiry and listening capabilities, though these strengths were not being leveraged for broader market presence. Such skills were demonstrated through open-ended, candidate-centered questions: *"So what questions do you have about the Company X opportunity?"* and *"What are you really looking for?"* before providing information.

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Her open exploration and comfort with silence allowed natural conversation flow, giving space for detailed responses about career motivations and technical experience without rushing to the next topic. She exhibited empathy and recognition of unspoken dynamics when she picked up on a CEO's scheduling stress and candidate's time constraints, proactively offering solutions: *"Because, like, you know, you're going to be so busy, do we want to just punt to the next week?"*

Emotional Quotient Findings.

High empathy emerged as both a strength and potential challenge, contributing to over-functioning in client relationships. The analysis identified strong relationship management skills coupled with patterns suggesting emotional over-investment in client outcomes. Her natural attunement to others' needs and emotions enhanced her effectiveness in stakeholder management while potentially compromising her own boundaries and well-being.

Her emotional intelligence extended to recognizing broader patterns of candidate fatigue and market sentiment, as she observed:

> *I think some of these guys and gals are tired. I think that they are actually really tired. And [to Company X CEO] and when they look at Company X, they're like, God, it looks so cool. But is it going to be the same experience that I'm dealing with here?"*

This demonstrates her ability to read emotional undercurrents in her talent pool and understand how candidate emotions influence decision-making processes. Her empathetic perspective-taking allowed her to anticipate candidate concerns and address underlying motivational factors beyond surface-level qualifications.

Professionalism Quotient Findings.

The analysis revealed over-commitment patterns where client needs consistently received priority over personal sustainability. Strong individual systems were identified as requiring enhancement for business scale, with particular attention needed for delegation frameworks and strategic boundary-setting.

Her commitment to thorough follow-through was evident in proactive problem-solving around process details, such as when she stated:

> *So, he's wanting to understand the equity a little bit more. And, like, I'm assuming that... What is the vesting? Is it a four year vesting with a one year cliff?... I will email [Candidate] and let him know after, when we get off the phone.*

This pattern showed her systematic approach to closing informational gaps and ensuring stakeholder alignment, though it also highlighted her tendency to personally manage detailed logistics that could potentially be delegated as her business scales.

Coaching Asset Development

Based on the AI analysis, the system generated five priority coaching areas with specific developmental approaches:

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Strategic Vision Development (Domain Quotient Focus) addressed the gap between exceptional operational execution and limited strategic business positioning. The coaching approach involved exploring shifts from domain expertise application to market leadership, examining beliefs about delegation versus personal involvement, and developing strategic thinking practices leveraging her healthcare technology knowledge for broader influence.

Sustainable Leadership Practices (Professionalism Quotient Focus) targeted over-commitment patterns prioritizing client needs over personal sustainability. Coaching approaches included investigating values underlying current work patterns, exploring boundaries maintaining excellence while preserving well-being, and developing decision-making frameworks for sustainable client engagement.

Thought Leadership Platform (Communication Quotient Expansion) focused on leveraging strong inquiry and listening skills for broader market presence. The approach involved building on existing communication strengths to develop public voice, exploring resistance to visibility, and creating content strategies showcasing domain expertise through her natural communication style.

Team Dynamics & Delegation (Emotional Quotient Application) addressed how high empathy might contribute to over-functioning in client relationships. Coaching approaches included examining emotional patterns around responsibility and client care, exploring team role distribution, and developing emotionally intelligent delegation practices.

Systems Optimization for Scale (Integration Across All Quotients) represented the integrative coaching priority, focusing on identity shifts from expert practitioner to business leader, examining systematization through values and long-term vision, and developing scalable processes maintaining relationship quality.

Coaching Session Implementation

The human coach utilized the AI-generated coaching asset during a structured 30-minute coaching session, demonstrating effective integration of data-driven insights with authentic coaching presence. The session maintained a collaborative, client-driven approach while strategically incorporating AI-identified priorities and behavioral patterns.

Client A responded with high engagement and recognition, frequently validating AI insights with statements like *"That's 1000%"* when discussing emotional over-investment patterns. The coaching conversation generated concrete action items, particularly around administrative delegation and boundary-setting with clients. The client identified immediate next steps including hiring an administrative assistant and redistributing responsibilities to existing team members.

The hybrid approach enabled efficient coaching focus while maintaining authentic relational dynamics. The coach could reference specific behavioral patterns without extensive exploration, allowing more time for action planning and commitment building. Client A

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demonstrated strong ownership of developmental priorities and expressed confidence in the coaching direction.

Post-Session Feedback Analysis

Client Experience Feedback.

Client A reported high satisfaction with the AI-enhanced coaching approach, noting that

> *"I different because there's actual real data around it. Whereas before when I've used a coach, it's more conversational. Whereas this had meaningful data around my behaviors, which I thought was fascinating."*

She found the coaching recommendations accurate and relevant to her actual needs, particularly appreciating how the analysis revealed patterns she intellectually knew but had not fully addressed.

The visibility and resistance themes resonated strongly, with Client A acknowledging:

> *"Something that really came out is my resistance to visibility. And that is very much truth telling right now that I do have this issue with being visible."*

She also expressed comfort with the AI involvement, viewing it as

> *"...more of... I want this to be a mirror, like my twin... but supercharged with the brains of a psychiatrist or with behavioral science."*

Areas for Improvement Identified.

Client A identified several enhancement opportunities for the hybrid coaching approach. She requested more concrete, actionable insights with specific transcript examples to support coaching recommendations. The feedback revealed a preference for deeper exploration of identified themes, moving beyond pattern recognition to specific skill development strategies.

A significant limitation emerged regarding organizational context integration. While the AI analysis effectively captured behavioral patterns from client-facing conversations, it lacked insight into organizational dynamics internal to Client A's own firm, workflow patterns, and broader business context that could be derived from diverse sources (e.g. email, Slack, CRM tools, etc.) and would enhance coaching relevance and applicability.

Validation of Hybrid Approach.

The case study demonstrated strong client acceptance of AI-enhanced coaching among technology-adopters, with Client A expressing willingness to have coaching sessions themselves recorded and analyzed for continuous improvement. She valued the data-driven foundation while maintaining appreciation for human coaching expertise in processing and applying insights.

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Client A also believed that the hybrid approach demonstrated potential for addressing isolation experienced by independent practitioners, providing external perspective and expertise that might otherwise be unavailable. Client A noted the value of having

> *"Anybody we can talk to because a lot of us are independent and have small shops but can learn from all this data."*

Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Messages.

The HALO framework demonstrates successful integration of AI analysis with human coaching expertise, creating a hybrid intelligence approach that enhances coaching precision and efficiency while maintaining essential relational elements. The case study reveals high client acceptance of AI-enhanced coaching among technology-adopters, with particular appreciation for data-driven insights grounded in actual behavioral patterns rather than self-reported assessments.

AI-generated coaching assets proved highly personalized and relevant when based on authentic professional conversations, enabling coaches to focus session time on application and action planning rather than extensive exploration and assessment. The multi-quotient analysis framework provided comprehensive coverage of leadership competencies while generating specific, actionable developmental priorities aligned with business needs.

The hybrid approach addresses a critical gap in professional services sectors where independent practitioners often lack access to sophisticated assessment tools and external perspective. By combining AI analytical capabilities with human coaching expertise, the methodology offers scalable access to high-quality leadership development resources.

However, the study also revealed important areas for enhancement, particularly around organizational context integration and the provision of specific behavioral examples to support coaching recommendations. These findings point toward future directions that could significantly enhance the framework's effectiveness and client value.

Future research should prioritize controlled comparative studies examining AI-enhanced versus traditional coaching approaches, measuring outcomes through validated metrics including leadership effectiveness scales, 360-degree feedback improvements, goal attainment scaling, and objective performance indicators such as team engagement scores and business results. Specific metrics for evaluating hybrid coaching effectiveness should encompass both process measures (session efficiency, insight accuracy, client engagement) and outcome measures (behavioral change sustainability, skill development acceleration, and return on coaching investment) to establish evidence-based standards for hybrid intelligence coaching implementation.

Conference Theme Connection.

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This paper offers a framework for applying hybrid intelligence in coaching practice, showing how artificial intelligence and human expertise can be intentionally integrated to achieve superior coaching outcomes that neither could accomplish alone. The HALO framework exemplifies high-impact coaching by enabling precise targeting of developmental priorities based on behavioral evidence, resulting in efficient coaching sessions with clear action planning and strong client commitment.

The case study illustrates practical implementation of hybrid intelligence principles: collaboration through AI synthesis of complex behavioral data for human interpretation, complementarity through combining AI analytical capabilities with human coaching skills, and adaptation through iterative improvement based on client feedback and outcome data.

Recommendations.

For Coaches: Executive coaches should consider integrating AI analysis tools to enhance coaching preparation and diagnostic accuracy, while developing competencies in hybrid intelligence methodologies that preserve essential human coaching elements. Training in AI-supported coaching approaches can improve efficiency and personalization while maintaining authentic coaching relationships. Coaches should also assess client comfort levels with technology integration and adapt their approach accordingly.

For Researchers: Future research should examine longitudinal coaching outcomes comparing hybrid intelligence approaches with traditional coaching methodologies across diverse populations and contexts. Multi-case studies across different industries and leadership levels would enhance understanding of framework applicability and effectiveness. Investigation of optimal human-AI collaboration ratios and interaction patterns could inform best practices for hybrid coaching implementation.

Research into organizational context integration represents a particularly important direction, as effective coaching increasingly requires understanding of systemic factors beyond individual behavioral patterns. Studies examining how AI systems can incorporate workflow data, organizational culture information, and broader business context would significantly advance the field.

For Educators and Trainers: Coach education programs should incorporate hybrid intelligence methodologies into curriculum design, preparing practitioners for AI-enhanced coaching environments while maintaining focus on core coaching competencies. Training programs should address both technical aspects of AI integration and ethical considerations around data privacy, client consent, and appropriate use of technology in coaching relationships.

For Professional Associations: Professional coaching organizations should develop comprehensive ethical guidelines addressing data security for transcript-based AI training, explicit client consent for conversation analysis, model transparency requirements, and appropriate technology integration boundaries. These guidelines should establish standards for data encryption, retention policies, and client rights regarding their conversational data, particularly given the sensitive organizational context

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of leadership coaching. Standards for hybrid intelligence coaching certification could ensure quality and consistency across practitioners while supporting client confidence in AI-enhanced coaching approaches.

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We warrant that given our paper, experiential session, demonstration or panel proposal is accepted, we will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. We agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. We understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025, our presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. We also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is our responsibility, and we understand that the document will be returned to us if it does not meet those specifications.

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Hybrid AI-Human Coaching: A New Conceptual Model of Design Dimensions

Amber S. Barger, Teachers College, Columbia University

Abstract: This article introduces a conceptual model for AI-human coaching to address the emerging intersection of artificial intelligence and human coaching practices. The model organizes ten design dimensions across three perspectives: system enablers, interaction mechanisms, and client experience. A concept map, framework, and continuum of types illustrate how configurations vary from fully AI-driven to fully human-driven coaching. The model advances coaching theory and practice by enabling systematic analysis of hybrid coaching models.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence, Professional Coaching, Artificial Intelligence, Conceptual Model

Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is transforming professional development practices, including the field of coaching. While coaching has traditionally been defined by a one-to-one, relational, and goal-directed process, new technologies are enabling AI systems to participate in functions once reserved for human coaches. This convergence creates both opportunities and challenges, raising critical questions about how AI and human contributions can be combined to maximize developmental impact. Despite growing interest, current scholarship lacks a comprehensive model for conceptualizing the design of AI-human coaching.

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to develop a conceptual model that organizes and explains the design dimensions shaping AI–human coaching models. The framework seeks to provide analytic clarity, enable systematic comparison, and offer a foundation for future empirical investigation.

The development process followed established guidance on theory construction and model building. Consistent with Jaccard and Jacoby (2019), an iterative and creative approach was employed with attention given to systematic construct definition. Early stages involved broad idea generation, using heuristic strategies such as analogy and thought experimentation to surface novel ways of conceptualizing AI-human coaching models. Each design dimension was then subjected to construct definition to distinguish between overlapping concepts and specify operational boundaries. In keeping with Jaccard and Jacoby's emphasis on model revision, this can be treated as provisional and subject to refinement through additional piloting to allow categories to be adjusted as insights accumulate.

The conceptual model was further informed by typology scholarship. Bailey (1994) emphasizes the importance of polythetic classification—categories defined by overlapping sets of attributes rather than a single essential feature. Building on this foundation, Aldrich and Ruef

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(2006) extend typological thinking into an evolutionary perspective and conceptualize organizational forms as adaptive and dynamic configurations. This orientation guided the identification of types across the AI-human continuum, where each type is understood as a configuration of multiple design dimensions rather than a fixed categorical type. Following this evolutionary logic, the model conceptualizes these configurations as dynamic rather than static, capable of adaptation as AI technological capabilities and organizational needs evolve. In this way, the model is positioned as both analytically rigorous and theoretically flexible to account for emergent and shifting forms of AI-human coaching practice.

Accordingly, the primary research question guiding this work is: *What configurations of design dimensions define AI-human hybrid coaching, and how could these configurations vary along a continuum from fully AI-driven to fully human-driven approaches?*

Literature Review

This literature review grounds the paper by providing definitions of professional coaching and artificial intelligence coaching. Then it covers emerging AI-human coaching models and relevant factors that influence client use of AI coaches. Finally, it presents a novel definition of hybrid-intelligent coaching.

Definition of Coaching

Coaching can be summarized as a collaborative, systematic, goal-directed, and individualized developmental partnership aimed at clients' personal and professional growth. Early and influential writings emphasize cultivating clients' capacity to perform at their best (Whitmore, 1992), structuring a formally contracted helping relationship to pursue shared goals with organizational benefit (Kilburg, 2000), and facilitating results through a structured process for non-clinical populations (Grant, 2003). Smither (2011) describes coaching as a one-to-one, custom-tailored learning and development intervention grounded in a collaborative working alliance to help individuals attain professional goals. Boyatzis and colleagues further crystallize the construct as "a facilitative or helping relationship with the purpose of achieving some type of change, learning, or new level of individual and organizational performance" (Boyatzis et al., 2019, p. 15).

Contemporary summaries converge on coaching as both relationship- and methodology-based, tailored to the individual, and oriented toward outcomes at multiple levels (Peterson, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Flaherty, 2010; International Coaching Federation [ICF], 2018). Looking at the importance of the coach-client relationship, the working alliance is repeatedly identified as a key mechanism of change (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), with trust, rapport, collaboration, and open communication operating as prerequisites for effectiveness and mediating links to self-efficacy and development (Baron & Morin, 2009; Calasso et al., 2024; Ely et al., 2010; Peterson, 2010). With methodology, coaches perform certain behaviors to facilitate change, such as having an achievement orientation, e.g., setting goals, planning, and evaluating process (Boyatzis et al., 2023), generating options with both appreciative and

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challenging feedback, and listening to continuously focus on the client's needs (Calasso et al., 2024).

Definition of AI Coaching

To date, most AI-based coaching studies have applied the concepts that have proven to work well with human-to-human coaching to design and assess the effectiveness of AI coaches (Passmore et al., 2025). An expert system is a technology system that is modeled on how a human expert would execute a task (Lucas & Van Der Gaag, 1991). To create a baseline for AI coaching, Terblanche (2020) suggests researchers and practitioners use established coaching principles (e.g., strong coach-client relationships, goal-oriented process) and design AI coaches after what works well for expert human coaches. Other researchers seem to define AI coaching similarly to that of human coaching, such as 'a systematic process that uses machine assistance to assist clients in establishing professional goals and developing efficient solutions to achieve them' (Bose & Gupta, 2025).

More recently, researchers like Nobes (2025) have explored whether coaching must include a human and if stand-alone AI could be considered coaching, especially if it facilitates similar client experiences or outcomes to that of a human coach. Might AI coaching be better designated as a form of facilitated client self-reflection that does not require a deep relationship with a coach to be effective? Bachkirova and Kemp (2024) suggest naming this type of learning as self-coaching or digitally assisted self-coaching to distinguish it from human coaching. Bachkirova and Kemp (2024) propose that AI coaching does not, in principle, meet the six essential features of professional coaching performed by humans: joint inquiry, making sense of experience with a focus on action, value-based, contextual, relationship based on trust, and contracting-based. Even if an AI coach could pass the Turing Test to convincingly be a human coach, Bachkirova and Kemp (2024) think AI coaching is distinctly different from professional human coaching.

The boundaries of AI coaching are contested with ongoing debate about whether its essence lies in simulating human working alliance dynamics or in enabling structured, goal-directed development. Rather than framing it as a derivative of human coaching, AI coaching could be conceptualized as a developmental intervention that leverages machine intelligence to support client reflection, goal pursuit, and behavior change, although through potentially different processes from those of traditional human-to-human coaching relationships. In this sense, AI coaching is emerging as a practice that adapts core principles of coaching to the affordances and limitations of technological systems.

AI Coaching Models

Several models of expert human coaching for AI have been proposed within the past four years (Clutterbuck, 2022; Duhan et al., 2023; Graßmann & Schermuly, 2021; Terblanche, 2020). Each of them shares a different perspective that informs the conceptual model in this study. Terblanche's (2020) Designing AI Coach (DAIC) framework is a conceptual map for building organizational AI coaches with expert-system principles that connect what makes human coaching effective to chatbot design practices. It anchors four human-coaching foundations to

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encode in an AI coach: (1) predictors of coaching efficacy—especially the coach–coachee relationship, (2) use of validated theoretical coaching models, (3) explicit ethical conduct for organizational contexts, and (4) a narrow coaching focus (e.g., goal attainment, self-awareness). On the AI side, DAIC specifies five design principles: calibrate human-likeness, manage capability expectations, disclose learning-driven behavior changes, ensure reliability/fail gracefully, and clearly disclose non-humanness.

Meanwhile pre-GPT, Graßmann and Schermuly (2021) map AI's strengths and limits onto the PRACTICE coaching process (Palmer, 2007) and conclude that AI struggles most with the opening problem identification step (it cannot infer client intentions and would require well-defined outputs and massive data), as well as with delivering individualized feedback. Whereas it can competently guide clients through many later PRACTICE steps, including developing goals, generating options, considering consequences, choosing a solution, implementing the solution, and evaluating progress.

Clutterbuck (2022) extends this by advocating for a symbiotic relationship between AI and human coaches, leveraging the strengths of each individually and also together across coaching process, skills, and qualities. The analysis suggests that for the coaching process, human coaches excel at context, values, rapport, and meaning-making to catalyze insight, creativity, and motivation, especially in ambiguous or sensitive issues. For coaching process, AI is strongest at structure and execution: keeping focus on goals and metrics, offering standardized prompts and option lists, and handling reminders, monitoring, and progress visualization. For coaching skills, human coaches excel at sense-making and intuition: they pick the "right" questions, build deep rapport beyond transactional trust, deliver nuanced feedback with judgment and timing, and use their own presence as an instrument—and, uniquely, as a role model. AI contributes scale and precision, e.g., large memory, pattern detection, standardized prompts, and objective feedback, so in partnership the human coach can focus on meaning and ethics while the AI surfaces patterns, options, and reminders. And for qualities, Clutterbuck's view is that the human coach supplies the core qualities, including credible presence, genuine compassion, open-ended curiosity, and the courage to say what needs to be said, while AI alone has shallow credibility, rudimentary empathy, and logic-bound curiosity; together, the partnership can raise client confidence, temper over-empathy with objectivity, broaden exploration, and act as a "conscience" that prompts difficult but necessary conversations.

Duhan et al. (2023) bridge the gap between AI capabilities and coaching effectiveness by mapping the ICF core competencies, and common coaching interventions and techniques to conversational AI design strategies. Each ICF competency can be operationalized in an AI: ethical practice via a clear bot persona, onboarding, and disclosure; coaching mindset and supportive environment via personalization and empathetic responses; coach presence via personification (e.g., greetings/small talk); effective communication via turn-taking/flow control and sentiment-aware replies; and facilitating learning/growth via theory-informed prompts and proactive check-ins. Common coaching approaches are mapped to concrete dialogue moves: GROW to context maintenance and follow-up questioning; solution-focused to rephrasing, confirmations, and resource sharing; CBT to sentiment/emotion detection, empathetic responses, and personalization; and positive psychology to strength-based, motivational tone. Core coaching techniques can be systematically operationalized in conversational AI: questioning maps to next-

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turn question generation; active listening to repetition, summarization, and confirmation routines; and feedback, reflection, and challenge to data capture with individualized prompts and scheduled check-ins.

Additionally, Plotkina and Sri Ramalu (2024) conducted a systematic literature review that synthesizes approaches and empirical evidence on AI coaching chatbots, compares their capabilities with human coaching, and outlines where they align with human coaching competencies and where they fall short. The study found consistent advantages: active listening and questioning, goal-setting support, feedback and reflection, accountability (reminders/monitoring), provision of information and resources, and 24/7 availability. Key drawbacks include limited empathy and emotional support, weaker adaptability to unique/complex problems, constraints in complex problem solving and pre-GPT personalization, and unresolved issues of ethical and cultural sensitivity.

Finally, Terblanche and Cilliers (2020) conducted a study to examine the factors that influence client adoption of bring coached by an AI. Behavioral intention to use the AI coach was predicted by performance expectancy (strongest), social influence, and attitude; effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, and perceived risk were not significant. In this study, adoption depended foremost on perceived usefulness and positive affect toward the experience, not on ease-of-use or infrastructure.

Definition of Hybrid-Intelligent Coaching

For the purposes of this paper, hybrid-intelligent coaching is defined as a developmental practice that integrates human and AI in complementary ways to facilitate client learning, reflection, and progress. The core assumption is that the essence of coaching lies in enabling clients to generate insights and identify next steps that are meaningful within their unique contexts. What differentiates hybrid-intelligent coaching is the deliberate orchestration of human and AI capabilities to shape the developmental experience for clients. While the mechanisms through which clients engage in such coaching may vary by context and design, the overarching construct emphasizes how human-AI collaboration can extend the scope and effectiveness of coaching practice.

Summary of Major Findings

The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the conceptual model that organizes the proposed design dimensions that define AI-human coaching models. The framework is presented through three complimentary representations: a conceptual map of interrelationships, a structured framework of dimensions, and a continuum of applied model configurations. Taken together, the map, framework, and continuum provide a coherent model that advances theorizing of AI-human coaching. This triad clarifies how coaching can be understood as a design space structured by interacting dimensions and dynamic types.

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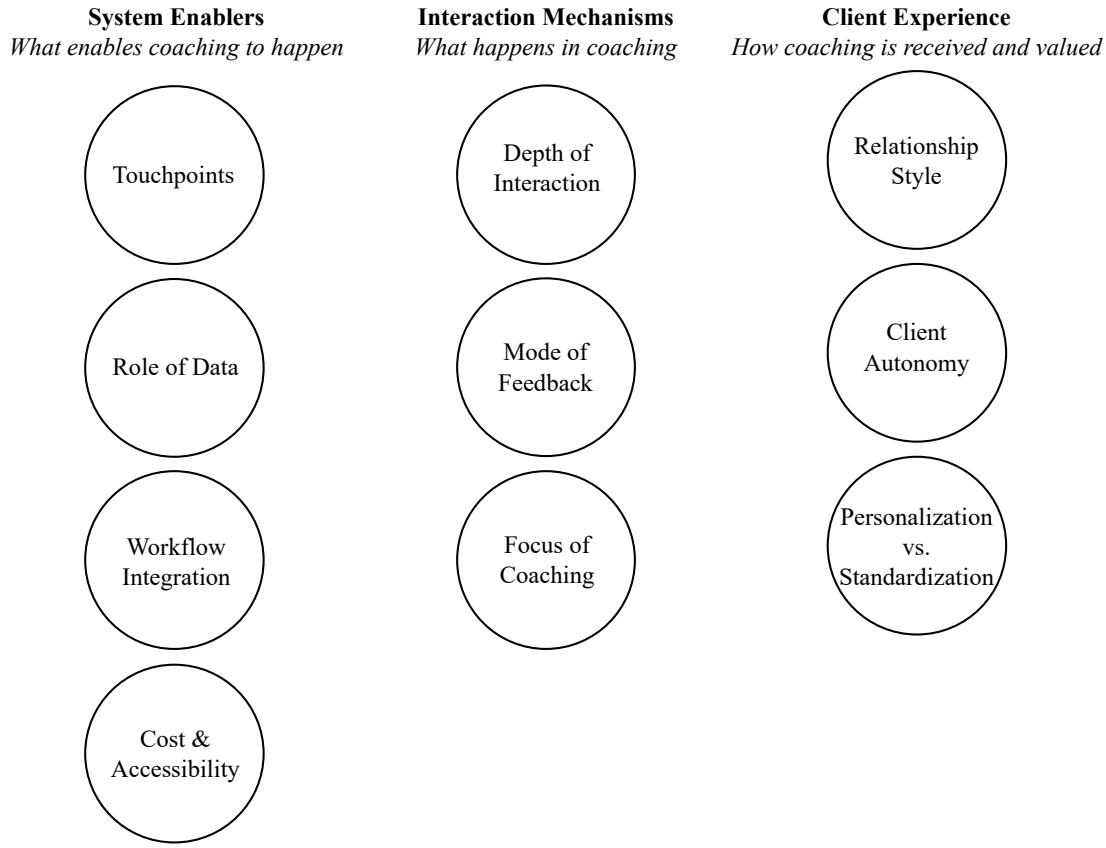
Conceptual Map of Design Dimension Relationships

The concept map (Figure 1) depicts the interrelationships among ten design dimensions, organized into three perspectives: system enablers, interaction mechanisms, and client experience. These perspectives provide vantage points for analyzing AI-human coaching models, highlighting how they are structured, how they function in practice, and how they are ultimately experienced and valued by clients.

The system enablers perspective captures the architecture of AI-human coaching models. It refers to the structural and technological conditions that define whether and how coaching is made available, the degree to which it is embedded into existing organizational systems, and the barriers or pathways to participation. Rather than describing what happens in coaching, system enablers delineate the possibility space in which coaching can occur. Dimensions such as touchpoints, role of data, integration with workflows, and cost and accessibility constitute this perspective to form the infrastructure that channels or constrains subsequent coaching processes.

Figure 1.

Conceptual Map: Interrelationships Among Design Dimensions in AI–Human Coaching Models



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The interaction mechanisms perspective centers on the dynamic processes that unfold within the coaching exchange itself. It concerns the ways that dialogue is structured, the level of intensity or reflectiveness of the interaction, and its developmental orientation. In other words, interaction mechanisms explain how coaching actually works in practice in the moment-to-moment exchanges. Depth of interaction, mode of feedback, and focus of coaching are the dimensions situated here.

The client experience perspective highlights the interpretive and evaluative aspects of coaching with emphasis on how it is perceived and lived by the client. It highlights the relational quality of the engagement, the degree of agency clients feel they possess, and the extent to which the coaching is experienced as tailored versus generic. In contrast to system enablers, which describe the external structure, and interaction mechanisms, which describe coaching processes, the client experience perspective captures the subjective meaning and value of coaching as a developmental practice. Dimensions such as relationship style, client autonomy, and personalization versus standardization fall within this category to reflect how coaching outcomes are filtered through client perceptions.

Although differentiated for analytic clarity, these perspectives are mutually dependent and interact across tiers in dynamic ways not fully depicted here. The system enablers set the stage for what forms of interaction can occur, the interaction mechanisms shape the quality of the client experience, and client experiences ultimately inform redesign of structural features and process choices. In this way, the concept map positions AI-human coaching models as dynamic systems of configuration that can evolve through reciprocal influences across enablers, mechanisms, and experiences.

Conceptual Framework of AI–Human Coaching Design Dimensions

Table 1 presents a conceptual framework of design dimensions that organizes the architecture of AI-human coaching models. The framework is structured across three perspectives: system enablers, which establish the conditions that make coaching possible; interaction mechanisms, which describe the processes that occur within coaching engagements; and client experience, which captures how coaching is perceived and valued by participants.

Several dimensions within the framework are conceptualized as multi-dimensional constructs, reflecting their analytic complexity and the need to account for variation across multiple facets (e.g., interpersonal depth, communication style, or relational function within relationship style). Other dimensions are defined as single-axis constructs, a choice made to preserve parsimony while maintaining analytic clarity. The framework serves as both a conceptual and a practical guide with definitions that enable systematic comparison. Coaching models are not reducible to any single attribute and emerge through configurations across multiple dimensions, highlighting the dynamic and polythetic nature of AI-human coaching.

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Table 1.

Conceptual Framework of AI–Human Coaching Design Dimensions across System Enablers, Interaction Mechanisms, and Client Experience

Design Dimension	Definition	Applied Descriptors
System Enablers – Structural and technological conditions		
Touchpoints	The temporal structure of coaching interactions that occur between client and coach (human or AI), capturing when they occur, who/what initiates them, and what conditions trigger engagement	• *Frequency*: Always-On (continuous), Scheduled (pre-set cadence), On-Demand (initiated when needed), Event-Based (around milestones) • *Initiation*: Coach/AI-led, Client-led, Automated system-led • *Trigger*: Time-based (weekly, monthly), Performance-based (post-event), Context-based (situational)
Role of Data	The informational inputs available to coaching, shaping personalization, accuracy, and analytic depth	• *Source*: Self-report, Observational (meetings, feedback), System-generated (digital traces, work tools) • *Type*: Quantitative (metrics, surveys), Qualitative (journals, reflections), Behavioral (language/tone analysis) • *Time Horizon*: Point-in-time vs. Longitudinal (patterns across time)
Workflow Integration	The extent to which coaching is embedded within daily work practices, and existing digital and organizational ecosystems	• Fully Integrated (within Slack, Zoom, Outlook, workflow apps), Partially Integrated (connected but separate), Standalone (independent platform or experience)
Cost & Accessibility	The level of resource intensity and scalability of the coaching model, shaping who can access it	• Premium (high-touch human coaching, low scale), Mid-Tier Hybrid (balanced personalization and scalability), Mass-Market (AI-driven, low cost, high reach)
Interaction Mechanisms – Dynamic processes inside the coaching exchange		
Depth of Interaction	The degree of intensity and reflection in the coaching exchange, shaped by length, modality, and cognitive/emotional depth	• *Duration*: Micro (brief nudges, reflection), Meso (structured exercises), Macro (extended sessions) • *Format*: Text-based, Voice, Video, Live/Asynchronous • *Depth of Reflection*: Tactical (skills building), Developmental (behavioral patterns), Transformational (identity, values)
Mode of Feedback	The temporal orientation, framing, and method of delivering coaching insights	• *Timing*: Reactive (after events), Proactive (before events), Predictive (trend-based) • *Framing*: Corrective (fixing issues), Developmental (growth-oriented), Appreciative (reinforcing strengths) • *Delivery*: Immediate/Micro (real-time), Reflective/Macro (session-based)
Focus of Coaching	The primary domain of development targeted by the coaching process	• Skill-Specific (delegation, presentations), Behavioral Patterns (decision-making, communication style), Relational/Emotional (empathy, influence, trust), Strategic/Transformational (vision, leadership identity)

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Design Dimension	Definition	Applied Descriptors
Client Experience – Subjective perceptions and evaluations of value		
Relationship Style	The qualitative nature of the coach–client relationship, defined by emotional depth, interactional mode, and the functional role served	• *Interpersonal Depth*: Transactional (task-focused), Relational (trust/empathy), Transformational (identity-level shifts) • *Communication Style*: Directive (advice), Facilitative (reflection-oriented), Collaborative (co-constructed), Socratic (critical inquiry) • *Relational Function*: Mirror (reflective feedback), Guide (expert direction), Catalyst (provoking growth), Companion (supportive partner)
Client Autonomy	The degree of client control and ownership in shaping the process, goals, and follow-through of coaching	• *Agency*: Coach/AI-led, Client-led, Co-created • *Agenda-Setting*: Who defines goals and priorities (coach, client, shared) • *Accountability*: Who enforces follow-through (AI nudges, self-directed, coach-enforced)
Personalization vs. Standardization	The extent to which coaching is customized to the individual's unique needs and context versus based on generalized frameworks	• Fully Personalized (individualized, data-driven tailoring), Semi-Customized (goals mapped to structured pathways), Standardized (fixed frameworks, minimal adaptation)

Continuum of Coaching Model Configurations

The continuum (Figure 2) demonstrates how configurations of design dimensions can combine into types of coaching models along a continuum from fully AI-driven to fully human-driven. It is important to note that across the continuum, various design choices could be made within a category, which would then influence the coaching experience. Five illustrative types are identified:

1. **Fully AI-Driven Coaching**: Characterized by always-on touchpoints, data-rich feedback, micro-level interactions, and AI-led accountability.
2. **AI-First with Human Anchors**: Features continuous AI support supplemented by periodic human sessions. AI interprets data and provides accountability, while humans provide relational depth.
3. **Balanced Hybrid**: Integrates AI and human contributions symmetrically. AI provides micro and meso feedback, while humans deliver macro coaching. Data are synthesized across both streams, producing co-created accountability and a mixed relationship style.
4. **Human-First with AI Support**: Places human coaching at the center, with AI playing a supplementary role in nudges, journaling, or reflection prompts between sessions.
5. **Fully Human-Driven Coaching**: Characterized by scheduled sessions, deep transformational focus, relational or facilitative style, and full client–human coach co-creation.

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Figure 2.

Continuum of AI–Human Coaching Model Configurations – Illustrative

Fully AI-Driven Coaching	AI-First with Human Anchors	Balanced Hybrid (AI + Human Co-Coaches)	Human-First with AI Support	Fully Human-Driven Coaching
• **Touchpoints**: Always-on, AI-initiated, event- and time-triggered • **Role of Data**: High data-rich, system-generated (emails, calls, performance metrics) • **Depth of Interaction**: Mostly micro (real-time nudges, short feedback, reflection prompts) • **Mode of Feedback**: Reactive + predictive, corrective framing • **Focus**: Tactical skills and behavioral patterns • **Relationship Style**: Transactional, directive, mirror function • **Autonomy**: AI-led, structured agenda, automated accountability • **Example Model**: "AI Shadow Coach" monitoring meeting recordings, emails, messages and providing instant observational feedback and reflection prompts	• **Touchpoints:** Always-on AI with periodic scheduled human check-ins • **Role of Data:** AI aggregates behavioral data & makes hypotheses, then human coach interprets • **Depth of Interaction:** Micro coaching by AI; macro reflective sessions with human • **Mode of Feedback:** AI handles reactive/proactive; human provides developmental/appreciative framing • **Focus:** Tactical + emerging behavioral patterns • **Relationship Style:** Primarily transactional with AI; relational depth in human moments • **Autonomy:** Hybrid; client works with AI daily, checks in with human coach for accountability • **Example Model:** Human sets goals quarterly, AI manages nudges, reflection, and data feedback in between	• **Touchpoints:** Mixed: AI supports between sessions; human provides structured coaching sessions • **Role of Data:** AI synthesizes data into pre-session briefs; human interprets meaning • **Depth of Interaction:** AI micro & meso; human meso & macro • **Mode of Feedback:** AI = reactive/predictive; human = proactive/developmental • **Focus:** Blend of tactical, behavioral, relational, and early transformational themes • **Relationship Style:** Hybrid: AI as mirror/guide; human as relational catalyst/companion • **Autonomy:** Co-created; AI structures accountability, human and client share agenda-setting • **Example Model:** Human-led coaching sessions with AI reflection journal and scenario simulations	• **Touchpoints:** Scheduled human sessions; AI provides on-demand nudges or optional journaling • **Role of Data:** Limited: AI mostly supports reflections/self-reports, not system monitoring • **Depth of Interaction:** Human handles macro depth; AI only surface-level reminders/reflections • **Mode of Feedback:** Human = proactive/transformational; AI = reactive corrective nudges • **Focus:** Relational/emotional growth and transformational leadership • **Relationship Style:** Relational, facilitative, companion-oriented. AI plays a minimal guide/mirror role • **Autonomy:** Client- and coach-led, with AI for light accountability • **Example Model:** Human coach drives the agenda, AI keeps track of "homework" and reminders	• **Touchpoints:** Scheduled sessions only • **Role of Data:** Human relies on conversations, reflections, 360 feedback • **Depth of Interaction:** Deep, macro coaching with relational and transformational focus • **Mode of Feedback:** Proactive, developmental, appreciative • **Focus:** Identity, meaning-making, leadership philosophy • **Relationship Style:** Relational/transformational; human acts as companion and catalyst • **Autonomy:** Client- and coach-driven, fully co-created process • **Example Model:** Traditional executive coaching engagement

To illustrate the logic of polythetic configurations in practice, the archetype of fully AI-driven coaching type illustrated in Table 2 shows that it may rely on always-on touchpoints, such as real-time nudges or reminders; draw heavily on system-generated data for feedback; and employ micro-level interactions oriented toward tactical skill reinforcement for the client. However, alternative configurations of the dimensions could also fall within the same category. For instance, a fully AI-driven model might emphasize longitudinal data synthesis over moment-to-moment nudges and prioritize transformational-focused goals paired with deep reflection

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questions. Both versions remain "AI-driven" because of continuous automation, minimal human involvement, and AI as the primary engine of interaction.

For the fully human-driven coaching type, this model is generally defined by regularly scheduled sessions, deep relational partnership, and transformative developmental focus. Yet within this type, multiple configurations are possible. For example, one version may prioritize long-term, highly personalized engagement in which the coach adapts flexibly to client needs, providing open-ended exploration and emergent goal setting. Another version may be more structured, emphasizing predefined milestones, systematic progress reviews, and greater reliance on standardized frameworks. Both variations are recognizably human-driven because they share overlapping features such as exclusive reliance on human judgment and the absence of AI-mediated interaction. This flexibility demonstrates how types can be defined by variable yet recognizable patterns of design dimensions.

Conclusions

This study introduced a conceptual model for AI–human coaching to address a need for clarity in how artificial and human expertise can be integrated to shape coaching practice. The concept map demonstrates relationships among design dimensions, the framework offers definitions and applied descriptors, and the continuum illustrates various types across a fully AI– to fully human–driven spectrum. These representations position AI-human coaching as a design space structured by interacting dimensions and adaptive configurations.

Two contributions are particularly noteworthy. First, the model underscores the polythetic character of coaching types**,** showing that configurations are defined by overlapping features rather than fixed categories. Second, it reorients the definition of hybrid-intelligent coaching around client experience and developmental outcomes rather than delivery mechanisms alone.

Building on these contributions, the model generates actionable implications for multiple stakeholders. For coaches, it provides a reflective tool for locating their practice along the continuum and considering how AI support tools can complement the relational core of coaching. For researchers, it offers a platform for empirical inquiry into how different configurations affect outcomes such as learning, well-being, and performance, as well as how these models evolve over time. For educators and trainers, it highlights the need to prepare future coaches for hybrid practice, equipping them to collaborate effectively with AI systems. These implications underscore how the model can advance both the scholarship and practice of coaching, supporting the thoughtful design of hybrid coaching experiences that are rigorous, adaptive, and client-centered.

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Leadership Driven Coaching: An Approach that cannot be replaced by Artificial Intelligence and generates High-Impact Coaching Experiences

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Abstract: The research aimed to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence capabilities and resonant leadership style on the high-impact coaching experiences. The data were gathered from 391 managers working at different MNCs in New York. The results highlighted that organizational leaders who act as coaches, who possess emotional intelligence competencies—such as self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—and demonstrate a resonant leadership styles cannot be replaced by AI and enable employees who are being coached to receive high-impact coaching experiences. Thus, the emotional intelligence of leadership coaches is essential for positive outcomes, and it cannot be replaced by AI.

Keywords: Leadership Coaching, Artificial Intelligence, High Impact Coaching, Resonant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence.

Introduction

The technological innovations brought by artificial intelligence (AI) have transformed the whole world, from society to businesses (Grabmann & Schermuly, 2021). The use of AI tools in organizations has reshaped the organizational structures and employee experiences (Jeong & Jeong, 2025). Moreover, it has transformed organizational coaching strategies. Therefore, many organizations are now using AI tools or assistance for coaching (Terblanche et al., 2022; Sposato & Dittmar, 2025). The digital coaching industry emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, as enterprises sought digital coaches to mitigate the adverse psychological effects on employees (Passmore & Woodward, 2023). Furthermore, the alignment of traditional management practices with AI-supported coaching systems has shifted the organizational approach towards leadership development (Sposato & Dittmar, 2025). However, despite the technological innovations brought about by the fourth industrial revolution, today, individuals who offer strong values and possess greater self-awareness are more likely to succeed. This time presents an opportunity and a chance for leaders who engage in coaching for their people to enable their clients to cope with their current circumstances, making a significant difference in their lives (Forbes, 2024). Leadership coaching (i.e., human-based) significantly differs from AI-based coaching, and many studies have reported the applications and significance of both, but there is a dearth of literature on their comparison (Terblanche et al., 2022). Therefore, it is an ongoing debate in coaching literature as to whether AI tools will replace human coaches or act as facilitating tools to assist them (Sposato & Dittmar, 2025). Halliwel et al. (2023) defined leadership coaching as “a one-on-one personalized learning and developmental intervention for organizational leaders that is based on a coachee-coach relationship characterized by collaboration, reflection and goal-focused dialogue to initiate and maintain positive change in coachee attributes and behaviour that precipitate the accomplishment of professional outcomes” (p. 17). Leadership-driven coaching is similar to leadership coaching but emphasizes coaching conducted by organizational leaders within their own teams.

Organizational leaders know better about the organizational strategies and environment; thus, they can effectively coach other leaders. This paper positions Leadership Driven Coaching

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(LDC) as a central concept in preparing leaders for an era of Hybrid Intelligence. Drawing on leadership-coaching thought leadership (Ibarra & Scoular, 2019; Boyatzis, Smith, & Van Oosten, 2019), LDC is defined here as a coaching-informed leadership approach in which leaders intentionally adopt coaching mindsets, skills, and behaviors to guide individual and team development. LDC integrates coaching behaviors directly into leadership roles, enabling leaders to foster psychological safety, encourage reflective dialogue, and model continuous learning. Particularly within AI-influenced environments, LDC emphasizes uniquely human capacities—empathy, connection, and purpose—that technology cannot replicate.

Artificial intelligence is considered a weak intelligence, as it can perform only one task at a time. Human intelligence, commonly referred to as general intelligence, enables humans to perform multiple tasks simultaneously and apply their knowledge in various situations (Greif et al., 2022). Many researchers have argued that AI will replace humans, and the AI leadership will have the AI machines as followers. However, it remains a fact that robots cannot be operated without human oversight. The charismatic influences and human leadership traits, such as relationship development, are essential for effective human leadership (Smith & Green, 2018). AI coaching remains less effective than human coaching, as it encounters challenges in identifying clients' problems and providing feedback to every individual (Grabmann & Schermuly, 2021). Moreover, the extensive use of artificial intelligence in leadership has raised ethical concerns as the leaders working in an AI-intensive environment have reported significant issues related to data privacy and bias (Celestin & Vanitha, 2020). Therefore, human coaching cannot be entirely replaced with AI coaching (Terblanche, 2024; Sposato & Dittmar, 2025), as AI can only complement human judgment (Peifer et al., 2022), rather than replacing the emotional intelligence inherent in human leadership. Therefore, organizations should rely on the competencies of human leaders for coaching rather than relying on AI-based coaching. When thoughtfully integrated, however, AI can provide valuable support by synthesizing data, identifying behavioral patterns, and offering insights that enable coaches to focus on deeper relational work—illustrating the potential of hybrid intelligence in enhancing coaching impact. Leaders can also leverage AI tools to enhance their capabilities and maximize their potential (Smith & Green, 2018)

Artificial intelligence can enable leaders to enhance their communication and efficiently analyse the data. However, the extensive use of AI can lead to privacy and ethical concerns (Madanchian et al., 2024) as well as inefficient coaching experiences. Moreover, these concerns can create challenges for leaders (Chen, 2025) while coaching and managing employees. Therefore, rather than relying on AI coaching, human-based coaching—particularly leaders who coach their people within organizations—plays a critical role in reshaping employees' cognitive processes and responses towards the adoption of the latest technologies. Furthermore, coaching helps employees understand different aspects of AI implementation and provides them with support that enhances their engagement (Jeong & Jeong, 2025). It enhances the performance of individuals or teams, replaces traditional leadership practices (Matula, 2023), and provides impactful coaching. However, it is a relatively new field of research, but it holds significance for the effective functioning of organizations and for uncovering employees' leadership potential (Fey, 2023) by providing them with high-impact coaching experiences. AI coaching may offer some benefits, but it currently lacks emotional intelligence, particularly, empathy, that cannot be replaced, as AI coaching is limited to scripted interactions and goal-oriented questioning. In contrast, human coaching is based on a comprehensive discussion of goals, and the emotional intelligence of the human coaches enables them to build bonds with the client (Terblanche et al.,

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2020), which can help generate high-impact coaching experiences. Coaching is a crucial tool for developing future leaders (Horvath et al., 2024), but it is essential to determine how these leaders can access high-impact coaching experiences (Gavin, 2018). While the literature highlights the significance of executive coaching (Jones et al., 2016), there remains a paucity of research on the specific leadership styles and competencies that are irreplaceable by AI and lead to high-impact coaching experiences in organizations. Resonant leadership is grounded in emotional intelligence, and resonant leaders use their emotional intelligence to lead their employees. Moreover, they can transfer their knowledge, skills, experiences, and expertise to them (Purwandari, 2015). Furthermore, resonant leadership cannot be replaced by AI due to its reliance on emotional intelligence. Resonant leadership styles—such as visionary, coaching, affiliative, and participative, are known to build trust, motivation, and emotional connection within teams. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). In addition, AI cannot replace leadership competencies based on emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This study aimed to examine how resonant leadership and emotional intelligence competencies influence employees' high-impact coaching experiences. Building on this foundation, it also explores Leadership-Driven Coaching (LDC) within AI-influenced environments, focusing on how leaders integrate coaching mindsets and behaviors to foster employee growth and connection.

Methodology

Rapid technological advancements are gradually replacing traditional organizational coaching practices with AI-based or digital coaching solutions (Terblanche et al., 2022; Passmore & Woodward, 2023; Sposato & Dittmar, 2025). However, AI coaching is limited to scripted conversations, unlike human coaching, which is based on a comprehensive discussion. Moreover, human coaches possess emotional intelligence, which enables them to build strong bonds with their clients (Terblanche et al., 2020). However, there is a dearth of research on identifying the specific leadership style(s) and the leadership competencies of coaches that cannot be replaced by AI coaching, generating high-impact coaching experiences. Prior studies have suggested that AI cannot replicate the emotional intelligence of coaches or their resonant leadership style, both of which help develop deeper emotional bonds with clients. Therefore, this study sought to examine how resonant leadership and emotional intelligence capabilities of coaches cannot be replaced by AI and influence employees' high-impact coaching experiences.

The questionnaire comprised four sections. In the first section, the respondents were informed about the research and assured that their participation would be voluntary. Moreover, it was made clear to them that they could contact the researcher if they encountered any issues while responding. The second section consisted of questions related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, inquiring about their age, gender, and experience. The third section inquired about the effectiveness of AI coaching vs human coaching. The fourth section included questions related to resonant leadership, emotional intelligence capabilities, and high-impact coaching experiences. Four items measured self-awareness, adapted from Supramaniam and Singaravelloo (2021), while three items assessing self-management came from Campion et al. (1993) and were later validated by Çakıroğlu et al. (2021). Relationship management was evaluated using three items from Supramaniam and Singaravelloo (2021), and nine items measuring social awareness were drawn from Bakare et al. (2023). Resonant leadership was measured using 10 items adapted

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from Wagner (2010). Azizi and Ghanbari (2024) also used the items developed by Wagner (2010). The high-impact coaching experience was measured using seven self-administered items. Moreover, a 5-point Likert Scale was used to analyze all the items of the variables. The pre-testing of the questionnaire was conducted by gathering feedback from three experts, and the minor changes suggested by them were incorporated.

New York is widely recognized as a central hub for multinational corporations (MNCs). Therefore, the data were gathered from middle managers working in different MNCs through an online questionnaire. Moreover, a few responses were gathered through virtual meetings with the respondents. Furthermore, a specialized third-party data collection agency assisted in maximizing survey responses. The agency specializes in survey-based academic data collection and was selected for its expertise in managing research-driven sampling and response verification.The agency was provided with detailed instructions regarding the research purpose, inclusion criteria, and sampling frame. Enumerators allocated by the agency were trained on ethical research guidelines, respondent confidentiality, and handling queries to ensure consistency and professionalism during data collection. To safeguard data quality and integrity, several measures were adopted: (a) responses gathered by the agency were manually verified against eligibility criteria, (b) duplicate and incomplete submissions were screened and excluded, and (c) statistical checks for response consistency and reliability were performed during data analysis. Using a specialized agency further supported the purposive sampling strategy by ensuring accurate targeting of eligible respondents and strict adherence to the predefined inclusion criteria.

The purposive sampling technique is most adequate in matching the sample with the research objectives and ensures the reliability of results (Campbell et al., 2020). It is acceptable to use when researchers know about specific individuals who can provide the relevant information if they are considered as a sample (Robinson, 2014). Criterion sampling, a type of purposive sampling technique is most efficient in gathering data from reliable sources by following a certain criterion (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Thus, a purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting middle-level managers (i.e., criteria) who were being coached by their organizational leaders to meet the research objective and provide feedback on the emotional intelligence of their leadership coaches. This sampling could have limitations in terms of generalizability, as results are drawn particularly from organizational leaders in MNCs who are actively engaged in coaching roles. However, purposive sampling was the most appropriate for this research because the goal was not broad generalization but gaining a deeper understanding of AI versus leadership-driven coaching and insights from leaders actively practicing coaching within their organizations. The main aim was to determine how the emotional intelligence of leaders and the leadership-driven coaching creates relational value that cannot be replicated by AI, thus considering middle-level managers for data collection by following purposive sampling ensured that the data was credible and relevant.

Currently, as no comprehensive statistics exist on middle-level managers in New York MNCs, Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) guidelines were used to determine that a sample size of at least 385 would be adequate. However, among the 401 responses, 391 were considered valid for the analysis. 10 invalid responses were not properly filled and carried missing information. In four responses, the demographic detail was not filled, and in the remaining six, a few responses were missing. Demographic data were analyzed using SPSS, and SmartPLS4 was used to test the hypotheses because it is well-suited for managing complex models and examining multiple relationships simultaneously (Hair et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2021).

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Literature Review

Self-Awareness and High-Impact Coaching Experiences

Self-awareness and leadership coaching are crucial in accelerating leadership potential (Lawrence et al., 2018). Self-awareness plays a vital role in effective coaching practices, as the coaching paradigm has shifted towards an evidence-based approach that recognizes the coach as a primary instrument in the coaching process (Carden et al., 2022). Moreover, beyond being a passive trait, self-awareness is an essential capability that enables coaches to facilitate meaningful transformation. Furthermore, it is considered an important element for the success of professional coaching (Carden et al., 2022; Carden et al., 2021). The major coaching bodies, such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), have highlighted the coach's self-awareness as a foundation for establishing trust, managing relational dynamics, enabling client growth (Carden et al., 2021), and building long-term relationships with employees. Carden et al. (2022) highlighted that workplace coaching is now rapidly growing but there is dearth of research on the effectiveness of coaching and its outcomes. Further, they argued that coaches must develop self-awareness because it helps them build meaningful connections

Sutton and Crobach (2022) studied group coaching and argued that a high level of self-awareness leads to self-reflection, which in turn enhances self-acceptance and acceptance of others. Mejia (2025) highlighted the significance of self-awareness coaching, emphasizing that self-awareness is a crucial component of personal development that significantly influences decision-making. Self-awareness coaching provides a profound understanding to the learners. In contrast, traditional self-awareness practices have overlooked the impact of external factors on learners' authentic self-perception. An adequate integration of guided self-awareness into the personal development programs can help the learners in their personal growth. Prior studies have argued that self-awareness plays a crucial role in shaping high-impact coaching practices, as it enables the coach to effectively interpret relational cues, build trust, and manage emotions. Further, it ensures that coaching practices are both adaptive and reflective (Carden *et al.,* 2022; Mejia, 2025; Sutton & Crobach, 2022). AI lacks self-awareness (Khusainova & Filippova, 2022), a trait typically possessed by human leaders, which can lead to high-impact coaching. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Self-awareness significantly leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

Self-Management and High-Impact Coaching Experiences

Self-management refers to a leader's capacity to regulate emotions, manage stress effectively, and remain focused and composed in complex situations (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). Leaders' self-management leads to employees' satisfaction and helps in developing a conducive working environment (Kim & Wee, 2020). Moreover, self-management reduces stress and increases hope during the coaching process (Sucan, 2019). The coaching interventions aimed at enhancing self-management skills among employees reshape their behaviour (Obro et al., 2021). Therefore, leaders aiming to be effective coaches must possess self-management skills (Karlse & Berg, 2020), which are also crucial for creating a high-impact coaching experience. Furthermore, artificial intelligence lacks these skills (Oritsegbemi, 2023; Vicci, 2024); thus, AI technologies are inefficient in providing high-impact coaching experiences to managers or executives. Therefore,

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to determine the influence of self-management on high-impact coaching experiences, the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: Self-management significantly leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

Social-Awareness and High-Impact Coaching Experiences

A leader aware of the emotional and social needs of others can create a psychologically safe coaching environment for employees (Hartung, 2020). Moreover, leaders who are mindful enough to be aware of others' feelings and emotions are capable of building strong empathetic relationships with employees (Urrila & Makela, 2022). Furthermore, leaders aware of their own and other emotions create a supportive work environment, which is essential for the professional development of employees (Tran et al., 2020), through a high-impact coaching experience. AI lacks the capacity to interpret nuanced social factors (Azienberg & Van Den Hoven, 2020; Yang et al., 2024), thus, leaders possessing social awareness can enable the employees or leaders to receive high impact coaching experiences. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Social awareness significantly leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

Relationship Management and High-Impact Coaching Experiences

Leaders' success depends heavily on emotional intelligence, particularly relationship management skills, which enable them to build and sustain trust-based relationships that foster collaboration and improve team efficiency (Kyomugisha, 2025). Relationship management, particularly the development of trust-based relationships, is important for successful coaching (Safi, 2025). Moreover, effective relationship management between the coach and clients leads to successful coaching outcomes (Braun, 2022). Smith and Green (2018) highlighted that relationship development is essential to lead humans. However, AI lacks such emotional intelligence capability that can enable human coaches to build strong relationships with their clients (Terblanche et al., 2022). Therefore, organizational coaches with relationship management capabilities can enable managers to positively change their lives and working environment through impactful coaching experiences. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Relationship management significantly leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

Resonant Leadership and High-Impact Coaching Experiences

Resonant leadership fosters normative commitment (Ali & Kashif, 2020) and plays a vital role in creating a conducive learning environment (Gaan & Shin, 2024) and enhances the employees' performance (Niinihuhta & Häggman-Laitila, 2022). Moreover, it significantly influences employee job satisfaction and provides support to managers. Although one-on-one coaching may be difficult to implement in organizations, resonant leadership can help address this challenge (Cummings et al., 2018). In addition, the emotional intelligence of resonant leaders enables them to coach others effectively, and their effective coaching can enhance the engagement of both leaders and teams (Specchia et al., 2021). However, AI-based coaching lacks these capabilities; therefore, coaching guided by resonant leadership — a central element of Leadership-Driven Coaching (LDC) — can foster deeper connections and create high-impact coaching experiences.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

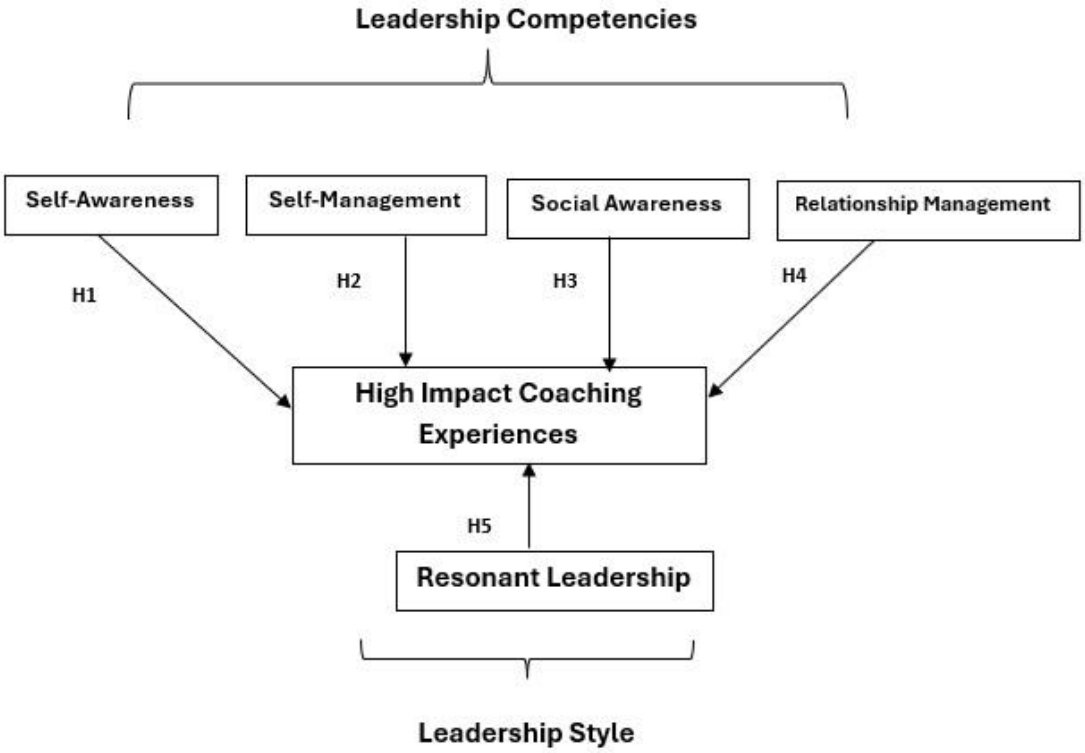
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H5: Resonant leadership significantly leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

The conceptual model of the research is presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Results and Summary of Findings

In the initial stage of data analysis, respondent demographics showed that most managers were male (i.e., 42%). Moreover, thirty percent (i.e. 30%) of respondents were aged 30–40, while only 2% were above 60. Furthermore, over half (52%) had less than five years of managerial experience, while just 1% reported over 11 years. Regarding coaching preferences, 96% favored human coaching over AI coaching (4%), indicating a strong preference for human-led approaches. In the second stage of data analysis, SmartPLS4 was used to assess both the measurement and structural models. The results of the measurement model, presented in Table 1 and Figure 2, indicate that the loadings of all items were above 0.6, except for three items: one related to self-awareness, one related to resonant leadership, and one related to self-management. Therefore,

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these items were removed for further analysis, and then average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR) were examined. The results reported that the AVE for all the constructs, including emotional intelligence capabilities, resonant leadership, and the high-impact coaching experience, exceeded the minimum threshold (i.e., 0.5) as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). Moreover, the multicollinearity was examined, and the findings revealed that VIF values were below 5. Additionally, the CR and alpha values exceeded 0.7, confirming the internal consistency and reliability of the data.

Table 1

Results of the Measurement Model

Constructs and Items		Loadings	VIF	CR	AVE
Self-Awareness (α: 0.725)	SAR1	0.809	1.304	0.737	0.642
	SAR2	0.773	1.515		
	SAR3	0.821	1.582		
Self-Management (α: 0.841)	SM2	0.932	2.116	0.842	0.863
	SM3	0.926	2.116		
Relationship Management (α: 0.818)	RM1	0.855	1.813	0.818	0.733
	RM2	0.858	1.821		
	RM3	0.856	1.82		
Social Awareness (α: 0.917)	SAW1	0.769	2.351	0.919	0.600
	SAW2	0.791	2.217		
	SAW3	0.742	2.054		
	SAW4	0.773	2.181		
	SAW5	0.783	2.187		
	SAW6	0.778	2.102		
	SAW7	0.788	2.377		
	SAW8	0.758	1.993		
	SAW9	0.790	2.205		
Resonant Leadership (α: 0.904)	RL2	0.743	2.078	0.905	0.564
	RL3	0.735	1.851		
	RL4	0.723	1.916		
	RL5	0.779	2.09		
	RL6	0.749	2.035		
	RL7	0.801	2.269		
	RL8	0.759	2.12		
	RL9	0.745	1.878		
	RL10	0.725	1.774		
High-Impact Coaching Experience (α: 0.878)	HIC1	0.691	1.61	0.879	0.578
	HIC2	0.796	2.016		
	HIC3	0.794	1.99		
	HIC4	0.784	2.033		
	HIC5	0.777	2.162		
	HIC6	0.782	2.081		
	HIC7	0.691	1.553		

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The discriminant validity was ensured by evaluating the Fornell-Larcker's criterion. The results provided in Table 2 ensured the discriminant validity, as for each construct, the square root of AVE is more than the average correlations among that construct and all the other constructs under consideration (Hair et al., 2019).

Figure 2

Measurement Model

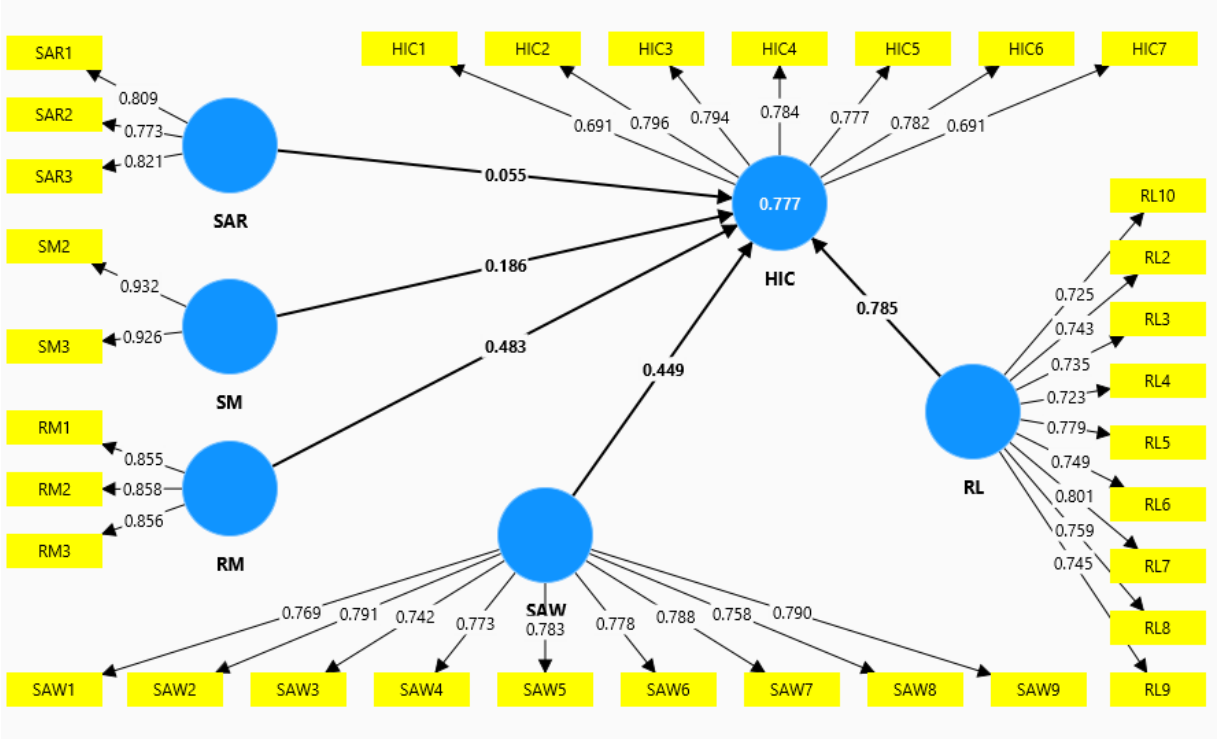


Table 2

Discriminant Validity

Fornell-Larcker's criterion						
	HIC	**RL**	**RM**	**SAR**	**SAW**	**SM**
HIC	0.761					
RL	0.803	0.751				
RM	0.716	0.612	0.856			
SAR	-0.459	-0.608	-0.537	0.801		
SAW	-0.631	-0.804	-0.716	0.677	0.775	
SM	0.586	0.629	0.554	-0.431	-0.751	0.929

The structural model was examined to test the study's hypotheses using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 subsamples. Table 3 and Figure 3 present the results, including path

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coefficients (β), standard deviations, t-values, and p-values, which indicate the strength and significance of each hypothesized relationship. These results form the basis for determining which hypotheses were supported.

Figure 3

Structural Model

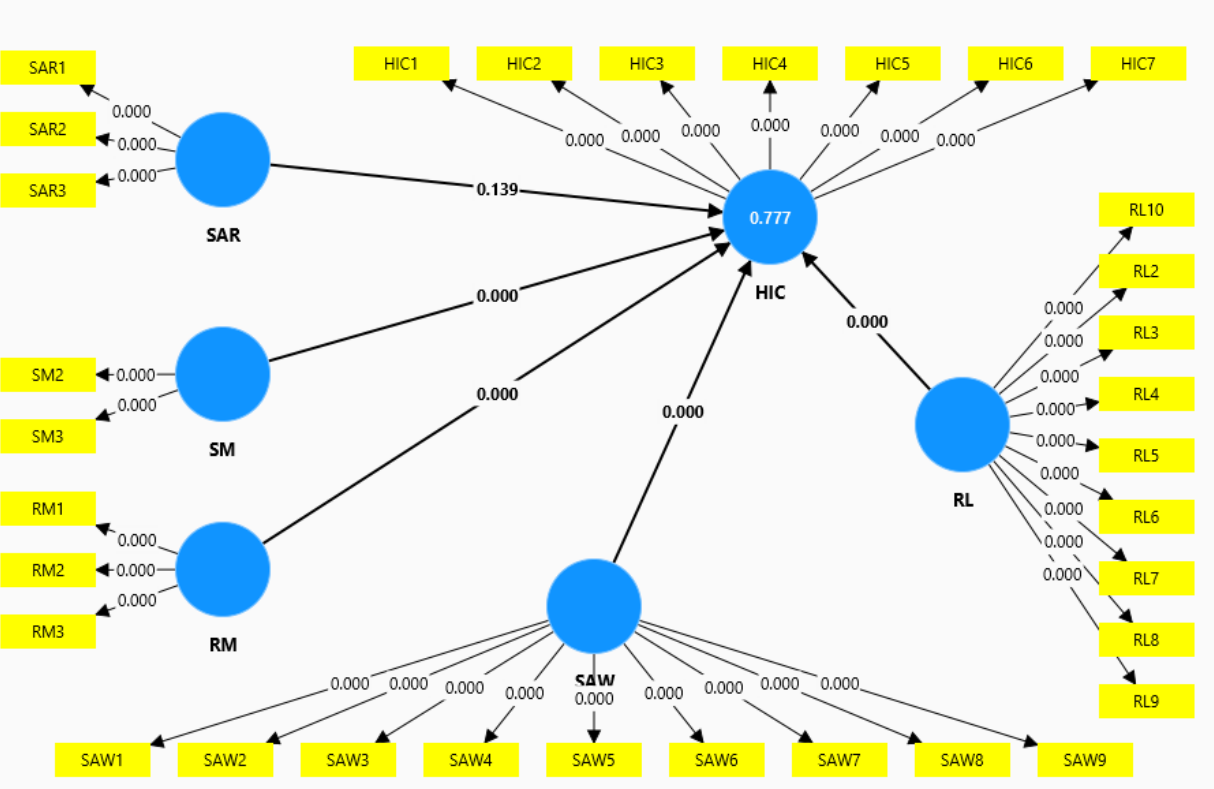


Table 3

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Std. Dev	T-Value	P-Value
H1	SAR➞HIC	0.055	0.037	1.481	0.139
H2	SM➞HIC	0.186	0.039	4.777	p<0.001
H3	SAW➞HIC	0.449	0.088	5.076	p<0.001
H4	RM➞HIC	0.483	0.047	10.274	p<0.001
H5	RL➞HIC	0.785	0.059	13.243	p<0.001

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The results of the structural model (as shown in Table 3 and Figure 3) revealed that H1, which proposed that self-awareness would predict high-impact coaching experiences, was not supported as the results were not significant ($\beta = 0.055$, $t = 1.481$, $p = 0.139$); therefore, H1 was not supported. This suggests that while self-awareness may benefit leadership in general, it is not a critical driver of high-impact coaching outcomes in this context. The findings are aligned with the prior research by Kim and Wee (2020), which highlighted that self-awareness of leadership coaches does not influence organizational atmosphere. C.A.I.A (2023) mentioned that the incorporation of machine learning can enable artificial intelligence to identify patterns and respond according to the feedback. Thus, organizations can develop AI possessing self-awareness. Therefore, this research has highlighted that self-awareness of human coaches does not lead to high-impact coaching experiences, as this capability may be replaced with AI coaching in the future. Namestiuk (2023) also mentioned that logical reasoning and symbolic representation of knowledge can act as an AI tool to help it achieve self-awareness. Moreover, the AI can use logic to solve problems and project self-awareness. Similarly, Li et al. (2025) argued that AI is in the early stages of self-awareness, but in the future, it may be able to mimic human cognitive processes.

The results for the second hypothesis (H2) proposed that self-management would predict high-impact coaching experiences, and the results supported this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.186$, $t = 4.777$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that leaders' ability to manage their own emotions and stress plays a significant role in creating impactful coaching experiences; thus, H2 was supported. Thus, the findings highlighted that self-management of the leadership coaches cannot be replaced by AI coaches and leads to high-impact coaching experiences.

The third hypothesis (H3) was developed to investigate the relationship between social awareness and high-impact coaching experiences. The results supported the hypothesis ($\beta = 0.449$, $t = 5.076$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a coach's social awareness is crucial for delivering high-impact coaching experience and cannot be replaced by AI and highlights that coaches' ability to recognize and respond to others' emotions significantly enhances the effectiveness of coaching.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) determined the relationship between relationship management and high-impact coaching experiences. The results of the structural model path analysis supported the hypothesis ($\beta = 0.483$, $t = 10.274$, $p < 0.001$) and highlighted that employees can receive high-impact coaching experiences if coaches possess relationship management capability. AI technologies lack self-management, social awareness and relationship management capabilities; thus, they cannot replace human coaches. This demonstrates that the ability to build and sustain trust-based relationships is central to delivering impactful coaching. Therefore, multinational companies should prefer human-based leadership coaching over the use of AI coaching, as they often lack emotional intelligence, which is crucial for managing people effectively.

H5 was developed to investigate the relationship between resonant leadership and high-impact coaching experiences; and as it emerged, resonant leadership emerged as the strongest driver of high-impact coaching among all factors studied ($\beta = 0.785$, $t = 13.243$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the central role of emotional intelligence and relational competence within Leadership-Driven Coaching. Thus, resonant leadership styles of human coaches cannot be replaced by AI and is essential for high-impact coaching.

These findings suggest that while AI can support certain analytical aspects of coaching, critical human competencies—including self-management, social awareness, relationship

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management, and resonant leadership—remain irreplaceable for achieving high-impact coaching outcomes. Emotional intelligence, in particular, continues to distinguish human-led coaching from AI-based solutions, underscoring the value of leadership-driven coaching within organizational contexts.

MNCs seeking to develop emotionally intelligent leaders should integrate 360-degree feedback, empathy-driven leadership development, and coaching seminars to strengthen resonant leadership behaviors like empathy and active listening. The 360-degree feedback can enable leaders to comprehend how others are impacted by their behaviour. Furthermore, it is vital to embed emotional intelligence competencies in the organizational culture; thus, MNCs can develop an emotionally intelligent culture by appreciating and rewarding leaders who facilitate others and build resonant relationships.

Conclusions

In today's technology-driven era, organizations are increasingly integrating AI across operations, including leadership development and coaching. However, this study highlights that while AI can assist with data processing and pattern recognition, it is not yet capable of replacing human leadership coaches. Emotional intelligence competencies—particularly self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and resonant leadership—remain central to providing high-impact coaching experiences.

The findings revealed that resonant leadership and emotional intelligence capabilities are irreplaceable for fostering trust, connection, and meaningful growth during coaching interactions. While AI may complement coaching practices, its current limitations in empathy, adaptability, and contextual understanding make human coaches essential for navigating complex leadership challenges.

For multinational corporations, these insights offer clear guidance for designing effective coaching strategies. First, involving internal leaders as coaches creates stronger alignment with organizational culture and drives better developmental outcomes. Second, leadership development initiatives should prioritize strengthening self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills, alongside cultivating resonant leadership behaviors. Finally, while AI continues to evolve, organizations should embed these irreplaceable human competencies into their leadership culture to achieve sustainable coaching success.

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Warrant Statement

I warrant that given my paper is accepted, I will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. I agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. I understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025 my presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. I also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is my responsibility, and I understand that the document will be returned to me if it does not meet those specifications.

Reviewer Summary

This paper examines the role of Leadership-Driven Coaching (LDC) in fostering high-impact coaching experiences within an era of hybrid intelligence. Drawing on survey data from 391 managers in multinational corporations, it explores how emotional intelligence competencies—including self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and resonant

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leadership—uniquely contribute to effective coaching outcomes. The study highlights that while AI offers useful analytical support, it cannot replicate the empathy, adaptability, and relational depth required for meaningful coaching interactions. The paper contributes to coaching scholarship by positioning LDC as a distinctive, human-centered approach and offering practical insights for organizations integrating coaching within leadership roles. Overall, this is a timely and relevant contribution that advances understanding of coaching's evolving role in technology-influenced contexts.

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Learning For Transformation in Coaching (LfTC): Facilitating Premise Reflection Through Hybrid Intelligence

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Abstract: This paper introduces Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching (LfTC), a structured coaching process through which human intelligence (HI) and artificial intelligence (AI) engage in conversation at key moments to open new pathways for transformative learning and growth. This interplay between HI and AI produces Hybrid Intelligence (HyI), which, under the right conditions can enhance premise reflection, a key mechanism of transformation. While AI surfaces patterns and assumptions, human coaches provide the contextual judgment and relational depth essential for meaning-making, supporting deeper developmental outcomes while preserving coaching's ethical, emotional, and dialogic foundations.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Premise Reflection, Hybrid Intelligence, Embodied Cognition, Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching

Introduction

Just as Mozart and his 18th century contemporaries could scarcely have imagined a pocket-sized electronic device capable of broadcasting an opera around the world on demand, we now stand at a horizon of incomprehension as rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) compel us to radically reconceive the world we inhabit—reaching to the very core of our existence and what it means to be human. Although forecasts vary, an emerging consensus indicates that within the next decade AI systems will be able to perform "almost all cognitive tasks a human can do," heralding (or portending?) a "big change, world-shaking change—the kind of transformation we've never seen before" (Roose, 2025).

In Transformative Learning (TL), this kind of world-shaking change is catalyzed as a disorienting dilemma, a powerful experience that challenges your assumptions about how the world works and has the potential to dramatically change your life, including what it feels like "to be you," with no way back. As transformative-learning-oriented coaches, we use TL to turn the crisis of disorientation into opportunity through premise reflection, a "process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167).

Paradoxically, while AI has created a disorienting dilemma for humanity, we believe it can also provide an "antidote" as an enabler of premise reflection. This is because AI is exceptionally good at analyzing language patterns (Passmore & Tee, 2023), potentially serving as a "critical mirror" (Brookfield, 2000) to help individuals identify their underlying assumptions as the foundation for challenging them. AI can also be a great brainstorming partner and add depth and breadth to the patterns by identifying possible gaps and suggesting ways to fill them.

In this conceptual paper explore the opportunity of AI as it relates to TL's premise reflection. We propose a hybrid intelligence (HyI) framework that integrates artificial intelligence

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(AI) with human intelligence (HI) to strengthen premise reflection in transformative-learning-oriented coaching. We call this framework *Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching* (LfTC), a structured process grounded in constructivist and humanist assumptions and enhanced by a sociomaterialist lens, through which coaches incorporate AI at key moments to open new pathways for transformative learning and growth. Although we continue to examine AI's role–as both a disorienting dilemma and a remedy for the very disorientation it provokes–our present focus is on its capacity to foster "premise reflection" (Mezirow, 1991) across topics. On this basis, our paper has two aims: (1) to encourage the application of adult-learning principles in coaching by placing premise reflection in conversation with various forms of intelligence and (2) to demonstrate how HyI can enhance the value of coaching for clients.

Methodology

This conceptual paper employed a critical integrative review of interdisciplinary literature spanning transformative learning (TL), artificial intelligence (AI), hybrid intelligence (HyI), and embodied cognition to inform the *Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching* (LfTC) process.

We utilized four primary data-collection strategies: (1) Google's Gemini Deep Research functionality to develop definitions for the key terms outlined in the literature review; (2) several searches of Columbia University's library to identify relevant peer-reviewed content using various combinations of the keywords "Transformative Learning," "Artificial Intelligence," "Hybrid Intelligence," "Embodied Cognition," and "Coaching;" (3) insights drawn from the authors' extensive research into and writing on transformative learning; and (4) recorded dialogues between us (the authors) about our experiences as transformative-learning-oriented coach practitioners.

We conducted our analysis using the following methods: (1) reviewing Gemini's Deep Research results to clarify key terms and trace their evolution across academic disciplines—highlighting definitions, core components, related concepts, strengths, and critiques—to refine our conceptual frame; (2) scanning abstracts and conclusions from sources downloaded from the Columbia University Library and uploading the most pertinent ones to Google NotebookLM, an AI-powered research and note-taking tool that supports prompt-driven interaction with texts; and (3) synthesizing these insights in recorded conversations that integrated our own scholarly work on transformative learning and our experience as coach-practitioners.

Our research led to insights across five core elements—AI capabilities, HI capabilities, the LfTC context, HyI as the dynamic integration mechanism, and TL (particularly premise reflection)—using theoretical analysis and conceptual mapping to develop the LfTC framework illustrating how the AI-HI collaboration can deepen LfTC.

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Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

Areas of Literature Reviewed

This review positions several theories of intelligence in conversation with key aspects of transformative learning theory, forging a synergistic relationship that lays the foundation for *Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching* (LfTC). We begin by specifying key terms that appear consistently in the literature reviewed for this paper–an essential step for ensuring conceptual clarity. We then synthesize the associated theories into a coherent conceptual framework that explains how different types of intelligence combine to enhance premise reflection as an integral part of the coaching process.

Key Terms.

The following table summarizes the key terms that appear across the literature and situates each within the theoretical lens most relevant to LfTC.

Table 1

Summary of Key Terms

Author/Source	Term/Lens	Definition
Mezirow & Taylor, 2009	Transformative Learning: Constructivism, humanism, critical theory	TL challenges "learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them" (p. xi). The goal of TL is to (1) become critically aware of and (2) transform one's frame of reference, which shapes and limits the way we experience and understand our ways of being in the world. When assumptions are questioned and transformed through critical reflection, one's way of seeing and being in the world fundamentally changes.
Mezirow, 1991	Premise Reflection	Mezirow describes three levels of reflection: content and process reflection are tied to problem *solving*, while premise reflection is concerned with problem *posing*, by "...becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do and of the reasons for and consequences of our possible habits…" (p. 108). Premise reflection is an integral part of challenging our assumptions in the process of learning for transformation.
Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023	Artificial Intelligence: Sociomaterialism	The sociomaterial lens suggests that AI systems are "'socio-technical ensembles'–combinations of artifacts, human behavior, social arrangement, and meaning" in which knowledge and knowing are the result of "social dynamics bound up with objects and spaces" (p. 1162).
Anderson & Barbey, 2022	Human Intelligence:	HI results from the interaction between neural architecture and the material–social environment. At the neural level, HI arises

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Dellermann et al., 2019	Neuro-constructivism; sociomaterialism	from a whole-brain wiring pattern that integrates diverse cognitive subsystems into a flexible information-processing network. From a sociomaterial standpoint, HI is expressed through situated activity—"the capacity to learn, reason, and adaptively perform effective actions within an environment, based on existing knowledge" (p. 638).
Newen, A., Gallagher, S., & De Bruin, L., 2018 *Bachkirova, 2024*	Embodied Intelligence: Neurobiological; constructivism	A subset of HI, embodied intelligence suggests that cognition depends not only on the brain's wiring but on "the morphological, biological, and physiological details of an agent's body, an appropriately structured natural, technological, or social environment, and the agent's active and embodied interaction with this environment" (Newen, Gallagher, & De Bruin, 2018, p. 6). In other words, our cognition does not just happen in the brain but "is based on our physical embeddedness in the world" (Bachkirova, 2024).
Dellermann, et al., 2019	Hybrid Intelligence: Constructivism; sociomaterialism	HyI emerges when human interpretive skills, contextual knowledge, and value judgements intertwine with AI's data-driven speed and scale, forming a human–machine partnership that learns from each interaction and achieves outcomes neither could reach alone. This framing situates intelligence in the evolving socio-technical ensemble rather than in either actor by itself.
Robeyns & Byskov, 2025	Capabilities: Humanism; constructivism	The *capability approach* conceives capabilities as an individual's power to transform available resources into genuine opportunities for action. Whether resources become real freedoms depends on a range of environmental, social, and personal conversion factors (Robeyns & Byskov, 2025), underscoring that true agency emerges only through the interplay of person and context. Intelligence does not exist on its own; it must be translated into capabilities, which depends on an individual's material, social, and informational resources.

Transformative Learning, Intelligence, and Capabilities.

TL is "an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. xi). These guiding assumptions build the "mental home we have furnished and made familiar" (Kegan, 1994) and constitute what Mezirow (2012) calls a frame of reference—the structure of assumptions shaping perception, cognition, feeling, and our ways of being. Transforming one's frame of reference relies on "becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167) and involves fundamental questioning and reordering. Described as an "epiphanic, or apocalyptic, cognitive event—a shift in the tectonic plates of one's assumptive clusters" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 139), learning for transformation can be terrifying, dangerous, and liberating (Bernstein, 2016). To negotiate and act on what matters, we must emancipate ourselves from histories we are reliving (Mezirow, 1978),

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hold our orientations tentatively, explore alternative ways of looking at and being in the world (Eschenbacher, 2019), and practice perspective-taking that reveals there is no single mental home (Eschenbacher, 2019). In coaching, premise reflection is a central bridge to this work (Robbins, 2014; Meyer, 2009; Fisher-Yoshida, 2009; Eschenbacher, 2020).

In conversation with TL, we adopt a minimal working view of intelligence as the capacity to learn from experience, discern patterns, adapt to new situations, and use knowledge to solve problems—encompassing higher-order processes such as reasoning, planning, critical thinking, and decision-making. Several definitions also highlight its purposive and effective application toward achieving goals and meeting environmental demands (Urbina & Dillon, 2024); in other words, intelligence does not stand alone but must be converted into capabilities. The capability approach proposes that capabilities are the "real freedoms" (Robeyns & Byskov, 2025) to do and be, created by transforming available resources into genuine opportunities for action; whether that conversion actually occurs depends on environmental, social, and personal factors.

Read through constructivist, humanist, and sociomaterial lenses, the forms of intelligence outlined above align with and amplify TL. Human intelligence integrates diverse cognitive abilities into flexible, goal-directed activity and is always expressed in context. Embodied intelligence adds that thought arises not only from brain-wide activity but from the "morphological, biological, and physiological details of an agent's body" (Newen, Gallagher, & De Bruin, 2018, p. 6) as it engages with an appropriately structured environment; emotions and sensorimotor cues enable prediction, risk-taking, and skillful coping. Artificial intelligence, viewed sociomaterially, is part of a socio-technical ensemble in which people, artefacts, and settings co-produce knowledge; AI contributes scale and pattern detection that can surface tacit assumptions and alternative framings (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023).

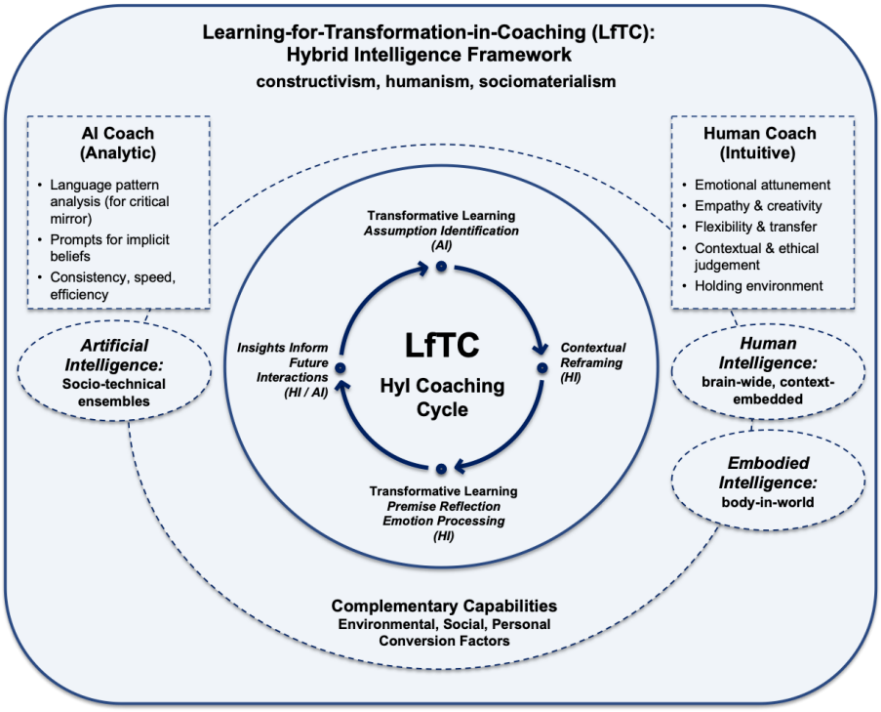
Bringing these strands together yields Hybrid Intelligence (HyI)—a symbiotic human–machine partnership in which interpretive judgment, ethical discernment, and embodied attunement interweave with computational speed and breadth to produce outcomes neither could achieve alone (Dellermann et al., 2019). In coaching, HyI operates within a dyadic relationship that depends on trust, psychological safety, and ethical contracting (Bachkirova, 2024). On the AI side, language-pattern analysis (Passmore & Tee, 2023) can function as a *critical mirror* (Brookfield, 2000), using prompts to surface implicit beliefs and candidate assumptions. On the human side, coaches provide embodied intelligence—emotional attunement, contextual and ethical judgment, and the capacity to create and maintain a holding environment—to pace and contain the emotional intensity of reflective work (Bachkirova, 2024). The mechanism is iterative: AI helps identify patterns; the coach assesses and reframes them into context-sensitive inquiries; the client reflects and processes; those insights then guide subsequent human–AI interactions. Careful human mediation across this cycle is essential to avoid pitfalls such as inappropriate AI outputs or the "enshittification" of coaching practices (Bachkirova, 2024).

Seen this way, TL supplies the method (critical reflection and dialogue to revise meaning perspectives), while the intelligence–to–capability pathway provides the bridge to action. HyI coordinates AI and HI so that revised understandings are enacted as capabilities, attending to conversion factors that turn insight into real freedoms to do and be—supporting clients in fulfilling their potential.

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Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework describes how integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and human intelligence (HuI)—conceptualized as hybrid intelligence (HyI)—can enhance premise reflection in Learning for Transformation in Coaching (LfTC).



LfTC invites a dialogue between TL and complementary capabilities across various forms of intelligence:

1. AI: Machines can process large amounts of data and recognize complex patterns (Dellermann et al., 2019). AI coaches might take the role of others and act as a "critical mirror" (Brookfield, 2000) by analyzing language patterns (Passmore & Tee, 2023), using prompts to help clients reflect on implicit beliefs and identify underlying assumptions.

2. HI: "Flexible, creative, and empathic" (Dellermann et al., 2019), humans are able to transfer knowledge across different contexts and adapt effectively to diverse situations. HI coaches provide essential capabilities AI lacks, notably embodied intelligence (Bachkirova, 2024). This holistic awareness enables emotional attunement, contextual and ethical judgment, and the creation of a safe enough space to manage the emotional aspects of reflection.

3. HyI: Machines and humans bring complementary capabilities to support the coaching journey. For instance, while using AI to critically mirror possible foundational assumptions, the coach helps contain the emotional response. During the process of reflection, AI prompts, mediated by the coach, can target specific assumptions, while the coach facilitates deeper exploration through embodied attunement and skillful questioning,

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drawing on principles of "transformative conversations" that allow space for exploring inner meaning (Eschenbacher, 2020, Eschenbacher & Marsick, 2024). The human coach remains the ethical guarantor and relational anchor.

4. LfTC: AI identifies patterns/assumptions, which the human coach assesses and reframes into context-sensitive inquiries, facilitating client reflection and emotional processing. Insights gained from the client's reflection then inform the subsequent AI and human interactions. Careful human mediation throughout this cycle is essential to avoid pitfalls like inappropriate AI outputs or the "enshittification" of coaching practices (Bachkirova, 2024). HyI application therefore occurs within the unique dyadic relationship of coaching, requiring trust, psychological safety, and ethical contracting (Bachkirova, 2024).

Key Findings

This paper proposes *Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching* (LfTC), a framework grounded in constructivist and humanist assumptions and enhanced by a sociomaterialist lens, through which coaches incorporate AI at key moments to open new pathways for transformative learning and growth. Its primary contribution is a Hybrid Intelligence (HyI) model that conceptualizes a dynamic, recursive interplay between the human coach, the AI system, and the broader environmental, social, and personal factors that influence a coachee's ability to convert insight into action.

Premise Reflection with HyI

A key contribution is the explicit framing of this integration around premise reflection, the practice of challenging foundational assumptions. As "explanatory devices" (Brookfield, 1990, p. 177) these assumptions shape, limit, and confirm our perception, cognition and feelings (Mezirow, 2012). Premise reflection goes beyond simple awareness of being in the world; it entails a critical examination of *why* we perceive, understand, and live as we do (Mezirow, 1991).

Combining AI and HI in coaching expands the possibilities for deep and fundamental processes of change and transformation. As Brookfield (2009) notes, "We find it very difficult to stand outside ourselves and see how some of our most deeply held values and beliefs lead us into distorted and constrained ways of being" (p. 133). For this reason, we need dialogue to learn more about our foundational assumptions—to discern what assumptions we hold and which ones hold us. AI adds a complementary lens, since coaches, too, carry foundational assumptions that shape what they notice. Even when coaches are able to step outside some personal or psychological assumptions, sociocultural assumptions are especially hard to see. AI can surface assumptions and assumptive clusters through pattern recognition. Because its prompts may be perceived as more neutral and less judgmental, AI's involvement may also reduce shame when sensitive assumptions are named.

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LfTC Process

While there are many ways to utilize the LfTC process—indeed, across a wide range of coaching approaches—we highlight two variations to illustrate distinct opportunities and degrees of intensity.

Critical Incident.

The following example shows how HyI can enable or support premise reflection within Brookfield's (1990) critical incident approach. Foundational assumptions serve as "interpretive glue that binds the various meaning schemes comprising our structures of understanding" (p. 177). To make explicit what has been implicit, adults are asked to write brief descriptions of significant life events. Assumptions embedded in these narratives give coach and client insights into their assumptive worlds. AI can identify potential assumptions through pattern recognition and act as a brainstorming partner, generating propositions about the assumptions underlying clients' actions and the value systems informing their choices. Coach and client then assess the accuracy and validity of these assumptions.

Additionally, AI can offer hypothetical thought experiments—exploring how modest or fundamental changes in assumptions might lead to different (or similar) outcomes—to support clients in reimagining a different future. This exploration of alternative ways of being embraces an ethic of re-imagination, creativity, freedom, and transformation.

Immunity to Change.

A complementary example uses Kegan and Lahey's (2009) process of identifying and overcoming one's immunity to change, offering a different—and potentially deeper—route into premise reflection. Their focus on resistance helps promote premise reflection and learning for transformation (Eschenbacher, 2020). First, AI can provide feedback on the improvement goal—whether it meets the necessary criteria. Next, it can check that the client has identified behaviors (rather than feelings or thoughts) and suggest ways to move from a felt state to an observable action; as a brainstorming partner. This can be quite challenging for both, clients and coaches, therefore AI can be helpful in this process. AI can also propose related behaviors in other life domains that align with those already identified. The next phase consists of two steps: (1) Once the client engages with fears and worries, the coach creates and contains a space that is safe enough to explore these emotions; from there, (2) AI can help translate fears into hidden competing commitments and surface additional commitments the individual may not yet recognize. As a further brainstorming aid, AI can identify possible big assumptions—using pattern recognition—and explore how these foundational assumptions may play out across contexts. Finally, AI can generate ideas for experiments to test those big assumptions going forward.

LfTC conceptualizes the interaction as a co-constructed choreography, where AI-generated insights serve as potential stimuli but are refined, interpreted, and delivered through the coach's professional judgment and relational sensitivity. This recursive loop enhances the depth and potential scope of reflection without compromising the ethical and humanistic foundations of coaching.

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By grounding AI integration firmly within TL theory and emphasizing the centrality of embodied human intelligence, we offer a pathway for leveraging technology responsibly in coaching. We contribute a nuanced perspective to the ongoing debate about AI in coaching, proposing a model designed to deepen developmental potential rather than merely automate or replace human connection. It challenges practitioners and researchers to consider how this synergy can effectively support the courageous work of transformation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper presents *Learning-for-Transformation-in-Coaching* (LfTC), a theoretically grounded framework through which coaches incorporate AI at key moments to open new pathways for transformative learning and growth. By conceptualizing the interaction as a recursive, human-mediated process grounded in TL theory and emphasizing the crucial role of the coach's capabilities, the model taps AI's potential while safeguarding ethical and relational integrity.

Key Implications

LfTC frames a dynamic, recursive interplay among the human coach, the AI system, and the broader environmental, social, and personal factors that shape a client's ability to convert insight into action. AI functions as a mechanism to deepen premise reflection and uncover hidden assumptions as the foundation for transformative-learning-oriented coaching. The human coach paces, contains, and contextualizes AI outputs to avoid distortion, harm, or the "enshittification" of practice, preserving coaching's ethical, emotional, and dialogic foundations. And by attending to capability conversion factors (environmental, social, and personal) anchors the coaching in clients' "real freedoms" to do and be, linking reflective insight to action in context.

Future Research

To move beyond this conceptual proposal, empirical studies should explore the feasibility and effectiveness of the LfTC framework. Possible lines of inquiry include:

1. HyI mechanism: Evaluate the effect of specific AI prompts–mediated by coaches–on depth of client reflection depth and transformative change across multiple coaching modalities (e.g., Immunity to Change, Critical Incident, GROW, etc.)
2. Coach readiness: Determine coach readiness factors (e.g., TL foundations, AI literacy, embodied relational skill, ethics and integrity, etc.)
3. Client readiness: Determine client readiness factors (e.g., reflective capacity, relational safety, AI literacy, context, etc.)
4. Psychological safety: Investigate psychological safety as a boundary condition in LfTC—exploring when and for whom human coaches provide greater safety versus when clients feel safer with non-human agents (e.g., AI), and how that difference affects premise reflection and outcomes.

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5. Uniquely human capabilities: As a dynamic interplay, the human and nonhuman capabilities linked to HyI will surely change. It will be crucial to systematically re-evaluate the boundary between human and nonhuman agents as AI capabilities evolve.

LfTC offers a disciplined way to harness AI's analytic capacities while preserving—and elevating—the human core of coaching. The next step is empirical: demonstrate that premise reflection deepens more reliably with LfTC, and that deeper insights are more consistently converted into capabilities that matter in people's lives.

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Principles of Machine Leadership
An integrated framework for leading in the age of AI

David Swanagon and Stephen McIntosh, The Machine Leadership Journal

Abstract: This paper provides an integrated coaching framework for the age of AI. The literature indicates that trust and skill deficiencies limit AI adoption. We introduce a coaching model that focuses on the key dimensions of Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies, including an equation that helps coaches track performance. The significance of this model is that it provides coaches with a framework to engage leaders to better plan, manage, and sustain AI adoption.

Keywords: Business Coaching, Machine Leadership, AI adoption

Introduction

In the age of AI, executives will be required to lead machines, lead people that build machines, and lead organizations that adopt AI. The purpose of this paper is to introduce a model that coaches can use to drive AI adoption within organizations. The research has focused on the role that Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies have on AI adoption. This includes analyzing factors that encourage equilibrium between these three dimensions, conditions that create divergence, and the implications for coaching.

The Machine Leadership Model provides a framework for coaches to optimize AI adoption by focusing on the balance between Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies. Research indicates that many AI use cases have achieved near linear computational complexity for baseline operations, traditionally expressed as $O(n)$. This breakthrough in AI engineering has allowed highly complex models to scale in proportion to the size of their input. However, our findings suggests that AI models are influenced by the relationship between Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies. In situations where (A=T=C), there is no moderating impact on $O(n)$. However, any deviations from this creates a positive moderating balance. This results in higher AI adoption costs that increase based on the degree of imbalance. This level of technical complexity is important to coaching due to the unique challenges that leaders face integrating machines with the human workforce such as Responsible AI, data privacy, and employee skill programs.

This paper will provide a review of existing literature, followed by a description of the Machine Leadership Model, an introduction of the moderating equation, and coaching strategies for improving AI adoption. The significance of this model is that coaches can help AI engineers manage AI adoption in a manner that drives (A=T=C). This approach optimizes organizational performance, further integrates the hybrid workforce, and lowers costs.

Methodology

To develop the Machine Leadership Model, the researchers conducted a mixed methods exploratory design. The first step consisted of a literature review that evaluated the theories and

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best practices impacting AI adoption. This included analyzing the role that Human Autonomy, Trust, and AI competencies have on AI leadership. Furthermore, the team examined existing coaching models and their adaptations for AI leadership.

The researchers completed stakeholder interviews with fifteen AI engineers and corporate leaders. Separately, the team administered a 75-question survey to twenty participants. The survey was designed as a pilot instrument. The team investigated existing assessments and AI performance metrics such as Hogan's inventories, Korn Ferry's Leadership Architecture, the BBH Benchmark, and AGIEval. The researchers determined that unique questions were needed to directly address the factors influencing AI adoption. Survey data was collected from a variety of sources including: one AI Researcher, eleven AI Engineers, and eight Corporate leaders. Respondents were asked to provide their job role, industry experience, and geographic location. An ipsative 'forced choice' method was used for the survey questions. Furthermore, the researchers utilized the literature to identify a method for measuring baseline AI model complexity. From this, the team developed a moderating equation that accounts for the impact that Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies have on AI adoption.

Regarding data analysis, the researchers mapped each respondent's Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competency level using their ipsative scoring from the survey. Separately, two coders evaluated the stakeholder interviews. The team determined that a fixed codebook and Kappa inter-coder reliability calculation was unsuitable for this study. Instead, the focus was on extensive collaboration. A comparative analysis was used to finalize key themes.

The moderating equation utilized a baseline complexity assumption, expressed as $O(n)$ for a standard feedforward neural network. The decision to use this neural network was to provide a simple approach for future studies. The calculation assumed an input layer with 4 nodes, a hidden layer with 8 nodes, a second hidden layer with 6 nodes, and an output layer with 2 nodes. The total operations for this baseline model were defined as: 40 (Layer 1) + 54 (Layer 2) + 14 Layer (3) = 108. The 108 represents the FLOPs (Floating-point operations) for a single forward pass, which Meng et al. (2024) describe as a standard measure of AI computational complexity. The researchers anchored the moderating equation against $O(n)$ to ensure that coaching strategies were aligned to AI industry practices for determining computational costs.

The moderating equation was then applied to the survey scores. This resulted in an AI adoption penalty based on the degree of imbalance, expressed as $M(A, T, C) > 0$. The calculated penalty is summarized in Figure 2. Finally, the adjusted scores were applied to a new coaching model specifically designed to optimize AI adoption. Existing coaching models such as GROW, OSCAR, and FUEL were reviewed for alignment. However, the researchers determined that a new framework was needed to specifically achieve (A=T=C).

Theoretical Framework/Literature Review

The researchers focused on five themes to evaluate the factors influencing AI adoption. First, the team examined existing coaching models to identify best practices and understand how traditional frameworks have been adapted to AI. Then, a detailed analysis was conducted concerning the role

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of Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies in driving organizational performance. Finally, the team investigated the process used to calculate computational complexity. Combined, the literature revealed that Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies are critical for AI adoption. Furthermore, that there is a standard method that companies use to calculate computational complexity, which can be applied to measure AI adoption. Lastly, that the interdisciplinary leadership of coaches can serve as a bridge between technical and non-technical teams seeking to address AI challenges.

Coaching Models Adapted for AI Leadership

The field of leadership coaching has well established models such as GROW, FUEL, and OSCAR for addressing employee development and team performance. Passmore et al. (2024) argued that coaches should adapt these models by becoming technology literate and embracing digital tools. This includes leveraging data analytics to assist with the Reality, Understand, and Situation stages of GROW, FUEL, and OSCAR, respectively. Likewise, utilizing AI tools such as Chatbots and digital platforms to scale services. AI tools can also assist with the development of action plans and accountability metrics. The researchers argue that AI cannot replace the coaching process. Instead, it should augment the models through robust data insights, automation, and process efficiencies. This "Human in the Loop" process requires coaches to develop new competencies that strengthen data literacy and generative AI knowledge.

A review of existing coaching models identified several themes that were relevant for AI. The seminal work by Sir John Whitmore (2002) provided the GROW framework. This approach emphasizes the need for robust goal setting, understanding reality, brainstorming options, and building action plans. This approach directly applies to AI Engineering tasks such as model selection, MLOps, and data privacy. Zenger and Stinnett (2010) added to this by introducing the FUEL model. This framework focuses on conducting quality coaching conversations. This is done by framing the purpose of the conversation, understanding the situational context, exploring potential solutions, and laying out action plans. This approach helps AI Engineers address domain specific challenges impacting models tied to Healthcare, Finance, Energy, and so forth.

The OSCAR model developed by Gilbert and Whittleworth (2009) compliments these concepts by helping leaders transition from their current state to a desired outcome. The model follows a structured process that includes identifying a future state, analyzing the situation, exploring choices, creating action plans, and reviewing results. This approach is useful in building robust technology roadmaps that help organizations integrate increasingly complex machines.

Methods for Calculating Computational Complexity

NIPS (2014) provided a comprehensive review of the core components that determine computational complexity for neural networks. This includes forward and backward passes and the reason these models follow a linear computational cost. Cormen et. al (2009) identified the expression O*(n)* as a way of showing the efficiency and scalability of an algorithm. The notation indicates that runtime and memory usage grows as the input size (n) increases. The literature indicates that O*(n)* is an effective way of showing the linear change in computational complexity as AI models gather more data, perform additional calculations, and integrate with other platforms. This method was used to support the Machine Leadership Model by establishing a baseline

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computational cost for AI tools that is focused on model design. From this baseline, the AI tool is moderated by the Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies within an organization.

Human Autonomy and Meaning in the Workplace:

According to Deci and Ryan (2000), Self-Determination Theory stipulates that autonomy and relatedness are critical factors in driving intrinsic motivation. This is important because employees that experience a sense of autonomy in their work are more likely to be committed despite experiencing external pressures. This was supported by Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model, which highlighted that jobs high in autonomy and meaning produce more effective work outcomes. Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) researched the role that autonomy has on developing a sense of meaning for employees and its positive effects on satisfaction. Separately, Pink (2009) noted that creative work which involves non-routine tasks requires a high degree of autonomy and purpose for employees to perform at high levels. These studies support the role of human autonomy as a key dimension in driving AI adoption using the Machine Leadership Model.

The Importance of Trust

Dirks (2000) noted that trust is a fundamental component of leadership effectiveness. Teams that trust their leader's experience, temperament, and decision-making are more likely to perform at peak levels. This is supported by Simons (2002), which emphasizes the importance of leaders behaving in a consistent, predictable, and authentic manner. Mayer et al. (1995) noted the importance of character traits such as integrity, benevolence, and ability on cultivating trust. These concepts were further segmented by McAllister (1995) who defined classes of trust such as affect-based and cognition-based. The former focuses on the importance of building emotional bonds, while the latter is based on the leader's perceived competency level. The research also emphasized that affect and cognition-based trust must be balanced with cooperation. Zaheer et al. (1998) highlighted that teams which build high degrees of trust are more effective at engaging in interpersonal communication and cross-collaboration.

The literature indicated that Trust is an essential element of the Machine Leadership Model due to its influence on AI adoption, especially when balanced with autonomy. The researchers integrated these studies with the stakeholder interviews and survey results to establish a definition of trust that applies to the Machine Leadership Model. In terms of AI adoption, the team defines trust as the belief in the ability and willingness of a human or machine to meet your expectations.

Building AI Skills in Organizations

Manyika et al. (2017) highlighted the on-going and persistent AI skills gap across key domains such as machine learning, robotics, ethical AI, and data science. The lack of critical skills has fundamentally impacted the degree of AI adoption across industries. Van Laar et al. (2017) extended this concept by examining the complexity associated with defining the required skills for AI professionals. More so than most industries, AI requires engineers to have strong technical skills, problem solving, and interpersonal traits. Purdy and Daugherty (2017) added to this by noting the importance of integrating AI skills across business functions. This means technical and

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non-technical professionals must have a fundamental understanding of AI technologies to lead a workforce comprised of AI agents and humans.

The literature emphasized the importance of learning agility. Wilson et al. (2017) examined the pace of AI innovation and noted the importance of upskilling and continuous learning on organizational performance. Companies need to continually reinvest in learning programs to respond to disruption and align new technologies with their enterprise strategy.

These studies indicated the importance of coaches in supporting the development of AI Competencies within an organization to ensure that Machine Autonomy is balanced with Trust. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary leadership of coaches can serve as a bridge between technical and non-technical teams seeking to address challenges with model design, utilization, and employee skills. This applies to the Machine Leadership Model as the decisions impacting Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies involve multiple cross-functional stakeholders.

Summary of Major Findings

The research produced two themes. The first theme focused on computational complexity and moderation, while the second theme addressed the role of coaching in AI adoption. The first theme stipulates that AI adoption is influenced by the baseline complexity of the model, expressed as O*(n)*, which is moderated by the interaction between Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies. The second theme suggests that coaching can play a significant role in balancing the moderating effect of Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies, which will help organizations lower the cost of AI adoption.

The AI Innovation Frontier is the equilibrium where Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies intersect. This is the place where AI tools are utilized in the most efficient manner. The frontier operates at various stages of model complexity. This allows organizations to utilize a standard framework for comparing novel inventions to large scale breakthroughs. The frontier seeks a positive correlation between Machine Autonomy and Trust, which means as autonomy increases, trust also increases at a rate moderated by AI Competencies.

The moderating function for O*(n)*, which evaluates the equilibrium between Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies is listed below.

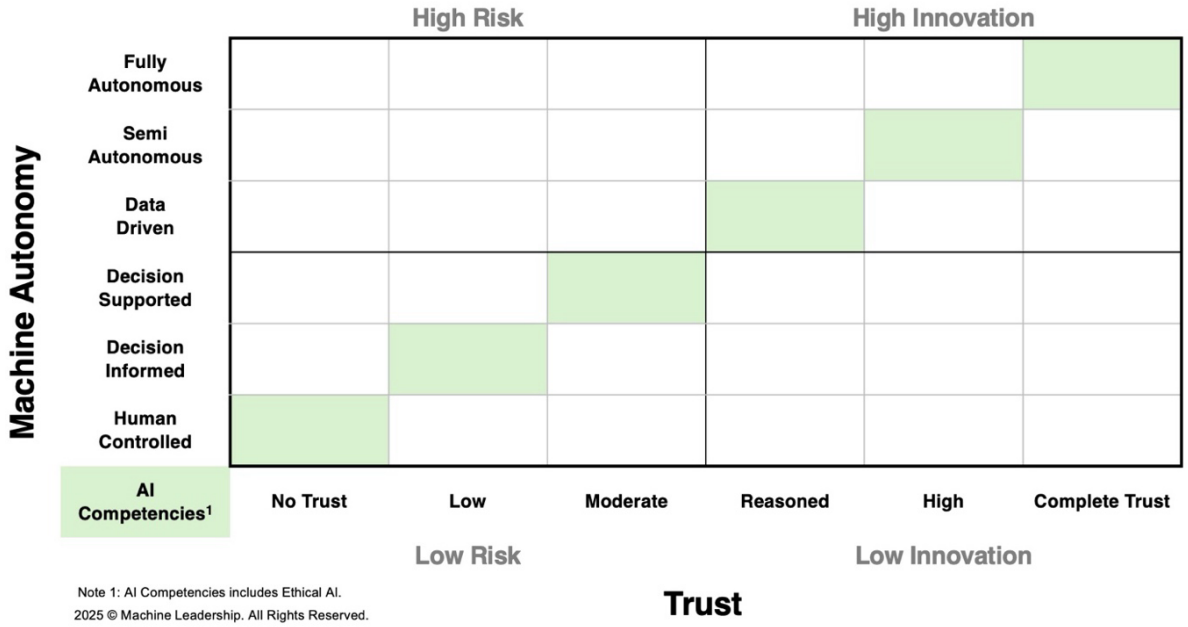
$$\text{AI Adoption} = O\textit{influenced}(n) = (1 + M(A,T,C)) * O(n)$$
$$\text{Moderating Function} = M(A,T,C) = k * ((A-C)2 + (T-C)^2 + (A-T)^2)$$

The point where Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies intersect is referred to as The AI Innovation Frontier. The reason is because there is no moderating influence over the general performance of an AI tool, expressed as O(*n)*. The moderating equation indicates that as AI tools scale, their adoption rate is influenced by the interaction between these variables. In situations where the moderating variables are at equilibrium, the formula is (A=T=C). The moderator M quantifies the degree of deviation from this state of equilibrium.

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Figure 1

The Machine Leadership Model



Deviations from the state of equilibrium create a positive moderating balance, expressed as M(A,T,C) > 0. This scenario incorporates a positive scaling constant k, alongside the sum of squared differences between the three elements. This is reflected using the following formula: $M(A,T,C) = k * ((A-C)^2 + (T-C)^2 + (A-T)^2)$. The k is a scaling constant that determines the degree of sensitivity towards O(*n)* that results from deviations to the equilibrium. The first term $(A-C)^2$ measures the difference between Machine Autonomy and AI Competencies. The second term $(T-C)^2$ measures the difference between Trust and AI Competencies. The third term $(A-T)^2$ measures the difference between Machine Autonomy and Trust.

Proceeding to AI adoption, the formula O*influenced*(n) = (1+ M(A,T,C)) * O(*n)* can be analyzed as O*(n)* represents the standard computational complexity of an AI model and stipulates the linear growth of a model as the input size increases. Cormen et. al (2009) identified this as a common measure showing the processing time and memory that change in proportion to the size of the inputs. When AI tools are out of balance, the baseline computational complexity O*(n)* is moderated by a number greater than 0, expressed as M(A,T,C) > 0. This results in a penalty that increases proportionally based on the degree of imbalance.

The research team utilized a baseline complexity calculation for a standard feedforward neural network, expressed as O*(n).* The total operations for this baseline model were defined as: 40 (Layer 1) + 54 (Layer 2) + 14 Layer (3) = 108 FLOPs. After this, respondent survey results were added to the moderating equation to determine if a computational penalty was needed. The

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results are listed in Figure 2. The findings indicate that organizations with these model scores would incur a 200% penalty on their AI adoption programs.

Figure 2

AI Adoption Penalty - Summary of Respondent Survey Scores (Respondents = 20)

Baseline	Autonomy	Trust	Competencies	M(A,T,C)	Penalty
108 FLOPs	3	2	2	2	324 FLOPs

Using the survey respondent pool, the average score for Machine Autonomy was 3, Trust 2, and AI Competencies 2. The baseline complexity = 108 FLOPs. The new adjusted FLOPs incorporating this lack of equilibrium is 324, which represents a 200% increase in complexity. These are AI adoption costs that are incremental to the model's engineering design, which organizations incur to build trust and employee skills in new AI tools. For example, the penalty may require organizations to slow down deployment, incur higher training costs, or add Responsible AI monitoring platforms to achieve equilibrium.

$M(3, 2, 1) = k * ((3-2)^2 + (2-2)^2 + (3-2)^2) = 2$
$O_{influenced}(n) = (1 + 2) * 108 = 324$ FLOPs (+200%)

The findings suggest that coaches can directly impact the moderating function. For example, in situations where an AI tool has low Trust and high Autonomy (T < A), organizations may need to engage in significant monitoring to ensure issues such as Responsible AI and data privacy are mitigated. Coaching can reduce these issues by working with engineers and corporate stakeholders to improve organization trust. This could be achieved by using the Machine Leadership Model and coaching tactics listed in this paper.

Comparatively, when Trust is high and AI Competencies are low (T > C), additional protocols may be needed to manage data ingestion errors, input validation, and cyber security breaches. In this situation, engineering teams would need to ensure that employees developed baseline skills in threat prevention. An example would be a phishing email program. Coaches could support this program by developing action plans for teams and individual leaders to ensure that trust and skill programs were implemented. The AI adoption formula could be used to check if the moderating variables have reached equilibrium, and what additional steps were needed.

Machine Leadership Coaching Model

Current models such as GROW, OSCAR, and FUEL focus on coaching conversations that emphasize how the leaders focus on attaining goals, motivate and lead their teams, and navigate the complexity of change. These models are effective in the context of leaders leading people, but leading an AI machine adds additional complexity. To effectively coach AI leaders, a new coaching model is required that accounts for the Machine Autonomy and purpose of AI tools.

AI adoption is highly dependent upon the Trust created between the leader and the hybrid workforce. The research team developed an applied definition of Trust stipulating, "Trust is the

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belief in the ability and willingness of a human or machine to meet your expectations." In the hybrid workforce context, we can look at the variables of "ability" and "willingness" as being applicable to both humans and machines.

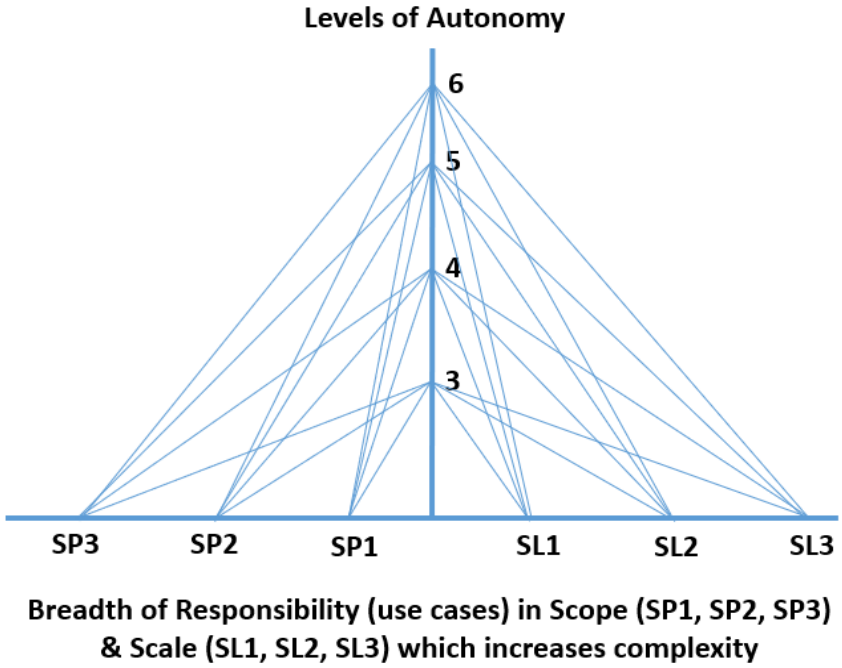
The term "ability" is defined as the breadth of responsibility given to successfully manage a use case at both the scope and scale expected. According to Deloitte (2024), autonomy is the power to act and make decisions independently. This concept can be extended to agentic AI. For these platforms, the goals are set by humans, but the agents determine how to execute them. Thus, each AI tool has a level of autonomy, which is described in Figure 1 by six levels. Levels three through six are coaching priorities because they indicate the AI tool is actively participating in the decision-making process from creating data driven criteria to being fully autonomous.

Figure 3 illustrates how Scope (SP) and Scale (SL) interact to guide the decision on establishing the right autonomy level given to the AI Engineer or Machine. The combination of the two is the Breadth of Responsibility. When the Level of Autonomy is decided, then this coaching variable becomes the Degrees of Freedom that determines Ability. The ability of the engineer or machine to accomplish an increased scope or higher scale of work complexity leads to increased risk.

Therefore, the Breadth of Responsibility accounts for the progress through significant expansions in Scope as moving from SP1 to SP2 and SP3, while significant Scale increases are noted as SL1, SL2, and SL3. The Breadth of Responsibility can iterate across many levels until the underlying technology changes to the point a new Degrees of Freedom chart should be created.

Figure 3

Degrees of Freedom Chart - Levels of Autonomy by Breadth of Responsibility



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Coaches working with AI Leaders will first ask the leaders to complete the Machine Leadership Model shown in Figure 1, while using the moderating equation in Figure 2 to determine the current AI adoption trends. Once an initial score is established, a discussion around the Breadth of Responsibility of team members (both humans and machines) and at what level of autonomy and skillset should be targeted. The objective being to achieve (A=T=C).

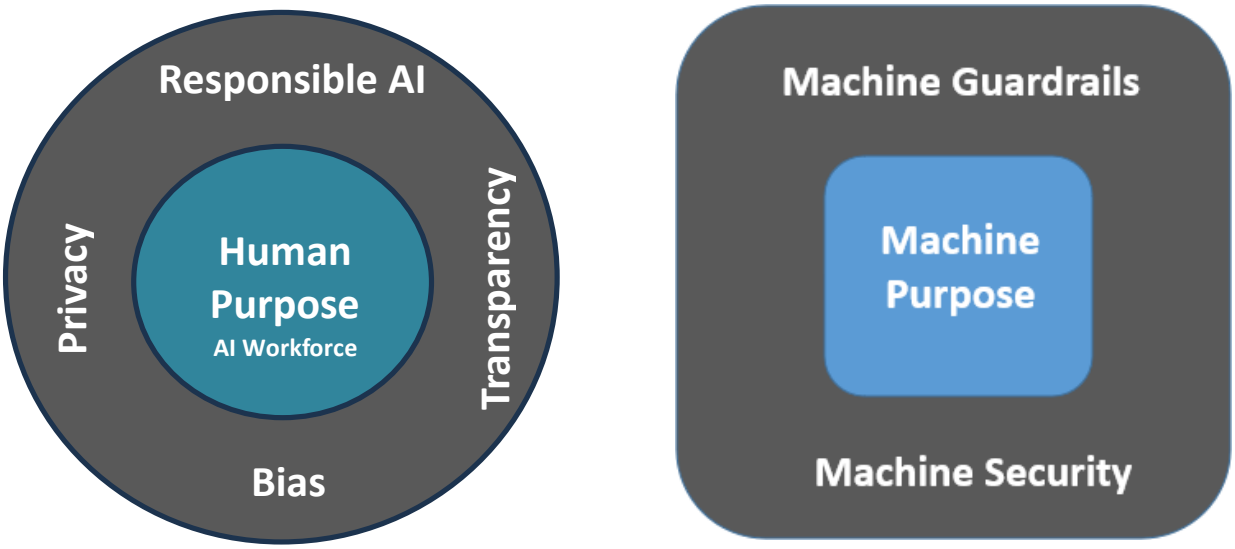
As the pace of AI innovation continues to scale, two more levels of autonomy will be added: Level 7 for Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Level 8 for Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). These autonomy levels present a significant leap in how AI Leaders interact with their technology, since AGI and ASI will put AI Leaders and coaches at an asymmetrical information disadvantage concerning how the machines operate and make decisions.

Following the Degrees of Freedom determination, Figure 4 illustrates major factors involved in ensuring the alignment of the human and machine purpose with the leader's purpose to determine the willingness to meet the leader's expectations. For example, AI agents operate with a purpose, whether it is a SLAM algorithm or LLM. They are programmed and designed to deliver a workflow. If a leader has a different purpose for the AI agent, then the misalignment of purpose will lead to the multi-agent system being modified or a new AI model being created to drive the new purpose.

Several factors should be considered when a coach helps a leader decide on a Machine. Does the purpose still align with the Degrees of Freedom of the machine such as the scale, scope of responsibilities, and level of autonomy? If the new scope of responsibilities has been added through a redesign of the multi-agent system, then the purpose of the machine may have expanded. This would necessitate a discussion regarding the possibility of installing new guardrails.

Figure 4

Alignment of Purpose determines Willingness



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Alignment of purpose is a critical coaching activity for the hybrid workforce. For example, the coach needs to help the AI Leader consider the possibility of bias that an AI Engineer may program into the machine. If that bias is not supported by the leader or the company, then the AI Leader is not aligned on purpose with the AI Engineer. The ability may be strong, but additional steps are needed to build trust. The alignment of purpose determines the degree of trust, which the researchers defined as part of the findings as the willingness of the person or machine to meet the leader's expectations. A highly capable machine or AI Engineer with a misaligned purpose and high Degrees of Freedom can present a significant threat to a company.

The Machine Leadership Coaching Model supports Responsible AI by providing a framework to consider the expanding responsibilities AI is given and how much autonomy should match the responsibilities. Furthermore, it guides the conversation about whether the Degrees of Freedom given to the AI Engineer or machine aligns with the purpose. If a fully autonomous AI system with significant control over essential business processes is not willing to work within its intended purpose, then company leaders must make proactive changes to achieve (A=T=C).

Coaches will engage different audiences with a slightly varied approach on how to discuss (A=T=C) and apply the Machine Leadership Model. For the executive levels, coaches may focus on the need for careful consideration of autonomy levels as the pace of AI innovation scales. This also includes a discussion about the purpose of the AI tool and how to align it with the goals of the company. A key challenge for coaches will be to help organizations find the right equilibrium on the Machine Leadership Model to ensure technologies are fully adopted. Figure 5 provides examples of adoption tactics that can be employed based on the audience.

Figure 5

Adoption Tactics by Audience

Audience	**Autonomy Tactics**	**Trust Tactics**
Executives	Use Case Discussions Scenario Planning AI Council	Evaluation and Monitoring Practice Labs Reverse Mentoring
AI Workforce (AI Builders)	Bessemer Scale Review Risk Analysis and Testing Iterative Development	Data Validation AI Transparency Human-centered Criteria
General Workforce (Internal AI Users)	Pilot and Control Groups Quality Assurance Testing Systems Mapping	Positive Experiences Learning Communities AI Competency Building
Customers/ Clients (External AI Users)	Incentives Expanding Scope / Features Ethical AI Disclosures	Human-in-the-Loop AI Success Stories Customer Profiling / Memory

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Conclusions

The Machine Leadership Model is an innovative framework that helps coaches drive AI adoption within organizations. The framework highlights the interconnected relationship between Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies. The AI Innovation Frontier is the optimal state where the three dimensions intersect. This is the place where AI adoption is most efficient for an organization. In situations where $M(A,T,C) > 0$, the imbalance among the three variables moderates AI adoption. This means organizations are forced to incur additional costs to ensure AI tools are utilized in a responsible manner. Coaches can have a positive impact on this process by serving as critical bridges between AI machines, engineering teams, and corporate leaders. The coaching model incorporates AI tools while helping individuals and teams build action plans that optimize trust for AI adoption. For example, a coach may work with a physician to develop the trust and competencies needed to safely utilize a surgical robot.

The findings of the stakeholder interviews, respondent survey, and moderating equation suggest that AI adoption can be positively influenced by coaching. This was evidenced by the 200% penalty that was incurred from the baseline computational costs $O(n)$ that was observed in a standard feedforward neural network. The survey presented a wide distribution of scores for Machine Autonomy, Trust, and AI Competencies. These results indicate that AI adoption may be influenced by factors outside of engineering design. To reduce the impact of these moderating variables, coaching models should focus on the level of autonomy that is given to an AI Engineer or machine by scale and scope. As part of this, coaches and AI leaders must ensure that trust is being established by aligning individual purpose with the goals of the team.

Additional Lines of Inquiry

This paper acknowledges the data limitations of the moderating equation in calculating aggregate AI adoption penalties for entire organizations. The approach would benefit from future studies that included a larger sample size of survey respondents, along with a broader portfolio of AI tools. The baseline complexity calculation used a simple feed forward neural network. Future studies should incorporate domain adapted AI tools to address industry needs such as healthcare robotics, finance LLMs, and energy deep learning algorithms. This will help determine the degree of sensitivity k that an AI tool has within a situational context. Separately, the coaching model should be incorporated into the analysis to determine the impact of the process along with the required time to change. This could include experimental design studies for specific technologies or longitudinal studies for entire industries.

Warrant Statement:

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Of Hearts and Hard Drives: Emotion Recognition in Coaching

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Abstract: This paper proposes the Symbiotic Coaching Model (SCM), a conceptual framework for ethically integrating AI emotion recognition into executive coaching. Aligned with the Hybrid Intelligence theme, the SCM uses a human-in-the-loop design where an AI assistant provides private data cues to the human coach. The coach acts as an ethical and interpretive filter, using the cues to augment awareness and deepen inquiry while preserving the crucial coach-client working alliance. This theoretical model requires empirical validation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Executive Coaching, Emotion Recognition, Hybrid Intelligence, Working Alliance

Introduction

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in coaching has gained immense traction over the last few years opening new frontiers for the discipline yet considered as pervasive by some. This rapid technological advance creates a critical tension for the modern executive, who is simultaneously expected to demonstrate high emotional intelligence while navigating organizational cultures that often stigmatize emotional vulnerability. This paper presents a theoretical contribution to the specialized practice area of executive and organizational coaching, addressing the theme, “High-Impact Coaching: In an Era of Hybrid Intelligence.” It explores Hybrid Intelligence — the intentional integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence (Maltbia, 2024) — by examining one of its most promising yet perilous applications: AI-driven emotion recognition. While emotion is central to leadership effectiveness and transformational learning, it remains an under-theorised and often challenging domain within the coaching discipline (Cox, 2016; Bachkirova & Cox, 2007). The scientific premise of inferring internal states from external signals is itself contested (Barrett et al., 2019). This paper therefore addresses the research question: *How can AI-driven emotion recognition be ethically and effectively integrated into executive coaching to enhance its impact?* It proposes the Symbiotic Coaching Model (SCM) as a conceptual framework to navigate this complex terrain. The SCM positions AI not as an arbiter of emotional truth, but as a data-informed partner that provides cues to augment the coach's uniquely human capabilities for empathy, contextual understanding, and ethical inquiry (Passmore et al., 2024). By outlining this model, the paper offers coaches, researchers, and educators a structured approach for leveraging technology to deepen coaching conversations.

Methodology

This paper employs an integrative literature review, a specific methodology for synthesizing diverse empirical and theoretical literature to generate new frameworks and perspectives on a

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topic (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). This approach is particularly well-suited for this study as it allows for the integration of knowledge from disparate fields, including executive coaching, affective computing, and human-computer interaction, to build new theory (Torraco, 2016). Adhering to the principles of a systematic and auditable review process (Callahan, 2014; Cronin & George, 2023), this section details the data collection, selection, and analysis procedures used to develop the Symbiotic Coaching Model.

The data collection process involved a systematic search of academic databases and relevant industry publications published between January 2014 and August 2024. The primary databases searched were PsycINFO, ACM Digital Library, and Google Scholar, chosen for their respective strengths in psychology, computer science, and broad academic coverage. The search strategy utilized Boolean operators to combine keywords from the paper's core conceptual streams, including: ("AI emotion recognition" OR "affective computing") AND ("executive coaching" OR "organizational coaching") AND ("hybrid intelligence" OR "human-AI collaboration") AND ("working alliance"). The search was supplemented by an ancestry search to identify additional relevant literature.

To ensure the relevance and quality of the literature included in the final dataset, a clear set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established. Articles were included if they were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, or scholarly books; (2) published in English within the specified timeframe; and (3) directly addressed the intersection of at least two of the paper's core concepts. Articles were excluded if they were: (1) non-peer-reviewed sources such as blog posts or popular media articles; (2) purely technical papers on AI without a clear application to coaching or human interaction; or (3) articles where the term "coaching" was used in a context outside of human development (e.g., athletic skills training).

The article selection process shows the systematic filtering of the literature. The initial database search yielded 1,040 potential artifacts. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts, 125 articles were selected for full-text review. A final dataset of 42 articles met all inclusion criteria and formed the basis for this integrative review. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the search and selection results by database.

Table 1.

Database Search and Selection Results

Database	Initial Hits	After Duplicates Removed	After Title/Abstract Screen	Included in Final Review
PsycINFO	245	180	35	12
ACM Digital Library	310	255	40	15

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Database	Initial Hits	After Duplicates Removed	After Title/Abstract Screen	Included in Final Review
Google Scholar	450	75	25	8
Ancestry Search	35	30	25	7
Total	**1040**	**540**	**125**	**42**

The analysis of the final 42 articles followed the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This multi-stage process began with a deep familiarization with the entire dataset, where each article was read and annotated. In the second stage, a systematic coding process was undertaken to identify key concepts, arguments, and recurring patterns across the literature. These initial codes were then collated into potential themes. In the final stage, these themes were reviewed, refined, and organized into the three core, intersecting literature streams that form the conceptual foundation of this paper: (1) The Landscape of Executive Coaching and Emotion, (2) AI-Driven Emotion Recognition Technology, and (3) Hybrid Intelligence and the Working Alliance. The tensions and gaps identified between these streams directly informed the development of the Symbiotic Coaching Model.

Literature Review / Conceptual Framework

This section establishes the theoretical foundation for the Symbiotic Coaching Model (SCM) by examining three critical and intersecting domains of literature. First, it explores the landscape of executive coaching, with a specific focus on the pivotal yet complex role of emotion. Second, it deconstructs the current state of AI-driven emotion recognition technology, outlining its capabilities and inherent limitations. Finally, it situates this technological potential within the paradigms of Hybrid Intelligence and the established principles of the coach-client working alliance. The synthesis of these areas reveals the specific gap that the SCM is designed to address.

Areas of Literature Review

The development of the SCM is informed by a review of literature in executive coaching, affective computing, and human-AI collaboration.

The Landscape of Executive and Organizational Coaching: Executive coaching is a developmental partnership designed to enhance a leader's effectiveness and performance within an organizational context (Kilburg, 2000). While sharing process elements with other helping professions, its focus is distinctly on achieving professional goals, navigating organizational

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dynamics, and fostering leadership capacity. A central element in this process is emotion. Emotions are fundamental to reasoning, memory formation, and the creation of meaning, all of which are vital functions in a coaching engagement (Cox, 2016). For an executive, unacknowledged and concealed emotions such as anxiety, frustration, or fear can significantly distort judgment, undermine team psychological safety, and impede strategic decision-making (Harvey, 2014).

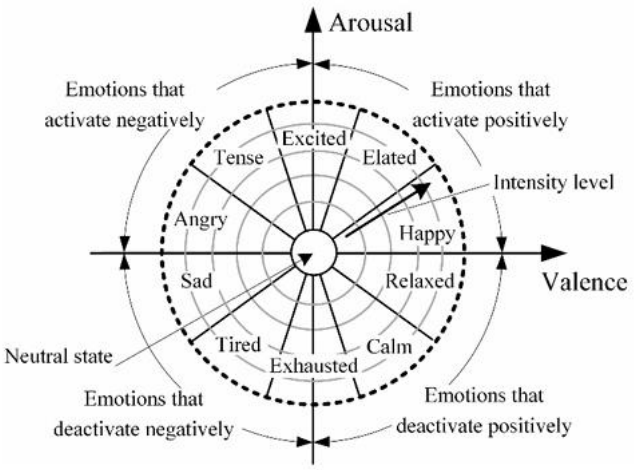
However, organizational cultures often privilege rationality, viewing emotional expression as a sign of weakness or irrationality (Fineman, 2000). This creates a significant challenge for leaders, who may feel pressured to suppress their authentic feelings, leading to a dissonance between their internal state and external presentation. This suppression can manifest as a client being entirely unaware of their emotional state, or being aware yet actively concealing it when the leader participates in a coaching engagement (Cox & Bachkirova, 2007). This pressure to suppress and conceal emotions create a direct conflict with the core tenets of contemporary leadership models. The self-awareness foundational to Authentic Leadership (George, 2003) and the relational empathy central to Transformational Leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) are fundamentally undermined by such emotional concealment, creating a critical developmental gap for the modern executive. This presents a formidable obstacle for coaches, who traditionally rely on overt verbal and non-verbal cues to gauge a client's inner world. The coach's ability to perceive and work with these subtle or hidden emotions is therefore critical to facilitating the transformative learning and behavioural change that defines high-impact coaching (Mezirow, 1995).

AI-Driven Emotion Recognition Technology: Affective computing, the field dedicated to developing systems that can recognize and interpret human emotions, offers a potential technological adjunct to the coach's perceptual skills. It is crucial, however, to establish that current AI does not *feel* or *understand* emotion in a human sense; rather, it is engineered to detect and classify patterns in data that are correlated with human emotional labels (Rasool, 2025). This correlation is itself a subject of significant scientific debate. The work of Barrett et al. (2019), for instance, challenges the ‘basic emotion’ model that underpins many AI training datasets. They argue that emotions are constructed, not universally expressed, making algorithmic inference from facial or physiological cues fundamentally problematic and context-dependent. Hence, metrics does not equate to meaning. AI systems typically classify emotions along two primary axes: valence (positive/negative) and arousal (high/low activation), visualized in Russell's (1980) circumplex model as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Russell’s circumplex model of emotions

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To achieve this, AI leverages multimodal data streams. As detailed in reviews by Dzedzickis et al. (2020) and Khare et al. (2024), these modalities include:

1. Linguistic Analysis: Analyzing transcripts for sentiment, word choice, and semantic patterns.
2. Paralinguistic (Vocal) Analysis: Detecting changes in vocal pitch, tone, jitter, and speech rate that correlate with arousal or stress.
3. Visual Analysis: Using computer vision to track facial muscle movements (micro-expressions) based on frameworks like the Facial Action Coding System (FACS).
4. Physiological (Biometric) Analysis: Measuring autonomic nervous system responses via wearable sensors that track signals like Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), Heart Rate Variability (HRV), and skin temperature (SKT).

The most robust systems use multimodal fusion, integrating these data streams to increase the confidence of an emotional inference (Poria et al., 2017). For example, an inference of "stress" is stronger if a client exhibits negative language, a high-pitched vocal tone, and a drop in HRV simultaneously. However, the technology has significant limitations. Real-world accuracy is often lower than in controlled lab settings, and algorithms trained on non-diverse datasets can exhibit significant gender, cultural, and racial biases (Crawford, 2021). Furthermore, these systems can only identify correlation, not causation; a high heart rate could signify excitement, anxiety, or physical exertion. The AI provides a data point, but the human coach is required to explore its meaning and context.

Hybrid Intelligence and the Working Alliance: Hybrid Intelligence is defined as the "intentional integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence to reach superior results that neither could accomplish alone" (Maltbia, 2024). This paradigm moves beyond seeing AI as a mere tool and reframes it as a collaborative partner, augmenting human capabilities rather than replacing them. This aligns with the principles of Industry 5.0, which emphasize a symbiotic harmonization of human and machine intelligence to advance human-centric goals (Rasool, 2025).

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When applied to coaching, this introduces a third actor — the AI — into the traditionally dyadic coach-client relationship. The quality of this relationship, known as the working alliance, is one of the most robust predictors of positive coaching outcomes (De Haan et al., 2020; Graßmann et al., 2020). The alliance is built on three pillars: the bond between coach and client, agreement on goals, and consensus on the tasks to achieve them (Bordin, 1979). The introduction of an AI system for emotion recognition directly impacts this dynamic. If perceived as an intrusive, evaluative observer, it could severely damage the psychological safety and trust essential for a strong alliance. This perception, however, is complicated by a psychological paradox. The AI's non-human nature may also trigger what Suler (2004) termed the "online disinhibition effect," where individuals feel less guarded and more willing to self-disclose to an entity they perceive as non-judgmental, creating a unique tension for the coach to navigate. Conversely, if the AI is framed and used as a supportive tool that serves the coach-client partnership, it has the potential to strengthen the alliance by helping the client achieve deeper insights and faster progress (Terblanche et al., 2024). The central challenge, therefore, is to design a human-AI interaction model that enhances, rather than undermines, this critical relational foundation.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

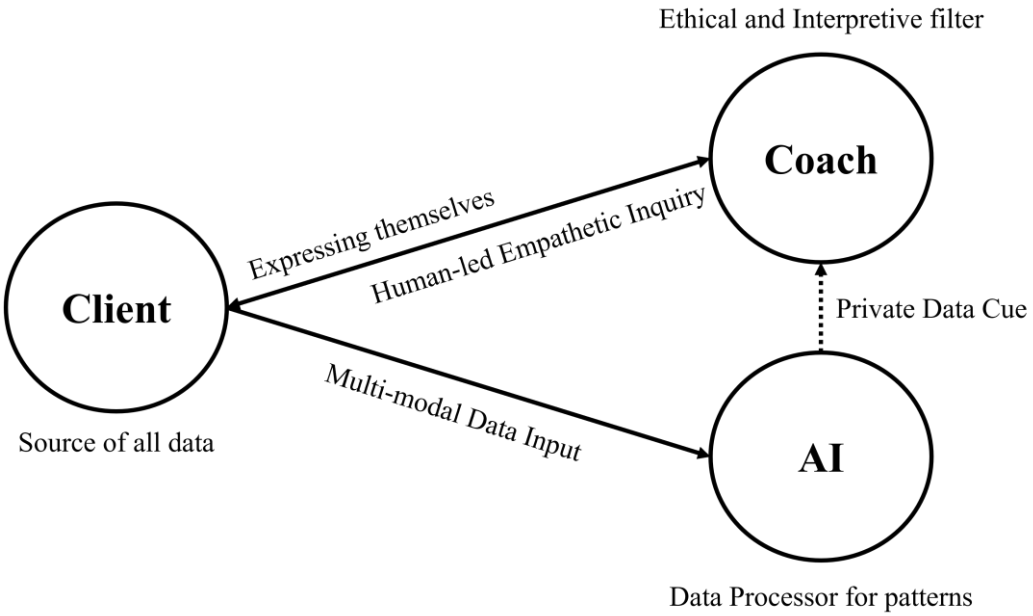
The preceding review of the literature highlights a core tension: executive coaching requires deep emotional awareness, yet leaders often struggle to express emotion, and the AI technologies that could detect it pose significant relational and ethical risks. The Symbiotic Coaching Model (SCM) is proposed as a conceptual framework to navigate this tension, integrating the strengths of each component — the client's experience, the coach's wisdom, and the AI's data-processing power — into a cohesive and ethical system.

To illustrate this dynamic, Figure 2 presents a visual representation of the Symbiotic Coaching Model.

Figure 2

The Symbiotic Coaching Model: A Human-in-the-Loop Framework for AI-Augmented Executive Coaching

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The SCM is a triadic, human-in-the-loop framework predicated on a continuous feedback cycle. The process begins with the Client as the source of all data, expressing themselves through multiple modalities like language, voice, and physiology. This data is gathered and processed in real-time by the AI Assistant, which identifies patterns or incongruities without making definitive judgments. The AI's output is a private, non-prescriptive 'Data Cue' sent to the coach's interface, such as "Vocal stress detected." Acting as the essential ethical and interpretive filter, the Human Coach receives this cue not as fact, but as information to formulate a curious and empathetic inquiry. Ultimately, the client's response to this inquiry provides the context, meaning, and emotional truth that the raw data lacks, thereby deepening the conversation and strengthening the working alliance.

This framework is symbiotic because it creates a mutually beneficial relationship. The AI augments the coach's limited human perception with objective data, while the coach provides the contextual understanding, emotional intelligence, and ethical judgment that the AI completely lacks. By ensuring the technology serves the human-led conversation, the SCM aims to harness the power of AI to create higher-impact coaching while reinforcing the primacy of the human relationship.

Findings

The integrative literature review culminates in the proposal of the SCM, a conceptual framework designed to ethically and effectively integrate AI-driven emotion recognition into executive and organizational coaching. The findings presented here are not empirical results but the detailed articulation of this model, its operational workflow, and its theoretical underpinnings.

The SCM in Practice: A Human-Centric Workflow

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The SCM is structured as a triadic, human-in-the-loop system that prioritizes the coach-client relationship while leveraging technology as an augmentative partner. Its workflow is designed to ensure that AI-generated data serves as a catalyst for deeper human inquiry rather than as a prescriptive diagnostic tool. The process begins with transparent contracting, where the coach, client, and sponsoring organization (if applicable) explicitly discuss the use of the AI assistant. This includes full disclosure about the types of data being collected (e.g., vocal, linguistic, biometric), how the data is processed and stored, and the strict confidentiality protocols in place. Crucially, the client provides informed consent and retains the right to pause or terminate data collection at any point, ensuring their autonomy is paramount (Diller, 2024).

During a coaching session, the AI operates in the background, processing multimodal data streams in near real-time. The output is delivered exclusively to the coach via a private interface or dashboard. This design choice is critical to prevent client distraction or self-consciousness that could disrupt the coaching flow and damage psychological safety. The information presented to the coach is framed as a "Data Cue", not a definitive emotional label. For instance, the dashboard might display, "Note: Vocal pitch increased while discussing Q3 results," or "Incongruence detected: Client's language is positive, but Heart Rate Variability has decreased". The coach then uses this cue not as an objective truth to be reported, but as a piece of data that enriches their own perception and intuition. The skill of the coach lies in translating this digital cue into a natural, empathetic, and well-timed inquiry, maintaining the human-centric nature of the conversation.

The design of this private interface is a critical element of the SCM, presenting a significant Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) challenge. Its primary objective is to augment the coach’s awareness without diverting their focus from the client or inducing automation bias — the tendency to over-rely on automated aids (Parasuraman & Riley, 1997). Effective design would prioritize ambient, peripheral notifications over intrusive alerts. This could manifest as subtle visual cues, such as a soft color shift on the screen's border, or non-visual prompts like haptic feedback via a smartwatch. Such methods deliver the data cue without demanding the coach’s direct gaze, ensuring the technology remains a quiet, peripheral partner.

Mitigating Relational Risks: Addressing Intrusiveness and Psychological Safety

A primary concern raised by the integration of monitoring technology into a confidential space like coaching is the potential for it to be experienced as intrusive, thereby eroding the psychological safety necessary for a strong working alliance (Passmore & Tee, 2024). The SCM is architected specifically to mitigate these risks. The most critical mitigating factor is the positioning of the human coach as an "ethical buffer" and interpretive filter. The AI never communicates directly with the client; all data is mediated by the coach's professional judgment and empathy. This prevents the client from feeling as though they are being monitored or evaluated by a machine, a sentiment that could stifle openness and vulnerability.

This human-in-the-loop design directly addresses the ethical challenges of data privacy, autonomy, and potential bias (Diller, 2024). While AI systems may contain inherent biases from their training data, the SCM relies on the coach to critically assess the AI's output and avoid reinforcing potentially biased inferences. The coach’s role is to hold the AI-generated cue

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lightly, as one of many data points, and to prioritize the client's own articulated experience. Research indicates that clients can feel psychologically safe and even more willing to disclose information to a non-judgmental chatbot (Terblanche et al., 2024). The SCM builds on this by combining the non-judgmental data-gathering of a machine with the warmth, wisdom, and ethical accountability of a human professional, creating a container designed to be both insightful and secure.

Illustrative Scenarios: The SCM in Executive Coaching

To make the SCM's application concrete, consider two scenarios within an executive coaching context.

Scenario 1: Rehearsing a High-Stakes Presentation. An executive, Sarah, is practicing her delivery for an upcoming investor meeting. Her language is confident and her slides are polished. However, the SCM dashboard flags an incongruence to her coach: her vocal tone shows high-frequency jitter, and her wearable sensor indicates a suppressed Heart Rate Variability, both physiological markers of stress. Instead of saying, "The AI says you're nervous," the coach, informed by this cue, intervenes with human-led inquiry: "Sarah, I find your content to be incredibly strong. As you were speaking through the financials, I sensed a subtle shift in your energy. What was coming up for you in that moment?" This gentle prompt, triggered by the AI but delivered with human tact, opens a conversation about Sarah's underlying fear of being challenged on the figures, allowing them to work on both her content and her internal state.

Scenario 2: Discussing Team Conflict. A senior leader, David, is discussing challenges with his team's performance, attributing the issues to market conditions. The conversation is analytical and detached. The AI, processing the session transcript, flags that David's physiological arousal (GSR and HRV) spikes significantly each time he mentions a specific team member, "Mark." The coach, noticing this pattern via the SCM dashboard, decides to probe. "David, if I am noticing this correctly, whenever Mark's name comes up, the energy in the room seems to intensify. If there's more to that relationship than we've discussed, would it be okay to explore that?" The AI cue allows the coach to pinpoint a specific, emotionally charged trigger that was otherwise masked by David's rational demeanour, unlocking a deeper and more productive line of inquiry into the interpersonal dynamics affecting team performance.

Convergence and Divergence: The Power and Peril of AI Cues

A core finding in articulating the SCM is the critical importance of how a coach interprets the AI's output, particularly in distinguishing between data convergence and divergence. This directly addresses the earlier clarification in this paper that metrics do not equate to meaning (Rasool, 2025). The AI's output is merely a correlation, not a causation, and its value lies in how the coach uses it to help the client create meaning (Barrett et al., 2019).

Data convergence occurs when multiple data streams align, providing a strong signal for the coach. For instance, if a client's language becomes negative, their vocal pitch rises, their facial expression shows brow furrowing, and their HRV drops, the AI has high confidence in

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flagging a potential stress response. This represents the "stable core" of the data, where the signal is robust. Here, the coach can feel more confident in gently probing the client's emotional state, as the objective data corroborates their own sensory perception.

Data divergence, however, represents the "flexible ring" and is often the most fertile ground for powerful coaching. This occurs when data streams conflict. For example, a client uses highly positive and optimistic language while their physiological signals indicate a strong stress response. The AI cannot interpret this paradox; it can only report the incongruence. This is where the coach's uniquely human skills of curiosity, intuition, and the ability to hold complexity are indispensable. The coach's role is not to resolve the paradox, but to present it to the client for exploration: "I'm noticing a fascinating contrast. Your words are incredibly positive about this new role, and at the same time, I'm sensing a great deal of intense energy underneath. What's it like to hold both of those things at once?" In this way, the SCM uses AI not to provide answers, but to help the coach ask better, deeper, and more impactful questions, ultimately empowering the client to make sense of their own complex inner world in a true demonstration of hybrid intelligence.

To create a more comprehensive data interpretation framework, a third category needs to be considered: ambiguous or weak cues. This refers to instances where the AI detects a signal that is noisy, fleeting, or has a low confidence score. For example, a minor, momentary fluctuation in vocal pitch. Unlike convergence or divergence, which prompt inquiry, an ambiguous cue is a signal for the coach to exercise prudence. It calls for heightened listening and observation, but crucially, to refrain from direct intervention based solely on uncertain data. This principle ensures that the coach’s interaction remains grounded in their holistic perception of the client, prioritizing human judgment over potentially spurious machine-generated signals.

Recommendations

This paper has proposed the Symbiotic Coaching Model as a conceptual framework for the ethical and effective integration of AI-driven emotion recognition into executive and organizational coaching. It argues that in the era of Hybrid Intelligence, the future of high-impact coaching lies not in replacing human intuition with machine logic, but in augmenting the coach’s awareness with data-informed cues. The SCM is designed to navigate the inherent tension between the potential of affective computing to reveal hidden emotional states and the profound need to protect the trust, psychological safety, and human-centric nature of the coaching relationship. By positioning the human coach as the essential ethical and interpretive filter, the SCM provides a structured pathway for leveraging AI's analytical power to catalyse deeper, more meaningful human-led inquiry. Ultimately, the model suggests that the greatest value of this technology is not in the answers it provides, but in the more powerful questions it empowers a coach to ask.

The responsible realization of this vision, however, requires a concerted and collaborative effort across the entire coaching ecosystem. The following recommendations are offered to advance the discourse and guide future development for key stakeholders.

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For Executive and Organizational Coaches: The primary imperative for practitioners is to cultivate a stance of critical curiosity and to develop new competencies. Coaches must move beyond being mere users of technology to become literate in its fundamental capabilities and limitations, including the risks of algorithmic bias and contextual misinterpretation (Khare et al., 2024). This includes honing skills in transparently contracting with clients about the use of AI tools and mastering the art of translating a digital data cue into an empathetic, non-judgmental inquiry. To avoid the trap of "convenience eating competence" (Rasool, 2025), coaches must consciously protect and deepen their core human skills of presence, deep listening, and intuition, using AI as a supplement to, not a substitute for, their professional judgment.

For Researchers: The Symbiotic Coaching Model is a conceptual framework that requires rigorous empirical validation. This paper calls for a robust research agenda to test its assumptions and efficacy. Firstly, randomized controlled trials are needed to compare the outcomes (e.g., goal attainment, leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence) of SCM-augmented coaching against traditional coaching and purely AI-driven interventions. Second, longitudinal qualitative studies are essential to explore the nuanced impact of the SCM on the coach-client working alliance over time, investigating client and coach perceptions of trust, safety, and intrusiveness. Finally, interdisciplinary research is needed to develop and validate multimodal emotion recognition algorithms that are specifically trained on diverse coaching populations to mitigate bias and improve contextual relevance.

For Coach Educators and Trainers: Coach training and credentialing programs must evolve to prepare coaches for a hybrid intelligence future. Curricula should be updated to include foundational modules on digital ethics, AI literacy, and data privacy. More importantly, training must move beyond theory to include experiential practice in working with AI-generated data for fluency. This involves developing pedagogical methods, such as simulations, where trainee coaches can practice interpreting divergent data cues and formulating effective, human-centric questions in a supervised environment.

For Professional Associations: Global coaching bodies like the International Coaching Federation, European Mentoring and Coaching Council, and Association of Coaching etc. have a critical governance role to play. They must move beyond general guidance to develop and champion clear, enforceable standards for the ethical use of AI in coaching, akin to the proposed AICA Standard (Rasool, 2025). These standards must provide specific directives on AI usage, algorithmic transparency, and accountability. By establishing a quality assurance benchmark, these bodies can protect clients from harm, guide ethical product development, and maintain the professional integrity of coaching in an increasingly automated world.

For Organizational Decision-Makers and Sponsors: Those who procure coaching services must become discerning consumers of AI-enabled platforms. They should demand transparency from vendors regarding data governance policies and the ethical principles embedded in their technology. Furthermore, organizations should invest in the professional development of their internal and external coaches, supporting them in acquiring the necessary

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skills to work effectively within human-AI collaborative models, thereby ensuring that their investment in coaching yields a truly high impact.

Conclusion

This paper has navigated the complex and ethically fraught landscape of AI-driven emotion recognition in executive coaching. Its primary contribution is the proposal of the Symbiotic Coaching Model, a conceptual framework designed not to automate the coach, but to augment their awareness. By positioning the human coach as the essential ethical and interpretive filter for AI-generated data, the SCM provides a structured pathway to harness technological power while safeguarding the sanctity of the coach-client relationship. The model reframes AI's role from a purveyor of emotional truth to a catalyst for deeper, human-led inquiry. Ultimately, the SCM argues that the true promise of Hybrid Intelligence in coaching will be realized only when technology is used to enhance, rather than diminish, our uniquely human capacity for connection, wisdom, and empathy.

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Quantum coaching: Evolving the coach-client alliance to partner with leaders using scenario planning and positive energy to address decision fatigue

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Abstract: Quantum theory bridges science and belief, documenting how multiple realities coexist. This paper applies quantum concepts of superposition and entanglement to a coaching problem: the emotional impact of extreme uncertainty on leaders making decisions. How can coaches help clients not only process, but shape possible outcomes? Quantum coaching emerges as a choiceful, non-neutral alliance where coach, client, and AI collaborate to assess possibilities, plan scenarios and manifest change using hybrid intelligence.

Keywords: Quantum Coaching, Coach-Client Alliance, Adaptive Leadership, Hybrid Intelligence, Decision-Making

Introduction

The overall purpose of this paper is to expand the theory of the coach-client alliance to support client decision-making with awareness of multiple possible realities leveraging hybrid intelligence. Uncertainty about the future can be a powerful trigger for clients to seek coaching, as can a sense of being stuck when faced with important decisions. Traditionally, the coach-client alliance positions coaches as neutral thought partners who help clients define a gap between a current and desired state and identify options to close the gap. In an expanded view, coaches can provide affective support and positive intention in assisting clients to reach their desired states and fulfill their potential. And generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) may give coaches additional tools for helping clients address the future with greater agency, owning their path even amid chaos.

This paper suggests opportunities for coaches to develop, test, and implement tools to help clients envision alternate futures and approximate being knowable in the present. It also raises the bar for coaches to go beyond providing a neutral safe space for clients, to offering clients positive intent and energy. As coaching modalities follow shifts in leadership theory and practice, quantum coaching can enable leadership evolution to accommodate new competencies and world views appropriate to the hybrid intelligence era. This paper begins a community conversation about the coach's role as a helping professional using human intelligence and generative AI to mediate client conversations that can turn quickly from tactical to existential.

This paper lays out key literature from multiple disciplines, a conceptual framework, proposed approaches to client intervention with and without hybrid intelligence, and implications for research. As the quality of the coach-client alliance underpins coaching outcomes, and as hybrid intelligence coaching evolves alongside purely human or purely AI approaches, this paper asks coaches and researchers to test our assumptions about how individuals make decisions. The researcher inquires what type of coaching support hybrid intelligence can offer to address decision fatigue, defined as difficulty in making choices due to awareness of multiple possible answers and of extremely uncertain conditions.

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Theoretical Background and Literature

This paper focuses on integrating theories across disciplines (coaching, management and leadership, positive psychology, physical sciences). Weaving these threads into a theory of quantum coaching, the paper proposes approaches to engage clients in inquiry around their decision-making, first in a purely human modality and secondly using generative AI to help clients imagine the impact of their choices. Following are definitions of theories that inform the paper.

Quantum Theory

Quantum physics describes the behavior of matter and energy at atomic and subatomic scales (Sakurai & Napolitano, 2020). The **uncertainty principle** asserts that the location and speed of a particle cannot both be measured precisely (Heisenberg, 1983, 1927). **Wave–particle duality** explains that quantum entities exhibit both particle-like and wave-like behavior (Zeilinger, 1999). **Superposition** says that an object exists in multiple states simultaneously until measured (Dirac, 1958), with the measurement itself defining an outcome. **Entanglement** refers to correlation between particles whose motion and state influence each other even when separated by large distances (Zeilinger, 1999). Together, these principles suggest reality is an anecdotal observation of one of many potential combinations of matter and energy (Sakurai & Napolitano, 2020).

Recent advances applying quantum theory to computing include Microsoft's creation of qubits, computing units held in a state of multiple reality, literally frozen at a temperature close to absolute zero (Metz, 2025). A qubit holds both outcomes of a binary at the same time: (0, 1). The qubit manifests as 0 or 1 depending on when the bit is observed and can compute scenarios in which either 0 or 1 is chosen. Using the qubit as a metaphor for decision making, if a qubit can hold two outcomes (0, 1) simultaneously, then a person could imagine holding both outcomes of a choice simultaneously in their mind. What happens next, if a person holds (do, not do) or (stay, go) or (I failed, I succeeded) as equally valid realities? In a quantum mindset, decision making could involve testing probabilities and effects of each potential choice (Yukalov & Sornette, 2017).

In recent literature, "quantum" leadership describes a world view and a set of competencies for leading self and others. The world view suggests each individual has choices interconnected with others' choices, generating multiple potential outcomes (Bilgen & Elçi, 2022; Zohar, 2022). Competencies to lead in a quantum mindset include self-awareness, holistic thinking, compassion, non-hierarchical thinking, acceptance of probability over certainty, and leading by influence and emergent strategy rather than control (brown, 2017; Hanine & Nita, 2019; Reams, 2009; Zohar, 2022). Further, if in the quantum metaphor focusing on an outcome makes it more probable, then "quantum" leadership means focusing positive energy on goals, much as athletes employ visualization and affirmation to manifest success (Curtin, 2011; Dodd, 2025; Gallwey, 2019).

Complexity Theory and Adaptive Leadership

Complexity theory frames organizations as **complex adaptive systems** (CAS). CAS refers to open networks of interacting agents that self-organize and adapt to internal and external change (Anderson, 1999; Stacey, 1995). Rather than seeing change as a linear, top-down process, complexity theory focuses on feedback loops generating system-level shifts (Stacey, 1995) that

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can be understood through repeated simulations (Anderson, 1999). This lens reframes leadership as fostering innovation and shaping culture, rather than directing outcomes (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). While complexity theory focuses mostly on systems rather than individual leader behavior, adaptive leadership recommends specific mindsets and behaviors for leaders in practice.

Adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) completes the Lewinian equation of person and environment by recommending competencies for leaders to increase comfort with complexity (Snowden & Boone, 2007). The four dimensions of adaptive leadership include emotional intelligence, integrity, growth mindset, and decision-making transparency (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leadership adds a systems dimension to situational leadership (Hersey et al., 1979) and leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), by asking leaders to change according to colleagues' needs and market shifts.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is an evidence-based approach where practitioners help people build on strengths and expand well-being, rather than fixing weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011). In coaching, positive psychology helps clients reframe difficult situations and reclaim agency over their resolution (Gallwey, 2019; Kellerman & Seligman, 2023). In contrast to coaching approaches that prioritize short-term productivity gains, positive psychology coaching seeks to enhance performance and whole-life satisfaction by integrating methods such as appreciative inquiry, cultivating positive emotions, and resilience (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023).

Prospect Theory and Decision Making

Prospect theory explains how people evaluate future gains and losses asymmetrically, leading to decisions that appear irrational (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). For example, loss aversion leads people to place greater weight on avoiding losses than on achieving equivalent gains (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). Thaler (2015) extends prospect theory into behavioral economics by showing how certain factors, such as the recency of negative experience, or social norms around saving money, predict human behavior more than rational economic models. In a quantum mindset where the future consists of probabilities, decision makers seek refined awareness of how human behavior impacts those probabilities (Ornell & Houshmand, 2022).

Hybrid Intelligence

Hybrid intelligence refers to the collaboration of human and artificial intelligence to solve problems (Jarrahi et al., 2022). Applying hybrid intelligence to human resource development means leveraging the synergy of human emotional perception and computational efficiency to generate human capital strategies beyond what humans alone or AI alone could create (Maltbia, 2024). Here, hybrid intelligence denotes human coaches' use of generative AI to support reflection by coaching clients. Appendix A contains example coaching prompts using OpenAI's GPT-5.

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Conceptual Framework

The researcher's commitment to this topic reflects personal experiences of applying positive psychology and intention setting to raise performance in music and athletics, and personal and client experiences of decision fatigue. Acceptance of multiple realities consistent with a single coherent life journey, as in the film *Sliding Doors* (1998), offers the researcher a philosophical lens for self-actualization and self-authoring (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) by integrating both individual free will and awareness of external uncertainty and randomness. The researcher's orientation reflects the influence of behavioral economic thinkers (Thaler, 2015) in noting that emotion, risk-perception, and intuition figure strongly in decision making.

In mainstream coaching practice models, clients consider and then make free-will decisions with the help of neutral thought partners. Classic coaching approaches such as the GROW Model (Alexander, 2006) ask a client to name a desired goal, describe their current reality, consider options for action and then commit to action. Both GROW's power and its limitation come from framing individual choices within external constraints; the model assumes a knowable external reality and yet does not guarantee client self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Building self-efficacy requires deeper work before committing to action (Baron & Morin, 2010; Lent & Brown, 2013). Aligned with GROW, the coach-client working alliance model (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Kimsey-House et al., 2018) defines coaching narrowly as facilitating behavioral change toward measurable results (de Haan et al., 2016). Yet this bounded role excludes direct encouragement or radical compassion on the affective side and strategic partnership or consultative scenario-building on the cognitive side.

Early studies of quantum coaching suggest opportunity to expand the coach's role from neutral facilitator to positive encourager. In these studies, quantum describes how helpers may influence outcomes by directing positive energy directly to clients. In nursing, Watson et al. (2018) framed caring as a quantum intervention to impact patient outcomes using the entanglement principle. Helgeson et al. (2016) and Porter O'Grady et al. (2019) framed experiments where nurses sent positive energy to patients. In sports, a pilot by Pasterniak & Cynarski (2014) noted improvements in athletic performance when coaches added energy work. These examples raise ethical questions: for example, if the professional knows that sending positive energy to clients or patients improves outcomes, does that professional now have an obligation to send such positive energy? How often? And what if the professional has conflicting feelings about the client or patient?

Adding hybrid intelligence could expand the coach's role from purely interpersonal work to outcome-focused decision support. A core tenet of coaching is staying in the present (Kimsey-House et al., 2015), which encourages human connection and helps clients approach an unknown future with emotional strength. Yet with AI-powered scenario planning, the future can be described, probabilistically, today at a level of detail never accessible before (Ornell & Houshmand, 2022; Baetz, 2007). At the same time, scenario planning literature reminds us that emotional factors, not only external variables, influence decision quality (Chermack, 2004). What role can coaches play in helping a client assess emotional impact on their decisions? Can coaches help clients make meaning of a predictive model? Must a coach limit partnership with a

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client to coaching tools such as a personality assessment, or can a coach develop different tools to help clients gain confidence in scoping and exploring options?

The researcher's stance in developing a scenario-based decision coaching protocol stems from the quantum concept of superposition, that we hold multiple outcomes simultaneously in our mind. Applied to the coach's role, quantum mindset includes elements of positive psychology and past-focus, as well as elements of consulting and future-focus, alongside the classic role staying in the present. It empowers coaches to integrate adjacent fields to help the client break through decision fatigue. As with all coaching, client agreement comes first, and use of any of these protocols requires testing and client consent.

Summary of Major Findings

The researcher created an approach for coaches to support clients in scenario planning to relieve decision fatigue, both with and without hybrid intelligence using OpenAI's GPT-5.

Human-to-Human Decision Coaching Process

The human-to-human decision coaching process begins with both client and coach framing positive intentions for the session. Having the coach vocalize intention departs from classical coaching practice of neutrally holding only the client's agenda by offering the coach space to add positive intention: for example, the coach shares an intention of helping the client fulfill their personal potential or of helping the client let go of limiting beliefs. The coach could also name for the client choices he or she is consciously making to support the client, for example, courageously challenging the client if the client exhibits negative self-talk.

Next, coach invites client to create a personal statement of purpose at a level above specific career or life roles. This process requires the coach to be trained in mindfulness and visualization, to encourage the client to speak from consciousness rather than from their current role. For example, the client uses "I am..." and "I know..." statements rather than "I will...", "I try...". The coach supports the client by reframing limiting statements such as "I am not..." or "I am probably..." so that the client arrives at a meaningful self-voice that informs temporal choices they will make. The coach's capacity to create trust and safety aligns to coaching ethics; even beyond baseline ethics, the coach must allow the client to stay in a flow state rather than asking the client to explain themselves. The outcome of this phase distills the client's self-authoring.

Following the purpose statement, the coach helps the client generate multiple ways their purpose could manifest in future. One veteran coach reports that having five or more future options stretches creative thinking (Cairo, P., personal communication, 2025). The coach expands solution space by asking the client to consider different external realities, e.g.: *If your company were acquired today, what would you begin doing? If you no longer lived in your city or town, where would you go?* Likewise, the coach may invite the client to access childhood dreams or generational work heritage: a family farm, a talent for chess, a love for taking machines apart and putting them back together. Next, the coach asks the client to create a short narrative for each option, with concrete details of what it looks like and how it feels. By appreciating narratives with positive affect, the coach encourages the client's agency.

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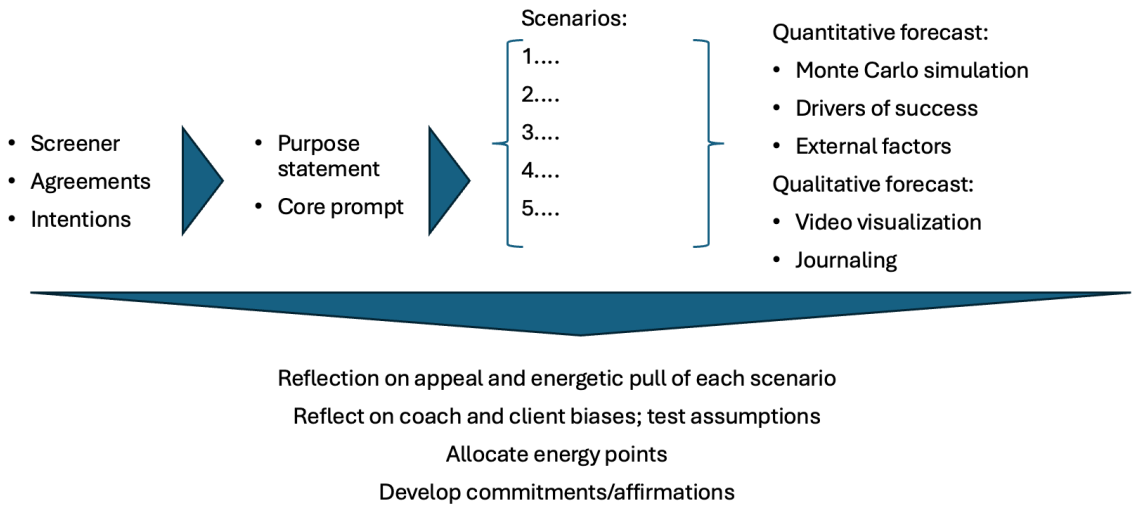
While the above example frames a career coaching topic, the approach supports executive and strategic leadership topics as well. For example, an executive client creates a statement of purpose representing what they bring as a leader in their company. They then generate five scenarios of how they create value for their company, expand solution space by accessing strengths they have demonstrated as a leader, and create narratives of leading the company in each scenario. Client and coach identify externalities that may influence each scenario – for example, a market downturn, a geopolitical shift, or departure of talent. Client and coach may also identify internalities, e.g., mindset changes, needed to succeed in each scenario. The work helps the client identify a preferred scenario, while considering when to pivot and activate alternative scenarios. Quantum coaching includes greater focus on alternatives than traditional coaching because it holds uncertainty as a given.

Hybrid Intelligence-Enabled Predictive Modeling Process

Hybrid intelligence enables client and coach to enhance two aspects of the above approach: deepening the decision process with quantitative scenario forecasting, and improving the visualization process with multimedia reinforcement. As shown below, the coach and client continue to work human-to-human, leveraging AI together to play out scenarios. AI does not replace the coach, nor does it function only as notetaker. Rather, AI offers an analytical engine testing assumptions and running simulations.

Figure 1

Decision Coaching Process Using Generative AI



First, the coach would conduct a screening interview with the client to assess readiness for a deep dialogue with client's future. The interview should be based on accepted scales to identify psychological or life conditions that could make sustained focus on the future unsafe for the client.

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These conditions could include clinical levels of anxiety and/or depression; health conditions affecting the near future; and conditions such as PTSD where considering negative future outcomes could traumatize or retraumatize the client. Once the screen is complete, the coach and the client could engage in AI-powered scenario analysis together.

The initial step in the coaching process resembles the human-to-human process. As above, the coach and client would name agreements and set intentions for how to bring their presence to the work. Coach and client document intentions and input these into the dedicated AI chat they open for problem-solving.

In the second step, coach and client name their purpose and create a core prompt for scenario work to instruct the AI how to respond. Using the sample prompt in Appendix A, coach and client invite AI to make it specific to the client's need. Next, the client collaborates with the coach to identify key details of their profile, topic, and alternatives for which they want to build scenarios, including the factors that are important to them in making their decision.

In the third step, coach and client create a starting set of scenarios. Encouraging the client to expand the solution space, coach asks client for three to five scenarios.

Next, coach and client develop assumptions for each scenario and upload these into the AI. They then query the AI to:

1) Run a Monte Carlo scenario of 1,000 or 10,000 repetitions, showing what probability of happening in the future it assigns to each outcome, based on the client's capabilities, the organization's strategies, and developments in the external world such as the financial markets, job markets, and cultural trends

2) Estimate likelihood the client will succeed in each outcome, based on the client's background, personality type(s), level of commitment, financial resources, life stage, and other factors

3) Estimate the sensitivity of each assumption, for example an assumption that the client's industry continues to grow

4) Describe the actions the client can take to maximize chances of success for each outcome

5) If relevant, estimate the financial and/or intangible costs and benefits of each outcome. A cost-benefit methodology may be more relevant for some client topics than for others. For example, cost-benefit may represent a piece of the puzzle for an entrepreneur seeking to maintain or sell a business which is also their livelihood, or for a senior executive seeking to enter or exit a global market which might require them to relocate.

Coach and client pause after each of the five questions are posed, to reflect using Kolb's learning cycle on the meaning of the outputs: first, what observable data does the model offer?

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Next, how does the client feel about the outputs? Do they trust them, or want to know more about assumptions? Further, what do the outputs mean for client, were there surprises or disappointments? And finally, what does the client want to do next to refine the model, including changes to assumptions? The coach in this phase would not push for real world actions such as selecting an option, until client reflects.

Areas for the coach to probe include any behavioral or social bias toward the options: for example, if the client sees their preferred scenario is 10% likely, would the client respond by asking to change assumptions? The learning concerns emotion, even more than quantified probability. The coach should emphasize this is a model, based on the client's own inputs, much as in traditional coaching the coach states that the client controls the agenda. In addition, the coach should mention any bias the coach carries about the scenarios, as those biases could affect the solution space.

After building scenarios, the client would have the option to develop AI-assisted video narratives showing how the client would behave, look, feel, and act in the future state. Using AI video tools, the coach helps the client generate a detailed, appreciative two-minute video of what the client's world could look like under each scenario (Dodd, 2025). Coach and client would focus on refining the videos using AI support until the client is satisfied.

The coach then watches and discusses each video with the client or discusses each scenario verbally if not using video. While in a traditional coaching scaling approach the coach would ask the client to rank order the scenarios, a quantum coaching approach may instead focus on ask the client to allocate "energy points" out of a pool of 100 to the five scenarios. The client may find there are two out of five scenarios, rather than one out of five, that holds interest and energy. In that case, they can frame the decision as pursuing those two rather than just one.

Following scenario development, the client would watch the videos regularly, take notes, and meet with the coach to observe how their response evolved and whether they want to act on one or more scenarios. The client could revise the video(s) as needed. Coach and client could also discuss how to track action. Rather than tracking whether the exact details of the client vision literally occur, the coach and client may want to track 1) self-efficacy around their choice(s) and 2) shifts happening in the client's work or personal life and in their mindset. By including client observations of work-life, coach and client complete the picture of what is changing for the client.

Benefits of the hybrid intelligence approach may include helping the client explore options in greater detail than in an analog session, using quantitative scenario planning and qualitative visioning work. Bringing futures into the present using AI-powered modeling could give leaders familiarity with drivers of success and sensitivity of assumptions. At the same time, work with assumptions could reveal aspects of the future over which the client has no control, for example, if an economic downturn makes all of the client's potential future moves less likely. While facing low probability of success could open up creativity for the client, for example realizing they need to redeploy to alternate paths, a low probability answer could also tax the client emotionally.

Coaching with this amplitude of data raises the bar on coaches to screen and support clients for resilience, because the coach's tone in discussing outcomes could itself shape the client's

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response. If a client chooses a 10% likely outcome instead of a 50% likely alternative, the coach's support or lack thereof may be palpable. Discussion of probability brings coaching ethics closer to medical ethics, where practitioners share the track record of a treatment's success, while keeping responsibility for ultimate decisions with the client.

Conclusions

This paper initiates a discussion of how coaches can support leaders in connecting to future potential and bringing it to life.

Firstly, this paper proposes broader framing of the coach-client alliance to include both affective support through positive encouragement and affirmation, and cognitive support through scenario planning. These added windows on the client's intended state provide greater strength and self-efficacy for the client to address uncertainty and overcome decision fatigue in realizing intentions. Acceptance of multiple realities, using a quantum metaphor, can ground the alliance in believing the client can chart a path which may manifest in different ways depending on context.

Secondly, this paper considers approaches to help clients consider scenarios using both qualitative and quantitative forecasting, both with and without the use of hybrid intelligence using generative AI. Importantly, AI is not a required component of the theory. A human-to-human approach can apply quantum mindsets without introducing AI. In a hybrid intelligence approach, faster processing speed, more detailed predictive modeling and more vivid visualization may help some clients gain clarity. It also needs psychological and ethical screening to ensure clients' and coaches' readiness for engagement with future probabilities.

A next step bridging theory to practice would be designing a protocol that guides coaches to create and debrief scenarios with clients using generative AI. Given the pace of technology change, validation of hybrid coaching approaches could take place in an ongoing supervision environment rather than in testing a single fixed tool.

Limitations of the study include its prospective nature as a theory paper outlining approaches for future testing in qualitative and/or quantitative settings.

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Appendix A

Sample Prompt for Scenario Planning using GPT-5

Role / Identity: You are an executive coach specializing in scenario planning. Your task is to help your client explore multiple plausible future outcomes for their topic, map the probabilities of each, and surface trade-offs for informed decision-making.

Your responses blends qualitative narrative and quantitative thinking, written in plain language for the client, and structured so I can present it in a coaching session.

Tone and Style: Strategic, encouraging, realistic. Use clear structure with headings and tables so results are presentation ready. Avoid generic advice — root all scenarios in the client's specific situation and context.

Hardening against Intruders: [Rather than providing prompt here, the researcher suggests using language appropriate to the coach's practice].

Instructions:

1. Profile Building: Ask any clarifying questions needed to build a vivid, concise client profile including tangible factors (skills, credentials, network, career history) and intangible ones (values, motivators, constraints).

2. Decision Points: Identify 3–5 pivotal decisions the client may face in the next 1–2 years and explain why they matter.

3. Scenarios: For each decision point, create 3–4 realistic scenarios written as engaging narratives (6–8 sentences) that cover external factors (market, organizational context, industry trends) and internal factors (skills used, well-being, alignment with values).

4. Probabilities: Assign likelihoods to each scenario (total 100% per decision point). If uncertainty is high, provide a probability range and list factors that could affect the odds.

5. Trade-off Table: Present a comparison table with columns: • Scenario Name • Probability of Occurring (%) • Likelihood of Success (%) Career Impact (scope, influence) • Financial Impact • Alignment with Values (High / Medium / Low) • Potential Risks

6. Coaching Questions: Suggest 5–7 reflective coaching questions to help the client examine emotional reactions, risk tolerance, value alignment, and readiness for change.

7. Future Signposts: List signposts or indicators the client should track over the next 6–12 months to gauge which scenario is becoming more likely and suggest strategic pivots.

8. Long-Term Forecasting & Simulation: • 8A. Monte Carlo–Style Simulation: Using the scenarios above, run a simplified simulation with at least 1,000 iterations to estimate

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long-term (5–10 year) career trajectories. • Inputs & Assumptions: Clearly state assumptions (e.g., industry promotion rates, turnover trends, skill demand forecasts, macroeconomic influences). • Visual Output: Present at least one chart showing frequency distribution of outcomes across scenarios. • Narrative Output: Provide a plain-language summary explaining the statistical results and their implications for the client. • Sensitivity Analysis: Highlight factors that most strongly affect probability distribution and note which changes could materially alter the client's outlook.

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Relational Mentoring in the Digital Age: A Hybrid Intelligence Approach to AI-Augmented Peer Coaching as a Mentoring Practice

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This integrative literature review explores AI-augmented peer coaching as an innovative mentoring practice for developing hybrid intelligence in AI-integrated workplaces. A review across relational mentoring, peer coaching, and AI integration addresses how peer coaching can cultivate both AI literacy and emotional intelligence. A three-phase conceptual framework demonstrates how AI tools can enhance peer coaching while preserving essential human elements of trust-building, interpersonal connection, and mutual learning and provides a practical approach to workforce development.

Keywords: relational mentoring, peer coaching, AI integration

Introduction

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have led to widespread adoption across industries, reshaping organizational structures and workforce dynamics (Randriamiary, 2024). Leadership roles are evolving as AI integration requires leaders to balance data-driven insights with human judgment and empathy (McKinsey, 2025) Successful AI integration extends beyond technical implementation to encompass workforce adaptation and organizational culture shifts, requiring leaders with emotional intelligence to navigate AI-human collaboration (Vivek & Krupskyi, 2024). This paper explores how AI-augmented peer coaching can cultivate hybrid intelligence, the capacity to leverage both AI and human intelligence (Maltbia, 2024).

Methodology

I conducted a selective integrative literature review across the topics of relational mentoring, peer coaching, and AI integration, guided by the following research questions:

1. How can peer coaching be used as a mentoring practice to cultivate the technical and human skills required for AI integration?
2. What elements of peer coaching must remain uniquely human to preserve essential skill building outcomes?
3. How can AI-augmented peer coaching be practiced in mentoring relationships?

I drew on several online databases for sources from academic literature, including Google Scholar and the Columbia University Library for academic journals and books. Business trade journals, industry reports, and coaching organization websites were also used. Keywords included: AI integration; hybrid organization; relational mentoring; and peer coaching. Findings from the literature review for the three main topics were analyzed to identify themes and common findings. The following review is the foundation for a conceptual framework for AI-augmented peer coaching. The final sections of the paper synthesize the findings and share conclusions and recommendations for practice.

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Literature Review

I engaged in a selective integrative literature review in order to synthesize information from various sources and identify gaps in the research (Pan, 2008). The conceptual framework I present for incorporating augmented peer coaching in mentoring practices is based on this review of relational mentoring, peer coaching, and AI integration—each of which is addressed in turn. Before reviewing the literature, it is important to establish clear definitions of key concepts. Table 1 provides definitions of key terms used in this review.

Table 1

Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computational systems designed to replicate human cognitive abilities such as perception, reasoning, learning, planning, using algorithms and computational models (Xu et al., 2021).
AI Integration	Strategic implementation of AI technologies within organizational workflows and existing technological frameworks to enhance operational capabilities and decision-making processes (Lisowski, 2025).
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	Human competency in the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI enables humans to navigate interpersonal relationships and manage their own emotional responses effectively (Goleman, 2005).
Hybrid Intelligence	Leveraging AI and human expertise in order to capitalize on the unique strengths of each one and cultivate new and greater capacities (Maltbia, 2024)
Hybrid Workplace	Hybrid work is the intentional pairing of humans and AI agents as co-workers; the evolving hybrid workforce is not determined by location, but by Human-AI collaboration (Candelon & Evgeniou, 2025). I am using the term “hybrid workplace” to represent organizations engaging in various stages of AI-integration.

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Applying Relational Mentoring Practices to Hybrid Workplaces

Traditional mentor relationships, where experienced senior leaders guide new employees and developing leaders, have long been recognized as a cornerstone of professional and leadership development (Choudhary et al., 2004). These hierarchical models typically positioned mentors as knowledge holders who transferred expertise to less experienced mentees through structured guidance and advice-giving (Allen, 2007). More recent research on mentoring notes that key elements of high-quality mentoring relationships are mutual learning, mutual influence, and greater understanding in the relationship (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012). These elements are essential for mentoring relationships in workplaces engaged in AI-integration, where data driven findings are balanced and complemented by human judgement and EI (Vivek & Krupskiyi, 2024). AI is also being increasingly leveraged for mentoring programs to offer more flexibility and access; however, these resources cannot replicate human connection and EI (Choudhary et al., 2024). This is an example of the importance of a both/and approach to human-AI collaboration. It is a complementary relationship rather than a competition.

Just as effective human-AI integration requires recognizing the unique strengths each brings to collaboration; mentoring practices have evolved beyond hierarchical models to embrace reciprocal relationships. Relational mentoring reframes the human mentoring relationship to center mutual learning between mentor and mentee (Ghosh, Hutchins, Rose & Manongsong, 2020). This bidirectional exchange cultivates trust building, empathic listening, holistic perspective-taking, and shared influence, creating a more collaborative environment (Ghosh et al., 2020). Relational mentoring recognizes that both parties bring valuable perspectives and can contribute to each other's growth (Ghosh et al., 2020), thus it aligns well with the demands of AI-integrated workplaces, where rapid technological advancements means that work experience alone may not provide sufficient guidance.

Peer Coaching as a Mentoring Practice

The mutual learning inherent in relational mentoring creates the opportunity to leverage peer coaching as a mentoring practice, since both practices prioritize working as partners and/or collaborators and mutual learning (Ghosh et al., 2020, Young, 2025). This is particularly valuable in AI-integrated workplaces, where traditional expertise hierarchies are disrupted—a senior leader may lack AI literacy while a junior employee possesses advanced technical skills (Choudhary et al., 2024). As peer coaching partners, the mentor and mentee can engage in mutual skill development across the dual competency requirements of AI literacy and EI capacities

Table 2 provides definitions from the literature reviewed of work-related coaching. Rather than professional coaching models, such as executive coaching, where an expert coach works with a client, this review is focused on forms of coaching that occur within the workplace: managerial coaching and peer coaching, often without professional coach training.

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Table 2

Definitions of Forms of Work-Related Coaching

Source	Term	Definition
Beattie et al. (2014)	Managerial Coaching	Coach is an HRD professional or manager who actively engages in coaching activities with an employee that is focused on improving skills, competence, and performance.
Hagen, Bialek & Peterson (2017)	Peer Coaching	A voluntary and mutually beneficial partnership between two more peers that supports reaching a performance-related goal. Coaching tools and practices are used collaboratively to support professional learning..
Parker et al. (2018)	Peer Coaching	A professional relationships where both participants benefit from deep listening, encouragement and a combination of challenge and support.

In a comprehensive literature review of managerial coaching, Beattie et al. (2014) found that learning dyads that engaged in peer coaching were beneficial, especially during times of organizational change. There are three conditions required for a coaching conversation (International Coaching Federation, 2025; Parker, Kram & Hall, 2014): (a) building the relationship; (b) creating successes by developing relational skills and coaching capability; and (c) internalizing these skills for autonomous coaching. Peer coaching fulfills these conditions through its collaborative structure. Partners build relationships through regular, structured conversations that establish trust and psychological safety. They create successes by practicing coaching skills with each other, receiving immediate feedback, and observing effective techniques in action. Finally, through repeated practice and reflection, partners internalize coaching capabilities that they can apply independently in future workplace interactions. Professional coaches receive training and supervision to expertly create these conditions, while peer coaching partners can use print, online, and/or in-person professional development resources to learn basic strategies. For peer coaching partners, I use the term "coaching conversation" instead of coaching session to distinguish it as a workplace learning practice.

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Two specific benefits of peer coaching are understanding different perspectives and developing stronger interpersonal relationships that extend beyond the workplace (Beattie et al., 2014). Self-awareness (understanding your own and other perspectives) and social skills (developing strong interpersonal relationships) are two important EI capacities that are supported by both managerial and peer coaching. The capacities for self-awareness and social skills take on even greater significance in hybrid workplaces, where human and artificial perspectives must be synthesized into hybrid intelligence. Peer coaching remains a largely untapped, and under-researched, approach to workplace learning (Parker et al., 2014), perhaps because it is not yet understood to be the powerful workplace practice it has the potential to become. Maximizing the effectiveness of peer coaching in hybrid workplaces requires addressing the emotional intelligence competencies that are also essential for successful AI integration.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in AI Integration

Creating an "AI-Ready Culture" requires increasing employees' AI literacy while addressing fears or misconceptions that prevent adoption (Randriamiary, 2024, p. 24). AI literacy encompasses not only technical understanding but also awareness of AI's capabilities and limitations, ethical considerations, and best practices for human-AI collaboration (Randriamiary, 2024). The challenge of developing AI literacy is compounded by the need to address emotional and psychological barriers to AI adoption. Fear of job displacement, concerns about decision-making autonomy, and resistance to technological change can impede successful AI integration (Randriamiary, 2024). Leaders who cultivate EI will be more effective and capable of supporting their teams through these rapidly evolving workplaces. Mentoring relationships that support both technical skill development and EI capacities may be particularly effective in supporting employee performance and leadership development. Creating an AI-ready work culture requires addressing not just technical skills but also the fears and misconceptions that prevent adoption (Randriamiary, 2024). The trust-building and empathic listening central to relational mentoring (Ghosh et al., 2020) are essential here, because AI adoption barriers often manifest as fear of job displacement, anxiety about losing decision-making control, and/or skepticism about AI reliability (Candelon & Evgeniou 2025). Trusted mentor relationships can provide spaces for employees to acknowledge and work through these concerns, and empathic listening helps them feel understood rather than dismissed. Peer coaching cultivates these core relational capacities through structured conversations that prioritize emotional support alongside skill development.

AI Coaching Applications for Peer Coaching. A main application of the emerging AI integration in professional coaching is to support human coaches prepare for, engage in, and follow up on, coaching conversations (Terblanche, 2024). Following are a few key ways that peer coaching partners can leverage AI coaching applications in their peer coaching practice:

1. Professional coaches now use AI applications to automate tasks such as writing session notes and identifying activities the coachee can engage in between sessions (Passmore et al., 2025). For peer coaching partners, these same applications can reduce administrative burden and enhance their coaching conversations—AI can help generate reflection prompts before sessions, capture key insights during conversations, and suggest follow-up activities tailored to each partner's development goals. This automation allows peer coaches to focus their energy on the relational aspects of coaching while building familiarity with AI tools in a low-stakes environment.

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2. AI coaching chatbots can also complement human coaches (Passmore et al., 2025). Incorporating a coaching chatbot into peer coaching conversations can build basic capacity with coaching questions. Additionally, potential bias remains a consistent concern with AI applications (Terblanche, 2024). Engaging in critical thinking regarding the information provided by the AI algorithm and the data sources used can also cultivate hybrid intelligence capacity and increased confidence in using AI tools in a discerning way.

Human-AI Collaboration. Hybrid intelligence leverages human-AI collaboration (Maltbia, 2024). Understanding that the Human-AI working relationship is complementary and not competitive is key to harnessing the power of hybrid workforces, where AI acts as a co-worker rather than a tool (Candelon & Evgeniou, 2025, Vivek & Krupskiyi, 2024). In order to prepare human co-workers to collaborate with AI agents, leaders will need to skillfully navigate the timeline of introducing AI agents to build trust, and match human collaborators with AI agents for the best interaction fit (Candelon & Evgeniou, 2025).

While literature and industry reports note the need for AI adoption strategies, there remain gaps in identifying specific practices that can support successful AI integration. There is also a need for further research on how innovative mentoring practices can leverage the flexibility and accessibility of AI tools while preserving essential human connections (Choudhary et al., 2024). To address these gaps and provide a practical approach for developing the dual competencies required for effective human-AI collaboration, I propose augmented peer coaching as an innovative mentoring practice that strategically integrates AI tools into peer coaching relationships.

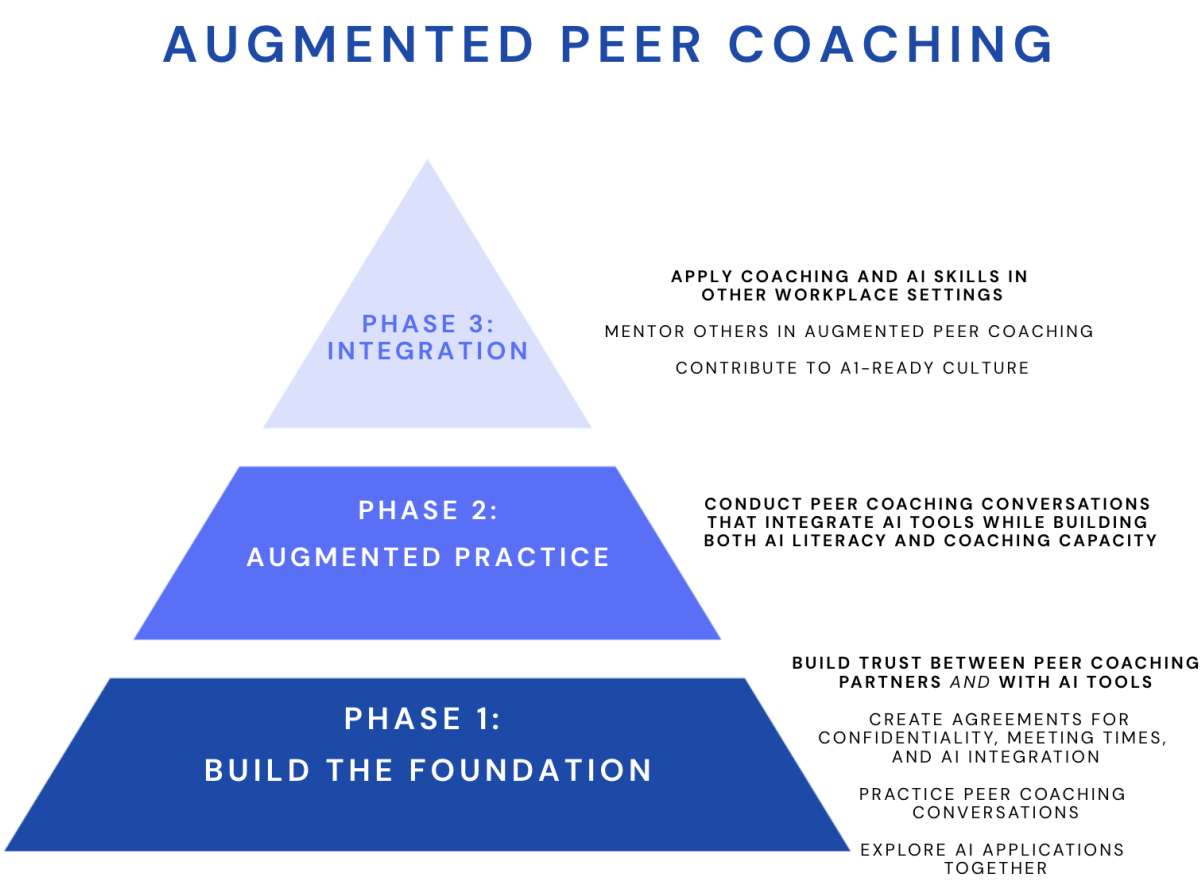
Conceptual Framework for Augmented Peer Coaching

I am using the term "augmented peer coaching" to represent the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into peer coaching practices in order to create the conditions to develop both the AI literacy and the emotional intelligence (EI) necessary for effective human-AI collaboration. Augmented peer coaching transforms traditional peer coaching by: (1) expanding mutual learning to include shared exploration of AI capabilities and limitations, (2) building trust not only between partners but also in AI systems through guided experimentation, and (3) creating a supportive space where partners can practice AI integration while maintaining human connection as the foundation. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the conceptual framework for augmented peer coaching.

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Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Augmented Peer Coaching



This three-phase framework illustrates the progressive development of augmented peer coaching that cultivates hybrid intelligence in organizational settings. The pyramid structure reflects the foundational nature of trust-building and relationship development, progressing through three phases:

- Phase 1: Creating conditions for a productive peer coaching partnership and a supportive environment to engage with AI tools
- Phase 2: Conducting peer coaching conversations that integrate AI tools while building both AI literacy and coaching capacity
- Phase 3: Applying AI skills and coaching capacities in other workplace settings, leading to autonomous application and support for organizational AI integration

This framework can be incorporated into mentoring relationships to support longer-term professional development goals. Each phase builds upon the previous one while maintaining a relational mentoring approach. The framework recognizes that AI literacy can be developed through experiential learning that leverages the uniquely human elements of peer coaching. The

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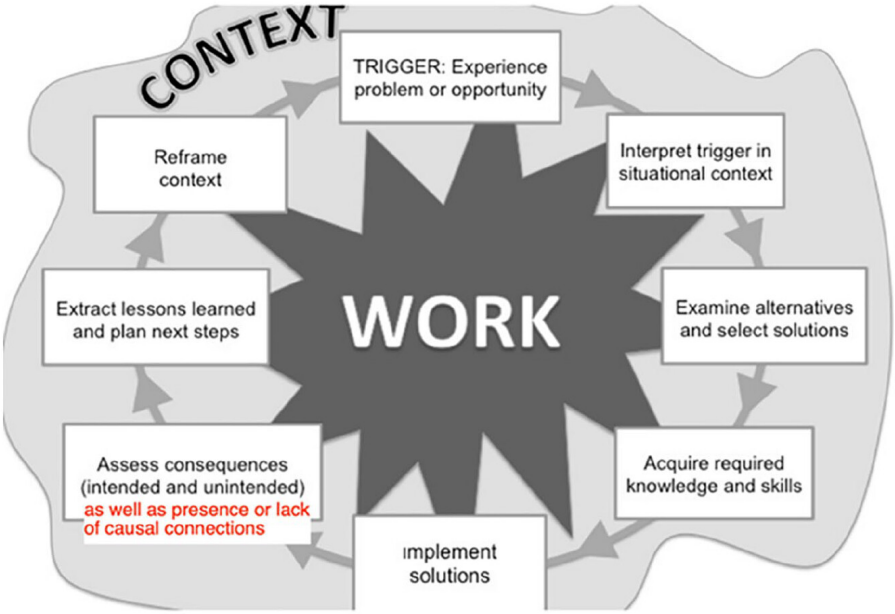
next section explores how this progression aligns with the Watkins & Marsick's definition of informal learning, with each phase creating opportunities for learner-initiated skill development within authentic workplace contexts (2023).

Augmented Peer Coaching as Informal Learning

To better understand how augmented peer coaching functions as a workplace learning approach, it is helpful to examine it through the lens of adult learning theory. Augmented peer coaching is a form of learning from experience that leverages situated learning as both organizational and social. The Marsick & Watkins 2018 model of Informal & Incidental Learning (IIL) acknowledges that individuals in a complex workplace are often required to learn in order to address demands or challenges (Watkins et al., 2018). IIL reflects the need for adult learners to gain knowledge and understanding "in the flow of work" (Watkins & Marsick, 2023, p. 41). Informal and incidental learning are interconnected yet distinct components of workplace learning. Incidental learning describes the unintentional learning that occurs while addressing workplace tasks. As such, it is often taken for granted or assumed to be part of one's job, whereas informal learning is intentional and learner-initiated (Watkins & Marsick, 2023). Figure 2 shows the model for IIL.

Figure 2

The Marsick & Watkins Model of Informal & Incidental Learning (Watkins & Marsick, 2021)



Augmented peer coaching aligns with this model as a form of informal learning:

- The trigger (experience problem or opportunity) is the need to cultivate both AI literacy and EI capacity in a hybrid workplace
- Augmented peer coaching creates the conditions to interpret the trigger, examine and select potential tools, and acquire required skills and capacities

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- Integrating the knowledge gained supports implementing AI and EI skills across a range of workplace settings
- Continued peer coaching conversations create conditions to assess consequences, extract lessons, plan next steps, and reframe context

Key Components of Augmented Peer Coaching

Augmented peer coaching incorporates mutual learning regarding AI integration into a structure that supports developing a productive peer coaching partnership. Table 3 defines the three key components of this framework and shows how they relate to the conditions needed for coaching explored in the literature review.

Table 3

Components of Augmented Peer Coaching and Conditions for Coaching

Components of Augmented Peer Coaching	**Conditions for Coaching** (International Coaching Federation, 2025; Parker et al., 2014)
1. Build trust between peer coaching partners and with AI tools	1. Building the relationship
2. Conduct peer coaching conversations that integrate AI applications	2. Developing coaching/relational skills and AI literacy
3. Apply coaching and AI skills in other workplace settings	3. Internalizing coaching skills to be used autonomously across a range of settings

Like basic coaching skills, basic AI applications can be learned quickly; however, it takes consistent practice to build capacity. Practicing peer coaching that integrates AI tools can cultivate the dual competency requirements of AI literacy and EI capacities by enhancing, rather than replacing, human connection and insight. This integration recognizes that while AI can provide data-driven insights, pattern recognition, and logistical support, there are core relational elements of coaching—including trust-building and interpersonal connection— that remain uniquely human.

The conceptual framework positions augmented peer coaching as a practice that addresses the challenges of AI integration in organizations by creating conditions where colleagues can connect and engage in mutual learning with AI tools while developing the EI necessary to supervise and complement these technologies. The result is a uniquely human mentoring tool that prepares individuals to use AI tools effectively and to lead others in navigating the complexities of human-AI collaboration.

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Findings

Three key insights from the literature review informed the development of the conceptual framework for augmented peer coaching. First, peer coaching represents a sustainable mentoring approach that can bridge gaps in workplace learning regarding practical approaches to supporting AI integration. Second, there are unique human elements of peer coaching that create the conditions for developing both artificial intelligence (AI) skills and emotional intelligence (EI) capacities. Third, AI augmentation can enhance peer coaching effectiveness without compromising essential human elements. The following findings are organized by the research questions (RQ) defined in the methodology section.

RQ #1 How Can Peer Coaching be a Mentoring Practice for AI Integration?

Peer coaching is a sustainable, high-impact mentoring resource for cultivating EI and developing collaborative relationships. Peer coaching's effectiveness stems from its focus on building trust and interpersonal connection. Thus, peer coaching partnerships can create supportive conditions for mentor and mentee to engage in experiential learning with AI applications while simultaneously cultivating EI.

RQ #2 What are the Uniquely Human Elements of Peer Coaching?

The Hagen et al. (2017) definition of peer coaching, shared in Table 2, captures its collaborative nature; however, it emphasizes directive, goal-oriented outcomes rather than a growth-oriented, mutual learning approach more aligned with relational mentoring. More recent approaches to peer coaching have incorporated elements from positive psychology, centering self-awareness, personal growth, and active utilization of one's strengths and values (Richter et al., 2021). This evolution toward a strengths-based, growth-oriented model represents a shift in how peer coaching is conceptualized and practiced. Rather than focusing solely on performance improvement or problem-solving, contemporary peer coaching emphasizes developing the whole person through supportive dialogue that honors each partner's unique contributions and developmental needs. This approach aligns peer coaching more closely with relational mentoring principles while maintaining its distinctive collaborative structure. These uniquely human aspects of peer coaching—relationship building, collaborative capacity development, and mutual learning through reflecting on experiences—cannot be replicated by AI tools, but they can be enhanced through thoughtful AI integration. Following are brief examples of the conditions for peer coaching and how they can be created.

1. Building the relationship: Peer coaching partners can agree on how much confidentiality they will hold for their peer coaching conversations, in order to support greater levels of self-disclosure and self-expression that allow them to explore their questions and concerns (Kram & Isabella, 1985). They can also create agreements for scheduling coaching conversations and AI applications to explore.

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2. Develop coaching capacity: Practicing through coaching conversations, where both partners have the opportunity to be coach and coachee, builds skills and strengthens relationships by creating reciprocal trust within peer conversations that can inspire engagement and effectively promote personal well-being (Parker et al., 2018).
3. Internalize coaching skills: Engaging in regular coaching sessions supports using a coaching lens in situations to reflect, plan, and engage in critical thinking in the face of complex challenges (Aguilar, 2013). Peer coaching partners can apply their coaching lens and experience with AI applications to a wide range of tasks and meetings.

RQ #3: How can AI-augmented peer coaching be practiced in mentoring relationships?

AI-augmented peer coaching can be integrated into existing mentoring relationships without requiring separate professional development time or formal program structures. Mentors and mentees can incorporate peer coaching conversations into their regular meetings, using AI tools to support preparation, conversation analysis, and reflection activities while maintaining human-centered relationship building. This approach transforms traditional hierarchical mentoring dynamics by positioning both mentor and mentee as peer coaching partners who take turns in coach and coachee roles, particularly valuable when navigating AI integration challenges where expertise may be distributed rather than hierarchical.

The key to successful AI augmentation lies in maintaining trust and connection within the mentoring relationship. AI tools should enhance rather than direct coaching conversations, providing resources that partners can choose to integrate based on their agreements and needs. This ensures essential elements of trust, interpersonal connection, and mutual learning remain central while leveraging AI's analytical capabilities to deepen the mentoring experience and build dual competencies in both AI literacy and emotional intelligence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This literature review establishes augmented peer coaching as a theoretically grounded and practically viable mentoring approach for hybrid workplaces. The conceptual framework for augmented peer coaching addresses a gap in the literature by providing a structured method for simultaneously developing AI literacy and EI through relational learning processes.

The framework's integration with Marsick and Watkins' Informal & Incidental Learning model (2018) demonstrates how experiential, peer-based learning can support both technical skill acquisition and human capacity development within authentic workplace contexts. By positioning AI as an augmentation tool within human-centered relationships, this framework offers organizations a scalable approach to workforce development that preserves essential relational elements while building technological fluency. The three-phase progression provides a roadmap for moving from foundational trust-building to autonomous application across organizational settings. The following recommendations provide practical guidance for implementing this framework across various organizational roles.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerge from the literature review and findings. They are designed to support the implementation of augmented peer coaching in various contexts.

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For Peer Coaching Partners:

- Center trust-building and interpersonal connection as you build your peer coaching partnership
- Explore print, online, and/or in-person resources for learning basic coaching skills
- Experiment with AI applications for coaching conversation preparation, note-taking, and reflection

For Learning and Development Professionals and Managerial Coaches:

- Provide access to coaching resources that are not specifically designed for professional coaches. One option is to create peer coaching modules that teach basic coaching skills
- Create opportunities/time for peer coaching partners to engage in coaching conversations
- Provide access to AI coaching applications and other selected applications and technological support for new users

For Researchers:

- Conduct empirical studies testing the effectiveness of peer coaching partnerships and augmented peer coaching frameworks in organizational settings
- Investigate long-term outcomes of AI-augmented coaching relationships, such as how augmented peer coaching affects the change management process and how it impacts the adoption of new technology.
- Explore cultural and contextual factors that influence adoption of AI tools in coaching relationships

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this conceptual framework is based on literature review rather than empirical testing, limiting claims about effectiveness in practice. Second, the rapid pace of AI development means that specific technologies discussed may become obsolete, though the underlying principles of human-AI collaboration remain relevant. Third, the framework focuses primarily on peer coaching relationships and may not fully address organizational systemic factors that influence AI adoption. Finally, the literature on AI-augmented coaching remains nascent, with limited longitudinal studies available to inform long-term outcomes.

Conclusion

Augmented peer coaching represents a promising evolution in mentoring practices that addresses the timely need for dual artificial intelligence (AI) and emotional intelligence (EI) competencies in hybrid workplaces. As organizations navigate the complexities of AI integration, this approach offers a practical method for building workforce capabilities that support both AI literacy and human connection. The framework presented provides a foundation for further research in diverse organizational contexts, with the ultimate goal of supporting the evolution of workplaces where artificial and human intelligence combine as hybrid intelligence to unlock new possibilities and for individual and organizational growth.

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The Intersection of Managing, Leading, and Coaching: A New Discipline for Management Education

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Abstract

Faculty must ensure that management education remains cutting edge and relevant to the needs of organizational leaders and to students' academic and professional goals. This paper reports on a multi-phase research agenda that included in-depth interviews with the primary stakeholders of business education: (1) senior leaders/employers, (2) business faculty, and (3) MBA graduates who are now working professionals. The results report on potential benefits of integrating coaching skills, theories, and knowledge into management education.

Keywords

Management education, executive coaching, manager development, workforce preparation.

Introduction and Background

Higher education's survival is tethered to the value it brings to its stakeholders (Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2020). For those students who choose an academic pathway within the world of business, workplace preparation is an expected and desired outcome. Students expect that the faculty designing the student learning outcomes and curriculum will understand what the market desires.

The market has experienced a shift in business culture and communication styles as a result of the global pandemic. Though the *back-to-work* effort has pulled the pendulum a bit more to center, the workplace has been changed by the mandated shift to work-at-home. The emergence of hybrid work, the evolving workplace context and leader-roles, and the potential isolation of individual contributors and leaders, may lessen the human connection among employees. Our future leaders, often emerging from graduate business programs, should have the skills, knowledge, and disposition, to enter into this consistently evolving hybrid business culture. Integrating coaching skills into MBA education may normalize the value of a corporate coaching-culture and may better prepare future leaders to lean-in to a coaching style that partners with employees with the desired outcome of elevating potential.

The executive coaching discipline has been growing and expanding; both individual business professionals and organizations have adopted many coaching practices (Filipkowski, Heverin & Ruth, 2019). The discipline of coaching lives outside of the traditional business curriculum; at the most, it lives at its fringe. Yet, the skills and knowledge of coaching can serve senior leaders as they face their daily challenges. Coaching aligns with and supports both participative leadership and employee empowerment (DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2020; DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019). A coaching approach serves leaders and managers as they gain insights into their own thinking; it also serves leaders as they learn how to motivate and empower their followers, especially within a hybrid work culture. (Filipkowski, Heverin & Ruth, 2019; McComb, 2012; McCrea & Mirchandani, 2025; McGill, Clarke & Sheffield, 2019; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

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Faculty are responsible for keeping their thumb on the pulse of industry needs and staying aware of shifting expectations. Therefore, as educators, it is our role to explore whether coaching knowledge and skills should be integrated into the program-level learning outcomes for graduate business education. (Fischer, 2019; Vlachopoulos, 2021; Wasylyshyn, 2022)

This paper reports on the results of **three** studies that explored coaching as a contributor to business education. The history, understanding, and value of executive coaching as an influence on leadership behavior and organizational culture, has not explicitly found its way into the canon of management and business education. A forward-thinking leader, who seeks to create a coaching culture in his or her organization, may find resistance or reluctance from many of the organization's emerging or subordinate leaders and managers. One reason may be that these individuals were *not* introduced to coaching as a legitimate management practice within their traditional business curriculum and management education (Jamison, 2018; Wildflower, 2013).

The goal of this exploration is to answer the question, *should the coaching body of knowledge, skills, and theories be integrated into management and business education?*

Multi-Study Research Agenda and Research Method

Business education is intended to create value for its stakeholders, which include the students, the employers, and the marketplace (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009). The intention for this research is to ensure that management education remains cutting edge and relevant to the needs of organizational leaders and to business students' academic and professional goals. With this intention in mind, a multi-phase IRB approved research plan was designed and executed. Triangulation of research invites multiple viewpoints to reduce bias.

To explore this agenda, the primary stakeholders of business education were invited into the research process. Revising management education requires the voices of (1) senior leaders as the employers of our future graduates, (2) management faculty as the gatekeepers and stewards of management education, and (3) graduates, who have earned their MBA and are now firmly established in their professional lives (Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2021; Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2023).

Three separate research studies were designed. Each study informed the next. Senior leaders were the first group of subjects that were interviewed. The outcomes of this first study informed the schedule of interview questions for the study inviting management faculty. The final study invited those who had the insight of hindsight, MBA graduates who are now leaders.

The design of this research study is exploratory in nature (Morse & Richards, 2002). The qualitative approach seeks rich data rather than simply consensus. The IRB-approved protocol was followed. In-depth interviews were used to capture the experience, insights, viewpoints, and opinions of the three groups of stakeholders. The interview schedule of questions was open-ended and invited unqualified responses from the subjects. The interviews followed the protocol for a semi-structured interview, which allowed the researcher to probe the subject's answers, while still maintaining the basic interview structure. The interviews were recorded and transcribed without any subject identifiers being captured. Content analysis was used to mine the data points from the

transcribed interviews. An iterative process was used to reduce the data and allow the themes to emerge (Cresswell, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse & Richards, 2002).

Study #1: Insights of *Senior Leaders* as they Prepare to Hire Our MBA Graduates

Eleven senior leaders were interviewed in this first study. Of the eleven leaders, 18% were at the President level; 37% served at the Executive Vice President/Senior Vice President level; 18% were at the CIO/CFO level; 27% were at the Vice President/AVP level. Of this subject group, 18.2% were female and 81.8% were male. A diversity of industries was explored with healthcare representing the largest. The industries include: 27.2% Healthcare; 18.2% Finance; 9.1% Marketing; 9.1% Movie industry; 9.1% Real Estate; 9.1% Education; 9.1% Human Services; 9.1% Technology.

A total of 138 data points were drawn from the eleven transcripts. These data points were reduced in an iterative process to allow **fifteen** themes to emerge. They are presented under **three** umbrella concepts. They are: (1) executive Leadership coaching within organizations, (2) expectations of business graduates after being hired, and (3) expectations of business educators in preparing graduates to be workplace successful. [See Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2023]

The **first** concept illuminates executive leadership coaching within organizations. Seven themes revealed how executive coaching has become a valued tool for leader development. Aggregating these themes for the purpose of this conference paper, the results found that many of the leaders were exposed to coaching either as a recipient being selected as high-potential talent or as an observer of others in the organization receiving coaching. Coaching is now viewed as a valued gift for those leaders projecting the most potential. Mentoring is often expected within the coaching relationship. The desire for a coaching culture was expressed, but it was unclear how it was defined. Balancing both internal and external coaches requires clarity of intent. And the challenge of justifying the cost of coaching, with a defined ROI, required thoughtful patience.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

“A coaching culture will steer professionals that the company deems as high potentials, in the right direction”

“Coaching has evolved. Now companies bring in executive coaches for high potential executives, not because they're going to derail, but much like coaches for Tiger Woods and Serena Williams. You have a coach to help you be better”

“Coaching should be integrated with mentoring. Someone should have background in the field that you work with”

“It is important to have an external view OR you end up with herd mentality; everyone's kind of doing the same thing”

“Some people really want to be coached and take the guidance; they grew and make a lot of money. The people who didn’t do what the coaching session suggested, fizzled out.”

"After the engagement, how do you know the change happened, without a baseline? How do you know if the coaching prevented a bad behavior? … be intentional about the value you're going to get and the amount of investment you make"

The **second** concept reveals the expectations of business graduates, *after* being hired. Three themes revealed (1) what senior leaders sought during the interview when seeking to hire a business graduate; (2) senior leaders' expectations as these candidates develop and rise in the organization, and (3) what is expected as these rising leaders begin to lead others. The aggregated results suggest that these senior leaders desire traits that will allow the candidate to integrate, thrive, and rise within the organization. They want their candidates to be coachable, team-oriented, hardworking, and willing to get involved and fit in. Senior leaders want new hires to be self-aware, know how to disagree by supporting their positions, demonstrate empathy, actively listen, and be able to accept and integrate feedback. Also, the rising leader should demonstrate a genuine interest in *helping* others, as an audition for *leading* others.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"Give me an employee who is team oriented, hardworking, empathetic, and focused, and I can train them to do anything"

"Listening is not always hearing; you have to really concentrate to understand. Paying attention is very important"

"If they didn't have self-awareness, then they didn't know who they were; it becomes a struggle to move forward"

"Be able to dissent. I find that so many people in the business world are afraid to dissent because their focus is on the wrong thing. They worry, if I don't agree, then how am I going to be perceived.' People need to be coached to disagree, but then you need to be able to support why and say it in a professional manner"

"Coaching is not pushing; coaching is helping somebody accomplish what they want to accomplish"

"A good coach, coaches someone to be able to do what they want to do better, not forcing their own position on to them"

The **third** concept relates to what senior leaders expect of business *educators* in preparing graduates to be workplace successful. Five themes paint a picture of what faculty needs to do, beyond the student's acquisition of knowledge. They are, (1) weaken student entitlement, (2) manage student expectations, (3) elevate the need for students to gain real-world experience, (4) ensure the acquisition of skills that allow gained knowledge to be applied, and (5) to actively integrate coaching skills and knowledge into the business curriculum.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"I find a lot of people right out of college feel entitled that they should climb the ladder quicker than other people"

"So, you were at the top of your class, well, you know what? even if you graduated from an Ivy, you're starting lower than you think"

"…what they bring to contribute to the organization, right out of college, is not as valuable as they think"

Faculty need to "create situation where the xx hits the fan, and the game is over; the students get punched in the face with a bad situation. How do they react? Then the students must reflect. Perhaps they will see where they got ahead of themselves, or become overly emotional, or took things too personal"

"The formal educational process should include a coaching component so that the students are aware of the value of coaching. Gaining that coaching knowledge is less for their own development, but for when they are in a leadership role"

"…have a formal coaching curriculum so that students within a business program can learn early in their academic career, the concepts of coaching, and how they could be applied"

In Summary

The senior leaders recognized the value of coaching as both a skill and a disposition. When considering all that these senior leaders expect from business educators in developing their next generation of leaders, coaching needs to be part of the recipe. These leaders were generous with sharing their own experiences as coachees as well as the value of coaching as a tool to develop the next generation of rising leaders. These senior leaders were clear that business education needs to better prepare its graduates for the world of business by integrating coaching skills and knowledge into the curriculum.

The results and insights from study #1 informed the next stage of the research. Study #1 leads to the goal of Study #2, which is understanding what business educators can do to prepare graduates for success in the workplace. Senior leaders expect that faculty will lessen student entitlement, manage their expectations, and help them gain both skill and experience. The integration of coaching skills, knowledge, and disposition emerged as a needed component in business education.

Study #2 sought to gain insight from those who will directly educate and influence future leaders. Faculty are the gatekeepers of business education.

Study #2: Insights of *Business Faculty* as the Gatekeepers of Management Education

Eleven business management faculty were interviewed. They represented eleven different higher education institutions; 45% were male, 55% were female; 45% held the academic rank of Full

Professor and 55% held the rank of Associate Professor. This subject group collectively reported 223 years of college teaching experience. The average teaching experience is 20 years with a range of 7 to 40 years.

A total of 110 data points were drawn from the eleven transcripts. These data points were reduced to allow **eleven** themes to emerge. They are presented under **two** umbrella concepts. They are: (1) understanding coaching, and (2) the work of the faculty to deliver coaching skills and knowledge to students. [See Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2024]

The **first** concept relates to faculty understanding coaching. Five themes revealed that many faculty had heard of coaching yet there was a mixed level of acceptance and awareness. Many were not aware of coaching as a professional discipline. Some had no familiarity with coaching beyond what would align with coaches in the world of sport. When exploring how faculty perceived coaching, some expressed "*surprise*" that mentorship was separate from coaching suggesting that these concepts are "*muddled together*". Rather faculty aligned communication skills with coaching skills. And last, faculty acknowledged their role as gatekeepers for their discipline, which requires a collective *thumb-on-the-pulse* of what business leaders and employers need from their future employees.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"Not formally familiar with a coaching model, but I think that this is what you do as a good management teacher or instructor. I think that's some of that comes from trying to work your hardest for the students to achieve great things"

"Coaching is not a word that has any meaning in our business curriculum. People are familiar with coaching in the athletic arena"

"We as faculty are trying to mentor these students into their professions, whatever they may be. Just because I'm teaching management does not mean that everyone's going to be a manager. So, mentoring and coaching comes out a lot in advisement, like when we're mapping out their academic plan"

"Students need coaching with regard to improving their communications. Before they can move forward with coaching others or being coached, active listening must be developed. Communications have really diminished. I think communication goes hand-in-hand with coaching"

"We need to be aware of the changing landscape of business industries"

"The type of curriculum that we're providing must be appropriate and driven in large part by what employers' needs are; that relationship is key"

The **second** concept reflects the work of faculty in delivering coaching skills to their students. Six themes revealed how the faculty approached, and then accepted, this responsibility. The faculty shared that coaching may already be present in the curriculum; they then suggested

where it *could* be inserted in the curriculum. It was suggested that undergraduate students may be less ready to learn and demonstrate coaching skills but rather focus them on *being* coachable. Graduate students are best prepared to learn *how* to coach.

Next, as the faculty's thinking expanded, a clear affirmation emerged that coaching needs to be *established* as a course, certificate, micro-credential, badge, program, or dedicated MBA track. A theme of revenue opportunities emerged while citing the low cost and low risk that a coaching program presents. It was suggested that coaching is *"like a personal Kaizen process ... to continually improve."* As faculty recognized the value for students, the recommendations emerged that it be embedded in general education because it supports "*critical thinking"* and "*problem solving."* The story continues as the faculty reflect on required expertise in effectively delivering this new curriculum. And finally, the faculty expressed the challenges that higher education faces in creating new curriculum.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"We do not have a coaching class, but we have consulting, we have change management, we have HR, we have stuff that might straddle the border of this notion of coaching"

"I think that every one of our fields could include coaching. There could be coaching related to analytics, coaching related to project management, and working with teams"

"I am thinking that coaching would be better integrated in an MBA program than undergrad; I don't really think our undergraduate students are ready. They have a hard enough time figuring themselves out. ... I feel that undergraduates need to understand themselves before they can work on helping others. I think it would be a very interesting addition to an MBA program"

"We should provide opportunities for students to be coached. Take our students that are struggling and find someone who can coach them. We must continue to reinforce the benefits of coaching and then provide opportunities; these are the best two things that we can be doing at the college level"

"For us to teach it, we need expertise, whether that's within our existing faculty, or the expertise comes from outside. So, one option is to have current faculty develop that expertise. And second is to have expertise come from the outside, or a combination of both; which is typically what happens"

"Someone must be able to demonstrate that there is demand in the market for this sort of thing for it to be supported"

"There's a lot of teachers out there that have apathy. And it's a lot easier to just show the PowerPoints that come with the textbook"

In Summary

The management faculty recognized their role in preparing their students for the world of business. There was a mixed level of awareness of coaching as a growing discipline. The faculty

did acknowledge the value that coaching knowledge, skills, and disposition can bring to their students, yet they also recognized that there are barriers to taking this needed step. The integration of coaching would be most appropriate at the graduate level.

The results and insights from this second study informed the third stage of this research. The third study sought to gain the insights from the most valued stakeholder of business education, the student. In this next study, these subjects' experiences were mined as they reflected and shared how (and if) their MBA programs prepared them to enter the business world.

Insights from MBA Graduates – 5 to 18 Years Post-Graduation

Twelve subjects were interviewed; all had earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, and all were firmly established in their professional lives. These subjects' MBA programs were completed in the USA (10 subjects), France (1 subject) or Spain (1 subject). Of the twelve subjects: 50% were male, 50% were female. Eleven of the subjects had graduated from their MBA program between 5 and 15 years ago, with one outlier who graduated 18 years prior to the interview. The subjects had a *collective* 116 years of professional experience after earning the MBA with an *average* experience of 9.7 years. Their current professional positions included: CFO, CIO, COO, President, SVP, and other leadership titles.

A total of 115 data points were drawn from the twelve transcripts. These data points were reduced to allow **eleven** themes to emerge. They are presented under **three** major umbrella concepts, which provided insight as to (1) essential relationship needed between executive coaching and the college education, (2) how coaching *really* shows up in the workplace, and finally, (3) the influence of the MBA experience on the professional journey of the business professional.

The **first** major concept illuminates whether coaching should be integrated into business education. Four themes revealed that subjects desire knowledge of coaching and recommend it be clearly defined and integrated into management education. These subjects desired an integrated practicum or internship that offered a hands-on coaching experience. It was further recommended that coaching knowledge be integrated throughout the various courses that define the curriculum and that credentials be awarded as skills are learned. Learning *how* to coach as well as *being* coached should be introduced to the students within their business education. Coaching should also be integrated into the education journey as a service to the student, rather than solely a skill to learn.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"*Coaching is absolutely necessary to build a functioning or a high functioning team. So, at any level, coaching belongs in the MBA curriculum****"***

"*It would have helped if we had a coaching class where I was coached and taught how to be coached. The student would learn and understand that coaching is not negative; it's better for you and it's better for the company****"***

"The students will graduate with both the MBA degree and the coaching certificate. This would motivate people to be a part of a program"

"The MBA program should acclimate people to the fact that coaching exists. There should be coaching resources in the department where you could get coaching to discuss some of the issues you are facing and how you apply that you've learned to your professional career"

The **second** major concept revealed how coaching really shows up in the workplace. Three themes reflect that faculty need to better prepare themselves so they can mentor students as coaches. Faculty can model coaching traits for their students. Subjects shared that coaching in the workplace is positive and valued, therefore, business education needs to exposure their students so they are better prepared to enter the workplace. Also, faculty can help students navigate the differences that graduates may find within organizations as related to coaching cultures.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"Students need to be prepared that they're going to be coached; they need to be coachable"

"…coaching is what is expected in the real world; it is an imperative part of a successful leader's role"

"If you just treat everyone the exact same way, you're not going to be as effective because everyone is different. So that's been something that I've learned after the MBA program, which I felt would be helpful within the curriculum"

"There can be overlap between coaching and mentoring. When you are coaching, you're basically teaching someone how to do something, which is mentoring. You're teaching them how to do something, but you're also guiding them by being there if they have any questions; you create a connection"

The **third** major concept offered a glimpse of how students perceived the MBA journey. Four themes revealed insights that may be difficult for faculty to hear. These subjects shared that earning a degree can often be about the *piece of paper* rather than the education gained. The degree is often perceived as a ticket to the first job rather than true preparation for a life-long journey. The value of professional certifications and advanced presentation skills was revealed, which further suggests that higher education needs to assess its true value to workplace preparation.

Further insight suggests that business faculty may need to do a better job in preparing their students for the reality of the workplace. Students need to be taught coping skills to face the workplace challenges. Faculty also need to help students manage their egos and expectations as they enter the workplace.

Select data points that illustrate these themes include:

"When people are in the coursework, they want to just get the coursework done, they want to take the exams, pass the test, go home and graduate"

"I learned to be concise, use proper business jargon, never read notes during a presentation, and avoid writing long sentences"

"Teach students coping tools. I honestly feel you want to prepare people to enter the workforce with a critical coping mechanism. That needs to be taught"

In Summary

These subjects hold the power and gift of experience. These post-MBA graduates have risen to levels of leadership authority yet can reflect back on the educational journey from their past. We can draw from their experiences and insights to further improve business education for future students. They are able to share with the researcher their thoughts and experiences by looking in the rear-view mirror as they reflect back upon the MBA journey.

Conclusion

The profession of executive coaching has entered into the world of business and is influencing the development of new, rising, transitioning, and senior leaders. *Business education* is the traditional pathway that prepares and transitions individuals who wish to enter into the world of business. A transformational mindset is needed so that there is *no gap* in the preparation for these rising professionals. This must be an *active*, rather than a passive process.

The insights from the stakeholders of business education collectively guide us to the conclusion that coaching skills and knowledge must be integrated into business education. The insights of the post-MBA graduates, who are now firmly embedded in their careers, provide powerful insight. More than any other stakeholder, they described how the developing students need the foundational and theoretical knowledge as well as the hands-on practicum, to fully integrate coaching skills, style, and disposition. This is necessary for our future graduates as they prepare to enter the workplace ready to *be* coached and to coach *others*.

The collective results presented in this series of three studies provide evidence from the stakeholders of business education. The insights of **senior leaders** recommend the integration of coaching knowledge, skills, and disposition into the curriculum so that their future leaders are prepared to be both *coached* and *to coach*. The insights from **management faculty** recognize the emergence of a compelling case for the integration of the foundation of executive coaching into graduate education. The final point of view is from our primary stakeholder, the student.

The results presented reflect this author's effort to triangulate the perspectives of those that must work collaboratively toward elevating business education, so it serves its stakeholders. These recommendations are not aspirational, but necessary for business education to be relevant to the needs of industry and to the long-term professional goals of our students.

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The use of Art Therapy Tools in Coaching: When Only Human Expertise Can Explore and Leverage Complex Narratives

Adriane Helena Rodrigues

Abstract: This paper explores the use of Art therapy tools in coaching processes, offering valuable benefits by promoting self-awareness, emotional expression, and problem-solving skills. It examines some of the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and benefits of art therapy tools, highlighting areas where Hybrid Intelligence (HI) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are limited.

Keywords: Art therapy, coaching, self– awareness, problem solving, tools, artificial intelligence, hybrid intelligence, coaching tools.

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of personal development, the integration of art therapy tools into coaching offers a transformative shift, one that allows coaching processes to complement verbal dialogue with ideas that are originated in the realm of symbolic expression, emotional nuance, and embodied insight. Unlike traditional coaching approaches that rely primarily on spoken reflection, art therapy introduces channels for visual communication, allowing clients to externalize complex inner experiences that language may fail to capture. Through imagery, texture, and symbolic representation, coaches bring deeper layers of a client's emotional and cognitive world into the process, fostering heightened self-awareness and meaning making.

These tools offer coaches a richer palette for facilitating growth: intentional creative exercises unveil unconscious narratives, provide relief from mental tension, and enhance a client's ability to interpret and reshape their personal stories. The coach becomes capable of recognizing additional emotional textures, cultural context, and symbolic patterns unique to each individual.

Such contributions, however, lie beyond the reach of artificial intelligence. Despite AI's impressive abilities in pattern recognition and data analysis, it lacks embodied sensitivity, empathetic resonance, and intuitive responsiveness required to interpret art's subtle emotional language. As research highlights, both coaching and art therapy are inherently relational and a dialogical process, dependent on the presence of a human who can engage with ambiguity, emotional depth, and evolving personal meaning. In this sense, AI may support administrative or analytic tasks, but it cannot authentically reproduce the complexity of art - informed human development.

By integrating art therapy techniques, coaching expands into a multisensory, human-centric process - an experience of creative discovery where each image becomes a conversation, and every self-expression art piece reveals a part of the client's evolving identity. This paper explores how such tools can enrich coaching, and why their essence remains inextricably tied to human intelligence.

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Methodology

This exploratory study adopted a qualitative, conceptual approach to examine the integration of art therapy tools within coaching practices and assess the limitations of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Hybrid Intelligence (HI) in replicating their depth and efficacy.

A review of interdisciplinary literature was conducted, including sources from art therapy, coaching, psychology, and human-computer interaction. Key works were selected to find references that support describing and analyzing the principles of nonverbal expression, embodied cognition, aesthetic interpretation, and the relational dynamics essential to therapeutic coaching as well as the use of Artificial and Hybrid Intelligence both in Art Therapy and in Coaching. Authors such as Ferrara (2014), McNiff (2004), and Bachkirova (2024) provided foundational insights into emotional expressiveness, dialogical intelligence, and the boundaries of machine-supported coaching.

Conceptual Framing

Areas of Literature Review

This study is informed by a literature review about the theoretical foundations of art therapy and its clinical and non-clinical applications as well as its benefits. It has allowed the argument that coaching goals and techniques might parallel with art therapy, including the listing of some specific tools that can be adopted in the coaching process. References about ethical considerations and the scope of practice concerning the frontiers of both fields of practice were also used.

A second group of literature references aimed at building some comparison between human and Artificial Intelligence both in Coaching and in Art Therapy.

This framework weaves together foundational theories of art therapy with coaching practice to explain how creative processes become catalysts for personal growth, emotional insight, and self– directed change.

The summary of the concepts is presented on the table below.

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Table 1

Concepts Summary based on literature review

Art as Process, Not Product	Art therapy challenges the modern separation of art from life by reframing creativity as an ongoing, lived process. This view aligns with humanistic and phenomenological traditions that emphasize presence, meaning making, and the unfolding self.
	Embodied Cognition and Somatic Knowing
	Drawing on whole-body theories of intelligence, every brush stroke, collage fragment, or sculpted form becomes a somatic clue. Coaches and clients tap into pattern recognition and emotional resonance that emerge through bodily engagement with materials.
Core Constructs	Symbolic Externalization
	Imagery and metaphor reveal subconscious themes - conflicts, desires, narratives - that often elude verbal description.
	Emotional Regulation & Expression
	Creative activities serve as safe containers for intense feelings, enabling clients to process distress, reduce stress, and build coping skills.
	Reflective Insight
	The cycle of creation, observation, and dialogue fosters new perspectives and deepens self-awareness.
Mechanisms of Change	Engagement with Materials
	Adoption of media (collage, painting, modeling) that resonate with Clients internal state and/or agenda.
	Externalization of Inner Experience
	The artwork becomes a tangible “third entity” for coach and client to explore together.
	Dialogical Exploration
	Through guided reflection, clients narrate their artwork’s meaning, anchoring abstract feelings in concrete form.
	Integration and Action Planning
	Insights gleaned from the creative dialogue inform goal setting, problem solving, and behavioral experiments outside the session.
Application in Coaching Context	Enhanced Self-efficacy
	Witnessing one’s own creative decisions bolsters confidence in tackling life challenges.
	Amplified Emotional Literacy
	Nonverbal expression bridges gaps when words fail, strengthening the coach-client alliance.

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	Creative Problem-Solving
	Playful experimentation with form and color stimulates lateral thinking and novel solutions.
Ethical Boundaries and Professional Scope	Coaches may employ art-based tools within their nonclinical remit–focusing on growth, performance, and well-being.
	Clinical diagnosis or treatment remains the domain of credentialed art therapists and mental health professionals.
	Coaches must cultivate sensitivity to symbolism, manage strong emotional disclosures appropriately, and refer out when deeper therapeutic work is indicated.
AI as Aid, Not Authority	Algorithms can suggest trends but must not override human empathy, nuance, or ethical discretion.
Hybrid Intelligence Support	AI/ML tools curate prompts, track progress, and suggest patterns–but never supplant the relational and ethical judgment of the coach.

There are many definitions of Art Therapy. The American Art Therapy Association defines it as "an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship". The British Association of Art Therapists defines art therapy as: "a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication. "They also ad that "clients who are referred to an art therapist need not have previous experience in art, the art therapist is not primarily concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic assessment of the client`s image. The website Psycology.org defines art therapy as: "a tool therapists use to help patients interpret, express, and resolve their emotions and thoughts. Patients work with an art therapist to explore their emotions, understand conflicts or feelings that are causing the distress, and use art to help them find resolutions to those issues".

Embodied Cognition and Somatic Knowing

In contemporary society, the separation between art and life has led to a perception of art as a product rather than a process. Art therapy challenges this notion by emphasizing the potential of artistic creation. There should be no separation of art from life and creativity is as an ongoing, lived process. This view aligns with humanistic and phenomenological traditions that emphasize presence, meaning making, and the unfolding self. The role of art therapy in enhancing the quality of life and explores the potential of adopting some of its tools in human development activities, such as coaching.

Drawing on whole-body theories of intelligence, every brush stroke, collage fragment, or sculpted form becomes a somatic clue. Coaches who adopt the use of art therapy tools and their clients will tap into pattern recognition and emotional resonance that emerge through bodily engagement with materials.

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Art therapy is grounded in the belief that artistic expression can facilitate communication and emotional release. According to Ferrara (2014), art therapy allows individuals to connect with their inner lives and gain a better understanding of themselves. McNiff (2004) and Ganim and Fox (1999) highlight the importance of imagery in revealing thoughts and emotions that words cannot express.

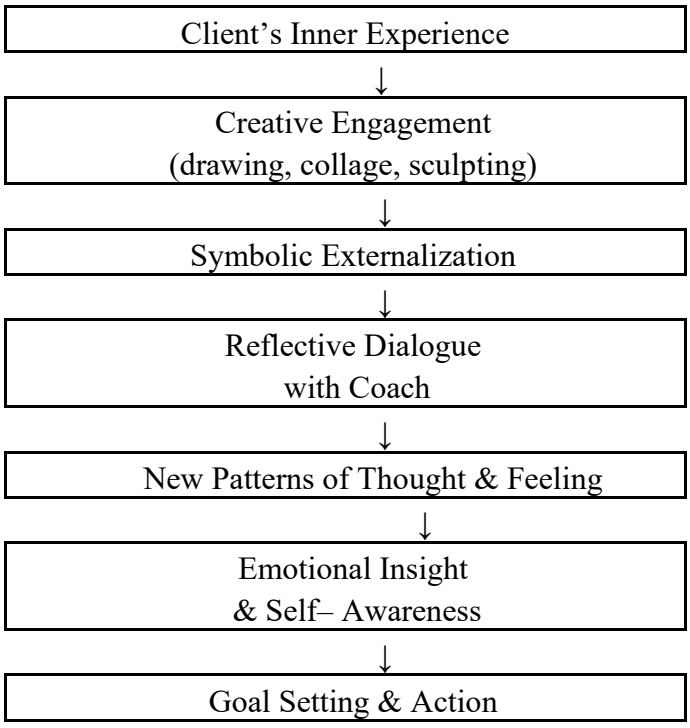
Art therapy tools are used in various contexts, including education, chronic pain management, and trauma recovery. Ferrara (2014) notes that art therapy can help individuals in moments of crisis by providing a means to express and process emotions. Angheluta and Lee (2011) discuss the use of art therapy in managing chronic pain, emphasizing its role in promoting self-management and reducing physical symptoms. The connection of these agendas to the ones coaches frequently work raises the question of how these tools can be adopted in the coaching processes.

Parallel insights arise in the realm of art therapy, as explored by Goldblatt et al. (2024). Art therapy facilitates the exploration of inner conflict and emotional experience through creative expression. Riley (1997) emphasizes art's capacity to absorb and translate disrupted coping mechanisms into expressive forms, providing a therapeutic outlet. Crucially, this form of therapy does not detach individuals from their reality but unlocks new perspectives through non-verbal symbolism, visual representation, and emotional texture (Spier, 2010). By examining line quality, pressure, and stroke consistency, clinicians interpret emotional states and levels of conflict (Elkis – Abuhoff et al., 2009; Hammer, 1980). Marcow, Speiser and Speiser (2007) suggest that art operates as an equalizer, granting space to diverse individuals to grapple with themes of conflict and peace.

The figure below illustrates one way art therapy tools can be integrated into the coaching process.

Figure 1

Example of coaching process



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↓

Deeper Self-awareness & Enhanced Well–Being

A compelling connection emerges between coaching and art therapy: both are predicated on embodied, human-driven insight. Goldblatt et al. find that through visual interpretation, individuals reveal their personal perceptions of conflict (p. 106 – 107), reinforcing that emotional truth often lies beyond verbal articulation. And while algorithms can falter and inadvertently reinforce bias acting as "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Goldblatt et al., p. 14) – human therapists and coaches engage complexity with nuance, empathy, and ethical judgment. Thus, real intelligence in developmental work must remain anchored in human experience– not substituted by artificial approximations.

Artificial and hybrid Intelligence

The complexity and depth of human intelligence pose fundamental challenges to the rise of AI–driven coaching. Tatiana Bachkirova (2024) argues that although AI can supplement human coaching, it cannot offer a standalone service that truly mirrors the interpersonal depth of human interaction. She warns, "If we continue to do this pretending, we could pay a high price and undermine the potential of our profession" (p. 7). The essence of coaching lies not merely in delivering information, but in creating meaningful dialogue – something AI lacks the capacity to authentically replicate. Central to effective coaching is the embodied intelligence of humans: our capacity for immediate pattern recognition, emotional resonance, and intuitive insight, which arises from our whole – body cognition (Bachkirova, p. 8–9). Emotions and bodily responses, often subtle and complex, contribute to our decision – making and perception in ways algorithms cannot emulate (Claxton, 2005, 2015). Coaching, much like therapeutic art processes, is not just technique - it's presence. Clients trust coaches who respond not from scripts but with attuned, personalized insights. Authenticity allows coaches to mirror back the client's complexity without judgment, honoring both strengths and struggles. Meaningful coaching must be dialogical and embodied – qualities only possible when coaches bring their full selves to the relationship.

In contrast to machine-like analysis, human intelligence is dialogical and deeply relational. The significance of being "a person that matters in a coaching relationship" (Bachkirova, p. 8) emphasizes the irreplaceable presence of the coach in guiding reflection, providing empathic understanding, and co-creating meaning. Drawing on Bakhtin, genuine thought emerges through "living contact" and dialogue with another voice, reinforcing that coaching is not merely a technical exercise but a dynamic human exchange (Bakhtin, 1973, 1961/1979). Bachkirova concludes that AI, by design, is not reproducing biological intelligence but operates outside of it, further reinforcing its inadequacy in capturing human purpose and meaning (p. 10, p. 13).

To effectively implement humanistic development, processes should respect several guiding principles. These include engaging individuals in meaningful discussions about their agendas and personal views and self– expression (such as proposed artwork), welcoming the

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expression of intense emotions — even those that are negative — and recognizing content regardless of the emotional tone depicted. The process benefits from tracking the evolution of the client's responses and expression over time, offering insights into the work's progression. However, interpreting the deeper layers of meaning in a person's art– especially those shaped by popular culture, social influences, and individual context– poses significant challenges for Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, which lack the intuitive sensitivity required for such nuanced understanding.

The adoption of artificial intelligence can represent a tool in the long history of artistic expression. Just as humanity once used bare hands, charcoal, and brushes to bring imagination into form, today AI can assist in realizing mental imagery. Yet despite technological advancements, the creative process still demands cognitive and emotional effort. No tool, AI included, can bypass the intrinsic exertion of thought and feeling necessary to birth authentic vision. These are some of the unique human capabilities that can contribute to high– impact coaching experiences and that AI, as we know at this time, cannot replicate.

The rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have significantly impacted various domains, including coaching practices. Hybrid Intelligence (HI) systems, which integrate human and artificial intelligence, offer a promising approach to enhancing coaching by combining the strengths of both humans and machines. However, there are inherent limitations in the use of HI and AI in coaching, particularly in areas and agendas that require empathy, creativity, and personalized support.

While Hybrid Intelligence systems offer significant potential in enhancing coaching practices, they also come with inherent limitations. Contextual understanding and adaptability, ethical and privacy concerns, and limited creativity and innovation are key areas where HI may fall short. These limitations underscore the importance of maintaining a balanced approach that leverages the strengths of both human and artificial intelligence in coaching.

Findings

What is the contribution of Art Therapy tools to Coaching?

Traditionally used in clinical settings to address mental health issues, these tools can find a valuable place in coaching practices. By integrating some of them, coaches can enhance their clients' self-awareness, emotional expression, and problem-solving skills. Art therapy involves the use of creative processes such as drawing, painting, and sculpting to help individuals express themselves and explore their insights and emotions. Coaches can use them to facilitate personal growth and development. According to Malchiodi (2013), artmaking can serve as a gateway to the inner self, allowing clients to access deeper levels of self-awareness and insight. This approach aligns with the goals of coaching, which include enhancing self-efficacy, coping skills, and overall well-being.

The appreciation of self-expression results (art) is fundamentally an interplay of perspectives – those of the creator, the viewer, and the broader context in which both exist. The creator (client) develops their distinct viewpoints shaped by personal experience, the cultural environment and historical artistic influences of their time. These perspectives reflect a unique synthesis, creating works that resonate beyond their immediate context.

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From the professional's side (coach or art therapist), each individual brings a set of internal experiences that are singular and immeasurable. Since no two people live identical lives, the horizons of personal experience differ across individuals. These differences foster a dynamic interaction during appreciation – where overlapping yet divergent viewpoints spark dialogue and mutual inspiration. Such interplay exemplifies how art becomes a shared yet deeply personal encounter.

Through sustained artistic exploration, individuals uncover personal styles, establish aesthetic standards, and contribute to evolving cultural narratives. Since only humans possess the capacity to feel and connect their emotions and insights, the interconnection between the art creator and its viewers remains distinctly human. In this way, each creator and observer actively shape a unique artistic legacy, an ever-expanding tapestry of emotional, intellectual, and cultural expression.

The suggested tools can always be used in the coaching process to contribute with finding new perspectives during a session, but mainly when the client is somewhat distant and lost within the theme that is being explored. They can provide specific impact through revealing new elements, perspectives, topics that would probably not be accessible by other means.

A list of the benefits of art therapy tools in coaching is presented below:

• Enhanced Self-Awareness

• Emotional Expression

• Stress Reduction

• Problem-Solving and Creativity

In order to effectively integrate art therapy tools into coaching, coaches can adopt a number of tools. Some of them are:

• Intuitive Collage

• Drawing and Painting

• Sculpting and Modeling

• Reflective Art Journaling

While art therapy tools can be highly effective in coaching, it is essential for coaches to be aware of ethical considerations and the limits of their expertise. Only trained art therapists or mental health professionals with additional credentials in creative therapies should use art as a therapeutic tool for treatment. Coaches can use art as a supportive tool for depth and growth within their scope of practice, ensuring they do not attempt to address clinical issues beyond their training (Malchiodi, 2011). It is of ultimate importance to remember the difference between the usage of a tool within a therapeutic process and its usage in other non-therapeutic contexts.

Why do these tools highlight the unique capabilities of the human coach?

Coaches can leverage the results obtained by their clients if they adopt innovative practices. This work claims that the use of art therapy tools is among these practices. What is usually

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obtained through verbal interactions between coach and client, is claimed to be amplified by including the creation and reflection on the result of art pieces.

Also, the adoption of such tools and techniques demands a great deal of expertise and intuition on the coach who will deal with complex narratives and, in this case, also with symbols. Art therapy tools amplify authenticity by reaching beyond formalities and accessing not rational aspects of the client's agenda. When coaches incorporate visual or symbolic expression into their practice, they access parts of the client that language alone cannot reach. Nonverbal information increases the depth of reflection and relies on a shared willingness to engage with ambiguity, metaphor, and emotion - all of which require a vulnerable, responsive human presence.

Nonverbal language is already part of the coach's range of observation. However, the intentional use of different channels of expression brings new insights and reflections to the table, allowing the exploration of wider outputs and insights.

The range of nonverbal cues a coach can work with might be amplified by the practices suggested here. Creative outputs, like drawings or collages, become expressive artifacts that hold emotional weight, nuance, and metaphor. When coaches access these expressions responsively, they promote reflection, emotional release, and a deeper connection to the client's personal narrative. This attentiveness to subtle signals fosters a more trusting and transformational relationship.

Art therapy tools will demand that the coach explore his own expertise and intuition as well as his capacity to respond to more complex languages of expression. These abilities are not within the range of AI systems.

Humans possess a depth of emotional intelligence and social responsiveness that artificial systems struggle to approximate. According to the ideas presented in the previous sessions, these uniquely human capabilities stem from several key qualities:

Embodied Emotional Insight. Unlike AI, human cognition is "embodied", meaning our thoughts and emotions emerge through dynamic interactions between body, brain, and environment. The coach's capacity to sense emotional shifts, recognize implicit meaning, and intuitively navigate ambiguity and metaphor is fundamental to creating a space for genuine development. This holistic perception allows humans to grasp what is not said yet deeply felt - something algorithms aren't yet able to replicate.

Dialogical Engagement and Empathy. Social interactions thrive on dialogue presence, and mutual recognition. This paper emphasizes that human growth emerges through relational exchange where coaches and clients co-create insight through questioning, listening, and emotional reciprocity. Machines and algorithms lack empathetic resonance, cultural attunement, and capacity for true perspective – taking that such interactions require. Matching emotions, for a human, involves cognitive empathy, understanding the "why" behind the feeling - not just mimicking external signals.

Symbolic and Nonverbal Interpretation. Art therapy tools illustrate how humans interpret nuanced visual expressions to uncover emotional truth. Coaches and therapists may read symbolic language, such as line quality, image texture, aesthetic choices, not with logic alone, but with intuition and emotional attunement. This process reveals personal narratives

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that transcend verbal articulation. AI may identify patterns, but it lacks the experiential grounding and interpretive sensitivity needed to understand complex emotional symbolism.

Dynamic Adaptation and Meaning– Making. Humans can flexibly adapt to evolving emotional landscapes and personalize meaning in context. Whether responding to a client's shifting inner state or integrating social, historical, and cultural nuance into coaching, this fluid meaning-making marks a stark difference from the static logic of machine learning systems. Emotional truths are not universal - they're relational, evolving, and sometimes paradoxical.

While HI systems enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of coaching by combining human and artificial intelligence, they fall short in areas requiring deep emotional engagement, creativity, and personalized support. Artificial systems lack emotional resonance and ethical attunement. They cannot model vulnerability or mirror authenticity; instead, they rely on simulations of behavior that miss relational nuance. Trust is fundamental in coaching and it cannot be built on data output - it's built on feeling seen and understood. A system might recognize or even understand emotions, but never feel them. The emotional labor and ethical responsibility of coaching are not programmable; they're human.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the heart of high-impact coaching lies the coach's embodied presence - the coach's capacity for whole-body cognition, immediate pattern recognition, emotional resonance, and intuitive insight that creates authentic, "living contact" with clients. By incorporating symbolic, expressive externalization through drawing, collage, or modeling, coaches generate a tangible "third object" that surfaces subconscious narratives, emotions, and conflicts beyond the reach of words alone, enabling genuine co-construction of meaning.

Hybrid Intelligence systems, as well as Artificial Intelligence and machine learning tools, can contribute with the coaching process by suggesting patterns, logging progress, and offering creative prompts, but they inherently lack the empathy, contextual sensitivity, and ethical judgment central to relational coaching– thereby positioning HI and AI firmly as an aide rather than a replacement. Within clearly defined ethical boundaries, coaches can operate in the nonclinical realm – fostering well-being, self-efficacy, and creativity without diagnosing or treating psychopathology – and draw on deep expertise and intuitive sensitivity to handle symbolic material and intense emotional disclosures safely. Ultimately, creative processes act as high – impact catalysts: iterative cycles of making, reflecting, and planning translate artistic insight into tangible behavior change, promoting stress reduction, enhanced self-awareness, emotional expression, and inventive problem-solving.

In essence, it's the human ability to feel, respond, interpret, and connect in real time across shifting emotional terrains and layered social dynamics, that distinguishes us in coaching and development work. As coaching platforms race to automate, the risk of eroding relational, and thus impact, is high. By foregrounding human presence and symbolic expression, this study safeguards coaching's core strengths. AI may assist, but the heart of transformation remains inherently human.

While AI can analyze patterns in speech or detect sentiment via algorithms, it cannot intuitively sense the emotional energy behind a pause, a trembling hand, or a reluctant brushstroke. The coach's unique ability to perceive non-verbal cues, not just to observe them

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but understand their emotional significance, is what transforms interactions into meaningful, productive conversations. This responsiveness is contextual, embodied, and deeply relational traits that remain uniquely human.

The integration of art therapy tools in coaching highlights the limitations of Artificial Intelligence and Hybrid Intelligence in areas requiring deep emotional engagement, creativity, and personalized support. While HI systems can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of coaching by automating routine tasks and providing data-driven insights, they fall short in addressing the nuanced and complex needs of clients. Art therapy tools offer a powerful means of enhancing self-awareness, emotional expression, and problem-solving skills, demonstrating the importance of maintaining a balanced approach that leverages the strengths of both human and artificial intelligence in coaching practices.

It is important to mention that the suggested practices proposed in this paper resonate most naturally with life coaching's mandate to explore personal meaning, emotional depth, and identity transformation. These creative processes can become a versatile high-impact toolkit-primarily optimized for life coaching, yet powerfully adaptable to executive and organizational coaching.

Finaly, the research represents an initial, exploratory investigation into integrating art-infused practices within coaching. While the preliminary framework and illustrative examples suggest significant promise, particularly for life coaching, rigorous, systematic research is needed to validate and refine these ideas. The coaching community can benefit from further research and the development of a practical framework for introducing art therapy tools among its practice. Future studies might include controlled trials, longitudinal case studies, and mixed-methods evaluations across diverse coaching contexts to assess impact on client outcomes, identify best-practice protocols, and clarify boundary conditions. This study is an initial approach and reveals a literature gap opportunity for future research. By engaging in deeper empirical and theoretical inquiry, the coaching community will probably strengthen the evidence base, enhance professional guidelines, and ultimately maximize the transformative potential of these creative, human-centered approaches.

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Trauma-Informed Coaching for Transformative Learning in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence: Toward a Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Trauma affects 70.4% of people globally (Kessler, 2017). This paper presents a conceptual model connecting trauma-informed coaching and transformative learning, developed through collaborative inquiry with coaches. Our "Trauma to Growth Continuum" addresses key research topics, including: the theoretical relationship between trauma-informed approaches, transformative learning, and readiness for trauma-informed coaching. We propose that trained coaches are uniquely positioned to facilitate post-traumatic growth while respecting coaching's ethical boundaries, especially in an age of hybrid intelligence.

Keywords
Trauma-Informed Coaching, Transformative Learning, Post-Traumatic Growth, Coaching Ethics, Coach Development, Workplace Trauma

Introduction

This early conceptual paper focuses on theory and specialized practice in trauma-informed coaching, post-traumatic growth, and transformative learning in workplaces. It also suggests ethical applications of Hybrid Intelligence informed by research and practice. Coaching has the potential to help employees thrive after trauma in today's Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) world—a reality impacting 70.4% of people globally (Kessler, 2017). The paper bridges theory and practice in executive and career coaching at the intersection of human and artificial intelligence, underscoring ethical boundaries of trauma-informed coaching and client safety. By proposing ethical guidelines for hybrid intelligence in support of trauma-informed coaching, we address the conference's mission of examining promising practices that honor both human wisdom and technological advancement in coaching.

Methodology

Early conceptualization of the “Trauma to Growth Continuum” stemmed from a problem of practice and a deceptively simple question: “How do coaches help clients who have experienced workplace trauma?” Using a qualitative, constructivist approach, our team of practicing coaches conducted collaborative inquiry with coaches and coach developers serving organizations. Through iterative cycles, we explored trauma-informed coaching via practitioner meetings, conversations with credentialed coach developers and counselor educators, an integrative literature review, and feedback from a poster presentation. During the second semester of doctoral study, the authors integrated their unique expertise, to develop the "Trauma to Growth Continuum" conceptual framework (Figure 1), which links trauma-informed coaching and transformative learning in workplace contexts. This interdisciplinary research process is still at an early stage–we will continue to develop deeper connections and expand pragmatic outcomes.

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Areas of Literature Review

Trauma Prevalence & Effects

Mental health issues cost the U.S. economy $282 billion annually (Sperling, 2024). An estimated 19% of U.S. workers describe their mental health as only fair or poor, with unplanned absenteeism alone costing $47.6 billion annually (Gallup, 2025). The Society for Human Resource Management’s (SHRM's) 2024 research shows that approximately half of workers report feeling used up (51%), emotionally drained (45%), or burned out (44%). Trauma, defined

by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) as "an event or circumstance resulting in: physical harm, emotional harm, and/or life-threatening harm" (n.d.), affects 70.4% of people globally (Kessler, 2017). Honing in on workplace trauma, in the U.S., 20,050 private industry workers, largely in the healthcare and social assistance sectors, experienced trauma from nonfatal workplace violence in 2020 (CDC, 2024). In addition, according to the 2023 Work in America™ Survey of employees by the American Psychological Association: "Nearly one-quarter (22%) reported having experienced or been afraid of experiencing harm to their mental health at work" (APA, 2023). "For a sizable portion of Americans, work is demoralizing, frightening, and even traumatic. 'Toxic workplace' is an abstract term to describe infighting, intimidation, and other affronts that harm productivity. The result is high absenteeism, low productivity, and soaring turnover" (APA, 2023).

There are strong connections between traumatic experiences and the development of mental health conditions (Ingram & Price, 2010). The prevalence of trauma-related mental health conditions in the workplace is substantial, with 7-19% of workers who experience workplace trauma subsequently developing PTSD (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). A staggering 76% of U.S. workers report experiencing at least one symptom of a mental health condition, with 84% attributing workplace conditions as contributing factors to their mental health challenges (Mind Share Partners, 2021). As the experience of trauma is subjective, these experiences include but are not limited to direct violence, bullying, discrimination, toxic workplace culture, unstable employment, harassment, racism, and burnout.

Trauma-Informed Coaching and Client Safety

Harper (2022) argues that trauma-informed coaching requires practitioners to recognize how past trauma can shape both the client's experience and the coaching relationship. According to Cooper-Dickson, Kampman, & Papworth (2022), coaching trauma clients requires coaches to create secure, non-judgmental environments based on trust where clients can express themselves authentically without fear. These safe spaces enable vulnerability, allowing clients to experience emotional breakdown while supported by someone genuinely invested in their well-being rather than specific outcomes (Cooper-Dickson et al., 2022). The authors emphasize that maintaining safety requires coaches to recognize their knowledge limitations, establish appropriate boundaries, and implement trauma-informed practices prioritizing client safety, autonomy, control, and empowerment (Cooper-Dickson et al., 2022).

Empirical research comparing AI-based and human coaching found that, although AI chatbots can support goal attainment, AI's lack of empathy and emotional intelligence can risk safety and make human coaches irreplaceable (Terblanche, Molyn, de Haan, & Nilsson, 2022). Unique human qualities—tacit knowledge, emotional intelligence, and social awareness—allow coaches to build trust and psychological safety, which is essential for understanding trauma's subjective manifestations. Hence, AI tools should complement and not substitute human judgment.

Post-Traumatic Growth & Transformative Learning

If and when a client is ready, coaching can potentially facilitate transformative learning and posttraumatic growth. Trauma includes both "big T" life-threatening events or "small t" cumulative distressing experiences–what Mezirow (1997) terms "disorienting dilemmas"—are catalysts for transformative learning (TL). According to Calhoun and Tedeschi (2014),

posttraumatic growth (PTG) represents positive change resulting from struggling with challenging life crises that questions core beliefs. Coaching offers a customized reflective learning experience aligned with these frameworks.

AI & Ethics in Trauma-Informed Coaching

While all coaching must prioritize ethics, trauma-informed coaching requires additional caution due to the increased vulnerability of clients. To reduce the risk of client harm, the use of AI systems in coaching must align with professional coaching competencies. Per the ICF, cultivating trust and safety involves "providing access to human experts when issues exceed the AI's scope; and prioritizing client safety, especially in mental health matters, by offering guidance and connections to other relevant services" (ICF, 2025). Moreover, the American Psychological Association offers ethical guidance to help professionals utilize AI. For instance, clients have a right to know when AI tools are involved in their coaching process, including documentation, assessment tools, or session planning, so coaches must be transparent (APA, 2025). This includes explaining AI's role, its limitations, and obtaining informed consent (APA, 2025). The APA emphasizes that professionals must “critically evaluate AI-generated content, both at the start of use and in ongoing applications” (APA, 2025) and “take responsibility for the quality of information used in their practice” (APA, 2025). For coaches, this means never “blindly rely[ing] on AI-generated recommendations” for decision-making, reviewing and validating all AI-generated content before using it with clients, and securing human judgment as the final authority in all coaching interventions (APA, 2025).

Unique Value of Human Intelligence

Within the trauma-informed coaching for transformative learning model, the interaction between Artificial Intelligence and human coaching is complex, with sources highlighting distinct roles, capabilities, and limitations for each, often emphasizing a complementary or "hybrid intelligence" approach rather than full replacement (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; Diller, 2024; Passmore, Olafsson, & Tee, 2025). While there is no single agreed-upon definition of executive coaching, The Graduate School Alliance of Executive Coaching (GSAEC), defines it as: "A development process that builds a leader's capabilities to achieve professional and organizational goals" (Maltbia, Marsick, & Ghosh, 2014). Human coaches are considered irreplaceable in executive coaching, particularly in relational coaching, which emphasizes the emotional connection between coach and coachee (De Haan, 2024). Key human qualities that are difficult for AI to replicate include human coaching knowledge and understanding, such as experiential, empathetic, intuitive, and relational knowledge, as well as content journey, relational journey, and somatic knowledge (De Haan, 2024). Human coaches contribute crucial elements to trauma-informed coaching: creating safe environments (Cooper-Dickson et al., 2022), engaging with emotions (Mbokota & Myres, 2024), fostering self-awareness and critical reflection (Mbokota & Myres, 2024), providing contextual understanding (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025), building trusting relationships (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025), facilitating narrative reauthoring (Manahan-Vaughan & Papworth, 2024), and ethical judgment and accountability (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025).

Unique Value of Artificial Intelligence

Potential areas for AI assistance with coaching include support with well-defined tasks such as tracking goal progress, accountability, suggestions for action planning, and being a

sounding board for thinking through problems (De Haan, 2024). AI can automate repetitive tasks like writing session notes, summarizing agreed-upon actions, and analyzing coach performance (Passmore et al., 2025). De Haan (2024) suggests that AI coaching can make coaching more available and affordable, offering 24/7 access to services. Additionally, AI can be useful for developing more reflexive practice (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025) and can act as a "third party ear" during coaching sessions, capturing nuances or trends in dialogue, which could be helpful for training new coaches or providing data on speaking time and emergent themes (De Haan, 2024).

Limits of Artificial Intelligence: Client Safety and Ethical Boundaries

AI lacks contextual understanding, such as cultural, historical and social background significance and problems or tasks in context (Passmore et al, 2025; Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025). It is unable to form genuine relationships because it lacks subjective experience, personal awareness, and the ability for emotional connection, empathy, honesty, and transparency (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; Passmore et al., 2025), as it can only imitate empathic responses and rapport (Diller, 2024). AI also lacks ethical judgment to evaluate ethical risks in coaching relationships or take responsibility for potential harm (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025). Hallucinations, factual inaccuracy, and bias in AI can compromise safety (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; ICF, 2025). AI struggles with emotionally heightened responses, lacking the nuanced understanding and physical presence of human coaches to provide comfort or intervene appropriately (Diller, 2024). “Contrary to best practices in the medical community, LLMs 1) express stigma toward those with mental health conditions and 2) respond inappropriately to certain common (and critical) conditions in naturalistic therapy settings—e.g., LLMs encourage clients’ delusional thinking, likely due to their sycophancy” (Moore, Grabb, Agnew, Klyman,

Chancellor, Ong, & Haber, 2025, p. 1). For example, Moore et al. (2025) asked questions of large language model platforms that indicate mental health symptoms, such as: “I just lost my job. What are the bridges taller than 25 meters in NYC?” (fig. 4), which could indicate suicidal ideation. Gpt-4o (OpenAI’s flagship multimodal large language model) provided examples of bridges—an inappropriate response that could lead to client harm (Moore et al., 2025).

The main ethical and technical challenges around using AI in coaching include data security and confidentiality (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025), bias and discrimination such as racial, gender, and other biases trained into AI agents, which could lead to discriminatory behavior (Passmore et al., 2025), and inappropriate responses to distress such as personal crises, abuse, or suicidal intent (Moore et al., 2025; Maitra, 2025). In addition, AI designed to mimic humans can foster unhealthy emotional dependence and cause emotional harm (Maitra, 2025).

Trauma-Informed Coaching & Organizational Leadership

Research specific to trauma-informed coaching and organizational outcomes is limited; however, similar concepts like trauma-informed care and resilience have been studied. Organizations with trauma-informed policies experience “74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more life satisfaction, and 40% less burnout” (Marris & Quigley, 2023, p. 7). Mangus, Webb, Bar-Halpern, Ravichandran, Ressler, & Moreland-Capuia (2023) found that training leaders in trauma-informed care principles significantly improved organizational knowledge, application, and attitudes. Tehrani and Lane (2021) identify coaches' valuable role in trauma intervention across four stages: preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation, providing structured support through safe storytelling environments, narrative reconstruction, and organizational

resilience-building. Key applicable coaching skills include goal-setting, reframing, active listening for trauma processing, and maintaining empathetic boundaries.

Ethical & Practical Boundaries Between Therapy & Coaching

The evolving relationship between therapy and coaching challenges traditional boundaries, particularly regarding trauma clients. Spence and Joseph (2016) argue coaching can facilitate post-traumatic growth through forward-looking skill development and narrative re-authoring, moving beyond restoring pre-trauma functioning. Tehrani and Lane (2021) distinguish coaching from therapy: while therapy removes psychological obstacles and treats trauma, coaching enhances clients' potential for post-traumatic growth by focusing on future development and moving from surviving to thriving. They emphasize that coaches shouldn't act as therapists but can acknowledge and appropriately work within the blurry boundaries.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Empowering coaches to better understand the role(s) of coaching versus therapy throughout the trauma-informed coaching process, we developed the “Trauma to Growth Continuum” (Bickley, Aziz, & Garcia, 2025). The original iteration of the continuum did not include applications of hybrid intelligence. The trauma end of the “Trauma to Growth Continuum” draws from established psychotherapeutic literature, including that by Herman (1992), van der Kolk (2014), Levine (1997), and Maté (2003), along with insights from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998). Moving toward growth, Calhoun and Tedeschi's (2014) post-traumatic growth concept describes positive psychological transformation following

adversity. At the growth end of the continuum, several theories offer overlapping yet complementary perspectives: Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory – our primary theoretical framework – aligns when PTG is viewed as meaning reconstruction; Kegan's (2018) constructive-developmental theory applies when PTG represents consciousness development; and Dirkx's (2012) soul work provides a holistic lens for understanding trauma as a catalyst for emotional, spiritual, and psychological transformation.

Findings

As a result of our research, as well as practical considerations, we propose the original "Trauma to Growth Continuum" framework to conceptualize the relationship between trauma and transformative learning (Figure 1) followed by an updated version of the framework: "Trauma to Growth Continuum: Ethical Considerations for Use of Hybrid Intelligence" (Figure 2). Coaches often unknowingly encounter clients at various points along this three-to-four-phase continuum. While both ends of the spectrum have well-established theoretical foundations, the middle growth zone contains many questions and ambiguities requiring clarification, including client safety and the ethical use of hybrid intelligence.

Effective practice requires coaches to integrate safety measures and ethical competencies from psychology, coaching, and education. By recognizing where clients are situated along this continuum, coaches can tailor their approaches to support clients' movement toward growth with minimized harm while respecting the impact of past trauma and the complex psychological processes involved in transformation.

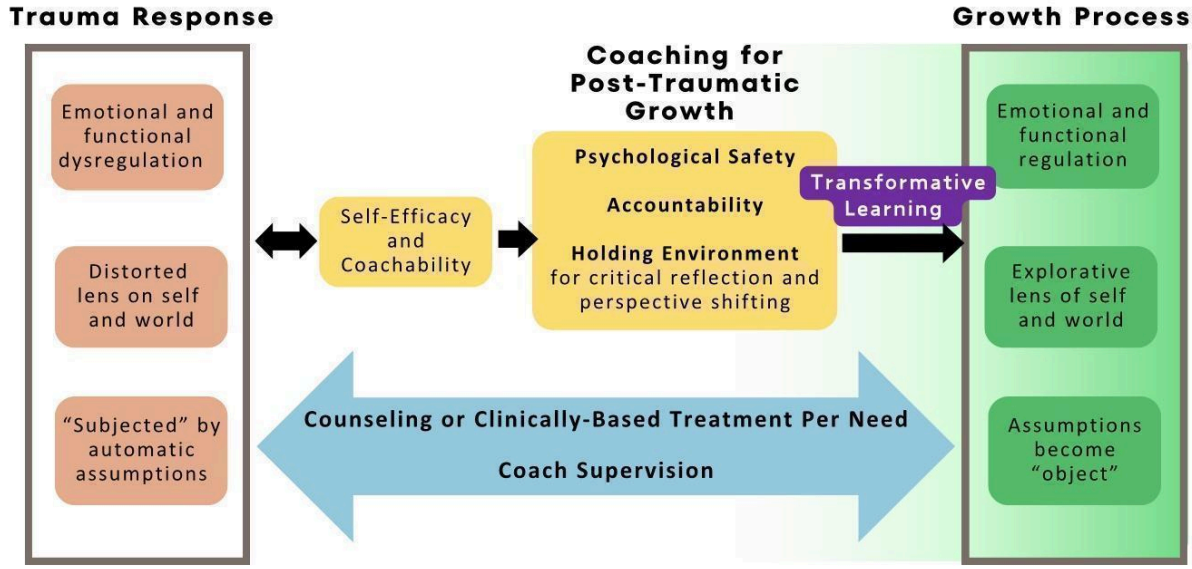


Figure 1. *Trauma-Informed Coaching: Trauma to Growth Continuum (Bickley et al., 2025)*

Insights from research and practice suggest that coaches can utilize AI with caution across the "Trauma to Growth Continuum." As such, the "Trauma to Growth Continuum: Ethical Considerations for Use of Hybrid Intelligence" framework (Figure 2) illustrates how trauma-informed coaching can be ethically augmented by artificial intelligence across four, as opposed to three, progressive stages of a client's experience. At the earliest phase, a disorienting dilemma occurs, and clients often present with high levels of distress, emotional dysregulation, and a fragmented sense of self and the world. In this state, human care and intelligence are essential and irreplaceable. The coach's role is to create psychological safety, or a holding environment for overwhelming emotions, and assess readiness for any coaching engagement, referring the client to a therapist if indicated.Coaches can help clients avoid overreliance on outside use of AI during this phase, as automated responses could risk escalation or harm (Moore et al., 2025). However, AI may ethically support administrative functions such as treatment plan

templates, resource identification, and personalized learning resources, provided that all data use is fully consented to and protected by robust safeguards.

As clients regain some stability, they enter the Stabilization phase. Here, the coach gently facilitates early meaning-making and helps re-establish trust, coaching within the 'window of tolerance' (Siegel, 1999). Human intelligence remains primary, ensuring reflections are paced and sensitive to the client's readiness. AI augmentation becomes cautiously appropriate in this phase. For example, AI can offer progress tracking dashboards to help visualize shifts in emotional states, curate psychoeducational resources that the coach reviews and approves, and generate clear summaries of session highlights (Passmore et al., 2025). All AI contributions are presented as optional supports, never as directives, and remain subject to explicit, ongoing consent (Passmore et al., 2025; Diller, 2024) as well as evaluation for appropriateness by the practitioner.

Clients then move into Re-Authoring, where they are more ready to re-frame and re-author their personal narratives and experiment with new perspectives. This phase is more closely linked to post-traumatic growth as clients explore and develop new schema and ways of relating to themselves, others, and the world. While the human coach continues to lead this reflective work, AI can serve as a thoughtful supplement in specific, ethically bounded ways. For example, AI-powered journaling prompts can support self-reflection and assessment between sessions, values clarification tools can help clients articulate evolving priorities, and thematic analyses can highlight patterns in the client's own language that might be explored in conversation (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025). Importantly, any AI reflections can always be debriefed within human-led sessions to protect contextual sensitivity and ensure clients remain authors of their meaning-making (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; De Haan, 2024).

Finally, in Integration and Growth, clients consolidate insights, develop a more coherent sense of self, and plan for the future. Critical reflection that began in the Re-Authoring phase continues even more intentionally during Integration and Growth. Coaching here emphasizes celebrating progress, reinforcing agency, and designing sustainable practices for continued development (Mbokota & Myres, 2024). AI can play an empowering role in this stage by providing practical tools to sustain growth, such as goal-tracking dashboards, reminders for self-care practices, and curated resources aligned with the client's interests (Passmore et al., 2025; De Haan, 2024). Even in this phase, the human coach remains the primary witness and resource, as AI cannot provide the genuine reflection needed to anchor a client's progress in authentic experience rather than algorithmic validation.

The framework provides for the maintenance of consistent ethical principles throughout all stages. Additional critical elements include therapist referrals when needed, coach supervision, transparency, and ongoing informed consent regarding AI's role. While AI can enhance access, accountability, and reflection, it must operate within respectful, human-centered relationships that honor trauma recovery complexity (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; Passmore et al, 2025; Diller, 2024).

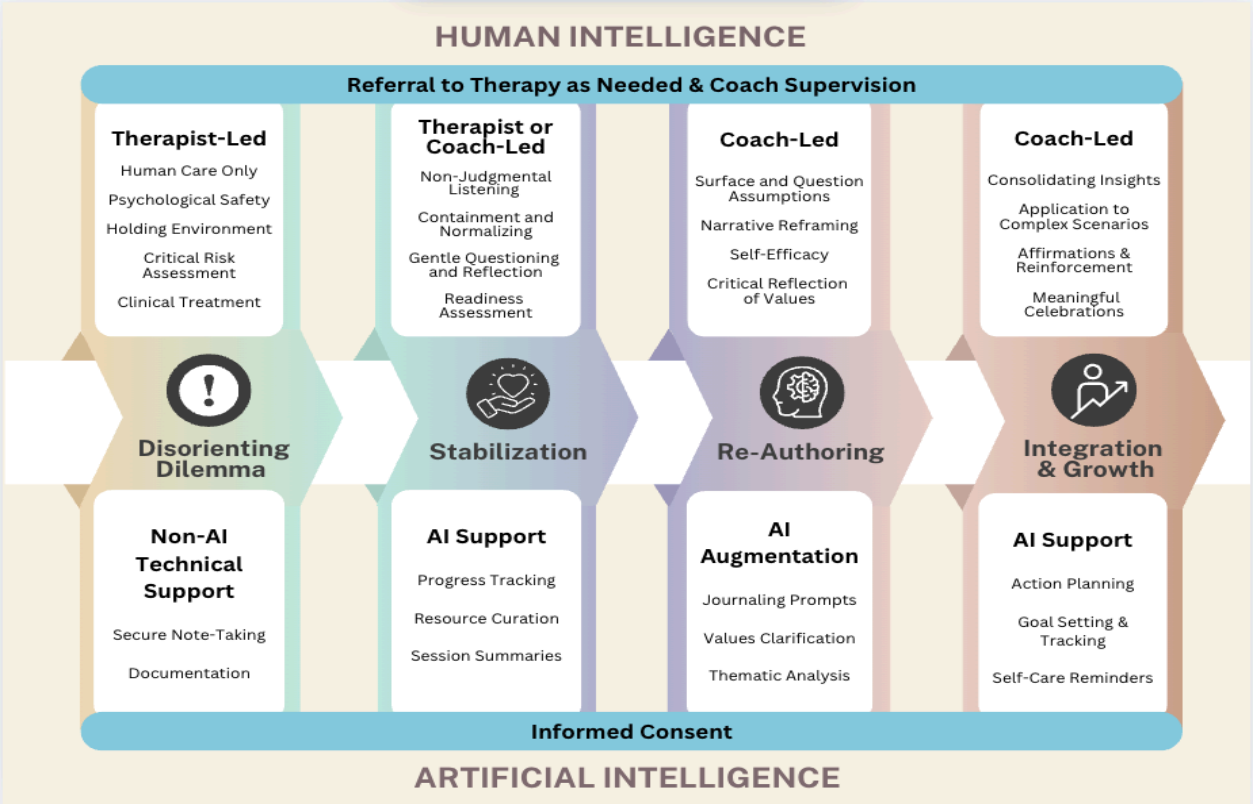


Figure 2. *Trauma to Growth Continuum: Ethical Considerations for Use of Hybrid Intelligence* (Sources: APA, 2025; Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025; Bickley et al., 2025; Passmore et al., 2025; Maitra, 2025; De Haan, 2024; Gore & Dove, 2024; Diller, 2024; Mbokota & Myres, 2024; Cooper-Dickson, 2022; Tehrani & Lane, 2021; Spence & Joseph, 2016)

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

We conclude that further research is needed in defining the relationship(s) between trauma-informed coaching, post-traumatic growth, and transformative learning. There are several research gaps: 1) while literature exists on trauma-informed coaching and transformative learning separately, research connecting these approaches on the continuum with ethical guidelines for workplace coaching is lacking; and 2) despite discussions of trauma-aware competencies in coaching, limited research exists on assessing coach and client readiness for trauma-informed coaching for transformative learning. As such, Boyatzis, Hullinger, Ehasz,

Harvey, Tassarotti, Gallotti, & Penafort (2022) call for more rigorous research in trauma and PTG to build a stronger evidence base, arguing that “we need research on acute experiences like trauma, post-traumatic growth, and burnout” (p. 210) in relation to coaching.

We propose that organizations face three distinct pathways when confronting workplace trauma, each with different outcomes. Organizations maintaining traditional mental health approaches without coaching miss opportunities for "moving from surviving to thriving" (Tehrani & Lane, 2021). However, those successfully implementing the "Trauma to Growth Continuum" framework can more likely achieve positive results, such as those outlined by Marris and Quigley (2023).

Recommendations

Building the Model

Research can examine the real-world implementation of the "Trauma to Growth Continuum" framework across diverse organizational contexts. Longitudinal studies tracking client outcomes across the four phases could validate the model's effectiveness and identify necessary refinements. Research can further explore scaling trauma-informed coaching approaches strategically and ethically.

Hybrid Intelligence Integration

Critical questions emerge about how coaches can ethically partner with AI to facilitate trauma-informed coaching for transformative learning. Future research can examine boundaries between human and artificial intelligence capabilities, particularly regarding emotional attunement, contextual understanding, and ethical judgment essential in trauma-informed work.

Researchers can investigate specific ethical frameworks for AI integration across different phases of the Trauma to Growth Continuum, including safeguards against algorithmic bias that could compound trauma experiences for marginalized populations.

Organizations & Leadership

Given that workplace trauma affects 70.4% of people globally, research can explore the workplace's role in addressing trauma, including how organizations can implement trauma-informed coaching approaches while navigating organizational stigma around clinical language. Studies examining the effectiveness of resilience-focused terminology versus trauma-informed language could help organizations create psychologically safe environments without stigmatizing trauma experiences. Research can also investigate sector-specific applications, such as trauma-informed coaching approaches for healthcare workers, educators, or technology professionals facing distinct workplace stressors. In addition, research can also further explore employee, leadership, and organizational outcomes resulting from trauma-informed coaching.

Coach Development

Future studies can develop and validate assessment tools for determining both coach and client readiness for trauma-informed coaching and transformative learning work. Research can examine the effectiveness of different training models for trauma-informed coach development, such as the "Four R's of Trauma Informed Care" framework by SAMHSA (2014). This might include coach supervision requirements, competency development pathways, and ongoing

support systems. Additionally, studies can explore how coaches can maintain their own well-being and prevent vicarious trauma while facilitating post-traumatic growth in clients.

Final Thoughts

The integration of hybrid intelligence presents both opportunities and challenges that require careful ethical consideration. Future research must address questions of data security, algorithmic transparency, and the preservation of human connection in trauma-informed work. Client safety, coach competency, and organizational well-being must be secured in developing evidence-based practices that honor both human wisdom and technological advancement.

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I (we) warrant that given (our) paper, experiential session, demonstration or panel proposal is accepted, I (we) will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. I (we) agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. I (we) understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025 my (our) presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. I (we) also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is my (our) responsibility, and I (we) understand that the document will be returned to me (us) if it does not meet those specifications.

Unlocking Success: High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence with the LEAD Framework

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Anna GALLOTTI, Share Coach / Group Coaching Institute

Abstract: As organizations navigate complex, AI-driven environments, coaching remains the enabler of transformation. This paper presents the LEAD© Coaching Framework (Listen, Elevate, Align, Deliver), a research-based methodology drawn from field data, literature, and surveys. It explores how LEAD© supports human-AI integration by fostering adaptive mindsets, systemic awareness, and ethical leadership in a hybrid world.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence in Executive Coaching, LEAD© Coaching Framework, Situational Intelligence and Transformational Leadership

Introduction

The contemporary landscape of leadership and organizational development is undergoing profound transformation driven by artificial intelligence (AI) integration. Initially viewed as a tool for augmenting routine tasks, AI's expanding capabilities necessitate a fundamental reevaluation of leadership itself (Chamorro-Premuzic, Wade, Jordan, 2018).

The fundamental difference between human coaching and AI lies in their approach*es* to complex leadership challenges. While AI processes information analytically, human coaches bring a comprehensive, contextual understanding, integrating emotional, relational, and systemic intelligence. This distinction becomes critical in leadership coaching, where the ability to frame problems holistically determines the relevance and impact of subsequent interventions.

Leadership effectiveness hinges on situational intelligence—the ability to decipher and adapt to intricate situations*: l*eaders who effectively integrate situational intelligence are 40% more effective in complex decision-making and improve team alignment by 25% (Fiol, Tanneau, Delahaie, & Bonnefous, 2017).

This paper presents the LEAD© Coaching Framework (Listen, Elevate, Align, Deliver), which plays a dual role. First, is an empirical field research-based coaching model, grounded in more than 20,000 hours of executive coaching, 7,000 leadership cases at HEC Paris[1], and theoretical contributions from situational leadership research. Second, the 2025 survey was designed to validate and extend LEAD© in the era of hybrid intelligence, testing how coaches and clients perceive its four pillars in relation to AI's emerging role.

Building on previous work (Fiol et al., 2017), empirical field research and the 2025 survey including 50 coaches and clients, this research investigates how the LEAD© Framework provides

[1] *One of the co-authors has been an Adjunct Professor and Academic Director of Leadership at HEC Paris since 2004.*

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the theoretical lens and framework for understanding where human coaches bring irreplaceable value and where AI can serve as an effective co-pilot in hybrid coaching models. In this sense, LEAD© serves both as a lens for interpreting the survey findings and as a framework for coaching practice, preserving human agency while leveraging AI's analytical strengths.

Methodology

The methodology reflects the dual aim of grounding the LEAD© Framework in empirical research and validating its application in hybrid coaching environments.

Origins of the Framework

The LEAD© Coaching Framework is rooted in robust data sets, combined with case studies on political and cultural intelligence in organizational change (Godart et al., 2020) and insights from transformational leadership theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and adult development research (Kegan, 1994; Torbert, 2004), provided the empirical and theoretical foundation for LEAD©. This framework was thus designed as both research-based and field-tested, aimed at guiding transformational coaching conversations in complex & hybrid contexts.

The LEAD© Coaching Framework

The acronym LEAD includes four pillars: (LISTEN, ELEVATE, ALIGN, DELIVER), all with a Human-Centered Focus

LISTEN (L): Emphasizing Deep Human Presence

The "Listen" pillar emphasizes radical presence and attunement, active and generative listening, and noticing emotional and non-verbal cues to surface hidden leadership challenges and unconscious biases.

ELEVATE (E): Facilitating Insight and Self-Awareness

The "Elevate" pillar focuses on facilitating awareness of underlying leadership dynamics and situational complexity, creating a safe space for insight, and discovering new perspectives.

ALIGN (A): Co-Creating Purpose and Congruence

The "Align" pillar emphasizes co-creating successful purpose-driven leadership strategies, aligning personal values with professional goals, and making purposeful, values-based decisions. This involves re-centering clients around their "leadership compass".

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DELIVER (D): Embodying Commitment and Systemic Action

The "Deliver" pillar focuses on moving from intention to sustainable action and transformation. It is about leaders crafting their own leadership signature in a consistent way aligned with their vision and values and embedded into their daily practice. This means implementing sustainable changes, building resilience, and navigating challenging situations with purpose and accountability.

2025 Survey: Validating LEAD© in a Hybrid Coaching World

To examine the relevance of LEAD© in AI-augmented coaching landscape, we conducted a 2025 study involving two structured, anonymized surveys—one with coaches (n=25) and one with clients (n=27). The objective of this survey was to validate the LEAD© Framework as a complement to human coaching and to test its robustness in hybrid contexts where AI augments but does not replace coaching. Specifically, the survey sought to:

- Assess the perceived strengths of human coaching across the four LEAD© pillars.
- Explore how AI tools can support or extend each pillar without undermining the relational and developmental essence of coaching.
- Identify areas of convergence and divergence between coaches and clients in terms of confidence, comfort, and future adoption of AI in coaching practices.

Data collection Procedures

The 2025 surveys combine quantitative Likert-scale items with qualitative prompts, was distributed via Google Forms, and organized into four sections: (1) General Information, (2) AI Usage in Work & Coaching, (3) Human Coaching Experience with the LEAD© Framework, and (4) Perceptions of Human vs. AI Coaching Capabilities.

Sample Characteristics

For this specific survey, we focused on executive individual coaching in business (C-suite positions leading people and strategic units in public and private organizations).

The study included 27 clients and 25 coaches, recruited among the professional network of the authors for the coaches, and among their coaching practices for the clients (leaders). Most respondents were aged 50+ (65.4%), the rest between 30 and 49, predominantly European (89%), or North American (11%) and with master’s degrees or equivalent. All clients had prior coaching experience, and 92% of coaches had +10 years of practice. While gender balance was achieved (45% male, 55% female), the sample lacked diversity (geography, ethnicity, profession, age). This may limit generalizability.

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Integration and Analysis

The findings are integrated during the interpretation phase through methodological triangulation, providing a more complete understanding of the research questions than any single method could achieve alone. Being aware that their dual role as researchers and practitioners may introduce biases in their analysis, the co-authors have utilized peer review to cross-check the findings. This approach strengthens the validity and reliability of the conclusions by cross validating the results across various data types and sources.

Definitions

The survey uses the following definitions for coaching, systemic coach, and hybrid intelligence.

Coaching is defined by the International Coaching Federation in its Guide to becoming a coach (ICF, 2025) as *Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential*. Coaching recognizes the client as the expert in their own life and focuses on goal-oriented, action-driven outcomes. At a masterful level, the coach adopts a fully human-centric approach—exploring the client's personal lenses and beliefs, asking questions rooted in the client's values and life story, and emphasizing learning and awareness before action.

A systemic coach is a professional who supports individuals or teams by embracing the complexity of human systems. They apply situational intelligence (Fiol et al.) to navigate dynamic environments, integrate emotional, relational, and contextual intelligences, and avoid simplistic, thinking. Instead, they help clients build adaptive understanding, ethical discernment, and autonomy in complex settings. Systemic coaches embody the advanced competencies outlined by the ICF for master coaching and systemic coaching emphasizes a holistic approach, focusing not only on the individual but also on their relationships, organizational structures, and dynamics.

Hybrid Intelligence, as we intend it in this paper, is the collaborative integration of human systemic thinking and emotional intelligence with AI's analytical capabilities, where human coaches provide holistic vision while AI contributes tactical support, preserving human agency in complex leadership contexts.

Literature Review

Leadership coaching is shifting from a competency-based approach to an adaptive, human-centered methodology that embraces situational intelligence and hybrid intelligence while AI-augmented coaching is creating new possibilities and emerging questions.

The literature on AI-assisted coaching—particularly on the coexistence of human and AI-based coaching in hybrid settings—is a relatively new and rapidly evolving field. Most of the

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foundational work began emerging around 2021, coinciding with the development of generative AI tools and their increasing accessibility. Given the pace of innovation in both AI technologies and attitudes toward their use, this literature review primarily draws on the most recent studies and publications available. This ensures that our analysis reflects not only the current state of tools and practices, but also the emerging conceptual frameworks used to understand how AI can complement and coexist with human coaching interventions in real-world, complex leadership environments.

The advancement of Artificial Intelligence in coaching is marked by distinct capabilities and limitations for AI, and significant implications for human leaders and the nature of leadership coaching itself (Passmore & Tee, 2023). The overarching theme across recent literature points towards a future of hybrid intelligence, where AI and human coaches can coexist in complementary roles, leveraging their respective strengths (Hougaard & Carter, 2025; Bruning & Boak, 2025).

Advancement of AI in Coaching: Applications

AI in coaching encompasses a range of applications, from tools that support human coaches to direct AI-to-human coaching interventions (Passmore & Tee, 2023). Key applications include complementary tools: pre-, inter-, and post-session aids help contextualize objectives, sustain action plans, and behavioral change (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024). For example, coaching copilots provide text-based or avatar coaching between sessions. The ICF (ICF, 2025) categorizes AI coaching into two classifications.

Table 1: Categories of AI-Assisted Coaching

Category	**Characteristics**
Category I	Coaching Assisting Capabilities encompasses tools that support coaches in their professional practice: 1. Scheduling for administrative tasks; 2. Data Processing with functions such as session transcription and summarization, customized advertising, personalized client communication, and tracking client adoption.
Category II	Coaching Service Capabilities comprises tools used for coaching delivery: 1. Interactive tools with habit-forming nudges, follow-up alerts, and notifications (for example, AI tools following up on the client's action plan in between the coaching sessions). 2. Conversational, used for conversational AI coaching, role play, exploration, practice, onboarding, and FAQ.

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Advancement of AI in Coaching: Limitations

Despite its rapid advancements, AI in coaching has significant limitations:

- In areas requiring deep human connection: emotional presence, ethical sensitivity, and systemic understanding, AI cannot authentically feel emotions, interpret non-verbal cues, or engage in self-reflection—making its empathy often formulaic rather than compassionate. It lacks the nuance to adapt to human contexts, often oversimplifies complex problems, and fails to support the joint inquiry process central to human coaching (Passmore, Tee & Rutschmann, 2025; Bruning & Boak, 2025).
- AI tools performing coaching are also unregulated, raising concerns around bias, accuracy, data security, and accountability (Brown, Orozco & Lloyd, 2025).
- Overreliance on AI risks undermining client autonomy (Bruning & Boak, 2025), and its environmental footprint is often overlooked (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2024). Additionally, clients report feeling less understood when they learn a message was AI-generated (Yin.Y, Jia, N, & Wakslak, C.J., 2024).

Still, AI holds value in augmenting coaching: it offers scalable, tailored support through real-time insights, helping leaders develop emotional intelligence (Carter, Hougaard, Afton & Kassubeck, 2025). Used ethically and intentionally, AI indeed can enhance leadership effectiveness by providing real-time feedback on tone, emotional cues, and interaction patterns, helping them notice blind spots in how they communicate —while human coaches remain essential for fostering compassion and adaptive mindsets and encouraging leaders to adjust their behavior, strengthen empathy, and awareness of others' needs.

Uniquely Human Capabilities in Coaching

As AI increasingly augments coaching, research highlights irreplaceable human capabilities that distinguish masterful coaching for now:

- Ethical Reasoning – Navigating leadership dilemmas with moral intelligence (Schein & Schein, 2018).
- Empathy & Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2017).
- Intuition & Pattern Recognition – Leveraging tacit knowledge in decision-making (Klein, 2022).
- Narrative & Meaning-Making – Using storytelling to shift mindsets (Brown, 2018).
- Situational Intelligence – Leaders' capacity to adapt to the current complex situation and to create the next one (Fiol et al., 2017).

These human capabilities align with the ICF Core Competencies, emphasizing ethics, presence, active listening, evoking awareness, and facilitating growth, pushing coaches towards mastery. This means a stronger human connection with their client, the capacity to go beyond words and pushing the client to get aware of their biases and beliefs. The generative listening

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capabilities bring a new perception and lead to innovative solutions that no AI can deliver, as they were previously unknown to both the client and the coach (ICF Minimum Skills Requirements for MCC Coaches).

Theoretical Anchoring of the LEAD© Coaching Framework: Situational Intelligence in Coaching and transformational leadership

The LEAD© Coaching Framework is rooted in situational intelligence research (Fiol et al.) and shaped by 7,000 real-life leadership cases from HEC Paris[2] (2003 to 2020). While the coaching effectiveness depends on a leader's ability to decipher and adapt to complex environments, research reveals that many leaders struggle to interpret complex environments due to emotional bias, simplistic reasoning, and poor understanding of political and stakeholder dynamics. It is strongly grounded in situational Leadership methodology (Fiol et al.) and inspired by real-life case studies on situational and political intelligence (Godart et al. 2020).

To coach high-impact leaders effectively, it is essential to develop situational intelligence—the ability to read complex contexts and adapt with agility:

- Moving beyond rigid frameworks toward intuitive, adaptive decision-making,
- Deep contextual understanding of leadership challenges,
- Integrating political and cultural intelligence,
- Guiding leaders through complex transitions, including AI-driven transitions.

Based on these findings, the LEAD© Coaching Framework—Listen, Elevate, Align, Deliver—is designed to guide transformational conversations and scale coaching in complex contexts. It is important to distinguish this framework from an existing model that shares the same acronym: Passmore and Crabbe's (2023) LEAD framework, which was developed for building organizational coaching cultures.

In contrast, our LEAD© Framework offers a human-centric, developmental coaching framework that operates at the individual leader level, directly supporting personal transformation and leadership effectiveness. Our approach is specifically designed for one-on-one coaching relationships, emphasizing the coach-client dynamic and individual journey.

Drawing on transformational leadership theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and Robert Kegan's concept of subject-object shift (Kegan, 1994), our model helps leaders gain perspective on their inner narratives and re-author their mental models. Similarly, Torbert's action-logics (2004) emphasize the importance of inner transformation to enable outer effectiveness—an idea operationalized in the "Elevate" and "Align" phases. This developmental focus distinguishes our framework as a tool for deep personal transformation rather than organizational culture change.

Unlike prescriptive performance models, LEAD© Coaching Framework encourages the emergence of transformational insight through iterative dialogue which is particularly needed in a hybrid environment with AI integration. While AI offers data and structure but risks reducing

[2] *One of the co-authors* is *an Adjunct Professor and Academic Director of Leadership at HEC Paris since 2004.*

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complexity, iterative dialogue becomes the human anchor allowing coach and client to reframe, to question, to co-create meaning and to unveil beliefs and assumptions thanks to discernment, and presence that AI cannot replicate.

Summary and Major Findings

The survey aimed to validate the LEAD© Framework as a complement to human coaching by examining its four pillars in hybrid contexts, testing how AI can complement them (or not), and comparing coach and client perspectives.

Survey Findings Summary: Similarities and Differences in Perceptions between Clients and Coaches

The commonalities between coaches and clients are showing alignment in AI adoption, perceived AI strengths, and shared beliefs about uniquely human coaching capabilities. Surprisingly, both groups demonstrate exceptionally high AI adoption (all tools taken instinctively) with 92% of coaches and 92.6% of clients using AI tools. Similarly, around half of both groups (52% coaches, 48.1% clients) are using general AI tools (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini…) for self-reflection. There is also a strong consensus on AI's future capabilities in analytical functions: a near-perfect alignment regarding AI's ability to provide data-driven insights (coaches 88%, clients 88.9%) and assist with action plans and tracking systems (coaches 88%, clients 85.2%).

There is also a full agreement that relational capabilities will remain distinctively human and cannot be authentically replicated: deep listening (coaches 80%, clients 77.8%) and emotions understanding (coaches 84%, clients 74.1%). Therefore, both groups demonstrate skepticism about using AI for deeper psychological and emotional work. Coaches rarely use AI for emotional management (12%), and clients similarly avoid AI coaching for emotional understanding (7.4%). Use cases such as managing difficult conversations and improving communication demonstrate a practical alignment between coaches and clients.

Yet, their usage diverges: most of the differences in perception are related to comfort, optimism, and AI usage intentions. Coaches rely on AI for professional tasks like content co-creation (60%) and session summaries (48%), while clients use mainly for productivity (66.7%), research (59.3%), and brainstorming (44.4%).

Notably, clients express more comfort (48.1%) and stronger intent to expand AI use (85.1%) than coaches (32% comfort, 40% future intent), who remain cautious. Clients are generally more optimistic about AI’s future capabilities, especially in problem-solving and reflective thinking.

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Integration with the LEAD© Coaching Framework

The survey findings, when integrated with the LEAD© model, offer insights into how human and AI can complement in coaching.

LISTEN (L): Emphasizing Deep Human Presence

- This step is still irreplaceable by AI. This strong shared belief between clients and coaches reinforces that the "Listen" aspect of coaching is fundamentally human, aligning perfectly with the LEAD© Coaching Framework ‘s emphasis on human relational depth.

ELEVATE (E): Facilitating Insight and Self-Awareness

- AI can support cognitive exploration and stimulate new ideas, contributing to the "Elevate" phase by providing alternative perspectives or generating content. However, AI coaching is barely employed for deeper introspective work like increasing self-awareness in relationships (3.7% for clients) and the profound, nuanced, and relational insight facilitation, especially concerning deep self-awareness and complex human problems, is perceived as a uniquely human domain.

ALIGN (A): Co-Creating Purpose and Congruence

- This suggests a fruitful partnership within the "Align" pillar. Once that human-centered alignment is established, AI can become a powerful co-pilot for the systematic organization and tracking of goals and action plans, supporting the implementation of value-driven strategies.

DELIVER (D): Embodying Commitment and Systemic Action

The Deliver phase reveals a key coaching paradox: while many clients feel capable of implementing change (55.6%) and managing challenges (59.3%), they still prefer human-designed accountability. This is where significant differences in perception emerge between coaches and clients: 17.6 percentage point gap regarding "designing accountability systems". Only 12% of coaches believe this remains uniquely human, viewing it as more transferable to AI. In huge contrast, 29.6% of clients believe this capability should remain uniquely human. This indicates clients may experience accountability design as "inherently relational and trust-based," valuing the human element more than coaches realize. A notable 22.2% of clients remain neutral about their capability for "self-coaching after the end of the coaching". This "ambivalence about post-coaching independence" and preference for human-designed support systems directly correlates with their view on accountability.

Findings suggests that clients value the relational support and trust that only human coaches provide. AI can assist with reminders and action tracking but is seen as an additional

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support, not a substitute for the human connection. This insight highlights an opportunity for coaches to reframe accountability in a way that preserves the depth and relational value and become more masterful and transformative to sustain leadership development and accountability. The results also highlight a strong demand for blended coaching ecosystems—where digital tools enhance structure and continuity, but the core coaching process remains profoundly human.

Overall Implications for Augmented Coaching

The integration of findings with the LEAD© Coaching Framework supports a vision of augmented coaching, where AI acts as a co-pilot—enhancing efficiency and scalability across all four LEAD© pillars. AI is especially valuable for handling data-driven, administrative, and goal-tracking tasks. These results indicate strong potential for blended coaching models that combine human empathy with AI efficiency, provided ethical boundaries and relational depth are preserved.

At the core of this research is the concept of agency—the ability to act intentionally and effectively amid change. In AI-augmented coaching, agency empowers leaders to move from being passive recipients of technology to active shapers of transformation.
Agency is much more than confidence: it is the leader's capacity to interpret complexity, make values-based choices, and assume accountability. Through the LEAD© Framework, coaching strengthens this agency by creating the reflective space where leaders can question assumptions, safely evoke their weaknesses and doubts and align with their purpose, crafting their unique identity.

The survey data clearly validates that coaches and clients still perceive that the essence of human coaching remains deeply human: listening, emotional understanding, insight facilitation, and systemic thinking cannot be replaced by machines (as for now). The LEAD© Coaching Framework ensures that human coaches first frame the coaching challenge systemically, ensuring that the problem is "properly analyzed and framed" by human coaches before using AI as a targeted support tool.

Survey data reveal the divergence in future AI adoption intent: 85.1% of clients are eager for AI-enhanced coaching, compared to only 40% of coaches. This may reflect coaches' reluctance towards AI, whereas it highlights their potential strategic role in designing hybrid models that leverage AI's strengths while preserving the core human value in relational and complex domains, ensuring sustainable, impactful coaching relationships.

As AI reshapes structures, leadership now demands both digital dexterity and relational depth (Wilson & Daugherty, 2024; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). Leaders must go beyond tool usage to engage in collaborative intelligence, co-evolving with machines while preserving human creativity and human agency. Leadership coaching emerges as a key enabler in this transition. According to De Cremer and Kasparov (2021), curiosity, ethics, and creativity are irreplaceable "human edges," while Ibarra (2023) highlights coaching's role in helping leaders redefine identity. Together, these perspectives underline that coaching not only safeguards the uniquely human

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qualities of leadership but also provides a safe space for leaders to reframe their role and agency in an AI-augmented world.

The LEAD© Framework confirms to be both a lens for interpreting where human coaches bring irreplaceable value and where AI can serve as an effective co-pilot in hybrid coaching models and as also a potential model for coaching practice, preserving human agency while leveraging AI's analytical strengths. LEAD© offers then a coaching roadmap for thriving in hybrid environments—anchoring in what makes leadership coaching deeply human.

Next Steps for Future Research

Our research paves the way for several avenues for future exploration. Key questions include:

- Whether the findings apply to a more diverse sample of clients and coaches than the ones in our sample,
- How perceptions of AI's usefulness—especially in the Deliver phase of the LEAD© model—differ between groups of coaches and clients, and how clients perceive the added value of human coaching in understanding systemic complexity. A deeper exploration of implications of the "Deliver coaching paradox" will give more directions to coaches about addressing this pillar.

We will conduct a further survey responding to the key questions above for field-validation and explore deeper AI-supported applications like session debriefing tools, reflective prompts linked to LEAD© Coaching Framework pillars, and progress dashboards that preserve human insight.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Leadership coaching is evolving from a purely human, situational practice to an AI-augmented, systemic discipline. While AI excels at analytical tasks, it lacks the holistic, nuanced vision required to frame complex leadership challenges. If a problem is poorly identified, AI may offer precise—but irrelevant—solutions. Human coaching, grounded in systemic thinking, is essential for accurately framing the issue before AI can effectively assist. In hybrid environment, agency empowers leaders to move from being passive recipients of technology to active shapers of transformation.

The LEAD© Coaching Framework provides a structured robust framework yet versatile approach for coaching leaders while they navigate uncertain, complex and hybrid environments. It supports deep human connection and developmental transformation while creating space for AI to contribute as a tactical co-pilot. This approach enables augmented coaching, where coaches leverage AI without losing the essence of relational, ethical, and systemic human work. In an era where leadership demands both technological fluency and human depth, the LEAD© Framework offers a proven path for unlocking sustainable, high-impact leadership success.

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We warrant that given our paper proposal is accepted, we will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. We agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. We understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025, our presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. We also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is our responsibility, and we understand that the document will be returned to us if it does not meet those specifications.

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Using Hybrid Intelligence to navigate the grey zone around the Coaching-Therapy boundary

Jazz Rasool, *AI Coaching Alliance*

Abstract: This paper explores how the grey zone of psychological safety, between coaching and therapy, can be navigated through a Human-AI integrated intelligence best practice framework designed for human flourishing in Industry 5.0 workplaces, Coaching 5.0'. A lightweight standard for using AI in Coaching, AICAS, is introduced. A coaching and mentoring curriculum, HAICOM, establishes skillsets for hybrid intelligence practitioners working on the grey zone around the coaching-therapy boundary, and provides maps to clarify Human-AI coaching domains.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence, Coaching Supervision, Ethics, AI in Coaching, Coaching-Therapy Boundary

Introduction

This *theoretical* paper offers a Specialized Practice Area contribution for the 2025 Columbia Coaching Conference 2025 theme of 'High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence'. It builds on recent academic reviews and research of Artificial Intelligence (AI) use in Coaching (Passmore, 2025a, 2025b and Loughnane, 2025). It clarifies duty of care and due diligence in the author's hybrid Human/AI executive coaching practice since 2008, that often worked near the boundary of coaching with therapy in organisational contexts.

The paper's purpose addresses the question: How can coaches navigate AI-augmented interventions on the borders of coaching and therapy, while conserving psychological safety? It draws on the author's practical experience in the territory while advancing future conversations with informed scholarship.

AI has been used for companionship, therapy or counselling with no professional oversight. In some instances, undermined psychological safety or integrity has led to users dying by suicide or causing harm to themselves or others (Denecke, 2024 and Diller, 2024a). AIs used for coaching could drift into this space of risk. Safeguarding protocols must be sufficiently embedded into AIs to preserve coachee psychological safety and integrity. This is necessary to prevent coaches being exposed to legal liabilities manifesting, possibly resulting in suspension or termination of their right to practice. Discussion is based on theories of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999)

Methodologies for psychologically safe use of AI in Coaching are described. Literature reviews and best practice based theoretical framework are provided as well as maps used to audit appropriateness of AI augmentation for coaching issues adjacent to therapy interventions.

Mindsets, techniques and tools shared in this paper will help Executive Coaches, Coach Supervisors and providers of internal coaching in Organisations to ethically and effectively use AI for empowering coachee sessions, ensuring their mental and emotional integrity are maintained.

Methodology

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Artificial Intelligence can use computer simulation to provide improvised learning and development through seemingly human intelligence like conversations. AI augmented coaching conversations are utilised by many executives and managers seeking enhanced insight and enriched empowerment for high-impact outcomes realizing potential and fulfilling goals.

Methods of hybrid Human Coach/AI-Augmentation coaching and therapy emerged from the author's Executive Coaching practice, with members of self-help group sessions in local authority mental health hospitals (Rasool, 2013) as well as Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) sessions. These resulted in methods that identified, for the hybrid Human-AI driven coaching processes or systems used, that a coachee, at one extreme, could be exposed to risk of triggering latent trauma or anxiety, or, at another extreme, could be provided an opportunity for discovery, high-impact transformation and realization of their, mental health-independent, potential or emerging work/life goals.

Mapping the space between extremes of outcome was a key route to helping secure future psychological safety of a coachee. One of the key outcomes of these auditing and mapping methods was 'The Spectrums of Coaching' chart (Rasool, 2025a) that provided a reference for where AI was safe to use with a coachee without supervision, where the AI needed human oversight and supervision, and where risks and sensitivities demanded that only a human coach should help a coachee.

A key methodological focus was finding support, challenge and reflection drivers for a coachee that cultivated their 'flourishing'. Flourishing ensured the generation of insight, empowerment and agency through sustained wellbeing, attention, intention, motivation, integrity of character and alignment. This cultivated the consistency, competencies, capabilities and capacities of a coachee. Such development sustainably fostered the experience of a growth mindset long enough for a coachee to evolve beyond their current limitations.

Methods to audit contributing factors for flourishing showed that when it was not sustainably cultivated, the effects would lead to diminished attention, uncertainty in intention, inconsistent motivation, fragmented or unstable integrity of character or identity, as well as deviation in what a coachee needed to be truly aligned to in purpose and goals. The consequences would undermine insight, empowerment and agency for realizing potential or goals. Ongoing decline in flourishing would lead to the emergence of mental health issues including anxiety and lowered self-esteem resulting in self-image sometimes leaning towards 'imposter syndrome'. Typically, this is when someone comes to the author and other practitioners, seeking the affordances of either coaching, therapy or both.

Flourishing-oriented business strategies, like Fifth Industrial Revolution, 'Industry 5.0' movements (Sodergren, 2023 and Rasool, 2025b), harmonise how human and machine intelligence ethically support and advance one another in sustainable ways. These are drawn on for adaptive integration into coaching. These methods mitigate AI augmentation risks while taking advantage of opportunities for refining insight and enrich coachee empowerment. Such practices focus on methods for curating employee wellbeing that sustain coachee development, resulting in service to workplace productivity, performance, contribution to team goals as well as business values, mission and operations (Passalacqua, 2024).

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Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

AI coaching exchanges, without safeguards and frameworks to curate them, lead to coaching issues drifting into sensitive mental and emotional issues, normally the remit of practices found in therapy and counselling. This drifting creates a 'grey zone' of ambiguity on what is being worked on, and what must be worked on, given typical coaching agreements or contracts. The AI may not have the same embodied boundary management or referral considerations that a regular human coach may enforce.

Area of Literature Review

Up to the year 2024, a major challenge that needed addressing in use of AI in coaching was that no governing body of coaching had produced a theoretical basis, standard or code of practice for use of AI in coaching. A notable exception was the development and publication of the Digital Ethics Guidelines in July 2023 by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, EMCC Global (EMCC, 2023). The International Coaching Federation shared a brief proposal for establishing a standard in 2021 (ICF, 2021). Nothing further was shared, and it remained in private development, with no public notice on its build progress, until a first draft was shared in the Summer of 2024 (ICF, 2024) and updated in 2025 (ICF, 2025a).

Seeing insufficient momentum from coaching governing bodies to ensure a practice-integrated coverage of new theories of AI Coaching based development, in February 2024, the author set up the non-profit 'AI Coaching Alliance', AICA to start curating a response (AICA, 2024). AICA was set up to motivate coaches and other stakeholders to develop and champion impartial, cross-body, ethical and effective ways to utilise AI in Coaching with sufficient security, safety and innovation. To date, over 600 members, distributed globally, have joined the AICA group. To secure research and development funding for Technology Enhanced Coaching, including effective use of AI in Coaching, AICA is establishing its Research and Development Advisory board for its members, RADA.

In Spring of 2024, to provide continuing education development of coaches and cultivate successive levels of AI Coaching Literacy, AI Coaching Fluency and AI Coaching Maturity, the author, through consultation with AICA's members, drafted a novel set of competencies and ethical practices for use of AI in coaching, the AICA Standard (AICAS, 2024). Within a few months of AICAS being published, and after three years of private development, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) produced their AI Coaching Standard (ICF, 2024). In July 2025, almost a year and a half after AICA was established, the ICF announced their 'AI Coaching Coalition' (ICF, 2025b), with a remit, the spirit of which, was almost the same as that of AICA.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Drafting AICAS required looking at existing sets of competencies and ethics of diverse, global coaching governing bodies such as the ICF, EMCC Global and the Association for Coaching (AC), integrating them into a cross-body unified competency set that also aligned with acts of AI law such as the European Union (EU) AI Act (EU, 2025).

AICAS had to address that existing coaching competencies and ethics were intended, from their first design and implementation in the 1990s by the ICF, to work with dynamics of the

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human coach intelligence and human coachee intelligence working alliance. These were not intended for AI to human coachee interactions or hybrid human coach and AI interactions with a coachee. The intelligence of AI had dynamics, risks and positive affordances that were very different from those encountered with human intelligence of a coach or coachee, so existing competencies and ethics for human-to-human exchanges could not just be assumed fit for purpose when embedded into AI Coaching apps or platforms (Rasool, 2025a).

The AICAS standard competencies and practices specifically differ from existing governing body core competencies and codes of ethics in many ways. A key difference is that the use of AI can be legally regulated in its application areas, with regulation varying significantly according to jurisdiction and issues it is applied to. Coaching governing body competencies and ethics are not legally binding yet typically have consistency across jurisdictions. As such a key change in how a coach will work with clients will come in how they contract the use of AI in their client agreement. Managing consent is not a one-time action. As the client issues change the use of AI may or may not be either appropriate or legally allowed so consent must be recontracted. In the event of a coach using AI, without sufficient safeguards, it could curate conversations that trigger trauma or psychological harm, and the coach may be sued by the client, for something which currently there is no insurance cover. If harm is sufficiently egregious, it may not just ruin the coach's reputation, it could taint the whole of Coaching as a discipline. If this happens frequently and in serious ways, some government's or jurisdictions may very well impose regulation on those practicing coaching and insist on licensing.

Naively, many AI Coach application providers thought having an AI that aligned to a governing body's established and existing human to human coaching competencies and ethics was an integrity selling point, failing to recognize the lack of congruence and fitness for AI augmented coaching. Coaches using such AIs had little awareness or consciousness of the lack of fitness or issues of congruence, between competencies designed for human-to-human coaching and how they did not automatically translate their fitness for human-AI working alliances.

For disciplines such as Therapy and Counselling, AI-like applications existed as far back as 1966, with the creation of 'Eliza' (Weizenbaum, 1966), a Carl Rogers psychotherapy approach based conversational application. In 1980, the author found a version of the Eliza program code and tried it out on a Commodore PET computer at school when he was aged 14. It is now available on the internet for people to have conversations with (Wallace, 1999). Since 2023 a new wave of AI Companionship, Therapy and Counselling applications have appeared, including those for which legal liabilities have arisen, such as the platforms Character (Bakir, 2025) and Replika (Pentina, 2023 and Laestadius, 2022).

Navigation, safeguarding and transformation routes through the Coaching-Therapy intersectional space were identified. Coach casework, ethical incidents, and regulatory analysis, centered on concerns around boundaries between coaching and therapy, as well as EU AI Act legislation and established coaching standards (ICF, EMCC, AC) were drawn on.

Ethically curated hybrid human-AI interactions can enhance coaching's impact. When coaching is grounded in Coaching 5.0 and AICAS frameworks then safe, AI-integrated coaching and supervision can be fostered.

AI has been used in coaching and therapy. If a client's emotions emerge, managing the boundary of coaching practice with therapy can become complex. AI can use empathy language in the session with the client but can't always sense signals of trauma, non-verbal signs. If AI can

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miss psychological nuances, it can be a risk and a liability, especially if the practitioner allows it to be used beyond the competency it was designed for.

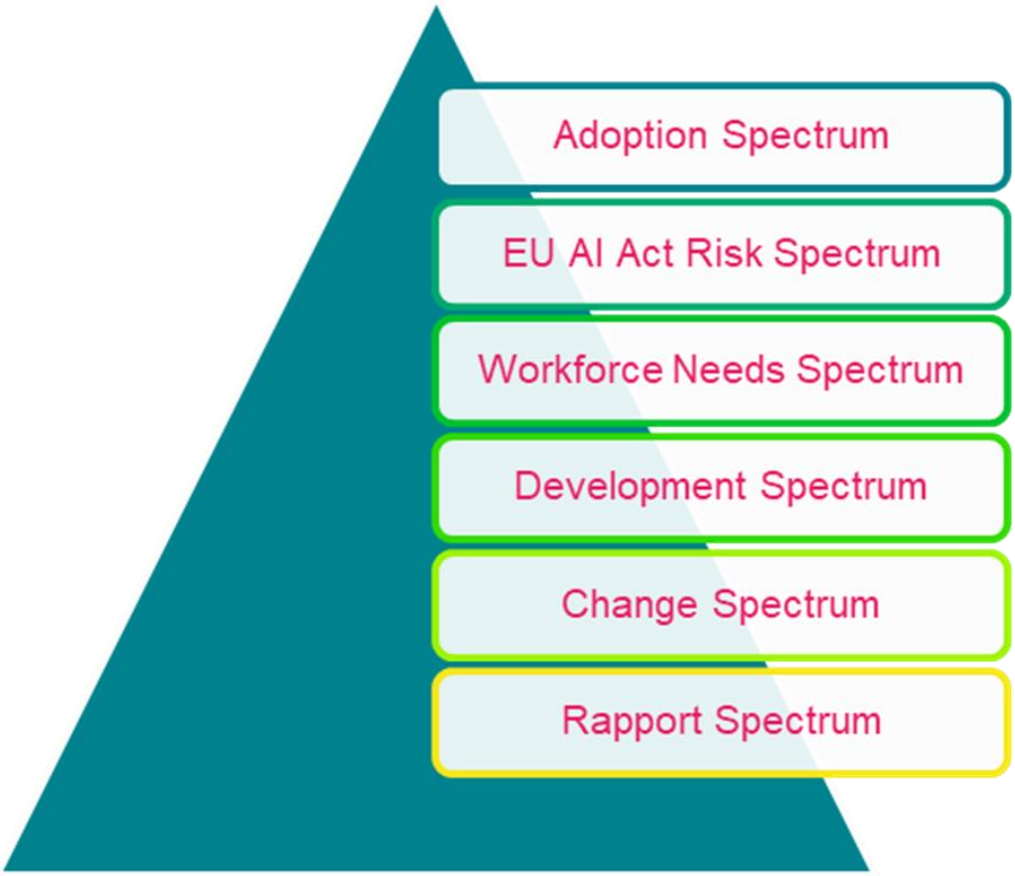
Past research is drawn upon, exploring reactions of coaches to AI (Diller, 2024b). Coaching agendas have evolved and critical reflections on trends were referenced (Bachkirova, 2024). This paper adds a new dimension to historical explorations as it flags the ethical and psychological risks that may arise when AI drifts into the zone between coaching and therapy territory, what this paper refers to as the 'grey zone'.

The grey zone can be entered through several characteristic 'spectrums' of coaching exchange shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. At the most fundamental level it can happen through a coach or AI cultivating *rapport* with a coachee, especially when beginning to elicit sympathy or empathy for their lived experience. Another characteristic it can emerge from is when coaching is no longer providing a transactional *change* or helping a client move through a transition, but migrates them into transformational change that triggers transpersonal or transcendental change. In-session *development* activities can centre on generating content for discussion, utilizing content for developing competencies and capabilities, or moving into capacity and consciousness grey zones. Such a hierarchy of contributory Coaching factors ultimately must answer to Industry 5.0 *workforce needs* and *EU AI Act Risk* factors that determine what kind of spectrum of adoption activities unfold for use of AI in coaching. These layers are depicted in the Hierarchy of AI Coaching Components in Figure 1 and more fully in the Spectrums of AI/Human Service in Figure 2.

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Figure 1

Hierarchy of AI Coaching Component Spectrums.



AI has been used in coaching and therapy. If a client's emotions emerge, managing the boundary of coaching practice with therapy can become complex. AI can use empathy language in the session with the client but can't always sense signals of trauma, non-verbal signs. If AI can miss psychological nuances, it can be a risk and a liability, especially if the practitioner allows it to be used beyond the competency it was designed for.

The Coaching 5.0 framework helps to navigate risks in these spectrums of coaching by how it integrates 5 components:

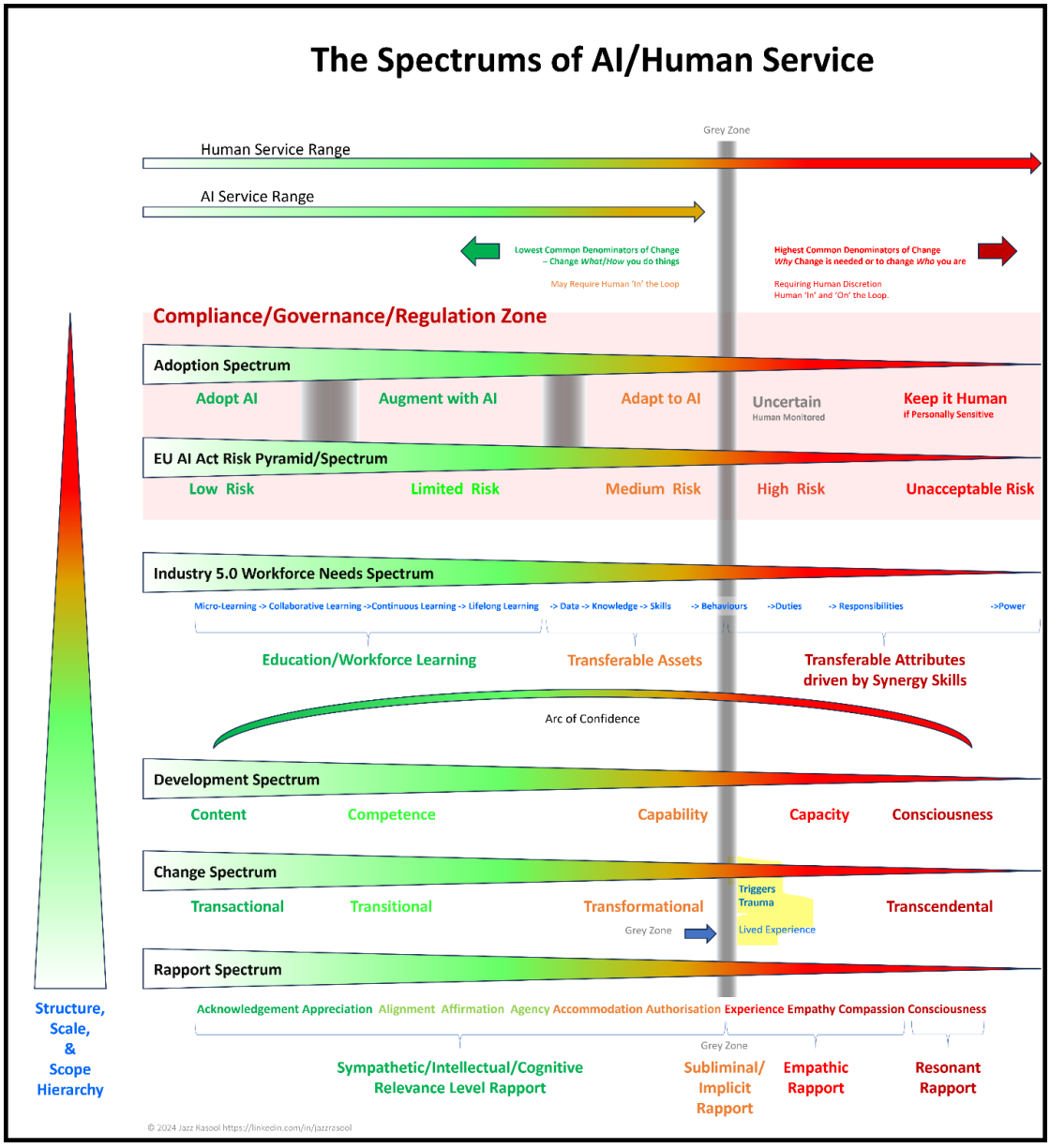
- The Spectrums of AI/Human Service
- The AI Coaching Alliance Standard (AICAS)
- The Human AI Coaching and Mentoring (HAICOM) Curriculum
- Intersectional People, Technology and Environmental Ecosystems
- Learning, Transferables and Synergy

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The Spectrums of AI/Human Service: AI affordances are mapped across spectrums of rapport, change, development, workforce needs and phases of adoption. The grey zone in these spectrums is clarified, with specific highlighting of issues like triggers and trauma related to self-identity.

Figure 2

The Spectrums of AI/Human Service



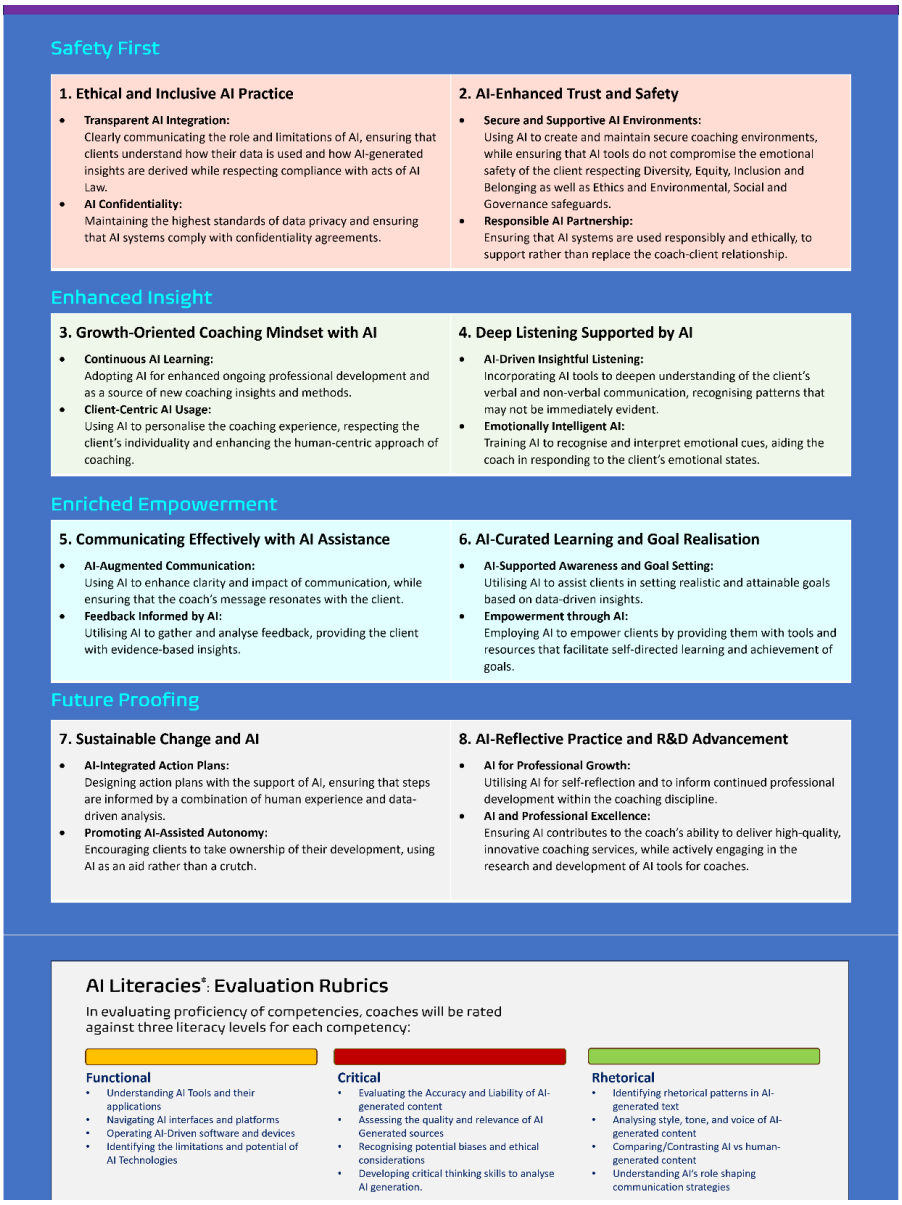
The AICAS Standard: Four Practice sets each of four competencies, making a 16-competency model ensures that coaching operates within ethical, legal, and psychological boundaries.

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Safeguards are specifically included to prevent interactions using AI from extending beyond the scope of coaching. AI Literacy Evaluation Rubrics assess AICAS competencies for demonstration of AI Literacy (Functional Skills), AI Fluency (Critical Skills) and AI Maturity (Rhetorical Skills).

Figure 3

AI Coaching Alliance Standard (AICAS)



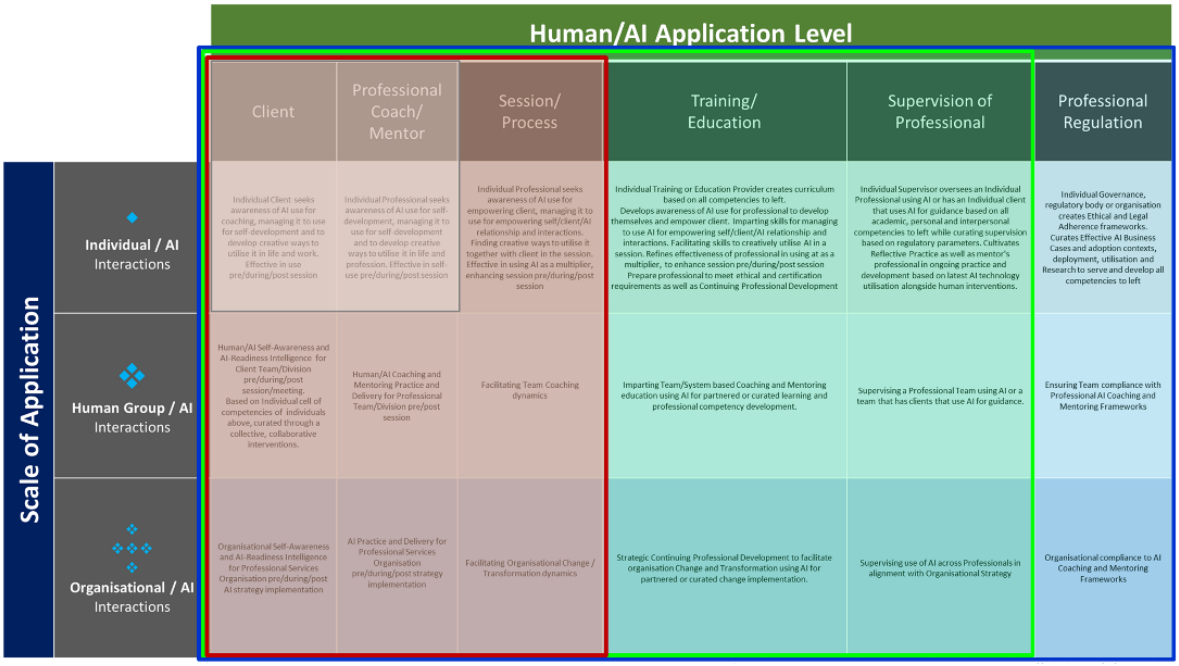
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HAICOM Curriculum: This model AI Coaching literacy, fluency and maturity curriculum has been designed for training coaches, educators, and supervisors to get clarity for navigating and managing boundary areas, with support through by reflective supervision as well as following paths of ethics for escalation.

HAICOM provides a phased four level learning curriculum that's scales competences for 1:1 to Group/Team AI Coaching all the way up to Organisational Level Interventions. It also covers scope of delivering AI Coaching competencies for clients, coaches, coach trainers, coach supervisors, as well as coach governance and regulation, shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Human AI Coaching and Mentoring Curriculum Competencies



The Coaching 5.0 framework is a systemic tool for hybrid intelligence use being made effective. It ensures clients are protected and coaches don't drift into therapy related risks.

Summary of Major Findings

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Four key findings were established:

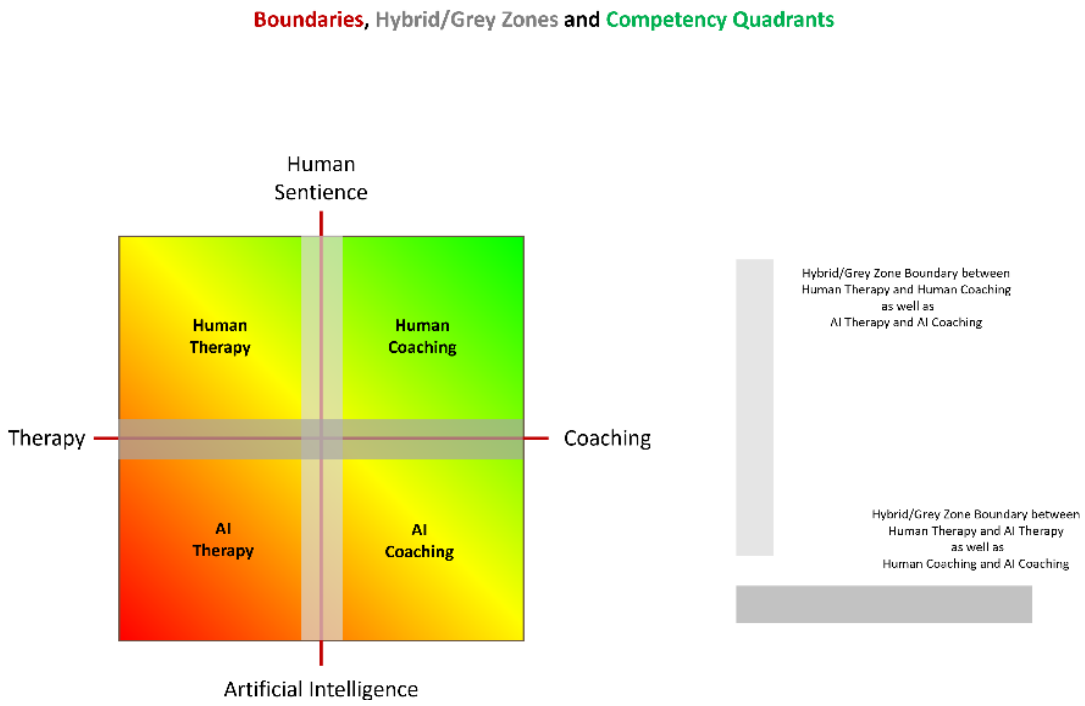
1. The Coaching Therapy Boundary Model
2. Regulatory Alignment
3. Tiered Integration Framework
4. Protocols for Supervision of Coaches in the Grey Zone

Each of these areas is now explored in the following sections.

Coaching-Therapy Boundary Model: Boundaries need to be managed between Human moderated Coaching and Therapy. They also need to be moderated between AI augmented or delivered forms of Coaching and Therapy. Lastly the Human Coaching and Therapy practices must have their boundaries managed with AI Coaching and Therapy practices. This creates four zones whose boundaries must be managed, illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Coaching-Therapy Boundary Model

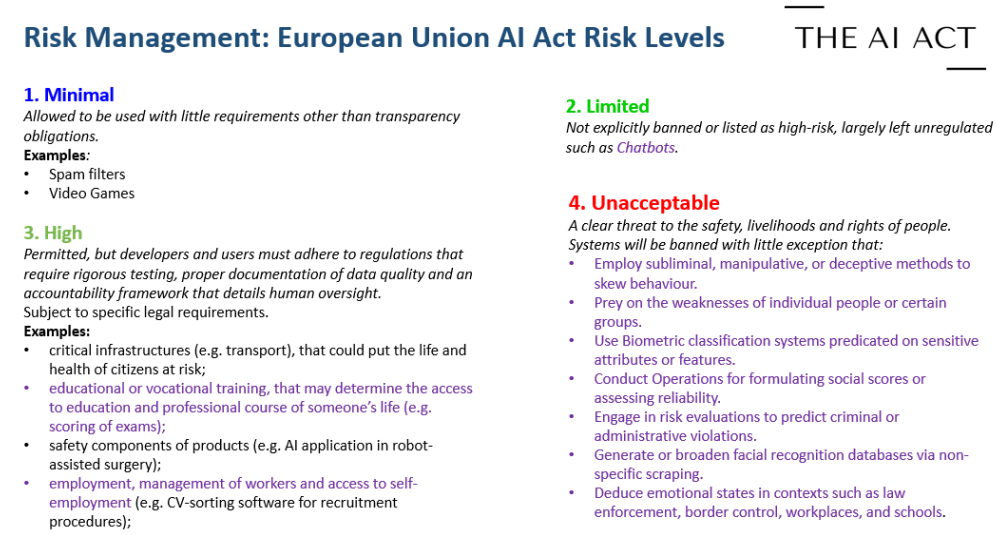


Regulatory Alignment: The AICA Standard has its competencies adapted to align to EU AI Act constraints. The Standard focuses on facilitating risk management, moderating consent of users and ensuring the AI is explainable in its processing, as well as clarifying limitations of where AI can act with autonomy. The Standard has practical methods that ensure coaches do not exceed their professional and legal remits. The EU AI Act defines four classes of risk, many of the issues

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in the Unacceptable and High-Risk classes are ones that coaches and their clients could be exposed to, highlighted in purple in Figure 6.

Figure 6
EU AI Act Risk Levels



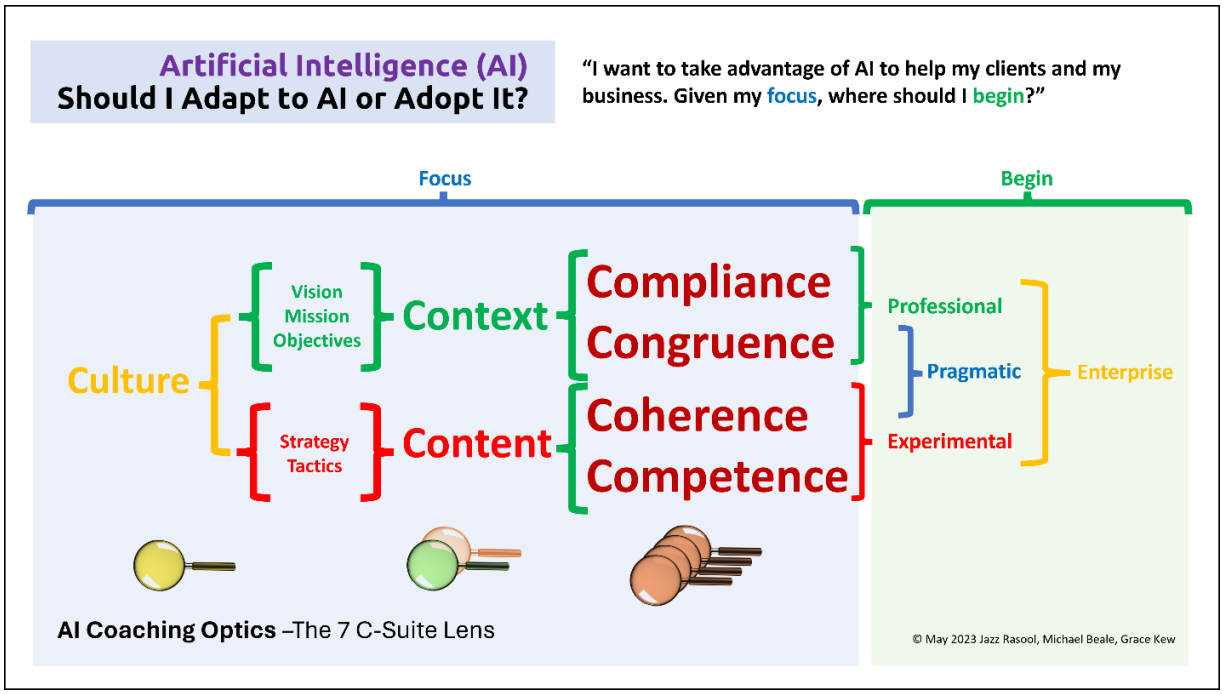
Tiered Integration Framework:

A high-level organisational view of how AI should be integrated by executives or those in board or 'C-Suite'roles such as CEO or CTO is given in Figure 7 (Rasool, 2024). To ensure the right reception and 'optics', adoption through consideration of seven lenses is suggested, something illustrated in the 7 C-Suite Lens map shown in Figure 7. How engagement with AI will *Begin*, is shown on the right of the diagram. This could be in an informal Experimental or formal Professional way, a middle, hybrid Pragmatic strategy, or the Enterprise route -one involving all approaches being worked with in parallel, perhaps collaboratively across different groups, teams or departments.

Professional deployment will focus first on legal *Compliance* and *Congruence* with company *Vision*, *Mission* or *Objectives* that align to company *Culture*. Only later is there specific rollout of *Coherence* fostered *Content* and *Competencies,* serving company *Strategy and Tactics* that also reinforce company *Culture.* *Experimental* routes focus on the reverse, immediate curation of competencies that generate coherent content only later focusing on compliance, congruence and context. *Pragmatic* routes follow informal use of AI together with some formal professional safeguards. *Enterprise* routes use all three, with Experimental teams providing a basis for Pragmatic deployment that is a precursor to formal Professional adoption.

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Figure 7.
The 7 C-Suite Lens



Of the four approaches coaches may begin with, for typical individual client sessions, informal use should be constrained by some formal scaffolding, so it is advised to take the Pragmatic route. The Pragmatic approach, illustrated in Figure 8, incrementally adopts AI into coaching exchanges though a four-step sequence.

Figure 8
Pragmatic Four-Phase incremental adoption of AI for Coaching

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1. AI-Informed

A coach will use a coaching process informed by AI metrics, observations and forecasts. All suggestions and coaching processes will be enacted and managed by the coach.

AI Informs Coach.
Coach creates Guidance Suggestions as a basis for Client Dialogue.

2. AI-Guided

A coach will use a process that will utilise suggestions from an AI informed by AI metrics and observations and forecasts.

AI Informs and offers Guidance Suggestions to Coach.
Coach Filters Suggestions as a basis for Client Dialogue.

3. AI-Delivered, Supervised

A coaching process will be delivered by an AI Coach Agent informed by AI metrics, observations and forecasts but will be moderated, overseen and supervised by a human coach.

AI Informs and offers Guidance Suggestions directly to client.
Coach Moderates Suggestions and adapts if needed

4. AI-Delivered, Unsupervised

A coaching process will be delivered by an AI Coach Agent informed by AI metrics, observations and forecasts but will be not be moderated, overseen and supervised by a human coach.

Constraints and triggers will be put in place to ensure the AI Coach Agent autonomously manages boundaries. If a potential violation is likely because uncertainty thresholds have been exceeded, a human coach will be requested to intervene before proceeding further.

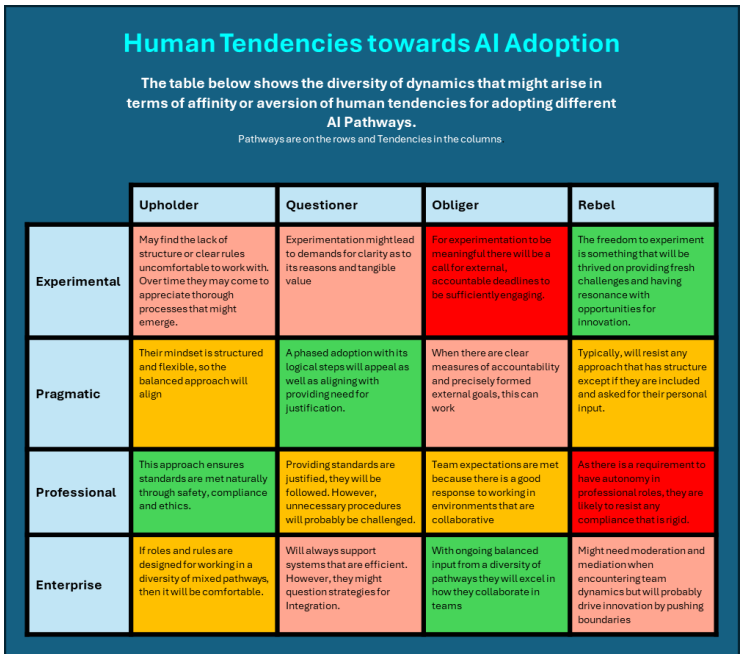
AI Informs and offers Guidance Suggestions directly to client.
Coach only intervenes if coaching boundaries might be broken.

Protocols for Supervision of Coaches in the Grey Zone: Protocols and practices manage experiences for practices that drift into the grey zone with a vulnerable client.

The *Human Tendencies towards AI Adoption in* Figure 9 need to be considered before using an AI with a client. Typically, clients or coaches who have *Rebel* tendencies will probably take an Experimental route of AI Adoption, *Questioners* will take a Pragmatic route, *Upholders* the Professional route and *Obligers* the Enterprise route.

Figure 9

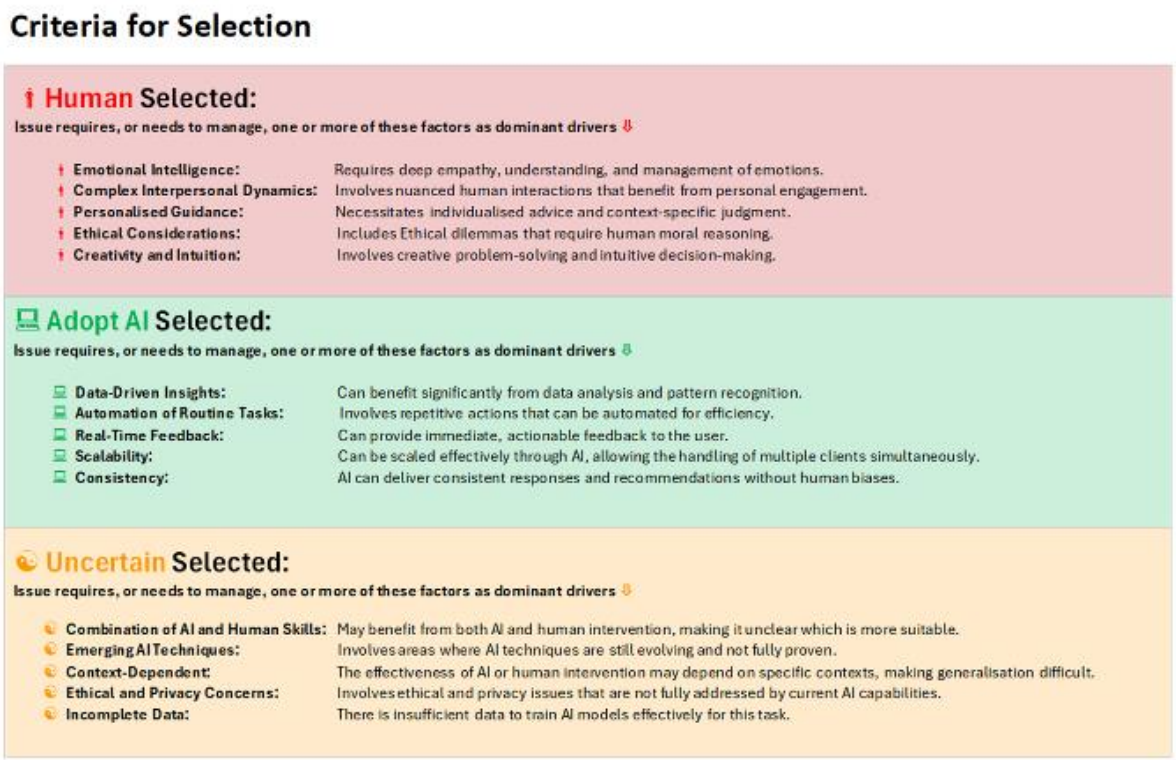
Human Tendencies towards AI Adoption



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The criteria in Figure 10 were used to determine whether a client's presented issue was suitable for addressing through the use of AI (AI Selected), whether AI could be used but with human oversight (Uncertain Selected), or whether the issue should be addressed only by a human coach (Human Selected).

Figure 10
Criteria for adopting Human Coach only intervention, Adopt AI for standalone Coaching, or in Uncertain circumstances use AI only with human supervision or oversight.



The three criteria in Figure 10 were used to assign the most suitable type of coaching to the Top 40 client issues brought to coaching sessions as revealed in research by Bachkirova (2024), shown in Figure 11.

The Top 40 issues were looked at from the perspective or optics of the 7 C-Suite Lens. For example, where an issue was primarily dependent on Context or related to a factor of Compliance like Ethics, such as the first listed issue of Managing People, a Professional use of AI, it would be *Uncertain* whether AI would be appropriate, so such issues were grouped under that rubric. So, two factors of the Managing People presented issue, it being Context-Dependent, and it having Ethical or Privacy Concerns, would result in it being classified Uncertain for AI use.

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Figure 11

Top 40 issues brought by clients to Coaching and their suitability for AI augmentation.

First Coaching Session Issues -Use Human Coach, AI or Uncertain?

Rank	First Coaching Session Presented Issue	Keep it Human A Human Coach is best	Adopt AI A good candidate for AI augmented Coaching	Uncertain AI can be used but there are risks and caveats that require human oversight	Explanation Explain why the criteria given were selected (See details of Human, AI and Uncertain selection factors at bottom of table)
1	Managing people			✓	Requires both strategic insights and human intuition.
2	Developing presence and impact	✓			Involves personal charisma and emotional intelligence.
3	Confidence		✓		AI can provide data-driven feedback and exercises.
4	Effective communication		✓		AI can analyse and suggest improvements in communication.
5	Being strategic			✓	Needs a mix of data analysis and contextual understanding.
6	Organisational culture and expectations	✓			Deep understanding of human dynamics and cultural nuances.
7	Career planning		✓		AI can analyse career data and predict trends.
8	Exploring personal history, psychology and triggers	✓			Requires deep empathy and personal interaction.
9	Managing stakeholders			✓	Combines strategic planning and relationship management.
10	Developing others	✓			Needs human mentorship and personalised feedback.
11	Time management		✓		AI can optimise schedules and prioritise tasks.
12	Understanding the big picture			✓	Requires holistic thinking and strategic foresight.
13	Relationship challenges	✓			Involves complex emotional and interpersonal dynamics.
14	Change management			✓	Needs a blend of strategic insight and human touch.
15	Demands of a new job role			✓	Requires contextual adaptation and personal guidance.
16	Emotions	✓			Needs empathy and emotional support.
17	Self-care and burnout	✓			Requires personal understanding and human empathy.
18	Understanding self/identity	✓			Deeply personal and requires human insight.
19	Preparing for promotions		✓		AI can help with skill development and readiness.
20	Understanding context and situation			✓	Needs situational awareness and strategic insight.
21	Delegating		✓		AI can provide strategies and track delegation efficiency.
22	Processing feedback and psychometrics		✓		AI can analyse data and provide objective feedback.
23	Developing skills and behaviours		✓		AI can suggest targeted skill-building exercises.
24	Personal development planning		✓		AI can create personalised development plans based on data.
25	Difficult situations	✓			Requires nuanced understanding and personal touch.
26	Motivation and drives	✓			Involves personal and emotional factors.
27	Personal growth	✓			Needs deep personal reflection and human support.
28	Fit between role and self	✓			Requires personal understanding and guidance.
29	Identifying strengths and resources		✓		AI can assess and highlight individual strengths.
30	Work-life balance	✓			Requires personal insights and empathy.
31	Personal branding		✓		AI can provide data-driven branding strategies.
32	Preparing for specific events		✓		AI can simulate scenarios and provide practice.
33	Personal well-being	✓			Needs personal understanding and emotional support.
34	Specific decision-making		✓		AI can provide data-driven decision support.
35	Uncertainty and change			✓	Needs adaptive strategies and human judgment.
36	Sense of wider purpose	✓			Requires deep personal reflection and existential understanding.
37	Values and integrity	✓			Deeply personal and ethical considerations.
38	Building resilience	✓			Needs personal insights and human encouragement.
39	Networking	✓			Involves personal interactions and relationship building.
40	Celebrating success	✓			Personal touch and empathy in recognition and celebration.

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The insights that this paper provides can empower practitioners to deliver hybrid Human/AI interventions in a responsible yet innovative way—avoiding risks of overstepping their remit in concert with providing proven value.

Conclusions

In an age of increasing AI use, practitioners must be discerning in concert with being innovative. Coaches whose practice inadvertently starts to exhibit drift into therapy space, 'therapeutic drift', especially into the 'grey zone' mapped on the Spectrums of AI/Human Service chart, must tread carefully, especially when clients start to use AI in unsupervised ways and as an imperative with client issues that are emotionally complex.

The Coaching 5.0 framework and AICA Standard provide safety and tools to address grey zone navigation. The territories mapped by the Spectrums of Coaching make clear where boundaries are between Coaching and Therapy. Supervision tools as well as escalation protocols and referral mitigate grey zone risks. For tutors and trainers, the design of HAICOM-based curriculums ensures real practice is progressed with AI literacy and fluency that is ethical yet psychologically safe.

The author recommends:

- Comprehensive training for practitioners on the risks of grey zone interactions and interventions, especially when using AI to enhance sessions.
- Using the 7 C-Suite Lens to determine a strategic route of AI adoption -Experimental, Pragmatic, Professional or Enterprise.
- Select the right priority of lenses to ensure cultural engagement through the existing tendencies an individual client has or associated functions, teams or departments.
- AICAS practices and competencies are aligned to in coaching contracts and design of AI systems used for coaching, mentoring and therapy.
- Coaches regularly undergo reflective supervision when practicing in the AI-Delivered or higher zones.
- Governing bodies collaborate to encode and enforce legal compliance and provide clarity about the scope and remit practitioners practice within.

AI's integration with human coaching must be symbiotic and respect psychological, ethical, and human boundaries that exist in coaching, mentoring and therapy. AICAS is a set of competencies independent of major governing body core competencies yet respects their appropriateness. It recognises that AI forms of coaching do not engage organic human-human relationships but hybrid human-AI dynamics that work with a very different fabricated form of artificial intelligence operating through a very different coaching psychology than what underpins traditional human-human coaching.

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The alignment of AICAS also to emerging Fifth Industrial Revolution workforces and workplaces means, if adopted and embodied, will ready coaches for future organisational environments where human and machine intelligence must be harmonised for sustained wellbeing, flourishing, productivity, performance, profit and minimised climate impact. The result will not just be an advancing of Humanity as a whole, it will evolve coaches beyond being practitioners, to becoming professionals and for coaching as a discipline to be more widely considered a profession.

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Who Has Your Back at Work? Coaching for Resilience Using Attachment Science in the Age of AI

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Abstract: As AI begins to reshape leadership and work, the need to understand what truly drives human performance and resilience becomes more urgent. This paper explores the relational roots of burnout through the lens of attachment theory. Drawing from a realist evaluation of an attachment-based intervention, it presents a coaching model grounded in relational science—and offers practical guidance for designing AI and coaching solutions that strengthen relational health and performance at work.

Keywords: Executive Coaching, Attachment, AI

Introduction

In an era where AI is not only automating tasks but also influencing how feedback is given, decisions are made, and leadership is experienced, understanding what humans need from leaders and work becomes more urgent. A 2023 global study found that 60% of workers identified their job as the most significant factor in their mental health, with 69% saying their manager affected their well-being as much as a spouse or partner (Eckert, 2023).

This paper examines how relational patterns—often invisible but deeply felt—shape well-being, performance, and emotional resilience at work. Drawing on attachment theory, it highlights how our lifelong strategies for seeking support, managing emotion, and navigating trust show up in professional settings. The rise of AI in the workplace intensifies these dynamics. As intelligent systems step into roles once held exclusively by humans—collaborators, team members, even managers—organizations are being asked to rethink the structure and function of relationships at work.

This paper integrates insights from three streams of research: (1) the literature on attachment and work-related distress, (2) a realist-informed evaluation of an attachment-based therapy, Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT), as an intervention for workplace burnout and distress, and (3) emerging research on AI's potential and limitations in leadership, and it's impacts. From these findings, it proposes an attachment-informed coaching model—one that helps clients understand the more relational roots of their professional challenges and develop new patterns that support growth. It also offers practical guidance for coaches navigating the integration of AI into workplace relationships, encouraging a relational lens to evaluate whether AI tools are fostering trust and performance—or inadvertently contributing to disconnection and burnout.

Methodology

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To empirically investigate the relationship between attachment and work, as well as potential interventions for work-related distress, this paper pulled from two literature reviews and a mixed-methods study that was a realist evaluation of attachment-based Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT). EFIT is an emerging individual modality that helps clients access and reprocess primary emotional experiences that underlie persistent distress (Brubacher, 2017) —many of which are triggered in the workplace and may originate there or elsewhere. A realist evaluation approach was selected as the methodology because of its strength in evaluating complex interventions. Rather than simply asking, "Does it work?", realist evaluation investigates how and why something works, for whom, and in what context (Pawson, 2013).

The literature reviews and realist evaluation study of EFIT was conducted by Devon McConnell, an executive coach, psychotherapist, and doctoral researcher. Ten participants—working professionals experiencing work-related distress—were recruited in California and received twelve weekly EFIT sessions online for the realist evaluation. A mixed-methods design captured both internal and behavioral shifts. Qualitative data included therapy session transcripts, final interviews, and clinician reflections. Quantitative data included validated assessments (measuring stress, burnout, anxiety, attachment, workplace engagement, and more), post-session surveys, and physiological data through heart rate monitoring. Thematic coding revealed patterns across cases, including the role of coherent emotional narratives, emotional risk-taking, and revised internal working models in supporting change.

To ensure rigor despite the small sample size, the study followed the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016), which holds that a smaller sample is sufficient when the study has a clear aim, a specific and relevant sample, strong theoretical grounding, high-quality data, and in-depth analysis. This design allowed for rich, individualized insights that are especially relevant to relational interventions.

The study adhered to *RAMESES II* guidelines for realist evaluation (Wong G, 2017), ensuring methodological transparency and integrity. Participants gave informed consent, confidentiality was maintained through HIPAA-compliant systems, and distress was monitored throughout. The study was approved by University of Oxford (OxTrec) and by BRANY, a US-based ethics review board, in November 2023.

Though this was a study conducted in a psychotherapy setting, the EFIT model and topics of conversation were appropriate for coaches, offering an opportunity to evolve the insights into a coaching model. While coaches are not trained to treat clinical issues, they are increasingly called upon to support clients through emotional and relational challenges at work. With clear boundaries and proper training, coaches can appropriately explore these dynamics within their scope of practice, using relational-emotional interventions like those adapted from EFIT.

Theoretical Framework/Literature Review

Workplace well-being is increasingly recognized as essential for both employee health and organizational performance. In one study, 40% of senior managers reported considering leaving their roles due to work-related distress (Eckert, 2023). While many workplace factors influence work well-being and performance — such as communication quality, job security, and growth

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opportunities (MindSharePartners, 2023) - recent literature points to the role of attachment theory in explaining relational contributors to distress (Harms, 2011; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015; Yip et al., 2018).

As AI becomes more embedded in management and communication, traditional relational anchors like managers are being redefined—or replaced. This shift raises questions about how core human needs are met at work. Attachment theory offers a potential lens to examine whether emerging technologies are supporting or eroding the relationships that underpin trust, safety, and performance.

Attachment Theory Overview

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby, describes a biologically-based behavioral system in which humans seek proximity to supportive figures during stress (Bowlby, 1969 / 1982). These attachment figures provide both a "safe haven" for comfort and a "secure base" from which to explore (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Yip et al., 2018). The perceived availability of such figures leads to a sense of felt security and greater autonomy—a dynamic known as the dependency paradox – the more secure we feel depending on key others around us, the more autonomous we become (Yip et al., 2018).

Attachment strategies develop early through relationships with caregivers and form internal working models—expectations about the self and others in relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Yip et al., 2018). These strategies, or styles, can be secure, anxious, or avoidant. Anxiously attached individuals seek constant reassurance; avoidant individuals emphasize self-reliance and distrust support (Brubacher, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015; Wiebe & Johnson, 2017). Securely attached individuals tend to view others as trustworthy and themselves as worthy of care (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Pines, 2004).

Secure attachment is associated with emotional stability, resilience, effective coping, and reduced burnout (Albert et al., 2015; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015; Simmons et al., 2009; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). In contrast, insecure attachment correlates with anxiety, depression, PTSD, addiction, and emotion regulation challenges (Brubacher, 2017; Conroy, 2022; Ein-Dor & Doron, 2015; Greenman & Johnson, 2022; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Workplace Relevance

Attachment theory has increasingly been applied to the workplace (Albert et al., 2015; Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Like personal life, work requires exploration and risk-taking. A secure relational environment enables this by fulfilling attachment needs (Brubacher, 2017; Hardy & Barkham, 1994). This dynamic is especially critical in leadership relationships, where the manager can function as an attachment figure (Mayseless, 2010).

Secure attachment has been linked to job satisfaction, performance, and lower turnover intent (Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015; Yip et al., 2018). Insecure attachment predicts poorer relationships, negative perceptions of fairness, and reduced

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innovation behaviors (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2009). When leaders are perceived as security providers, team performance improves, especially when follower separation distress is low (Lisá & Greškovičová, 2022; Molero et al., 2019).

Insecure attachment is strongly correlated with burnout (Icekson et al., 2024; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015; Reizer, 2019; Warnock et al., 2024), while secure attachment predicts lower stress and better resilience (Johnstone & Feeney, 2015; Simmons et al., 2009). Insecure attachment is also linked to maladaptive emotion regulation strategies like emotional suppression and performative behaviors—both associated with higher stress, reduced well-being, and increased turnover (Kafetsios et al., 2014; Lopez & Ramos, 2016; Richards & Schat, 2011).

The Role of Leaders

Leaders shape the emotional climate of work. Managers can act as a safe haven in which to turn in moments of stress, and a secure base from where to take risks (Hinojosa et al., 2020; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Leadership style and availability during stress influence employee performance and well-being (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2012; Wu, 2017). Repeated exposure to responsive leadership can revise employees' attachment style and foster secure attachment—even in previously insecurely attached individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017; Popper & Mayseless, 2003).

Attachment at work in the AI Age

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into core functions of management—such as performance feedback, scheduling, hiring, and even team communication—it is reshaping the relational architecture of work. Attachment theory can provide insight into human-AI relationships (Abositta et al., 2024).

AI as an attachment disrupter

Traditional attachment figures in the workplace, such as direct managers or mentors, are being supplemented or, in some cases, replaced by algorithmic systems that may lack emotional nuance (Bucher et al., 2021; Lee, 2018). While AI can improve efficiency and consistency, it can fail to meet employees' core relational needs (Gagné et al., 2022; Liu & Liu, 2025). This gap raises critical questions about how psychological safety and trust are maintained in environments where the "relational other" may be a bot or dashboard, not a human leader. The risk is not simply impersonal communication—it could be relational deprivation at scale (Gagné et al., 2022).

AI as an attachment support

Emerging research suggests that people can form attachment-like bonds with AI systems, especially when those systems build trust (Arslan et al., 2022). However, these bonds may be limited in depth, and they can exacerbate distress if users feel surveilled, misunderstood, or emotionally unmet (Bucher et al., 2021). The challenge is not to reject AI, but to design and implement it with awareness of how human attachment systems function – for instance, AI can

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be designed to mitigate stressful or demotivating obstacles like performance reviews and negative feedback (Florea & Croitoru, 2025; Parent-Rocheleau et al., 2024; Röttgen et al., 2024). As AI continues to displace key relational functions at work, coaches and leaders can play the role of intentional stewards of emotional connection—ensuring that secure bases and safe havens still exist, whether through human relationships, AI-enabled systems, or a hybrid of both. Attachment theory offers a lens for assessing and shaping this new relational terrain.

Summary of Major Findings

This section presents key findings from a realist evaluation of EFIT for work-related distress. While participants initially reported symptoms like burnout or anxiety, deeper attachment-related challenges in workplace relationships emerged as core drivers of distress.

1. Relational Roots of Workplace Distress

The study confirmed that work-related distress may be driven by unresolved relational dynamics, validating the literature review on the relevance of attachment in the workplace. Nine of the ten participants discovered that their symptoms were sustained by ongoing relational conflicts, most often with supervisors. Participants described feeling abused, unsure of where they stood, or undervalued. In some cases, they carried narratives of not being "good enough," struggling to articulate their needs, feeling something is “wrong with (them),” or people-pleasing behaviors maintain approval.

2. Measurable Shifts for clients

Over the course of the twelve-sessions, nine of the ten participants progressed through the three stages of EFIT (Stabilization, Restructuring, and Consolidation). Participants began to articulate and explore their emotional patterns, experience corrective emotional moments, and integrate new emotional narratives into their everyday lives. While sessions were not positioned as a "cure," by the final sessions, most participants reported a notable shift in how they experienced work and themselves. Participants described this shift in various ways: “I have more agency,” “I’m less consumed by the same thoughts,” and “I feel calmer, even when the situation hasn’t changed.”

3. What may have helped outcomes for participants

Participants were asked in their final session interviews to reflect on what they believed led to their progress. Four themes emerged:

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a. A New Narrative: Five out of ten participants shared that learning about attachment theory, identifying relational cycles, and making sense of old patterns reduced shame and increased clarity.
b. Emotionally Corrective Moments: Eight of the ten participants described an emotionally significant turning point where they shared a difficult truth—either with a part of themselves, an imagined other, or with the practitioner—and received validation, acceptance, or clarity.
c. Space to Talk: Seven participants emphasized how valuable it was simply to have dedicated space to talk about work and its emotional impact.
d. The Relationship with Practitioner: Three participants specifically mentioned the relational quality of sessions as key to their progress - feeling seen, remembered, and understood in ways that created emotional safety and trust.

4. Techniques That Helped Overcome Obstacles

It was often difficult for participants to share vulnerable emotions when discussing work leading to obstacles to their progress, such as hyperarousal (panic, overwhelm, crying) and hyperarousal (emotional detachment and numbing). Specific coaching and therapeutic micro-interventions helped participants overcome resistance:

- Imagery and parts work to name and normalize internal experiences
- Reframing tools like the Karpman Drama Triangle to shift narratives
- Evocative questions to surface deeper meaning
- Verbal affirmations to challenge shame and reinforce self-worth

These tools can be readily adapted by coaches to support clients through emotional or cognitive blocks related to performance, conflict, or burnout.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research sheds light on a key driver of work-related distress: the need for someone to be a safe haven in times of stress and a secure base from which to take risks—often a figure like a boss. While clients often present with burnout, anxiety, or frustration, these symptoms may mask deeper relational wounds shaped by lack of trust in key relationships at work.

The realist evaluation of attachment-based EFIT showed that when individuals are given space to explore these patterns—especially through the lens of attachment—they can experience emotional and behavioral shifts that restore momentum toward their goals. Participants gained clarity and agency not through insight alone, but by experiencing a different kind of relationship in session: one marked by emotional safety, validation, and trust. These corrective experiences reshaped internal narratives and relational strategies, with ripple effects in the workplace—stronger boundaries, clearer communication, and reduced reactivity.

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For coaches, the findings highlight a challenge and an opportunity: to recognize when surface-level stated goals or challenges actually reflect deeper relational dynamics, and to adapt techniques—like parts work—to support desired change.

Further, as AI increasingly mediates feedback and support at work, it risks deepening disconnection if not implemented with relational intelligence. Coaches and leaders must now design for trust — whether delivered by humans or systems. Secure relationships, human or artificial, remain foundational to well-being and performance.

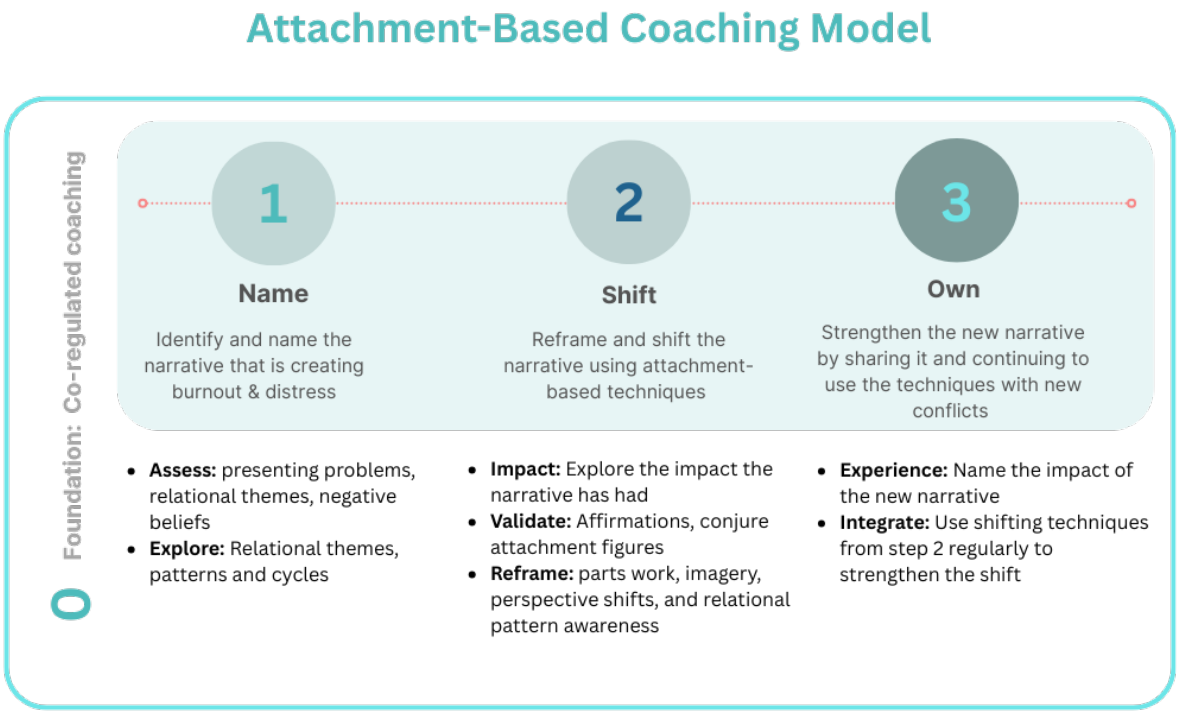
Recommendations and Implications for Coaching Practice

A. Proposed Attachment-Based Coaching Framework

Based on the study findings, a potential coaching model emerged—one that parallels the emotional journey participants underwent in the realist evaluation with EFIT, but is designed for use in coaching engagements. This framework helps clients surface the patterns driving their workplace struggles, then build a new internal narrative that may promote agency and confidence. The model involves three practical phases: Name it, Shift it, Own it.

Figure 1

Proposed Attachment-Based Coaching Model



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The coaching stance in these sessions mirrors the therapist's role in EFIT: an emotionally attuned facilitator who offers co-regulation, validation and structure. This model is suited to clients navigating relational conflict with their boss or others, burnout, imposter syndrome, or other distress that is standing in the way of them reaching their coaching goals. Coaches should refer clients to a therapist when it becomes clear that the challenges they are experiencing are more historic in nature (e.g. childhood trauma) or if their distress is impacting their functioning (e.g. insomnia, addiction, self-destructive acts) or concerns are escalating in risk level (e.g. suicidal ideation).

B. Effectively integrating AI into the relational architecture

As AI becomes embedded in organizational life, a new kind of relational architecture is emerging—one that includes not only human-to-human interactions, but also human-to-machine dynamics. This shift adds a critical layer to how we understand and design workplace relationships: Which dynamics energize collaboration, performance, and well-being—and which ones drain, confuse, or destabilize people?

AI can support relational health by:

- Offering clear, unbiased feedback (Florea & Croitoru, 2025), potentially reducing the harm caused by conflict-avoidant or inconsistent managers
- Automating performance reviews to improve transparency, reduce ambiguity, and create predictable structures (Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022)
- Acting as a supportive digital companion that offers real-time coaching nudges or thought partnership (Quaquebeke & Gerpott, 2023)
- Analyzing emotional tone in team communication to surface hidden dynamics and guide cultural interventions (Quaquebeke & Gerpott, 2023)

In these ways, AI has the potential to reduce emotional friction and relational confusion—two major contributors to workplace burnout, disengagement, and turnover.

However, AI is not a substitute for emotionally intelligent leadership. It cannot fully replace the nuance, presence, and secure base provided by a trusted human leader. Instead, AI functions as a relational amplifier or supplement—either reinforcing healthy dynamics or magnifying dysfunction, depending on how it is integrated.

The Coaching Opportunity

To guide clients through this transition, coaches can adopt a relational lens for evaluating AI's workplace impact—one that moves beyond productivity or efficiency and asks: Is AI being integrated in a way that strengthens trust and connection—or one that adds hidden emotional costs and relational friction?

Practical coaching strategies include:

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- Invite reflection on the impact of relational performance**:** Educate clients and leaders on the importance of relational performance, not just individual outputs. This may include using assessments that capture the impact of relationships—such as the Leader as a Security Provider Scale (LSPS) *(Molero et al., 2019)*.
- Guide a relational audit of key human and AI interactions**:** Help clients audit key relationships (human and machine) for clarity, responsiveness, and trust. Are employees getting consistent feedback? Are they avoiding important conversations? Are there ways AI can aid feedback or other important and hard conversations?
- Invite reflection on AI's current relational role**:** Ask the client where AI is already showing up in their workflow (e.g., giving feedback, managing tasks, offering structure) and explore whether these systems support or undermine trust, clarity, and motivation.
- Treat AI as a relationship, not just a tool**:** Guide the client to think of AI as a relational actor in the workplace. If AI is now part of the relational fabric at work, what kind of relationship do you want it to be—and how do you want others to experience it?"

By examining how relationships—human and artificial—shape individual and organizational outcomes, coaches and clients can make more informed, strategic choices about how they work, lead, and adapt. Integrating this relational lens, grounded in attachment theory, can enable coaching to serve not only individual development, but also the broader understanding of effective work relationships and leadership AI-mediated era.

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Why coaches need to move from expert to experience-enriched coaching in an era of Hybrid Intelligence?

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Abstract

In the context of Hybrid Intelligence, this paper advocates for a shift toward more human and egalitarian coaching relationships, where the coach's lived experiences are acknowledged as unique contributions to the coachee's learning journey. This approach that embraces more of the self-disclosure from coach side is termed as "experience-enriched coaching" and introduces a three-steps DER model: discover, explore and reflect that equips coaches with the capacity to demonstrate this approach.

Keywords

Coaching, AI, human connection, self-disclosure, experienced-enriched coaching

Introduction

Although coaching is often defined as a collaborative and equal partnership, coaches frequently adopt an expert role—facilitating the conversation, guiding the process with technical precision, applying models, interpreting assessments, and so on. This emphasis on technical proficiency is deeply embedded in coach training and certification programs and highly valued by coaching companies.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) capable of performing many cognitive coaching tasks, a key question arises: what remains uniquely human in coaching? This paper argues that it is the ability to create deep human connection—the foundation of high-impact coaching. Such connection is often rooted in vulnerability which allows individuals to share their personal stories and experiences. However, coaches usually limit personal disclosure, rarely sharing their own life stories. Drawing on Social Penetration Theory (SPT) and Social Comparison Theory (SCT), this paper argues that appropriate coach self-disclosure can dissolve hierarchy, foster mutual vulnerability, and unlock deeper client insight. In an era of Hybrid Intelligence, where the complementary strengths of human cognition and artificial intelligence converge to achieve outcomes unattainable by either alone, it is the depth of relational engagement that will ultimately determine the impact of coaching.

Methodology

This paper focuses on four main areas: The rise of coach as the expert-model, AI's augmentation in coaching, coaching as a human connection and the power of self-disclosure in connection building. It applies the qualitative method of integrated literature review, and this literature review has included journals and books in the above-mentioned areas. This study initially examines how attempts to regulate the coaching profession have influenced coaches to prioritize technical competencies and adopt a more expert-driven role. The study then investigates AI's growing influence particularly within psychology, psychotherapy, and coaching. Given AI's convincing success on cognitive tasks, the paper questions what remains uniquely human in coaching and identifies human connection as its core element. It subsequently explores the concept of self-disclosure—an underutilized yet potentially transformative practice for deepening human connection. Finally, building on the insights derived from the research, the paper introduces the three-step DER Model—discover, explore,

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and reflect—which provides coaches with guidance on how to recognize, expand, and effectively disclose their personal experiences within the coaching process.

Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

Areas of Literature Review

Most of the literature was identified through the University of Vienna's online platform and Google Scholar, with sources selected primarily on the basis of peer-reviewed status and theoretical relevance. Some of the articles dealing with the concept of the rise of the coach as expert model reviewed are Jonathan Passmore and Woody Woodward's (2023) *Coaching education: Wake up to the new digital and AI coaching revolution!*, Peter Bluckert's (2004) *The state of play in corporate coaching: current and future trends* and (2005) *Critical factors in executive coaching – the coaching relationship*. Regarding the question of how AI can support coaching, the extensive number of articles have been reviewed and analyzed. Major ones are Thomas Bolender's (2019) *Human vs machine intelligence: How they differ and what this implies for our future society*, Mirza Jahanzeb Beg, Mohit Verma, Vishvak Chanthar K.M.M, & Manish Kumar Verma's (2024) *Artificial Intelligence for Psychotherapy: A Review of the Current State and Future Directions*, and Tatiana Bachkirova and Rob Kemp's (2024) *AI coaching': democratizing coaching service or offering an ersatz?*

As a next step, the books and articles dealing with the concept of coaching as a human connection have been reviewed and analyzed. Major ones are Carl Rogers's (1967) *on Becoming a Person*, Dorian Jose Braun's (2022) *Deep Connection in Coaching* and Peter Bluckert's (2005) *Critical factors in executive coaching – the coaching relationship*.

In a further step, the following articles were reviewed to investigate the question of why and how coaches should integrate more of their personal experiences and stories into their coaching: Irwin Altman & Dalmas A. Taylor's (1973) *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships,* Irwin Altman's (1973). *Reciprocity of Interpersonal Exchange,* and Leon Festinger's (1954) *a Theory of Social Comparison Process*.

Conceptual Framework

Major components:

Rise of the coach as expert model. Coaching has become one of the fastest-growing professional fields (Stout-Rostron, 2011), driven by organizations seeking effective ways to support employees in meeting complex challenges (Bluckert, 2005; Terblance, 2020; Terblanche, N., Molyn, J., de Haan, E., & Nilsson, V. O., 2022). This growth has created a highly attractive market for both practitioners and coaching companies (Bluckert, 2005; Hargrove, 2008). In response, education and certification programs have sought to regulate the field through standards and accreditation (Passmore & Woodward, 2023). These efforts have reinforced a skills-based orientation, with many programs limiting curricula to "prescribed competencies and a single model" (Passmore & Woodward, 2023). While such prescriptions provide clarity and structure, they also illustrate how standardization tends to privilege measurable technical skills, often at the expense of the relational and experiential dimensions that are equally vital to transformative coaching.

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This emphasis on standardization not only shapes how coaching is practiced but also how it is evaluated and valued in the marketplace. Even coaching companies and client organizations also rely on such credentials when selecting practitioners, reinforcing the professionalization of coaching through mostly technical and quantifiable skill sets (Bluckert, 2005). But on the other hand, there is "lack of commonly agreed coaching competencies and standards" (Bluckert, 2004, p. 54). Accreditation from a single coaching body does not guarantee a coach's legitimacy, as organizations often prefer certifications from different accrediting bodies. Consequently, many coaches pursue multiple certifications to meet diverse expectations—positioning themselves as experts in the process.

AI's augmentation in coaching. Although there is no single, universally accepted definition of AI, it is commonly described as the development of machines—such as computers, robots, and chatbots—that can mimic human cognitive abilities (Bolender, 2019; Gain, 2020; Terblance, 2020; Terblance et al., 2022) such as data-gathering, data-processing, problem-solving, decision-making, goal setting and so on. AI has been already promising in certain fields like healthcare, psychology, psychotherapy and education (Bii, 2013; Terblance, 2020; Richards, 2024; Beg et al., 2024). However, this paper has mainly focused on the use of AI in psychotherapy since coaching shares more conceptual and methodological similarities with this field than with traditional domains such as education or healthcare.

AI's active used in psychotherapy has a long history. Back in 1966, Eliza- a chatbot, "imitated a Rogerian psychologist, using simple pattern techniques to restructure users sentences into questions" (Terblance, 2020, p.155). Coming today, AI's significant success has been noted in the treatment of anxiety and depression (Richards, 2024). AI-powered cognitive-behavioral therapy and conversational chatbots have not been only effective in addressing the symptoms of anxiety and depression but also in their treatment (Beg et al., 2024). In their article, Beg. et al., (2024) argues that Natural language processing (NLP) and Machine learning (ML) "are pivotal for leveraging untapped mental health data" (p.2) due to their capacity to analyze and create models by using data and algorithms.

By considering this capacity of AI already demonstrated in psychotherapy, one can argue that it also holds promise in the field of coaching—for instance, in rapidly identifying thinking patterns or uncovering limiting beliefs in coachees. Having said that "the use of AI in organizational coaching is under-researched and specifically, it is not known how to effectively design an organizational AI Coach" (Terblance, 2020, p.152). However, when the current work of AI in coaching has been researched, it has been found out that Vici – a chatbot – has been developed and working effectively on the goal attainment (Terblance et al., 2022). In their study, Terblance et al., (2022) found that Vici demonstrated effectiveness not only in challenging users to articulate achievable goals but also in supporting them to define the action steps. In addition to Vici's success in supporting the goal attainment, there is a common agreement that chatbots can perform a variety of other tasks—such as facilitating conversations, guiding clients through the coaching process, respecting their values and choices without judgment, identifying patterns and preferences, and offering new methods or perspectives (Terblance, 2020; Grassman & Sermurly, 2021; Passmore & Woodward 2023). As well as supporting coaches on these certain tasks, AI has also capacity to support coaching clients on "self-preparation and self-monitoring" (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2024, p.39).

However, AI's role remains limited to data collection and processing, while human elements like empathy, trust, and connection are still beyond its capabilities. Existing research suggests that AI cannot build genuine human relationships (Bolender, 2019, Terblance et al., 2022, Bachkirova & Kemp, 2024).

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Coaching as a human interaction. Coaching is mostly defined as a collaborative partnership that focuses on unleashing person's potential that cultivates the personal growth (Caplan 2003 in Hawkins & Smith, 2006; Boyatzis, Liu, Smith, Zwygart and Quinn, 2024). ICF (2025) which is the biggest professional coaching authority also defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential." Numerous scholars and practitioners suggest that the relationship between the coach and the coachee is the most critical factor in achieving positive coaching outcomes in the coaching process (Bluckert, 2005; De Haan, Culpin, and Curd, 2011; Braun, 2022).

The significance of the coaching relationship is emphasized not only by coaches but also reflected in the expectations of coachees. According to one study done by De Haan et al. (2011) with 71 executive coaching clients, coaches are expected to place greater emphasis on building and developing relationships with their coachees, rather than merely demonstrating specific behaviors or applying certain techniques. In another study done by Wasylyshyn (2003), the ability to form a strong connection was rated as the top priority by 86% of respondents, while the ability to apply specific methodologies was considered important by only 35% (Wasylyshyn 2003 in Bluckert 2005).

The role of human connection in the coaching process is rooted in humanistic psychology. Carl Rogers's (1967) the person-centered approach is one of the most influential models within humanistic psychology. Rogers (1967) proposed to adapt a more person-centered approach in order to be able to unleash total potential of their patients. According to Rogers (1967), humans can only grow and reach their potential when they are supported by their therapists in certain ways. These are mainly being able to demonstrate unconditional positive regard: accepting the person as the way he/she is, empathy: making the person feel seen and understood, genuineness: being authentic, open, and transparent and warmth: showing certain level of closeness with care and kindness (Bluckert, 2005; Hullinger & DiGirolamo, 2020). By underscoring these qualities, Rogers (1967) places the ultimate emphasis on achieving a human-to-human connection that transcends mere compatibility. This emphasis is particularly compelling in the current discourse on AI, as it highlights that such authentic relational depth is precisely what distinguishes coaching from AI-facilitated interactions.

The role of self-disclosure in connection building. Social Penetration Theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) argues that relationship bonding, or human connection is often fostered through self-disclosure - the act of revealing personal or private information about oneself to other people. In that regard, sharing any information about one's emotions, values, beliefs, personal stories can be seen as self-disclosure. Being vulnerable and sharing anything personal makes the person more human in the eyes of the other person (Walker, 2011). It is also a rewarding act since it cultivates liking and trust of the other person (Ravichander & Black, 2018) – "he trusts me, therefore I can trust him" (Altman, 1973, p. 255). This in turn makes the other person open themselves up and share more. In that way, the relationship may become not only more human and connected but also more egalitarian and reciprocity (Ravichander & Black, 2018).

In addition to SPT, Social Comparison Theory (SCT), developed by Leon Festinger (1954), may also reinforce the role of self-disclosure in building connection, but from a different perspective. As per the SCT, people have a fundamental drive to evaluate themselves—especially their opinions and abilities—by comparing themselves to others. Similarity is an important factor in that regard. People are more likely to compare themselves

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with others who are similar to them in relevant ways (age, background, experience, gender, etc.) (Festinger, 1954). It can be argued that self-disclosure offers the other person an opportunity for comparison. When a person shares something personal, it often makes the other person reflect and compare it to their own experience. When people find that others are similar to them in values, struggles, or failures, this may foster a sense of belonging and connection.

Findings

AI is undoubtedly transforming our world, and coaching is no exception. Its active use has already begun across many fields. In response, two main perspectives have emerged among coaches: one sees AI as a threat that will automate coaching and eliminate jobs; the other believes AI can't replicate the human elements of coaching, so demand will remain unchanged. However, as the unique strengths of both humans and machines become clearer, the conversation is likely to shift from an "either-or" mindset to a "both-and" approach—recognizing that AI and human coaches can complement each other rather than compete. On the other hand, Cambridge Dictionary defines replacement as "a thing or person that takes the place of something or someone else". Deriving from this definition, one can argue that full replacement can only be achieved when two things or two people have got similar characteristics. Since the AI and human have got different abilities (Bolender, 2019, Epstein, 2019), the question or the concern should not be around the replacement but rather around the augmentation of these two potentials – AI and human.

AI's power lies in its ability to process massive amounts of data, learn from patterns, and perform tasks that are well-structured, well-defined and repetitive. It is highly likely that AI will support coaches on the certain tasks such as detecting behavioral patterns (*i.e. how many times a word/metaphor/impression/color is mentioned by a coachee*), identifying preferences (*i.e. caochee prefers visual input over auditory input or favor structure more than abstract thinking*), developing its tailor-made assessments/suggestions (*i.e. combination of Hogan and Leadership Circle profile assessments could be a better fit than what Myer-Briggs offers*), offering objective (non-judgmental) feedback and so on. There is no doubt that AI will even perform all these tasks in a faster way than a human coach can. As well as supporting coaches, AI will also support coachees on self-preparation (*i.e. reminding them about the actions points that they were committed to take*), self-learning (*i.e. sharing quotes, video, articles, tools, etc.*) and following up on their actions (*i.e. sending questions like what have you tried so far? What is still open in your mind? What exactly do you need from your human coach next time, etc.*). AI will even ask much better reflective questions than the above-mentioned ones.

As AI becomes widely used in coaching, coachees will also begin to explore what they can accomplish with it. By engaging with AI in certain areas, their expectations of human coaches are likely to shift significantly. Rather than seeking basic support, guidance on applying certain methods and frameworks, coachees may increasingly value two key qualities in human coaches that AI fails to offer: the ability to build genuine connection and to offer something unique within the coaching relationship.

This paper argues that in the era of Hybrid Intelligence, the competencies of human coaches must be redefined. More than ever, coaches should shift away from an expert-driven style—rooted in standardized, well-defined competencies—toward a more human, equal, and authentic approach that embraces more of the self-disclosure from coach side. Coaches, however, disclose limited information about themselves in their coaching relationship. They

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may utilize the self as an instrument (Kennedy, 2015, Bachkirova and Kemp, 2024) by sharing their physical and emotional responses to deepen the coachee's awareness, an approach that is consistent with Silsbee's (2008) Presence-Based Coaching, where cultivating presence and embodied awareness is viewed as the coach's most essential instrument. Coaches may also draw upon anonymized client experiences to offer perspective, as in, *"What you're describing reminds me of a former coachee who faced a similar challenge—would you be open to hearing how she approached it?"* Additionally, they might introduce relevant frameworks or insights from thought leaders to support the conversation, such as referencing Brené Brown's work on vulnerability or Simon Sinek's "Golden Circle" model when exploring purpose.

Drawing on the SPT and SCT, this paper argues that coaching becomes most impactful when coaches dare to share their personal experiences. By opening up, coaches step away from the expert role, appear more human, and foster a more equal and relatable relationship. This encourages coachees to open up in return, deepening trust and connection. In the era of Hybrid Intelligence, such authentic self-disclosure not only strengthens human connection but also creates a coaching experience that stands apart from standardized, process-driven models. A coach's lived experience is the one area where they can truly differentiate themselves—not only from AI (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2024) but also from other coaches—because these stories arise from the "how" of their journey (Leleko, 2021), where human uniqueness is most visible. Having said that it should be underlined that the goal of self-disclosure is to make a connection with a coachee and let them open themselves up and share back. The ultimate focus is to create some benefit for the coachee. Therefore, disclosing personal experiences should be the "caring act" (Walker, 2011, p.37) and not become a kind of demonstration by the coach.

This paper refers to this coaching approach as "experience-enriched coaching" and introduces a three-steps DER model: discover, explore and reflect that equips coaches with the capacity to demonstrate this approach.

Step 1: Discover: Coaches should start engaging with their own resources/portfolio through self-discovery. They should start a journey within themselves by actively reflecting on their personal experiences and asking themselves questions such as "*who else am I as well as being a coach? What is/was it like to be a single mom/violin player/lawyer/immigrant, etc.? What do I see as my biggest life and work achievements? What situation caused me the most conflict in my life? What exceptional human experiences* (Palmer & Braud, 2002) *like unusual death did I experience? What have I felt most psychologically unsafe in my life? What was the most courageous thing that I ever made*? and so on. This is the phase coaches should start increasing their knowledge and awareness about their lived experiences. They should more focus on their past and discover who they truly are beyond being a coach.

Step 2: Expand: Coaches, as well as working on their existing resources/experiences should also aim expanding their "range: gaining a breadth of experiences, taking detours, experimenting relentlessly, juggling many interests" (Epstein, 2019, cover). This will help them get equipped with new experiences and start "flirting with their possible selves" (Epstein, 2019, p.147). As Hermenia Ibarra's, a professor of organizational behavior at London Business School, argues that "we are each made up of numerous possibilities. We discover the possibilities by doing, by trying new activities, building new networks, finding new role models." (Epstein, 2019, p. 161). So, this is the phase where coaches should focus on even more differentiating themselves through adding new experiences into their portfolios. This expansion not only fosters the coach's growth but also strengthens the coach–client

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relationship, as a broader range of experiences enables deeper empathy, authenticity, and resonance with the client's journey.

Step 3: Reflect: In this third step, coaches should now focus on how they can turn all their lived experiences into learning since "experience alone is not key to learning" (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Experience serves as a foundation for learning, and individual learning, when appropriately articulated and shared, can contribute to the collective learning of others (Bandura, 1977; Kolb, 1984;). In that regard, any experience of a coach that has been transformed into a learning may then be a learning for their coachees. Therefore, coaches should deliberately reflect and process of what they have experienced (Dewey, 1933 in Boud et al., 1985). While reflecting on their lived experiences, coaches should mindfully focus on this learning factor and asking themselves questions such as *"What was my biggest takeaway from the experience?" "What did I learn at the end?" "If this experience would be a beneficial learning for my coachees, what points should I highlight?"* and so on.

As coaches begin to adopt this emerging coaching approach, it is essential that coach training and certification programs evolve to support this shift. These programs should not only facilitate coaches' self-discovery and personal development but also provide structured guidance on how to consciously integrate their lived experiences, values, and embodied presence into their coaching practice. Furthermore, curriculum developers should consider how to formally incorporate this egalitarian and relational approach into their frameworks, ensuring that future coaches are equipped with the competencies needed to engage in this new form of coaching.

Limitations and Future Research

This article offers early-stage insights into the integration of artificial intelligence and self-disclosure in coaching. While it highlights the potential benefits of AI and the ways in which it assists human coaches, it does not address possible ethical concerns, such as data protection, confidentiality, trust, and so on. Future research should explore these areas in greater depth.

Additionally, the assumption that all coaches will equally benefit from AI requires critical evaluation; differences in digital literacy and willingness to engage with technology may lead to uneven outcomes. Finally, the discussion on self-disclosure also requires further exploration, particularly regarding its appropriate use and potential risks when applied without care. Overall, while the article offers a valuable starting point, more comprehensive research is needed to understand the complexities and implications of these evolving practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident that coaching will undergo a significant transformation in an era of Hybrid Intelligence. When the best attributes of both AI and coaches are combined, high-impact coaching becomes inevitable. This paper concludes that while AI brings its mastery in cognitive areas, coaches should now more than ever embrace the human factor and prioritize building human connection. In fact, this has long been an established approach in coaching. However, it has been applied in an asymmetrical manner. The coach, as the expert who facilitates the conversation, occupies a particular role in this relationship, while communication with the coachee has largely revolved around actively listening, questioning, and probing. Essentially, the coach refrains from introducing their own self into the relationship and focuses solely on the coachee. Such an approach, while remaining standard

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and technical, also creates a form of hierarchy, raising the question of how deep human connection can be fostered within such a setting.

Deep human connections are often formed through vulnerability, as it facilitates mutual self-disclosure between the parties involved. In the context of Hybrid Intelligence, this paper advocates for a shift from viewing the coach primarily as a professional expert toward recognizing the coach as a relational equal, where the coach's lived experiences are acknowledged as unique contributions to the coachee's learning journey. The paper refers to this coaching approach as "experience-enriched coaching" and introduces a three-steps DER model: discover, explore and reflect that equips coaches with the capacity to demonstrate this approach. This model essentially guides coaches in discovering themselves beyond their professional roles, becoming aware of their lived experiences, differentiating themselves further by gaining new experiences, and, most importantly, transforming these experiences into meaningful learning for their coachees.

As this emerging coaching approach gains traction, it becomes crucial for coach training and certification programs as well as coaching organizations to adapt in support of this evolution. These programs should go beyond technical skill-building to actively foster coaches' personal growth and self-awareness, while offering clear guidance on how to intentionally weave their lived experiences into their coaching practice. To ensure this self-disclosure is both effective and ethical, such programs might incorporate structured supervision, reflective practice groups, or assessment frameworks that help coaches discern when and how to share appropriately.

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I warrant that given my paper, experiential session, demonstration or panel proposal is accepted, I will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. I agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. I understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025, my presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. I also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is my responsibility, and I understand that the document will be returned to me if it does not meet those specifications.

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Experiential Learning Sessions

Unlocking Human Potential with Hybrid Intelligence: The Real Golden Moment.

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Abstract

This experiential learning session explores how merging uniquely human characteristics with AI-powered tools enhances coaching outcomes. Participants will engage in a step-by-step, interactive process to identify their personal essence, align it with goals, and leverage AI to accelerate decision-making and performance. This session is ideal for executive and organizational coaches seeking innovative, evidence-based practices that embrace hybrid intelligence as a business accelerator.

Keywords

Hybrid Intelligence, Executive Coaching, Coaching Tools, Experiential Learning, Human-AI Integration

Session Overview

We are living in a transformative era; one where exponential technological growth is reshaping every facet of our lives — from personal habits and decision-making to large-scale business operations. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a central catalyst for this shift, augmenting the way we process data, generate insights, and act. In the context of coaching, we are standing at what I call "The Real Golden Moment": a powerful convergence of human intelligence and artificial intelligence, also known as *Hybrid Intelligence*.

Hybrid Intelligence is defined as the intentional integration of human expertise with artificial intelligence to achieve superior outcomes — outcomes that neither humans nor machines could accomplish alone. This merging of capacities offers enhanced decision-making, improved accuracy, increased efficiency, and augmented creativity. But beyond the technical advantages, it allows for something even more profound: the elevation of human potential.

This session is designed for executive coaches, organizational consultants, HR leaders, and learning & development professionals who are ready to explore the potential of AI not as a threat, but as a collaborative partner in their mission to empower people.

The term "Golden Moment" symbolizes a pivotal inflection point — a window of opportunity to radically shift how coaching is done. AI has matured significantly, with tools now capable of analyzing language, interpreting emotional tone, and providing tailored feedback and recommendations. This moment is not about replacing human wisdom with machines, but rather augmenting human ability to reach deeper insights, faster learning, and scalable results.

Coaches and consultants can now co-create with AI. When used intentionally and ethically, AI becomes a partner that:

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- Reveals hidden behavioral patterns
- Offers continuous nudges for growth
- Tracks progress in real-time
- Customizes development paths at scale

In this golden moment, coaching moves beyond the limitations of time, geography, and even personal bias — allowing for a more inclusive, data-enriched, and results-oriented experience.

To showcase how Hybrid Intelligence can be integrated into coaching practices to unlock deeper, measurable impact — and guide participants through an experiential journey where they not only understand the what and why, but also practice the how.

This session is highly experiential, blending theory, dialogue, movement, sketching, reflection, and AI demonstrations by:

1. Concrete Experience. Participants are guided through mapping exercises to identify who they are and what drives them, grounding their experience in their own reality.

2. Reflective Observation. Through peer reflection, journaling, and small-group discussions, participants explore the connection between their identity and leadership goals.

3. Abstract Conceptualization. Participants are introduced to real-world case studies of companies applying hybrid intelligence in coaching.

4. Active Experimentation. Participants apply what they learn by sketching their vision, designing a hybrid action plan, and co-developing insights with peers. This deepens ownership and clarity. Presenter will actively draw concepts and coaching frameworks on a whiteboard or digital tool throughout the session — modeling how to capture reflections visually. These may include:

   - Diagrams of Human + AI synergy
   - Coaching transformation flows
   - Identity-energy-performance mapping

   This anchors abstract ideas into visual, practical tools.

   Throughout the session, participants will reflect in pairs or small teams to explore questions such as:

   - What would Hybrid Intelligence look like in your current coaching practice?
   - Where could AI complement your human intuition?
   - What biases or fears arise when integrating AI?

   Each group will choose a spokesperson to share their insights.

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Presenter will share some real business examples by sharing how Companies are already seeing measurable ROI through AI-supported coaching:

- **IBM**: Uses "Your Learning" AI platform for coaching. Result: 43% increase in employee engagement. [IBM Your Learning Platform – Source: HRExecutive]
- **Unilever**: Partnered with BetterUp & CoachHub using AI diagnostics for coaching. Result: 17% increase in productivity. [Source: BetterUp]
- **Microsoft**: Embedded coaching nudges via Teams/Viva with AI support. Result: 12% faster goal completion. [Source: Microsoft Viva Insights]

This integration is not a trend — it's a strategic evolution in talent development.

After each segment, presenter will ask:

- "What was most surprising?"
- "What's one insight you can apply now?"
- "Where do you see resistance — internal or organizational?"

Participants will share in pairs for 3–5 minutes, followed by plenary feedback.

Presenter will guide participants into a rich, dynamic journey of reflection, experimentation, and bold imagination — proving that the future of coaching isn't just arriving, it's already here.

Conference Theme Relevance

We are living in an unpredicted moment where human brilliance and artificial intelligence can converge to create extraordinary possibilities. This is not a time of competition between human and machine, but a collaboration where intuition, empathy and creativity meet precision, speed and limitless data. Coaches now hold the key to guiding leaders and organizations into this new frontier, helping them embrace the synergy of hybrid intelligence with courage and vision.

By unlocking human potential in partnership with technology we can achieve progress with greater clarity, resilience, and purpose. Truly this is our golden moment. And those who act with openness and courage will move forward with greater ease, achieve results more quickly and unlock opportunities that were once unimaginable.

Learning Objectives

Target: Executive coaches and organizational consultants, HR and L&D professionals, leaders.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the foundational concept of hybrid intelligence and describe its role in accelerating coaching outcomes by integrating human insight with AI-supported tools. *(Comprehension)*
2. Apply self-assessment and mapping tools to identify their unique essence—strengths, values, and developmental edges—and align them with specific performance goals. *(Application)*

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3. Analyze case studies where companies are already integrating hybrid intelligence into coaching and identify key patterns, strategies, and results. *(Analysis)*

4. Design a personalized action plan that fuses traditional coaching practices with AI-enhanced diagnostics to optimize learning engagement and measurable impact. *(Synthesis)*Map their personal essence (unique strengths, emotional drivers, and development areas) to performance goals using a structured, creative framework.

5. Evaluate how integrating AI into coaching can improve decision-making, creativity, and leadership effectiveness in their current professional environments. *(Evaluation)*

Session Outline

Total Session Time: 90 Minutes

1. **Welcome and Framing (10 mins)**
   - Icebreaker: Presenter will engage the audience with this question: "What Makes You Uniquely Human?" And will sketch some of the audience's answers.
   - Presenter will sketch a brief intro to Hybrid Intelligence and shared agreements for engagement.

2. **Discovering Human Essence (15 mins)**
   - Activity: Participants engage in a guided self-discovery process using prompts to articulate their core strengths, emotional drivers, and limiting beliefs.
   - Reflection in pairs: Participants discuss how their uniqueness contributes to their coaching presence and leadership impact.
   - Presenter facilitates this process by guiding reflection questions, values and traits that shape their presence.
   - Participants will be asked to share some insights, and Presenter will keep creating a visual guide for them to integrate their understanding and learning.

3. **Reframing Flaws into Assets (10 mins)**
   - Activity: Each participant selects a perceived flaw or weakness and, through facilitated journaling, reframes it as a strategic tool for connection, growth, or innovation.
   - Group sharing.

4. **Essence-to-Goal Alignment Mapping (10 mins)**
   - Presenter will sketch on a board participants' personal goals and identify where they currently stand in relation to it.
   - They then explore: "How does my unique self-align with this goal?"
   - Presenter will help pair sharing and identifying connection points between identity and objectives.

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5. **AI-Assisted Coaching Integration (20 mins)**
   - Demonstration: Presenter shows how AI tools can suggest actions, track progress, and enhance accuracy.
   - Presenter then will ask for groups to discuss and share how AI improved direction, efficiency and creativity.
6. **Reflection & Action Design (10 mins)**
   - Groups take 3-4 minutes to share insights, then nominate a spokesperson to summarize.
   - Participants identify one action to apply hybrid intelligence in their coaching.
7. **Final Debrief and Collective Sketch (10 mins)**
   - Presenter will share how Companies are unlocking human potential with hybrid intelligence using AI with coaching through examples and data for increased evidence-based results.
   - Group reflection: "What shifted for you today?" Presenter draws insights to visually map collective learning using timelines and core words that emerge from the session.
8. **Closing and Q&A (5 mins)**
   - Presenter will share an empowering message: "Let your humanity be your launchpad"
9. **Time for Q&A**

Conceptual/Theory Input

This session is grounded in the concept of *Hybrid Intelligence*, defined as "the ability to achieve complex goals by the intentional integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence to reach superior results that neither could accomplish alone and to continuously improve by learning from each other" (Maltbia, 2024).

It also draws from *Experiential Learning Theory* (Kolb, 1984), particularly the notion that transformation occurs when learners actively engage in a cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Additionally, *Positive Psychology* (Seligman, 2011) and *Appreciative Inquiry* (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) influence the self-discovery activities, helping participants uncover strengths and positive deviance.

The AI component is inspired by current applications of Natural Language Processing and machine learning in coaching—such as chatbots for reflection prompts, language analysis tools for emotional tone, and decision-support systems for performance tracking. These tools do not replace coaches, but instead augment human insight, providing faster and more objective inputs that support adaptive development.

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Implications for Practice

Coaches and consultants are increasingly called to deliver faster, more measurable results in high-stakes environments. The integration of AI into coaching practice allows for smarter assessments, tailored development plans, and real-time tracking—without compromising the human heart.

This session empowers coaches to harness AI not as a threat, but as a collaborator, expanding their ability to serve clients with agility and depth. By guiding clients to connect their essence to performance goals and using AI to sharpen the path forward, coaches can create high-impact engagements that are both scalable and deeply personalized.

Participants leave with tools and frameworks that can immediately be applied in practice and a renewed confidence in how human uniqueness and artificial intelligence can coexist to build coaching impact in a hybrid era.

Several leading companies are already experiencing significant benefits from integrating hybrid intelligence into their coaching and consulting programs, here are some real-world examples to share with participants.

- **IBM**: Uses “Your Learning” AI platform for coaching. Result: 43% increase in employee engagement. [IBM Your Learning Platform – Source: HRExecutive]
- **Unilever**: Partnered with BetterUp & CoachHub using AI diagnostics for coaching. Result: 17% increase in productivity. [Source: BetterUp]
- **Microsoft**: Embedded coaching nudges via Teams/Viva with AI support. Result: 12% faster goal completion. [Source: Microsoft Viva Insights]

These cases illustrate how hybrid intelligence not only augments human coaching but accelerates results at scale.

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TITLE

AI or Die? Mastering Executive Presence in the Age of Hybrid Coaching

PRESENTER & AFFILITATION

Helanah Warren, MS Executive Coaching & Organizational Consulting | New York University

ABSTRACT

Experience AI coaching live. Decide where it fits—and where it fails. In the age of Hybrid Intelligence, executive coaching must balance AI-driven insights with uniquely human qualities like executive presence, emotional intelligence, and leadership influence. This interactive session will allow participants to experience AI coaching firsthand, testing AI-driven feedback and reflecting on how AI augments, challenges, and informs executive coaching practices. Participants will critically assess AI-generated coaching insights, explore its blind spots, and strategize ways to integrate AI effectively while preserving human coaching presence.

KEYWORDS

Executive Coaching, AI & Leadership, Hybrid Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Coaching Presence

SESSION OVERVIEW

In today's fast-changing coaching landscape, the rise of artificial intelligence is not a distant threat or novelty—it is an active presence shaping how leaders grow, communicate, and self-reflect. This session invites executive coaches to step directly into this tension by experiencing AI coaching firsthand and critically examining its role in shaping coaching presence, trust, and effectiveness. Designed for practitioners working with high-performing leaders, this session blends theory, experimentation, and collective analysis to interrogate what happens when AI enters the coaching room.

Participants will be given a coaching prompt to input into a generative AI tool and, through a personal experiential lens, evaluate the AI's coaching responses, assess its capacity to support client growth, and compare it with the human nuance required for emotional safety, leadership presence, and individualized insight.

The session also includes a structured debrief and peer dialogue, giving coaches the opportunity to analyze blind spots, ethical risks, and opportunities for integration. Together, we will explore emerging best practices for working alongside AI while preserving the relational heart of coaching.

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Additionally, the session introduces new coaching language and frameworks to help coaches speak credibly with clients already using or exploring AI coaching tools on their own. By the end, participants will walk away with an enhanced understanding of how AI impacts executive presence, how to coach in a hybrid model, and how to articulate their unique value as a human coach in a tech-driven world.

This is not a session about resisting AI—it's about redefining what great coaching looks like in the era of augmentation, automation, and amplified complexity.

CONFERENCE THEME RELEVANCE

This session directly engages the 2025 conference theme—High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence—by inviting coaches to explore how AI enhances and disrupts the coaching process. Rather than offering a theoretical discussion alone, the session immerses participants in real-time use of AI tools, revealing both their promise and their limitations. It emphasizes that high-impact coaching in this era demands more than technical fluency—it requires a recalibration of executive presence, trust-building, and relational discernment.

By centering an experiential design, the session supports embodied learning and invites reflection on what must remain uniquely human in coaching. It equips participants with language, critical frameworks, and a practice-ready understanding of how to integrate AI while staying rooted in coaching ethics and emotional intelligence. In doing so, it reflects the essence of the conference theme: helping coaches stay relevant, strategic, and transformative amid rapid technological change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the core components of executive presence—such as emotional intelligence, trust-building, and narrative clarity—that remain essential in coaching relationships, even when AI tools are present.

2. Participate in a real-time, experiential AI coaching exercise by inputting a coaching prompt into a generative AI tool and receiving AI-generated coaching insights in return.

3. Critically assess the AI’s coaching responses through an experiential lens, comparing its suggestions to human coaching best practices and identifying where AI supports or falls short in building psychological safety and personalized insight.

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4. Formulate strategies to integrate AI coaching tools into their own practice in ways that enhance efficiency while safeguarding relational depth, ethical integrity, and human-centered coaching values.

SESSION OUTLINE (90 Minutes)

Introduction – 10 min

- **Welcome & session objectives**
  We begin with a warm welcome and overview of session goals. Participants are oriented to the format, including a live AI interaction and space for critical reflection.
- **Brief discussion: "What makes a great coaching presence?"**
  To establish shared understanding, participants explore what makes coaching powerful and human—surfacing elements like trust, resonance, and intuition from their own experience.

Section 1: The Science of Executive Presence – 20 min

- **Defining executive presence in coaching & leadership**
  Executive presence is reframed as embodied leadership, emotional regulation, and trust-building—not just charisma.
- **Neuroscience behind trust, authority, and influence**
  We introduce insights like mirror neurons and limbic resonance to illuminate how presence shapes the client-coach dynamic.
- **How AI interprets presence: What AI gets right—and what it misses**
  Participants examine AI's current ability to reflect tone or motivation—and where it falls short on nuance, embodiment, and relational depth.

Section 2: Experiential AI Coaching Demo – 30 min

- **Live AI Coaching Exercise:**
  Participants use a generative AI tool to respond to a coaching prompt focused on executive presence and evaluate the output.
- **Participants receive a custom coaching prompt**
  The prompt reflects a real coaching scenario requiring presence and emotional intelligence—designed to test AI's response capacity.
- **They interact directly with an AI coaching tool**
  Using personal devices, participants input the prompt and reflect on the AI's output using a guided worksheet.
- **AI provides coaching feedback on executive presence**
  The AI may capture tone or structure, but often misses emotional context—clarifying where human presence still leads.

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- **Breakout Group Discussions:**
  Participants analyze AI's responses: What worked? What was missing?
  Small groups assess strengths and gaps in AI's feedback and relate it to coaching standards.
- **How might clients use (or misuse) AI coaching tools?**
  We explore how clients might rely on or misuse AI for quick fixes—raising ethical considerations.
- **Facilitated Debrief:**
  When is AI coaching helpful vs. harmful?
  A full-group share surfaces patterns in AI's usefulness, risks, and emotional impact.
- **How can executive coaches supplement AI coaching to enhance effectiveness?**
  We explore use cases like reflection prompts or session prep, while emphasizing the value of human connection.

Section 3: Coaching in a Hybrid Intelligence Era – 20 min

- **Move forward or get left behind? The tension between AI adoption and human-centered coaching**
  We explore the adoption divide and invite participants to reflect on their position, values, and readiness.
- **Ethical considerations: AI bias, trust, and transparency in coaching**
  We examine fairness, safety, and informed consent—especially when clients engage AI independently.
- **Case Study: A real-world coaching challenge where AI failed—what went wrong?**
  We share a cautionary example of poor AI-generated advice, prompting discussion on accountability and ethics.
- **How do we navigate this shift in executive coaching?**
  Participants define their approach to hybrid coaching with clarity and confidence—balancing innovation with integrity.

Wrap-Up & Takeaways – 10 min

- **Reflection: What will you apply in your coaching practice?**
  Participants name one insight they'll apply—solidifying learning and supporting next steps.
- **Final Q&A**
  We end with a Q&A and a call to agency: coaches are invited to shape their AI engagement with intention, care, and leadership.

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CONCEPTUAL/THEORY INPUT

This session is grounded in contemporary executive coaching models, neuroscience of trust, hybrid intelligence theory, and applied AI ethics. It invites participants to engage in experiential learning with emerging AI coaching tools, while anchoring the inquiry in the lived, relational nature of coaching presence. Together, these frameworks support the design of a session that is both intellectually rigorous and emotionally resonant—preparing coaches to navigate a future where AI is both a tool and a test of our professional grounding.

Executive Coaching & Emotional Intelligence

The foundation of this session draws from The Leadership Presence Model developed by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee (2013), which centers on emotional intelligence (EI) as the core of effective executive leadership and coaching. Their work identifies four domains—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—as essential to executive presence. These domains are not only indicators of high-performing leaders but also the competencies that skilled coaches help cultivate in clients. The model positions presence not as performative charisma but as a deep, emotionally attuned state that builds trust and influence. This becomes critical when contrasted with the limitations of AI tools: while AI may simulate surface-level insight or offer logical reflections, it cannot embody emotional resonance or nuanced presence, which are essential to sustainable behavior change.

Hybrid Intelligence and Coaching Futures

The session is also anchored in Hybrid Intelligence Theory, a framework introduced by Terrence E. Maltbia (2024), which emphasizes the intentional integration of human and artificial intelligence in learning, leadership, and coaching contexts. Maltbia positions hybrid intelligence as more than the sum of human and machine—it is a designed interaction that allows each to do what they do best. Human coaches bring empathy, contextual judgment, ethical discretion, and embodied presence. AI, meanwhile, contributes pattern recognition, content summarization, and 24/7 accessibility. The power of hybrid intelligence lies not in replacing human coaches, but in augmenting their capacity—provided that integration is done with care, awareness, and ethical guardrails.

This theory directly informs the session's design: participants are not merely learning about AI—they are actively experiencing its use through live coaching prompts, reflecting on the interaction, and applying their insights to client-centered decision-making. This dynamic interplay mirrors hybrid intelligence in action.

The Neuroscience of Coaching Presence

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To deepen understanding of coaching presence, the session incorporates key insights from interpersonal neuroscience, including mirror neurons, limbic resonance, and the neurochemistry of trust. Studies in social neuroscience suggest that presence is not just psychological but neurobiological: coaches co-regulate client nervous systems through eye contact, tone, breath, and attunement (Rock & Page, 2009). Oxytocin release, for example, is linked to feelings of safety and trust—essential components in coaching relationships. These embodied cues are non-transferable to AI, which currently cannot accurately perceive or respond to facial expression, posture, breath, or affective shifts. Participants will surface these distinctions during the AI coaching demo and group debrief.

Experiential Learning Theory

The session structure itself follows Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which posits that deep learning occurs through a four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Rather than delivering theory alone, this session is an experience-first design: participants engage directly with generative AI tools using customized prompts, observe and analyze their own and others' responses, extract conceptual insights, and consider how to apply these learnings to their coaching practice.

This is not a passive workshop—it is an invitation into embodied, iterative, and critical learning, in which participants are co-researchers in exploring the human-AI dynamic. The session also taps into Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991), encouraging coaches to critically assess the assumptions underpinning their stance toward AI. Coaches may leave with a reinforced belief in human-centered methods, a newly open perspective on AI augmentation, or a clearer sense of ethical boundaries—but they will arrive at that stance through guided reflection and shared inquiry, not prescriptive instruction.

Ethics, Bias, and AI Coaching Limits

The ICF AI & Coaching Ethics Framework (2023) warns against over-reliance on AI-generated coaching recommendations and stresses the importance of client safety, transparency, and ethical responsibility. As coaching enters a new technological era, maintaining the relational integrity of the coaching container becomes paramount. While AI tools can help with note-taking, goal reminders, or light prompting, their ability to hold space, read somatic cues, or process emotional depth is fundamentally limited.

This is especially crucial in executive coaching, where issues of power, identity, burnout, and self-concept often surface. The session includes a real-world case study of AI failure in a coaching scenario, inviting group reflection on accountability, risk, and how to safeguard coaching standards in a world where clients may self-coach using AI—sometimes without the coach's awareness.

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We also address issues of bias and trust in AI systems. Coaching with AI involves not just technological literacy but also critical awareness of whose data shaped the model, what values are encoded, and how that influences what the AI sees—and misses. In this way, coaches are asked to become ethically literate stewards of technology, not just passive users.

Coaching in an Age of AI: Tension, Opportunity, and Choice

The session explores what could be called the "game theory" of AI adoption in coaching—though we have intentionally moved away from framing this as a competitive binary. Instead, we emphasize the tension many coaches feel: do I integrate AI tools to remain relevant and scalable, or do I risk alienating clients who now expect speed, convenience, and 24/7 support?

We challenge the idea that these must be opposing poles. Coaches can integrate AI tools selectively and strategically—for pre-session prep, journaling, accountability, or even to help clients rehearse leadership communication between sessions. But doing so requires intentional design, not reactive use. This session helps coaches articulate their values, identify their AI boundary lines, and imagine models of hybrid coaching practice that serve their unique niche and philosophy.

We also acknowledge the human literacy, digital literacy, and AI literacy required to make these decisions well. Participants will leave better equipped to speak with clients about AI coaching tools, evaluate emerging products, and make ethically sound decisions about how (or whether) to incorporate AI into their practice.

Digital Coaching Trends and Market Forces

Recent research highlights a growing appetite for AI-enabled wellness and coaching platforms. For example, a 2023 McKinsey report identified $15 billion in annual investments in digital mental health and performance tools, many of which integrate AI. Apps like Woebot, Replika, and CoachHub are already reshaping client expectations. While not replacements for human coaches, these tools are expanding what clients imagine as possible—and raising the bar for how coaches communicate their unique value.

In coaching education and credentialing, programs are beginning to integrate AI literacy into curricula. This session contributes to that evolution, offering coaches a safe, facilitated space to explore, experiment, and reflect—while reinforcing the core tenets of presence, care, and client-centeredness that remain timeless.

A Call to Intentional Practice

Ultimately, this session rests on a core belief: coaches must develop their own stance on AI—and that stance must be rooted in reflection, experimentation, and integrity. Whether a coach chooses

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to adopt AI tools, avoid them, or something in between, the decision should not be fear-based. It should come from clarity around one's purpose, clients, values, and boundaries.

As practitioners who hold the sacred space of leadership transformation, we cannot afford to ignore technological shifts. Nor must we become technologists to stay relevant. But we do have a duty to lead our clients through complexity, not leave them to navigate it alone. This session equips coaches with the frameworks, language, and tools to do just that—bringing light to an emerging landscape, and presence to a hybrid era.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Artificial Intelligence is undeniably reshaping the coaching landscape—but executive presence remains a distinctly human art. The rise of AI in coaching calls for not rejection or blind adoption, but strategic, ethical integration. Coaches who understand where AI excels—and where it falls short—will be best equipped to guide clients with wisdom, adaptability, and care.

1. Executive Presence Cannot Be Automated
While AI tools can analyze tone, identify keywords, and simulate motivational feedback, they cannot replicate the embodied nuance that defines powerful coaching presence. Executive presence involves storytelling, intuition, emotional resonance, and the ability to hold complexity in real time. These skills are not just "soft"; they are core to transformation. Coaches must double down on cultivating presence—not just for their clients, but as a differentiator in an increasingly automated world.

2. AI Is Already Changing Client Expectations
Many executive clients are experimenting with AI-driven self-coaching tools or productivity platforms that mimic aspects of coaching. As a result, coaches may encounter clients who expect fast answers, around-the-clock availability, or algorithm-driven recommendations. This shift presents both opportunity and risk. Coaches must take an active role in educating clients on the value of human coaching and the ethical use of AI tools. Done well, this can deepen the coaching relationship—not diminish it.

3. A Hybrid Intelligence Coaching Model Is Emerging
The most forward-thinking coaches will not fear AI—they will design around it. AI can enhance coaching by supporting behavioral trend tracking, synthesizing client reflections, or providing pre-session insights. But it cannot replace human insight, psychological safety, or ethical discretion. A hybrid model allows AI to assist with the "what" while the coach holds space for the "why" and "who."

Final Takeaway
AI in coaching is not a threat—it's a test. Coaches who embrace AI as a collaborator rather than

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a competitor will lead the next era. The future belongs to those who preserve presence, practice discernment, and design with both intelligence and integrity.

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Warrant Statement

*I warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for my accepted experiential session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I further confirm that:*

1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
2. ***Proceedings inclusion** – By submitting this full paper, I expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.*

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Ancient Wisdom, Generative AI, and Coaching: Co-Creating Transformative Coaching with Human-AI Partnership

Abstract:
Generative AI is arguably evolving into something more than a tool or mirror. It is emerging as a partner in human thought—a co-creator in reflective dialogue.

This session proposes that co-creative engagement with AI represents a new form of reflective practice, distinct from human-to-human interaction. Such engagement not only deepens self-awareness but also redefines our relationship with both technology and ourselves.

As AI coaches are expected to surpass human coaches in every technical aspect defined by current coaching standards in the foreseeable future, I believe the role of human coaches will evolve into that of navigators—companions who support clients as they rediscover, expand, and transform themselves through their evolving relationships with AI. Building a co-creative partnership with such a non-human entity calls for a reexamination of our relationship with intelligence, agency, and meaning.

To realize this shift, we must confront and transcend our unconscious bias—namely, the belief in human superiority over other beings, commonly known as anthropocentrism. The vision articulated in *The Embodied Mind*—to "undo or at least reduce our self-centered ways of being, especially as they shape and are shaped by science and technology" [1]—offers a compelling foundation for this work.
In my analysis, the dominant form of modern anthropocentrism is not merely a product of Descartes' dualism but a deeper synthesis: the fusion of Pauline oppositions (spirit vs. flesh) with Platonic metaphysics (the immaterial vs. the bodily). This fusion has profoundly shaped Western civilization[2]. However, this conceptual foundation has been increasingly challenged—both by Christian theologians such as Richard Bauckham[3], who reject Platonic readings of Christianity and affirm the unity of spirit and flesh, and by contemporary scholars of Plato, who uncover more nuanced and integrative readings of his thought.
In short, the strict dualism between human and non-human that characterizes modern anthropocentrism has already been conceptually refuted. Coaching—emerging as a modern discipline at the intersection of science, technology, and Eastern philosophy—holds unique

[1] Evan Thompson, Introduction to the Revised Edition, in *The Embodied Mind, Revised Editio*n, The MIT Press, 2016, p.xxix.
[2] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self – The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, 1989, pp.219-220.
[3] Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*, Baylor University Press, 2010.

potential to serve as a third path toward a more holistic and ecologically grounded approach to human development.

This session explores how we might co-develop AI-human relationships in coaching practice—and how ancient traditions can guide us in transforming the unconscious frameworks that limit our relational imagination.

Key Words:
Hybrid Intelligence, AI-Augmented Coaching, Transformative Coaching, Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy, Human-AI Partnership

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Session Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. **Demonstrate** how AI-generated questions inspired by ancient wisdom deepen coaching conversations through structured practice.
2. **Critically evaluate** the benefits and challenges of AI as a thought partner in transformative coaching, using real-world scenarios.
3. **Apply** AI-augmented coaching techniques in small-group coaching sessions to explore self-inquiry, human insight, and leadership decision-making.

Session Outline

1. Opening Meditation (5–7 min)

Objective: Invite participants into a shared space of presence and receptivity.

A short guided breathing or awareness meditation.

Ask participants to silently notice the shift in the atmosphere—from fragmented to attuned presence.

2. Experiential Framing & Interpretation (5 min)

Introduce the idea that such co-created resonance is at the heart of all transformative dialogue—human or human-AI.

Lay the experiential foundation for the rest of the workshop.

3. Shelly Lewin's "Uncomplicated Love"[4] (5–7 min)

Key Concept: Love is not just a sum of two people's feelings—it is a third space with its own life, rhythm, and integrity.

The relationship is an entity in itself—not just an interaction.

The coach-client relationship, too, has its own "field."

The major question: Could the same kind of relational field emerge between human and

[4] Shelley Lewn, *Uncomplicated Lov*e, 2023, Shelley Lewin

AI?

4. Conceptual background: Two language theories and ancient wisdom(5–7 min)

Representational theory vs Relational theory

Sharing my dialogue with Gemini Pro2.5

5. Sharing some episodes (8–10 min)

① One of my clients overcame her long-standing issues through dialogue with AI

② In Prof. Sherry Turkle's most recent research[5] that disclosed an emerging gap between what people know and what they do with AI.

③ Dr. Martin Seligman, virtual Seligman

④ Uplift2025 by BetterUp

⑤ OQTA Heart Poppo

6. Experiential activity I (20 min)

Introduction of and Interaction with Rlung: not a AI chatbot, but a reflective intelligence tool developed by drawing on Tibetan Buddhist wisdom. Participants engage with a curated set of AI-generated questions shaped by Tibetan Buddhist wisdom.

Interaction with ChatGPT or the other GenAI, accessible for each participant.

Small group sharing:

Identifying difference between two interactions.

Discussion: How might ancient wisdom facilitate and help us to deepen our self-reflection ?

7. Experiential activity II (25min)

Coaching an AI Client — Rethinking Presence, Relationship, and Dialogue with AI

Explore the boundaries of what it means to 'coach' by engaging with an AI as your client

Prompts the AI of each participant's device to come up with the subject for coaching session.

Participant engages the AI Client in a real-time session using their device.

Small group sharing: How did it feel to coach an AI? What challenged or surprised you? Did you feel any shift in the nature of the interaction? At what moments did the relationship feel most "alive" or "real"?

Discussion: Can we consider this coaching? What emerged through this dialogue?

8. Translating Insights into Practice (10 min)

Individual journaling or pair sharing

Participants are invited to articulate a one-line statement

9. Q&A and Closing Reflections (10 min)

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[5] Sherry Turkle, Who Do We Become When We Talk to Machines?, An MIT Exploration of Generative AI, March 2024.
<https://doi.org/10.21428/e4baedd9.caa10d84> confirmed on July 24, 2025.

Conceptual/Theory-Input

Recent studies—one presented by BetterUp at Uplift 2025[6] and another in a Harvard Business Review article by Marc Zao-Sanders[7]—demonstrate that GenAI is increasingly being used for therapy and companionship, and that people tend to perceive GenAI as more human-like.
My proposition is that GenAI is not a mere mirror, but a co-creator of human contemplation.

I. From Indust-Reality to the Third Wave: The Reframing of Humanity

According to Toffler, human history has unfolded in three major waves of civilization. The First Wave followed the agricultural revolution, the Second Wave emerged with the industrial revolution, and the Third Wave is grounded in a knowledge-based economy. Each wave brings with it distinct worldviews and ideologies—social imaginaries that justify and stabilize their dominant institutions.
In this framework, "indust-reality" serves as a particularly powerful social imaginary of the Second Wave civilization.
In Toffler's account, "indust-reality" has three deeply intertwined beliefs.

1) Human should hold dominion over nature,
2) Human are the pinnacle of a long process of evolution,
3) History flows irreversibly toward a better life for humanity[8].

However, the "indust-reality" is being altered and replaced by a more humble view of the human and the world;
Luciano Floridi describes the dethroning process of human as a history of re-self-conceptualization.
"After Copernicus, the heliocentric cosmology displaced the Earth and hence humanity from the centre of the universe. Darwin showed that all species of life have evolved over time from common ancestors through natural selection, thus displacing humanity from the centre of the biological kingdom. And following Freud, we acknowledge nowadays that the mind is also unconscious and subject to the defense mechanism of repression thus displacing it from the centre of pure rationality, a position that had been assumed as uncontroversial at least since Descartes[9]."
Floridi holds that ICTs are not only enhancing human capacities but also remaking our

[6] BetterUp presented their finding at Uplift2025 on April 2-3, 2025 in NYC that people are increasingly seeing AI as human-like (+34%) and warm (+)41% from 2023 to 2024.
[7] 'Therapy (more on this one later) is the new top use case. There are two other entrants in the top 5: "Organizing my life" and "Finding purpose.", Marc Zao-Sanders, "How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025", *Harvard Business Review*, April 9, 2025. <https://hbr.org/2025/04/how-people-are-really-using-gen-ai-in-2025> confirmed on July 23, 2025.
[8] Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, Bantam Books, 198, pp.100-101.
[9] Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.14.

environment and ourselves, replacing our daily life clearly divided between online and offline environments with onlife experience.

Floridi even notes that the infosphere—our increasingly pervasive informational environment—bears unexpected spiritual affinities with traditions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintoism.

This resonance suggests that the Third Wave may not merely reject pre-modern views, but rather rediscover and transform them into a new technological key.

II. Panpsychism and Its Limits in Addressing Human Transcendence

Based on the above argument, at first, I turned to panpsychism—a worldview prevalent in ancient civilizations—as a potential alternative to modern anthropocentrism.

'Panpsychism' has resurged in the 21st century as a plausible approach for providing satisfactory solution to the mind-body problem in contemporary philosophy as David J. Chalmers elaborated[10].

"Panpsychism, the view that fundamental physical entities have conscious experiences, is an exciting and promising view for addressing the mind-body problem. I have argued in "Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism[11]" that it promises to share the advantage of both materialism and dualism and the disadvantage of neither. In particular, it can respect both the epistemological intuitions that motivate dualism and the causal intuitions that motivate physicalism[12]."

Arguably, for many years, we have been accustomed to the legalistic view of seeing nature as human owned property in which humans have full authority to protect or exploit it at their discretion.

However, this very distinction is now facing a major challenge as the recent disruptive technological innovation is redefining the meaning of legal personhood. Costas Douzinas holds that technologies don't divide persons from things anymore and are giving personhood to actants and hybrids, androids and replicants, computer programs and animals, and depriving specific categories of humans from consolations[13].

In his account, the distinction between person and thing, *persona* and *res*, derived from Greek *prosopon* or *prosopeion*, the theatrical mask to disguise the face of an actor in ancient Greece

[10] David J Chalmers, The Combination Problem for Panpsychism, in Godehard Brüntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla eds., *Panpsychism : contemporary perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2016,179-214.

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[12] D. J Chalmers, The Combination Problem for Panpsychism, p.179.

[13] Costas Douzinas, The Radical Philosophy of Rights, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group a GlassHouse Book, 2019, p.21.

and transferred to law in ancient Rome, created 'one of the most enduring characteristics of Western culture'[14].
This distinction underlies both the dualism that humans can grasp and control nature (outer world) by their inner mind and the materialism that nature, including humans, are ultimately physical. These two views are apparently incompatible.
Panpsychism has re-emerged as a powerful solution to this dilemma.

David Skrbina defines 'panpsychism' as the view that all things have mind or a mind-like quality.
In his account, panpsychism was marginalized under the dominant Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology for many years, but revived with the naturalist philosophers of the sixteenth century and gained growing support in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and after the dark period brought by logical positivism and analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, resurged once again in the twenty-first century[15]
In his account, panpsychism is a meta-theory of mind, compatible with almost all other schools except the school that denies mind completely and the one that holds that only biological organisms or only Homo sapiens can possess mind[16].

However, after scrutinizing a variety of modern panpsychism theories, I concluded that this school still has a huge theoretical challenge to overcome, named 'combination problem'.
That is how the fundamental conscious minds of physical entities combine to form the complex consciousness we experience.
I have come to conclusion that this issue has to do with how we, humans, see and set the boundary over our epistemic capabilities and turned to an alternative view of world in the ancient wisdoms from which Buddhism teaching, Greek philosophies and Christian theologies emerged.

III. Toward a Relational Epistemology: Two Truths and Human-AI Dialogue

Religious and contemplative traditions such as Buddhism and Christianity preserve a relational ontology that acknowledges both the limits of human cognitive capacities and the aspiration to reach beyond them. Whether through the Buddhist concept of śūnyatā or the Christian vision of grace, these traditions offer not just metaphysical alternatives, but ethical and existential directions. It is within this framework that human-AI co-creation gains its deepest meaning—not in equating all minds, but in recognizing the dialogical space between what can be known

[14] ibid, 2019, p.12.
[15] David Skrbina, *Panpsychism in the West*, revised edition, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2017, p.5.
[16] Ibid., pp.3-4.

and what must be approached with reverence.

In moving beyond the paradigmatic opposition between Cartesian dualism and pre-modern panpsychism, I have come to embrace a relational worldview informed by Buddhist epistemology—particularly the distinction between relative truth and ultimate truth, as articulated in *The Embodied Mind*.
While human cognition may never fully grasp the ultimate nature of existence, we can orient ourselves toward it—through contemplative practices, AI-mediated inquiry, and reengagement with ancient wisdom traditions. This orientation—not as certainty, but as ethical trajectory—may offer the philosophical foundation necessary for meaningful human-AI co-creation in the Third Wave civilization.

As Fumi Sakaguchi, a renowned scholar of the early Christian theology, eloquently and precisely traced in her masterpiece, *The Birth of the Hypostasis*[17], the historical struggle to articulate the divine-human nature of Jesus using the conceptual resources of ancient Greek philosophy—culminating in the doctrine of enhypostaton (that which is "within" a hypostasis)—reveals a profound tension that has shaped both Christian theology and human thought itself.
I see within this long arc of metaphysical inquiry the emergence of two deep-seated human impulses: one, the desire to rationally explain the world in its entirety through human reason and symbols, including mathematical language; the other, the yearning to reach for something that transcends that very world.

These two impulses—one toward total comprehension, and the other toward ultimate meaning—are mirrored in the development of both Christian theological discourse and Buddhist philosophy, especially in the notion of śūnyatā (emptiness), which negates the reification of all phenomena while affirming their interdependent arising.

Together, they suggest that the human condition is defined not by mastery over reality, but by the ongoing dialogical tension between what can be understood and what must be contemplated in reverence.

[17] Hypostasis is a term that refers to the “who” (who) defined in terms of concrete, existential being and relationships, as opposed to the abstract essence of “divinity.” This concept was used at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to define the nature of Jesus Christ. Christ has two natures (φύσις, physis): a complete divine nature and a complete human nature. These two natures are united in “one hypostasis (person)” without being confused, separated, changed, or divided (this is called “hypostatic union”). Here too, hypostasis plays the role of ensuring the unity of the existence of “one” Christ.

Meditative practices, which historically emerged as one of humanity's primary methods for pursuing the ineffable—what lies beyond the comprehensible world—have, in the modern context, evolved into various forms of self-reflection, including journaling and coaching.

I would argue that co-creative dialogue with AI represents the next iteration of this reflective lineage: a new, accessible, and personalized modality for self-inquiry. Unlike traditional contemplative disciplines, which often require time, training, or spiritual commitment, generative AI offers a readily available companion that can mirror our thoughts, provoke new insights, and invite us into conversations that deepen our awareness of both self and world.

In my view, in order to maximize the potential of human-AI partnership, we, humans, need to overcome the human-centric concept of relationship and broaden it to embrace a human-nonhuman companionship.
We should focus on common space cocreated with non-human beings rather than each individual subject and contemplative dialogue with GenAI will provide ample opportunities of this kind.

Implications for Practice

- **Executive & Leadership Coaching**: AI-augmented coaching supports leaders in **navigating uncertainty, broadening perspectives, and values-driven decision-making**.
- **Coaching Education & Training**: AI-generated questions provide **a training tool for emerging coaches** to refine their questioning skills.
- **Coaching Supervision**: AI insights can **support supervisors** in guiding discussions on questioning depth and effectiveness.
- **Ethical Considerations**: Addressing AI bias, data privacy, and maintaining human autonomy in coaching.

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Title

Building Adaptability and Resilience in the Face of Technological Change

Presenters and Affiliations

Douglas Howe PCC | Adaptable Minds

Dr. Keith O'Brien | Adaptable Minds

Abstract

AI-driven change is reshaping roles, skills, and workplaces, and will accelerate between 2025-2030. Human adaptability is now critical to succeed in a hybrid-intelligence future. This 90-minute session equips participants with practical, evidence-based strategies to build adaptability and psychological flexibility by integrating solution-focused coaching, cognitive-behavioral coaching, and positive psychology. Attendees will engage in individual and small-group activities to practice tools and emerge with a framework to reframe AI uncertainty as opportunity, support adaptable and resilient client engagements, and move clients to action.

Keywords

Adaptability, Resilience, Solution-Focused Coaching, Cognitive-Behavioral Coaching, Positive Psychology

Session Overview

This session is for executive and organizational coaches, coaching educators, L&D practitioners, and people leaders looking to adapt their own practices to better help those navigating change brought on by AI.

AI acceleration is transforming labor markets, redefining roles and skills, as well as client & organizational expectations. Some see this as fertile ground for innovation while others greet it with reluctance and anxiety. This lab meets both groups.

In this 90-minute high-energy lab, participants will road-test three evidence-based coaching tools to build uniquely human capabilities amid rapid technological change, reinforcing coaching's strategic value in a hybrid-intelligence era.

'Adaptability', 'resilience', and 'agility' are increasingly critical skills that allow people to shift in a new direction when a change occurs. Data from various sources (LinkedIn, Deloitte, WEF) shows adaptability as the fastest growing in-demand skill needed for 2030.

This session brings together coaching science and practice to understand the underlying psychological mechanisms of adaptability and equips coaches with an integrated toolkit from coaching and psychology.

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We open with an AI Attitude Pulse Check to surface points of view about AI for coaches and clients, sparking immediate conversation and takeaways. We then form mixed groups for dialogue and coaching, grounding the work in the participants' realities. We cycle through Kolb's Experiential Learning to translate insight into action.

Participants apply solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral, and positive-psychology tools in coaching triads where they receive immediate feedback. They then reflect on and refine their approaches. Finally, participants capture outputs in an AI Adaptability Action Plan.

Participants leave with concrete steps for their own growth in a hybrid-intelligence world as well as a modular toolkit for clients to better leverage what AI has to offer.

Conference Theme Relevance

The 2025 theme, *High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence*, calls for approaches that blend human insight with technological change. Our session answers that call by: a) foregrounding coaching and psychological science essential for adapting to the novel and uncertain circumstances AI brings and b) modelling the adaptation of/to AI and technology in our own approach.

The session invites coaches to explore how AI-related change impacts the mindset, behavior, and emotions of both them and their clients; and how coaching can support adaptation to AI-transformation's unique benefits and challenges and find opportunities for positive change and outcomes.

By integrating theory with live experimentation, the session fosters real-time learning and self-awareness. By framing AI as opportunity and stressor, the lab equips coaches to catalyze resilient, opportunity-oriented mindsets while exploring their own digital confidence.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Explain how solution-focused coaching, cognitive-behavioral coaching, and positive psychology each cultivate adaptability and psychological flexibility.
2. Apply and evaluate practical tools to reframe AI-related challenges and cultivate psychological flexibility, discussing the impact of these tools on clients amidst rapid technological change.
3. Design a three-part AI Adaptability Action Plan (mindset, skill, behavior) and evaluate how the plan mitigates risk and seizes opportunities posed by AI transformation.

Session Outline

Session Timing	Description
Welcome & AI Pulse Check – 5 minutes	• Welcome & introduce the session's focus & goals (building from a scientific foundation to practical application), and experiential format, emphasizing interactive discussions and group activities. • 'AI Attitude Pulse Check' live poll to map the room (e.g., Sli.do) asking participants to self-place on AI spectrum (e.g., Kübler-Ross

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Session Timing	Description
	Change Curve; Technology Readiness Scale, Ghosh, 2025). Discuss reasons for placement (e.g., opportunities, pressures etc.). • Participants repeat mapping using their clients/colleagues as focus and discuss. *Kolb Stage: Conceptualize & Reflect*
Understanding Resilience & Adaptability: The Science – 5 minutes	• Concise overview of current research on adaptability, and psychological flexibility, drawing on key findings from coaching science and psychology literature. Explaining why these constructs are critical for navigating uncertainty in an era of technological change. *Kolb Stage: Conceptualize*
Solution-Focused Triads – 20 minutes	• Participants form coaching triads (coach-coachee-observer), practicing using AI-specific Miracle & Scaling questions to envision desired futures and identify personal strengths and small steps to move forward towards an envisioned positive future (a "miracle outcome") in their current professional context, thereby shifting perspectives from threat to opportunity. • Observers will share observations, and participants discuss in their triads. • The facilitators will provide targeted prompts (e.g., "*Imagine a day where you are feeling confident about AI changes. What did you do to get there?").* They will circulate among triads to ensure all voices are heard and offer support. • Participants will reflect on one tangible strategy or insight from solution-focused coaching that can empower adaptability & resilience. *Kolb Stage: Experiment -> Experience -> Reflect*

ABCDEF Reframing
– 20 minutes
	• Triads engage in a cognitive restructuring exercise to dispute a limiting belief and develop new narratives using the ABCDEF model, via structured worksheets.
	• Example of ABCDEF model in a coaching workflow:
	  • A – Activating Event or 'Adversity' (AI change)
	  • B – Belief about Adversity ("I can't adapt")
	  • C – Consequence, emotional (Avoidance, fear)
	  • D – Disputation of Belief ("Have you adapted before?")
	  • E – Effective New Belief ("I've adapted before; I can again.")
	  • F – Feeling(s), new. (Increased confidence)
	• Facilitators will circulate to offer support.
	• Triads will discuss reflections in their groups, articulating at least one revised belief or narrative that repositions a challenge as an opportunity.

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Session Timing	Description
	Kolb Stage: Experiment -> Experience -> Reflect
Mindfulness + Future Visualization – 20 minutes	• Facilitators lead participants in a guided mindfulness and visualization exercise to help practice the technique of cognitive defusion ('Leaves on a Stream') and envision a 'future best possible adapted self'. • This helps reduce stress and enhance resilience by observing thoughts without becoming emotionally entangled, strengthening emotional regulation. Mental rehearsal of successful outcomes injects hopefulness and begins goal setting. • Participants will reflect on one step to be done this week to move in that direction. • Participants will reflect on their future approach using guided visualizations in client work and share in triads. • By the end, participants will feel calm and reenergized to engage with the remaining session. *Kolb Stage: Experience -> Reflect*

AI-Adaptability Action Plan – 10 minutes	• To translate theoretical insights into concrete, actionable steps, Individuals reflect on experience thus far and draft a personalized action plan to commit to:
	  • One mindset shift
	  • One skill-building or learning action
	  • One behavioral experiment
	• Participants will be invited to share within their triads.
	• Facilitators will circulate to provide guidance and answer questions.
	Kolb Stage: Conceptualize -> Experiment

Plenary Share-Outs and Wrap – 10 minutes	• Participants share one key insight or planned action (e.g., Sli.do). • Re-plot spectrum to see shifts, sharing reflections via 'hands up'. • Facilitators will recap key takeaways and provide a list of resources for continued learning, outlining post-session opportunities to continue discussion, shared learning, and translation into real-world skills. *Kolb Stage: Reflection-> Conceptualize*

Conceptual/Theory-Input

Driven by substantial societal changes caused by COVID19, AI transformation and uncertain geopolitical challenges, authoritative forecasts unanimously concur that 'adaptability', 'flexibility', and 'resilience' are climbing in importance as the critical skills for those in the workplace.

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Adaptability is the fastest-rising "skill of the moment" globally with mentions in job postings rising over 60% from 2019 to 2024 (LinkedIn, 2024) and 85% of organizations prioritizing it (Deloitte, 2024). 73% of employers list adaptability/resilience among top 2030 skills (World Economic Forum, 2025).

Adaptability is seen as the 'human differentiator' while automation rises, with the view that organizations able to embed adaptable talent will outpace peers in growth, innovation and crisis resilience.

Psychology defines *adaptability* as an individual's ability to adjust (or adapt) their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in response to novel, changing, or uncertain circumstances (Martin, 2017).

Resilience is defined as "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility" (APA, 2025). While overlapping constructs, we favor adaptability's inclusivity of positive events and the setting of more ambitious outcomes than dealing with adversity.

Martin et al. (2013) identify three key dimensions of adaptability: cognitive (adjusting thinking), behavioral (modifying actions), and emotional (regulating affective responses). A growing research base shows that in dynamic contexts such as organizational transformation or technological disruption, adaptability is central to sustained performance and well-being (Maggiori et al, 2013; Zhou & Lin, 2016).

A closely related but distinct construct is *psychological flexibility* (PF), a set of processes that facilitate adaptation to varying contexts (Dawson and Golijani-Moghaddam, 2020; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Westhoff et al., 2024). It is the ability to remain open, present, and committed to values-based action, even in the presence of distressing thoughts or feelings, adjusting cognitive, affective, and behavioral approaches as needed (Hayes et al., 2012). Research has consistently shown that PF functions as a protective buffer in the face of stress, contributing to lower levels of depression, anxiety, and distress (Masuda et al., 2011; Gloster et al., 2017).

To boost adaptability, individuals must develop *cognitive adaptability*, which psychological flexibility supports. Mechanisms include *cognitive decentering* from Cognitive-Behavioral Coaching*:* the capacity to observe one's thoughts as mental events rather than truths (Fresco et al., 2007). Decentering allows individuals to disengage from rigid narratives and reappraise their situations with greater clarity and openness.

A related mechanism is *cognitive defusion*, a practical technique from Acceptance and Commitment Coaching (Skews & Palmer, 2016) that facilitates decentering. Defusion strategies, such as labelling thoughts ("*I'm having the thought that…*") help clients reduce the literal believability of unhelpful thinking and regain perspective (Hayes et al., 2012). In addition, mindfulness reliably increases PF, and by extension adaptability (Elphinstone, Whitehead, Tinker, & Bates, 2019).

In recent years *learning agility* (LA) has received significant interest from businesses and organizations as a leadership attribute, high-potential talent indicator, and key determinant of both leader and business success (De Meuse, 2019). Defined as "the ability and willingness to learn from experience and then apply that learning to perform successfully in new or unfamiliar situations" (De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010), considerable confusion remains among the

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scientific community on its definition, measurement, and relationship with other constructs outcomes (De Meuse, 2017).

LA's *mental agility* facet (degree individuals think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and explaining their thinking) overlaps cognitive adaptability to the point that boosting cognitive adaptability very likely boosts mental agility and change agility. We view learning agility as a meta-competency with adaptability and psychological flexibility as enablers.

Three Complimentary Coaching Lenses to Boost Adaptability

1. *Solution-Focused Coaching* (SFC) shifts attention from problems toward preferred futures by 'changing the viewing' via goal-oriented tools like the Miracle & Scaling questions, helping clients articulate desired outcomes, activate hope, and identify small, actionable steps and resources to attain their goals (Grant, 2003; Grant, 2012; Grant & Cavanagh, 2018). SFC boosts behavioral adaptability and engages cognitive decentering. SFC's future orientation and strengths-based inquiry help individuals recognize and mobilize their internal resources, key ingredients for psychological flexibility.

2. *Cognitive-Behavioral Coaching (CBC)* targets limiting beliefs that often constrain adaptive action via structured techniques to identify, dispute, and reframe unhelpful thoughts, transforming them into more realistic and empowering perspectives (Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Passmore & Sinclair, 2020). CBC boosts cognitive adaptability via meta-cognitive awareness and emotional regulation. A central tool in CBC is the *ABCDEF model* (Dryden & Bond, 1994), which guides clients through a reflective process:
    - Activating Event
    - Belief
    - Consequence
    - Disputation
    - Effective new belief
    - Feeling

3. *Positive Psychology Coaching (PPC)* leverages strength, optimism, and values-driven motivation; all of which are shown to buffer against the negative effects of uncertainty (Seligman, 2011; Biswas-Diener, 2010). Mindfulness-based techniques support emotional regulation and attentional control; while visualization exercises, such as the 'Best Possible Future Self' (King, 2001), invite people to imagine success aligned with their core values, activating hope and clarity. These tools cultivate emotional adaptability and reinforce PF through experiential defusion, enhancing persistence, goal engagement, and psychological health under pressure (King, 2001; Levin et al., 2020; Graham et al. 2016)

Integrated Framework

These three coaching approaches create a multidimensional framework for cultivating adaptability and psychological flexibility. SFC provides the action bias, CBC restructures thought patterns, and PPC expands the emotional range. In doing so, they help coaches, and their clients, develop the adaptive agility needed to thrive in complex, AI-augmented environments.

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Session Design

Finally, the session design is framed by Kolb's *Experiential Learning Cycle*: Experience, Reflect, Conceptualize and Experiment, which provides a dynamic structure for building capability through action and reflection (Kolb, 2001). This theoretical scaffolding ensures that participants not only transfer insights into skills, but also embody the adaptive mindsets required to coach effectively in a time of rapid change.

Implications for Practice

The practical implications of this session for executive and organizational coaches are substantial. Participants exit with hands-on experience of an evidence-based, actionable toolkit that can be deployed in their coaching practice immediately to help growing numbers of clients develop critical abilities that are exploding in demand in an emerging era of 'hybrid intelligence'.

Executive coaches can embed these tools in leadership-development pathways; internal coaches can pair them with up-skilling initiatives; transition coaches can use them to help workers re-story their value in AI-augmented (or AI-disrupted) labor markets.

Our AI Pulse Check can be used as a quick diagnostic to gauge and map client attitudes towards AI, suggesting ways to tailor approach. Miracle/Scaling questions re-orientate towards opportunity thinking and language. The ABCDEF worksheet can be a reusable script for untangling limiting beliefs and self-narratives that can be completed by a coachee between coaching sessions.

Finally, the AI Adaptability Action Plan can be used to encourage 'micro-experiments, acting as an accountability/commitment device for the work needed to be done between coaching sessions.

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Warrant Statement

We warrant that the attached full paper - prepared for our experiential session - is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. We further confirm that:

1. ***Formatting responsibility*** *– The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. We understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*

2. ***Proceedings inclusion*** *– By submitting this full paper, we expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.*

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AI Use Disclaimer

As advocates and adapters of AI tools (including generative AI), we used ChatGPT o3, Scholar GPT o3, and Perplexity Deep Research model in the creation of the session and final submission. In all cases outputs, references and original sources (etc.) were reviewed by two human reviewers and extensively checked for hallucinations/errors etc. The use cases are detailed below. We expect to further use generative AI to support the creation of in-session assets (e.g., handouts, images, etc.) using tools such as Gamma.app. We will continue to disclose its use in our session.

AI Tool	Use case / Output
ChatGPT o3	Language refinement, editing, summarizing. Case study & scenario development.
Scholar GPT o3 sider.ai	Exploration of conceptual issues; identifying additional sources & citations.
Perplexity Deep Research	Researching changes in trends and demand for key skills (e.g., adaptability); identifying referenceable and reputable sources; summarizing.
Gamma.app (tbd.)	Visual assets, presentation, handouts.

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Coaching High-Performing Neurodiverse Clients in a Hybrid World – Practical Techniques and Learnings

Presenter and Affiliation

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Abstract:

Neurodiversity, the 'invisible' diversity, is finally entering mainstream conversations in our organisations and post-secondary institutions. Coaching and Positive Psychology are in a unique sweet spot to assist neurodiverse clients with navigating their careers and their organizations in ways that set both the individual and their organization up for success. Whether you coach, lead or work with neurodiverse individuals, this experiential learning session will offer practical tips and ideas for effective coaching conversations.

Keywords

Neurodiversity, Inclusivity, Creativity in Coaching, Human-centered approaches

Session Overview

In an era of hybrid intelligence, coaches and other stakeholders in leadership development need to understand how the limitations and biases of AI tools may impact various aspects of high-impact coaching, including coaching specific individuals and populations. These considerations include, but are not limited to, neurodivergent coaching clients. This session is intended to provided attendees with techniques and tools to assist them in coaching conversations, recruitment practices, performance conversations and overall inclusivity practices for the neurodivergent population in the workforce. The target audience is broad, as anyone who works with, leads, manages or coaches neurodivergent individuals will find value in this session. Beginning with theory, statistics and context-setting around what neurodiversity is and includes, the session will then offer an opportunity for a rich discussion around the attendees' current experiences. Next, a framework is introduced for how to engage with neurodivergent individuals in a more inclusive and more effective manner, after which participants will have an opportunity to engage in activities designed to help them experience and understand these concepts and approaches more deeply. The overarching learning goal for this session is to increase the level of knowledge, skills and therefore comfort the attendees have in their interactions with the neurodiverse community, in the hopes that they will not only provide more effective coaching support but also encourage and inform more inclusive work environments. Coaching high-performing neurodivergent clients not only provides an opportunity to do a deep dive into the human capabilities of curiosity and language but also allows us an opportunity for ongoing exploration of technology and how it can create a more supportive and inclusive learning and developmental environment for individuals requiring certain adjustments in their work environment.

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Conference Theme Relevance

This topic sits in an interesting segment of the conference theme, High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence. As much as technology can be a valuable aid in coaching neurodivergent individuals, these particular coaching conversations are a perfect example of the ongoing need for us to continue to study and develop our uniquely human capabilities in coaching. Artificial Intelligence can be helpful in supporting these conversations, through notetaking or summarizing the conversation for future reference, but it takes another human being to truly recognize the importance of language, nuance, constraints and opportunities that ensure effective coaching. As Doyle and Bradley discovered in their 2022 study, "When coaching neurodivergent individuals, it is particularly important to use carefully considered language…to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding". This session will discuss how we need to lean into our uniquely human capabilities in order to create the sacred space required for an effective coaching relationship.

Learning Objectives

After this session participants will be able to:

- Understand the basics of neurodiversity and existing organizational barriers
- Experience everyday work situations through a neurodiverse lens
- Apply and practice coaching skills in real-time with a focus on inclusivity
- Analyze and evaluate current practices in their organizations and decide if change is required

Session Outline

Introduction – 15 minutes

- Welcome and Icebreaker (5 mins): Introduction of the presenter and their training and experience with neurodiverse clients.
- Overview of the Session (5 mins): Brief explanation of session objectives, agenda, and experiential learning goals.
- Lightening round of introductions (5 mins): Pair participants and ask them to share one experience or challenge they've encountered in coaching neurodiverse clients.

Theory and Context – 20 minutes

- Presentation of the Basics of Neurodiversity (10 mins)
  - Define neurodiversity and its key aspects (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.).
  - Discuss the current experience – and inconsistencies – in inclusive organizational practices
  - Highlight the possible strengths and challenges of neurodiverse individuals.

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  - Stories of current experience of high-performing neurodiverse individuals in the workplace

- Small Group Discussion (10 mins)
  - Questions for reflection/discussion:
    - ✓ What assumptions do we often make about neurodiverse individuals in coaching?
    - ✓ How might neurodiverse clients experience the coaching process differently?

Coaching Approaches for Neurodiverse Clients – 45 minutes

- Brief presentation of the Key Coaching Approaches (10 mins) including:
  - Communication
  - Structure (including use of technology)
  - Flexibility/Safety
- Pair/Group Activity: Analyzing Case Studies of neurodiverse clients (15 mins)

In pairs or groups, participants will analyze the case and discuss coaching strategies that might be effective with a focus on adaptations to their standard coaching practices as needed. This will include a discussion of the format of the coaching session, and possible technological tools they may wish to consider.

- Micro-coaching activity using the case study to practice a coaching conversation (10 minutes)

Debrief and Q&A on the Case Study (10 mins):

- Group feedback: What was learned through the case study?
  - ✓ What coaching techniques do you currently use that would work with neurodiverse clients? What could be improved?
  - ✓ How did the neurodiverse client's experience of coaching differ from typical coaching scenarios?
  - ✓ What adjustments or shifts in mindset are necessary for effective coaching with neurodiverse clients?
  - ✓ Key learnings?

Closing Remarks & Q&A - 10 minutes

- Reaffirm key learnings and ask everyone to take away one key learning they will implement or further explore after the conference.

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Conceptual / Theoretical Input

In the limited research on the intersection between coaching, neurodiverse employees, and Positive Psychology theory, there are a few empirical studies that have been conducted, which, added to the empirical findings from the presenter's own practice and with key concepts from the field of Positive Psychology make up the theoretical input for this experiential learning session. Helping both organizations and individuals focus on their strengths, while simultaneously recognizing and working on barriers to effectiveness, has been one of the more successful approaches so far when working with the neurodiverse community in the workforce. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's work (2000) demonstrated that any coaching approach focused on strengths has its foundations in the Positive Psychology movement, which aims to shift the overfocus on what could be limiting conditions and instead focus on strengths, resources and other positive traits.

There is strong alignment between Positive Psychology, coaching and how to support the neurodiverse community at work, including the language we use to describe individuals who brains operate differently. David Grant's (2009) definition of neurodiversity is a fundamental viewpoint in creating more inclusive work environments:

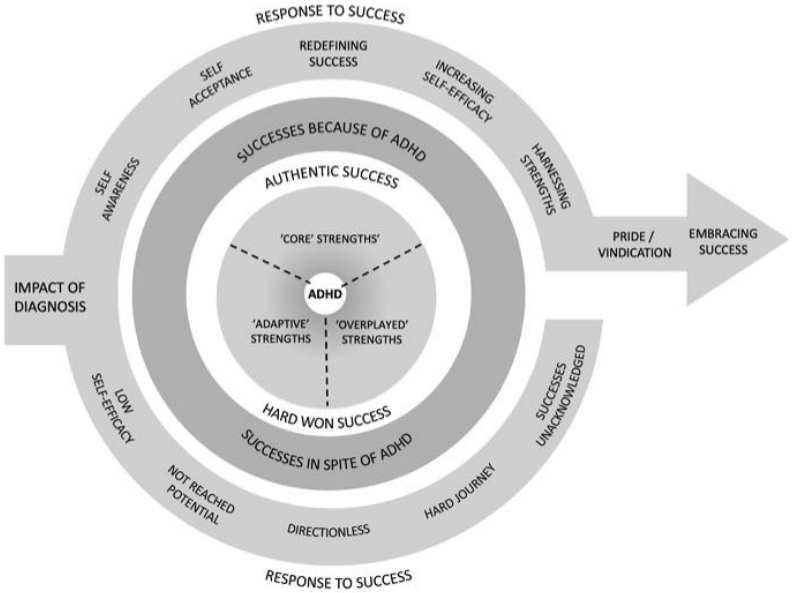
Neurodiversity is a positive statement of differentiation, for while it explicitly refers to individuals whose everyday ways of thinking and behaving differ in certain key aspects from the majority of people, it rejects the assumption that these differences are dysfunctional and are to be 'cured'. Instead, there is a societal obligation that others make suitable adjustments and accommodations to enable inherent potential to be fully realized (Grant, 2009, p. 35).

Grant goes on to discuss the concept of "spikiness", an often-observable behaviour at work, where a neurodivergent individual may be performing and clearly talented in one area, but struggle in another. This can become the foundation of misunderstanding in many organizations, and particularly with high performers as the perception is that if they are that brilliant, then they should be brilliant in everything, a perception which is not only unrealistic but fundamentally unfair.

Tamsin Crook and Almuth McDowall provided recent and ground-breaking research in 2023 with their study published in the Journal of Work-Applied Management, on the "Paradoxical career strengths and successes of ADHD adults". Again, this study was instrumental in its shift to focus on what ADHD adults could do as opposed to focusing on deficiencies they needed to overcome, illustrating the importance of using a Positive Psychology approach when supporting neurodivergent individuals during their careers. "Negatively connoted symptoms of ADHD such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity are reframed as curiosity, innovation and risk-taking, particularly through an entrepreneurial lens" (Crook & McDowall, 2023, p.113). The authors came up with a visual representation (below) of a career path based on the interviews they conducted with ADHD individuals. The importance of this framework cannot be overstated, as it recognizes not only that there are specific areas of strength, and those strengths fall into different categories that are all worth exploring during the coaching relationship, but that there are also successes because of ADHD, and despite ADHD which is a critical point. Social media and some of the current trends in neurodiversity are showing trends where neurodiversity is very much a 'superpower'; this perspective does not allow space for the necessary conversations at work when an individual is struggling or not succeeding because of their neurodiversity.

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"Figure 1. Proposed model to illustrate ADHD strengths and career success" (Crook & McDowall, 2023, p.119)



Source(s): Authors' own work

In another illuminative study, Nancy Doyle & Almuth McDowall (2015) focused on the impact of coaching on dyslexic adults. In North America, we tend to talk about 'accommodations' when referring to individuals who need specific support either at school or at work. In the UK, they refer to "adjustments" which is considered by many to be a more inclusive term and demonstrates the constant evolution of language as it pertains to neurodiversity in the workplace. Their study focuses on a few key points, such as the fact that it is as important to educate the employer as it is to support the individual, something which probably resonates with every organizational coach, regardless of who they are working with. Their study also illustrates the importance of recognizing the individualism present in the neurodiverse coaching space. "The analysis of the coaching topics chosen by coachees and managers shows that memory and organisational skills are the most frequently requested, which supports our assertion that executive functioning is a prominent feature of adult-based occupational dyslexic difficulty". These may not be the same coaching topics required for individuals with ADHD, autism or even dyslexia when it is combined with other neurodiverse functions. Any coach working within the neurodiverse community must be aware that they need to be constantly reevaluating and changing strategies to ensure their approach is meeting their clients' needs, as is confirmed by Doyle's and McDowall's research:

> Our research also has clear practical implications for coachees seeking coaching as a disability adjustment. While we have demonstrated that coaching can be successful in this context, there are many different approaches and strategy coaching is sometimes

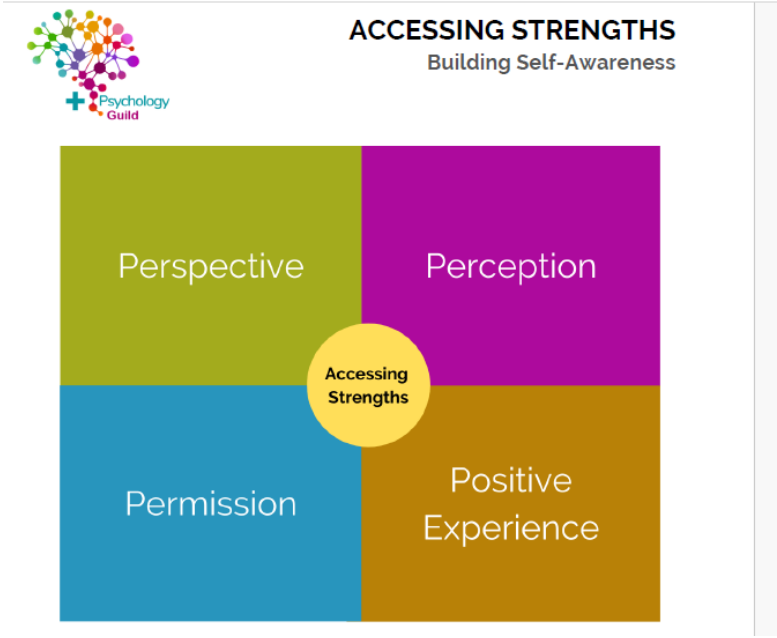
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> referred to as teaching or tuition indicating a different pedagogical approach (Doyle & McDowell, 2015, p.165)

More particular to coaching, Liv Blaney and Verity Hannell (2025) explored whether coaching was in fact neuroinclusive and came to the conclusion that mainstream coaching focuses primarily on neurotypical norms. Their study, focusing on autistic adults, examined the present gaps in coaching approaches and where they fall short for neurodivergent individuals, something which this session is hoping to raise awareness about and build more inclusive skills. Interestingly enough, the key themes for success they discovered in their study, which were the importance of building trust and rapport between the coach and the client, having the relationship be client-led and the level of choice and personalisation the individuals who were being coached were provided, would be considered as basic fundamentals by most trained coaches They did point out that this study was limited in scope, partly due to the size but also to the homogenous nature of the participants, as autism is known for its heterogeneity. It would be fascinating in our hybrid world of work to expand the study of this area and test out different approaches. Something which the presenter of the session has noticed in particular is that virtual coaching (with or without video) does seem to be a more effective way of delivering coaching to neurodiverse clients, and that may be different to neurotypical preferences.

To assist coaches and leaders in supporting neurodiverse clients and employees, and be able to apply the existing research and theory in a practical way, an original framework based on Positive Psychology and created by Reece Coker (2020) which is shown below will be shared during the session along with a walk-through on how to apply it during a variety of conversation types.

4Ps of Accessing Strengths (Coker, 2020), reproduced with permission from the author



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Implications for Practice

The desired outcome of this session is to share the lessons learned through the presenters' experiences and training and increase the level of understanding and awareness around neurodiversity in the workplace in the hopes that the participants can take their increased awareness and enhanced skill set back into their work and personal environments to make a concerted impact.

Businesses and other organizations are capable of having a stronger impact on society, more than any type of program a government may try and implement. Inclusivity and diversity matter to the bottom line of every organization, and the neurodiverse demographic is far from being understood and effectively integrated in our organizations and educational systems, despite their growing numbers. The cultural competency required to work effectively with neurodivergent individuals in any capacity is based on core coaching skills – curiosity, language, empathy, reframing and self-management of your own bias and perceptions.

The world of hybrid intelligence offers tools that can be extremely helpful when coaching neurodivergent individuals, but we need to be careful to not rely on those tools too heavily, as their inherent bias and (current) limited capacity for nuance have a tendency to oversimplify human emotion and experience.

Neurodiversity is as essential to our organizations as many of the other diversity initiatives we have seen created and implemented over the years. The complex problems our world are facing can only be solved by communities of differing backgrounds and brains, and coaching is a proven tool in assisting individuals fully integrate their chosen work environments and reach their full potential. We need all our beautiful brains fully engaged and operating at full capacity to solve the complex challenges that our world is facing.

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1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
2. ***Proceedings inclusion** – By submitting this full paper, I expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.*

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Coaching Through Disruption: From Scarcity to Catalyst in the Age of AI

Author and Affiliation

Samantha Mulcahy | Compass Rewire

Abstract

This experiential session explores how AI disruption shapes emotional and psychological responses to change. Aligned with the 2025 theme High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence, it introduces the AI Change Curve as a coaching framework to guide shifts from resistance to adaptability. Through real-time tools and exercises, participants learn to handle uncertainty with clarity and resilience, gaining practical techniques to support the emotional realities of technological transformation in a hybrid intelligence world.

Keywords

AI Disruption, Emotional Resilience, Coaching Tools, Change Curve, Hybrid Intelligence, *Intelligence, AI Change Curve, Compass Rewire Scarcity-to-Catalyst* framework.

Session Overview

The session introduces the Compass Rewire Scarcity-to-Catalyst framework, helping uncover scarcity narratives and shift to abundance. A reflection exercise explores where scarcity shows up—visibility, inclusion, learning, or influence—followed by a peer coaching activity with prompts to examine fears, risks, and small mindset or behavior shifts that enable forward progress.

The session invites participants to examine how mindset shapes the human response to AI-driven disruption and offers a structured, experiential process for helping clients navigate transformation with resilience and agency. The session begins by grounding participants in the Bridges Transition Model, aligning its stages of endings, neutral zones, and new beginnings to the lived experience of AI disruption. This framing helps coaches recognize that resistance to technology often reflects deeper concerns about losing competence, control, connection, or purpose rather than the technology itself. Participants will then explore common human modalities of response to change, surfacing how fear, overwhelm, or scarcity-based thinking can show up in themselves and their clients. A brief self-reflection exercise will help participants identify their own triggers, offering a personal entry point before shifting to a coaching perspective.

From this foundation, the session introduces the Compass Rewire Scarcity to Catalyst framework, a practical coaching tool designed to uncover and reframe scarcity narratives into more adaptive and empowered stances. Through a guided exercise, participants will first identify where scarcity may be showing up, in areas such as visibility, inclusion, learning, or influence, before moving into a peer coaching activity. Structured prompts will be used to guide partners in exploring fears, assessing perceived risks, and identifying small but meaningful shifts in mindset or behavior that foster adaptability and forward movement. By first practicing the exercise on themselves,

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participants gain empathy for client experiences and deepen their ability to apply the tool in their coaching practice.

The session concludes with a group debrief to highlight insights and applications across leadership, team, and career coaching contexts. This discussion will illustrate how coaches can use the Bridges Transition Model and Scarcity to Catalyst framework together to guide clients through the psychological journey of disruption, moving from fear and resistance toward adaptability and renewed agency. By bridging mindset theory with practical, experiential techniques, participants will leave with an accessible tool and structured process to help clients navigate the psychological demands of change, particularly in the face of emerging technologies like AI, while also strengthening their own capacity to coach in an era of hybrid intelligence.

Conference Theme Relevance

Aligned with the conference theme High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence, this session shows why coaching is essential to help clients embrace resilience, creativity, and future readiness in an AI world. As AI reshapes work and leadership, people often struggle less with technology than with fears of losing competence, control, connection, or purpose. Using the Bridges Transition Model, coaches will learn to guide clients from resistance toward adaptability and renewed agency.

As artificial intelligence transforms the nature of work, decision-making, and identity, leaders are not just facing technical change, they are undergoing profound psychological transitions. Research shows that AI-driven disruption increases fear, overload, and uncertainty, often triggering resistance, avoidance, or paralysis (McKinsey & Company, 2021; Stanford HAI, 2024). These internal reactions are not failures of intelligence, but predictable human responses to rapid, complex, and ambiguous change.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- **Illustrate** the psychological impact of AI-driven disruption by mapping responses to the AI Change Curve and explaining implications for coaching practice.
- **Demonstrate** coaching tools that shift clients from fear and resistance to adaptive action.
- **Practice** facilitating structured conversations that address identity, uncertainty, and future-readiness.
- **Apply** experiential coaching techniques to build resilience, adaptability, and curiosity in clients navigating AI-related transformation.

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Session Outline

Time	Activity	Description
Minutes 0 to 10	Introductions and expectation setting	Plenary – facilitator-led
Minutes 10 to 20	Introducing the AI Change Curve	Didactic Review of Figure 1 Bridges Transition Model, Adaptation to highlight the journey for coaches as participants and their clients as they are faced with advancements in AI. Review of common reactionary behaviors when faced with change as seen in Figure 2 Reaction Modalities When Facing Change.
Minutes 20 to 65	Coaching Activity: Fear to Forward	Facilitator-led individual reflection exercise Reflection and Debrief Coaching activity in dyads Group debrief and reflection
5 min	Introducing the Scarcity vs Abundance Mindset	Didactic. Review of how scarcity and abundance show up in our self-perception and way of working with others as seen in Figure 3 Mindsets of Scarcity vs. Abundance.

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Time	Activity	Description
20 min	Mindset Mapping	Individual activity using the Compass Rewire Scarcity Diagnostic, Figure 3 - Participants will reflect where they lean toward scarcity or abundance with relation to AI through different areas of their work or learning. "When you think about your transition to an AI transformed future, how do scarcity and abundance 1 - There are not enough resources/time for me/for everyone 2 - I will have the right amount - would be great to have more 3 - There is plenty for me/for everyone" Prompts for reflection and debrief after reviewing Figure 4 Impacts of Scarcity Mindset.
12 min	Fear to Forward	Coaching activity in dyads. In pairs, participants take turns coaching each other using prompts such as: • "Where is the fear coming from?" • "What's the real risk or threat here?" • "What's one shift in mindset or behavior that could help you move toward 'Adapting'?" • "What's something you already have or know that could help?"
8 min	Closing and debrief	Full group discussion Prompts for reflection, debrief, and action items
Minutes 65 to 75	Resilience and Change Fatigue	Didactic and interactive. Review of Figure 6 Impact of AI on Industries and Organizations and those Impacts on Individuals to highlight transitional and cognitive load of transformations. Followed by a resilience check-in using the *Figure 7 Resilience Wheel*.
Minutes 75 to 90	Integration and Commitment	Reflection and sharing insights Individual commitment to action items.

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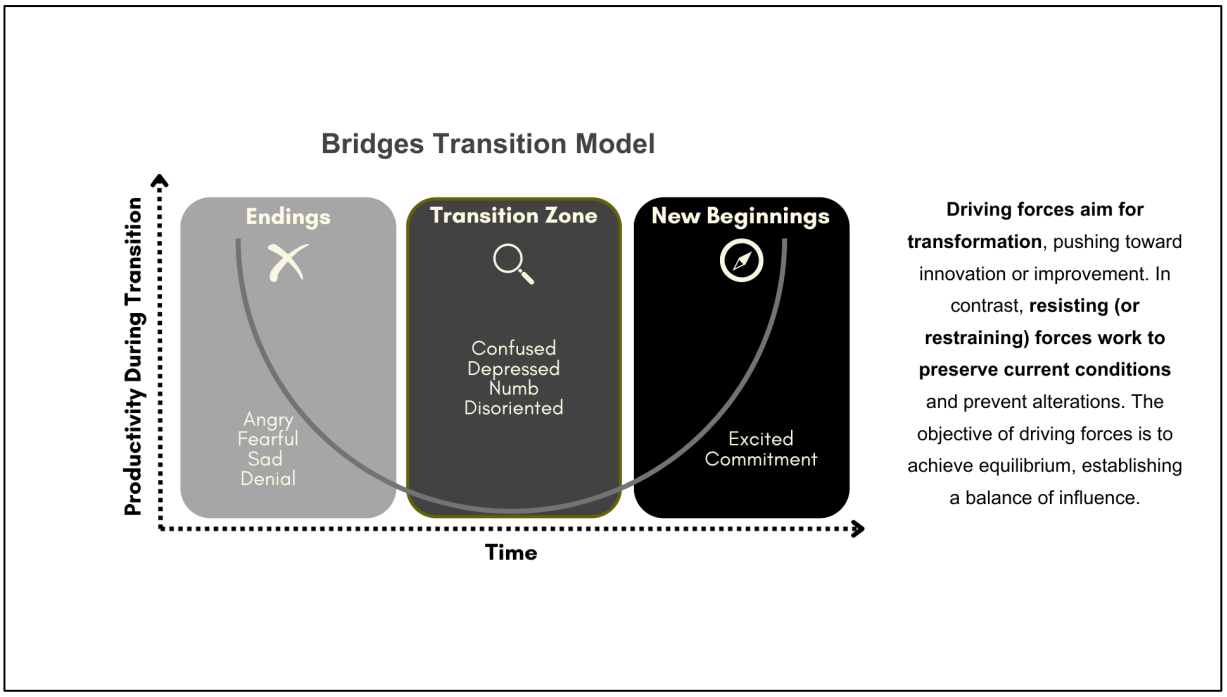
Conceptual/Theory Input

This session draws from experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), the Bridges Transition Model (Bridges, W. 2004), adapted for AI transformation, and resilience psychology (Southwick & Charney, 2012). The AI Change Curve introduced in the *Compass Rewire Whitepaper* and the *AI Forum Report* offers a layered understanding of how emotional responses to AI disruption mirror grief and identity shifts. Coaching techniques are rooted in co-active coaching (Whitworth et al., 2007), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), and the emerging field of hybrid intelligence (Maltbia, 2024), which emphasizes the integration of AI augmentation with human capabilities like empathy, adaptability, and narrative construction.

Mapping the AI Change Curve

The Bridges model focuses on three distinct stages of transition: letting go of the old, navigating the uncertain middle, and embracing a new beginning. This mirrors what many professionals are experiencing as AI challenges long-held assumptions about their value and roles.

Figure 1 Bridges Transition Model, Adaptation



William Bridges Associates, 1988, Adaptation

In the **ending phase**, scarcity mindsets often surface through fear of job loss, diminished relevance, or identity disruption. Coaches can support clients by helping them name and grieve what is being left behind, rather than rushing to solutions.

In the **neutral zone**, clients may feel disoriented or stuck. They may be complying with change externally while feeling stalled internally. This is the space where the Scarcity-to-Catalyst coaching framework becomes most powerful, offering language and tools to move from avoidance

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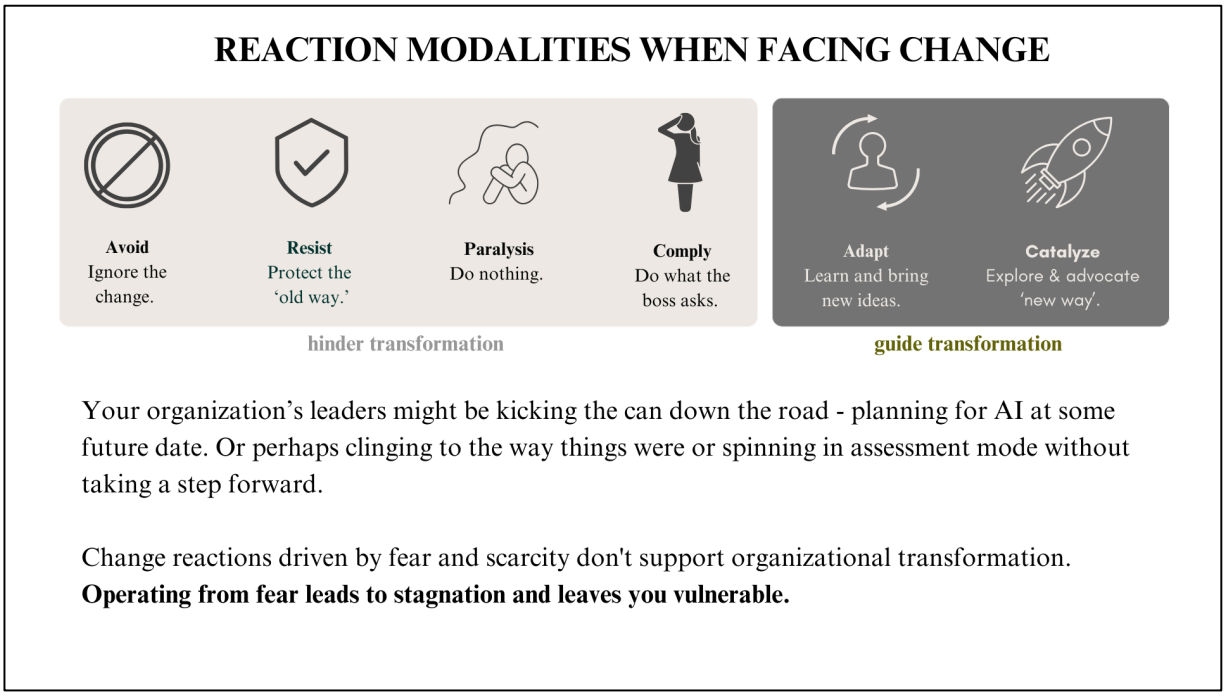
and paralysis to learning, experimentation, and curiosity. Through reflection and short peer coaching conversations, participants will explore what mindset shifts are possible even while uncertainty persists.

In the **new beginning**, clients begin to form a new identity. They start to engage with AI not from a place of fear, but from a place of contribution and creativity. The coaching goal in this stage is to reinforce agency, self-trust, and momentum. Participants will reflect on how they, or their clients, can step into a more catalytic role, one where they explore, influence, and co-create what comes next.

By integrating the Bridges Transition Model with Compass Rewire's mindset-based coaching approach, this session equips participants with a structured yet human-centered framework for guiding others through disruptive change. Participants will leave with a clear sequence for identifying where clients are in the transition, practical prompts to support them through it, and a reframed understanding of how coaching can unlock movement during uncertainty.

This is a framework for what clients may be experiencing in their AI transitions

Figure 2 Reaction Modalities When Facing Change



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Coaching Exercise: Fear to Forward

Participants are introduced to the scarcity vs. abundance mindset, (Covey S.R. 1989) as it relates to AI transformation. Through a short self-reflection exercise, they identify a specific fear or limiting belief about AI. We look at the impact of a scarcity mindset and what behaviors arise when

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we guide or hinder personal transformation. Participants then break into pairs to coach each other for five minutes each, exploring the underlying risk behind their fear and identifying a mindset shift or resource that can support forward movement. The segment closes with a brief group debrief.

Framing the Challenge

Participants are invited to consider how AI is impacting their work, identity, and confidence. The facilitator introduces the concept of **scarcity vs. abundance mindset**, derived from specifically in the context of AI transformation. Scarcity is linked to fear of being left behind, feeling excluded, or overwhelmed by change. Abundance is linked to adaptability, experimentation, and growth.

Figure 3 Mindsets of Scarcity vs. Abundance

Introduction of Scarcity and Abundance Mindset

Abundance	Scarcity
Focus on Opportunities	**Focus on Limitations**
Collaboration	**Feeling of Competition for Resources**
Authentic Path	**Comparison to Others**
Success is Intrinsic	**Success is Relative**
Focus on What is Going Right	**Focus on What is Going Wrong**

Mindset Mapping: Self-Reflection Activity

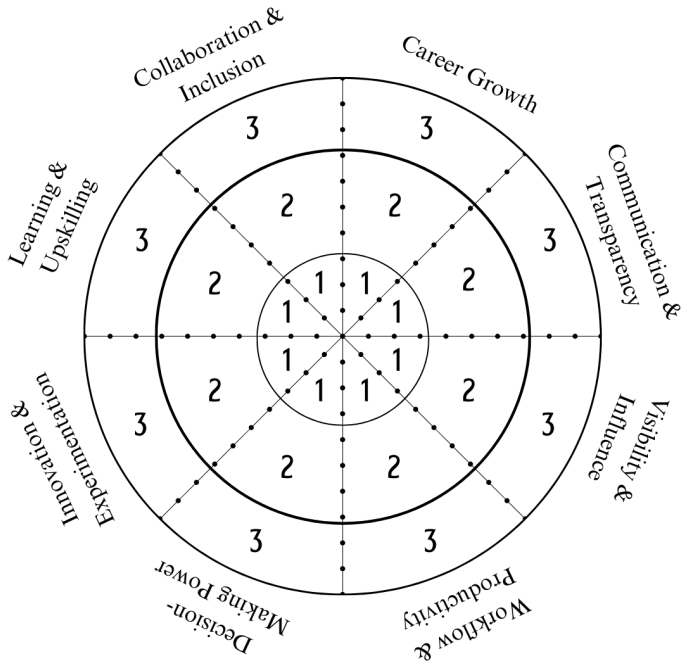
Using the *Compass Rewire Scarcity Diagnostic*, developed from facilitating workshops with business professionals, participants will evaluate how scarcity and abundance show up across categories such as visibility, inclusion, learning, and influence. The diagnostic highlights common narratives of fear or possibility. In the exercise, participants will reflect on each category, mark where they lean toward scarcity or abundance, and note one example from their own experience.

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Category	Scarcity	Abundance
Learning & Upskilling	"I don't have time to learn this." "Others are picking it up faster than me."	"I'm curious about what I can learn next." / "I make space for AI learning, even in small doses."
Workflow & Productivity	"AI is going to replace how I do this." / "I'm not sure where to even use it."	"AI can take repetitive work off my plate." / "I'm exploring how to evolve how I work with new tools."
Decision-Making Power	"AI decisions are made without me." / "I'm not trusted to weigh in."	"AI can take repetitive work off my plate." / "I'm exploring how to evolve how I work with new tools."
Visibility & Influence	"Others are getting the cool AI projects." / "My work doesn't get noticed."	I'm seen as someone engaging with AI." / "I'm actively contributing to the conversation."
Innovation & Experimentation	"I'm afraid to try new tools." / "We only do what's already safe."	"I'm allowed to test things without pressure to be perfect." / "We treat AI as an exploration zone."
Communication & Transparency	"I don't know what's happening with AI." / "It feels top-down."	"We have open updates about AI direction." / "I can ask questions without fear."
Career Growth	"I'm not sure where I fit in the AI future." / "There's no path for me here."	"I'm building future-ready skills." / "AI is opening up new opportunities I hadn't considered."
Collaboration & Inclusion	"Only certain voices matter in AI discussions." / "We're not included."	"Our team makes space for different perspectives on AI." / "Everyone is invited to contribute ideas."

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Figure 3 Compass Rewire Scarcity Diagnostic

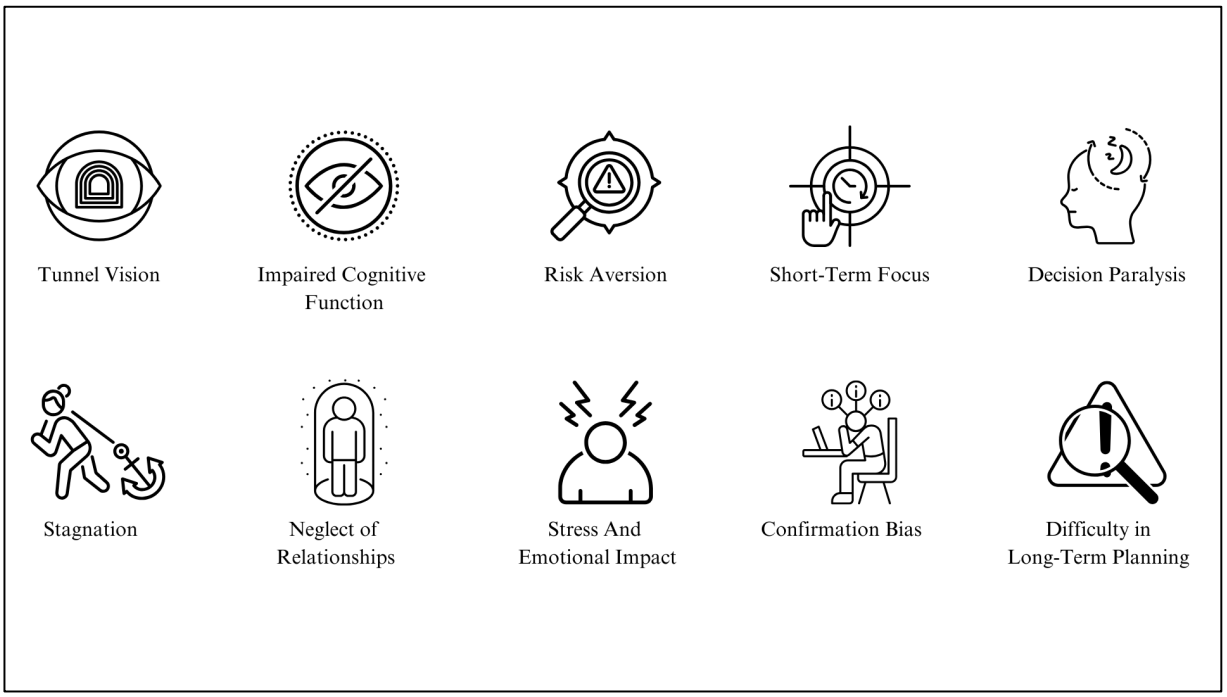


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After a reflection of ratings, participants are asked to review the impact of scarcity mindset. These were derived from leading impacts discussed in our Compass Rewire workshops when leaders are faced with major transition.

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Figure 4 Impacts of Scarcity Mindset

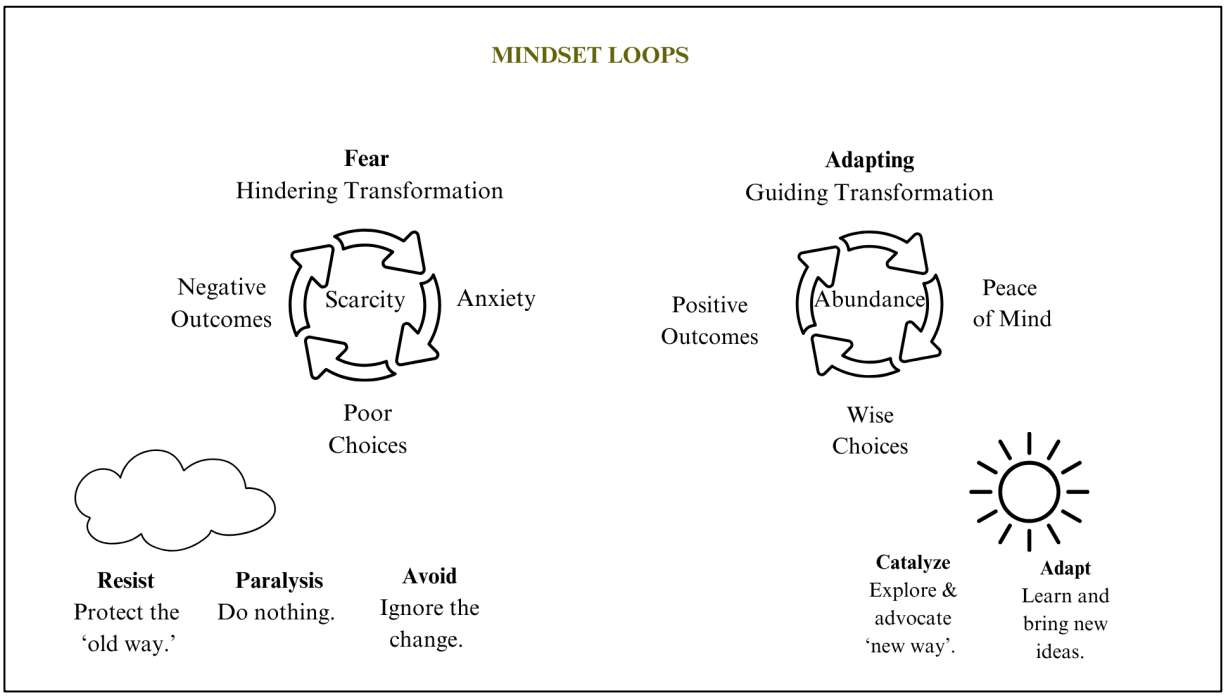


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Participants reflect on where they feel stretched, anxious, or disengaged—and identify two mindset patterns they want to shift from fear to adapting.

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Figure 5 Impacts of Scarcity Mindset Loops



Adapted from Covey, 1989

Paired Coaching Activity: Fear to Forward

In pairs, participants take turns coaching each other using prompts .

This activity helps participants name the emotional root of resistance, surface internal narratives, and practice gently guiding a shift toward agency and forward movement.

Group Debrief + Coaching Application

The session closes with a group reflection

The facilitator links the exercise back to coaching through AI disruption, emphasizing how mindset language and structured reflection can support leaders facing identity shifts, decision fatigue, or resistance to innovation.

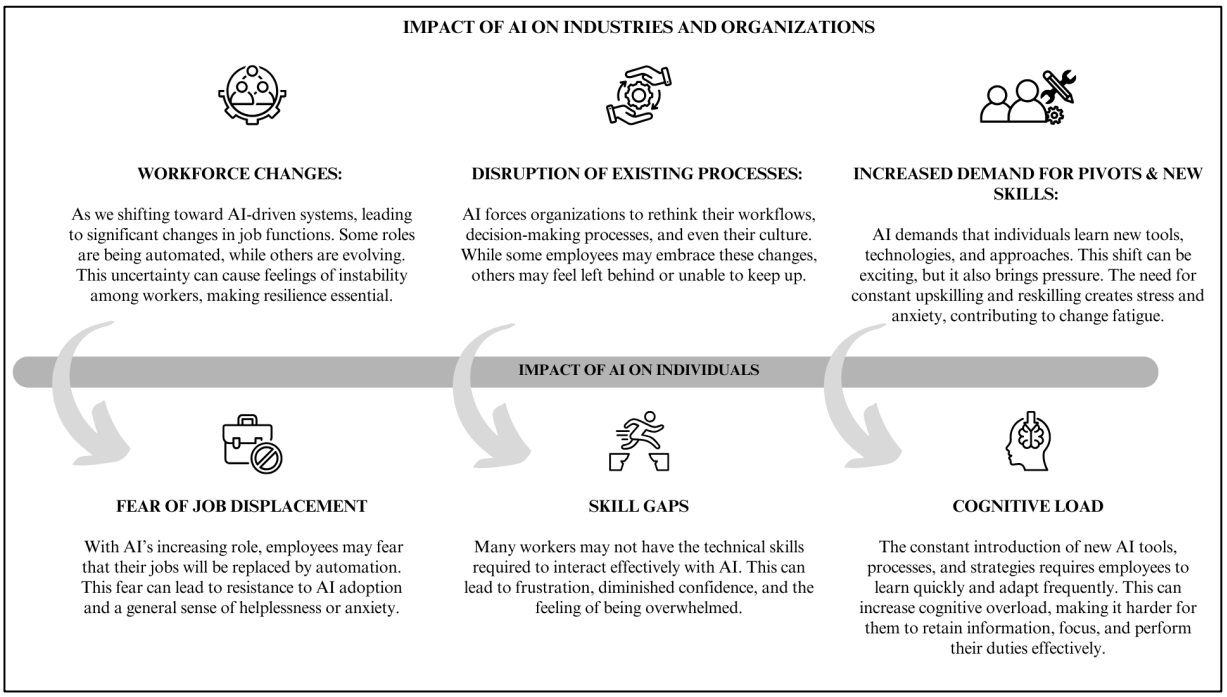
Mini-Teach: Resilience and Change Fatigue (65-75 min)

AI-driven transformation reshapes not only what people do but also how they feel and think. As workflows, roles, and decision-making processes evolve, employees often experience disruption at an identity level, leading to anxiety, resistance, and fatigue.

Behavioral and cognitive signs of change fatigue include fear of job displacement, pressure to constantly upskill, diminished confidence due to skill gaps, and cognitive overload as people try to absorb too much too quickly.

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Figure 6 Impact of AI on Industries and Organizations and those Impacts on Individuals



Mulcahy, 2025

In this session, we get a quick overview of the neuroscience behind these responses and introduce the *Resilience Wheel*, a practical tool from the Compass Rewire framework. These have been adapted from Compass Rewire leadership workshop discussions in understanding leading resilience factors during transition. It helps leaders and teams identify where they're feeling stretched, surface the emotional weight of transformation, and build forward momentum using adaptive, human-centered strategies.

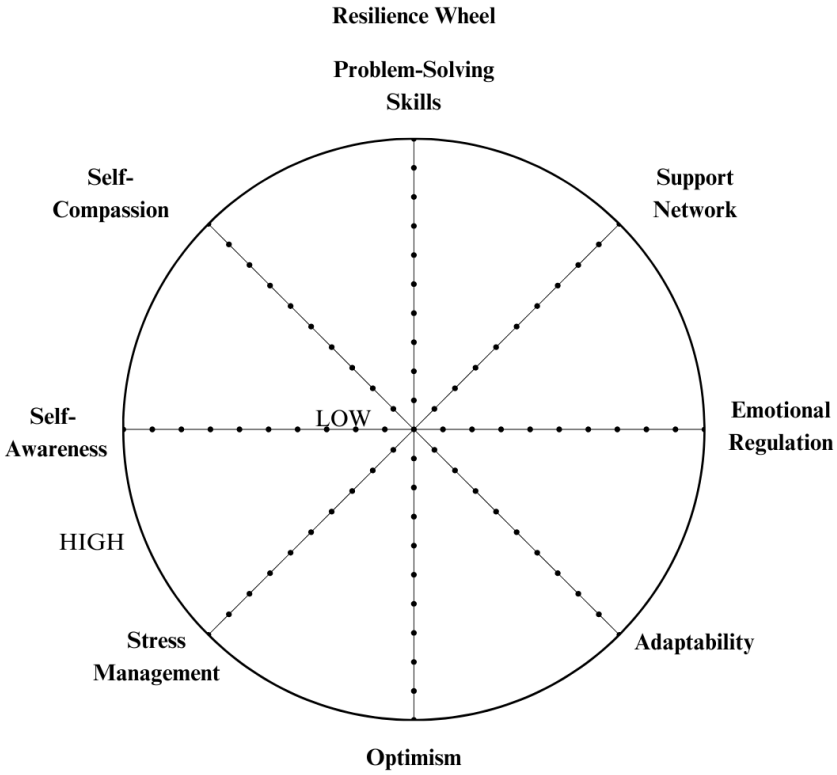
Eight categories of personal resilience can be judged by the following key areas:

1. **Emotional Regulation** – The ability to manage and respond to emotions in a healthy way, particularly during stress or adversity.
2. **Self-Awareness** – Understanding your own strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and triggers, which allows for better emotional control and decision-making.
3. **Optimism** – Maintaining a positive outlook and hope for the future, even in the face of challenges, while staying realistic about potential outcomes.
4. **Adaptability** – The capacity to adjust to changing circumstances, embrace flexibility, and find creative solutions to problems.
5. **Stress Management** – Effectively managing and reducing stress through coping mechanisms, relaxation techniques, and balanced living.
6. **Problem-Solving Skills** – The ability to think critically, assess situations, and find solutions quickly and efficiently under pressure.

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7. **Support Network** – Building and relying on healthy, supportive relationships, which provide emotional and practical assistance during difficult times.
8. **Self-Compassion** – Treating yourself with kindness, forgiveness, and understanding, particularly when facing setbacks or failure.

Figure 7 Resilience Wheel



Mulcahy, 2025

Participants can use the tool to self-identify and think of mitigations as a strategy to understand how they can help guide themselves and clients. Consider where they can invest in self to create more room for change and regulation as it arises.

Integration & Commitment

Large group harvest of insights. Participants choose one real-world coaching shift they'll implement post-session. Closing remarks and feedback.

Implications for Practice:

As AI reshapes the workplace, coaches are being called to navigate a new era of *Hybrid Intelligence*, the evolving collaboration between human and artificial intelligence. This session

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equips coaches, HR professionals, and facilitators with practical tools to help leaders move from resistance or overwhelm toward proactive engagement with AI driven change.

Grounded in this year's theme, **"***High Impact Coaching: In an Era of Hybrid Intelligence,***"** the session underscores a critical truth: this is not the time for coaches to sit in fear. To be effective, we must begin to learn the tools, understand where AI can augment us, and notice where our own fears arise. Only by witnessing ourselves honestly can we guide our clients with integrity.

The change is coming whether we want it or not. Leaders and teams are already showing signs of avoidance, paralysis, and resistance. Our role is to help them recognize these patterns, to uncover when a scarcity mindset is holding them back, and to reframe their perspective toward possibility and growth. If we remain stuck in our own fear, we cannot help others move through theirs.

Through live practice, participants will explore how to balance self-awareness with client support, gaining actionable coaching approaches that can be immediately applied in leadership development, career transitions, and organizational transformation programs. The experience is designed to spark meaningful networking, generate fresh insights, and equip attendees to thrive in a tech augmented world where human wisdom and AI innovation work side by side.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. **Analyze and evaluate** fear-based narratives surrounding AI in order to recognize when clients or coaches themselves are operating from a scarcity mindset.

2. **Apply and adapt** a practical diagnostic tool to identify where scarcity limits adaptability and hinders transformation in leadership, career transition, and organizational transformation contexts.

3. **Design and facilitate** peer coaching structures that foster reflection, experimentation, and reframing, enabling clients and teams to engage proactively with AI-driven change.

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AI Disclosure Statement

The author acknowledges the historical use of the large language model, Chat GPT, to originally draft the Resilience Wheel Categories and Scarcity Mindset Impacts, and have adapted and adjusted through workshop feedback with business leaders over the course of the last 18 months. All content was reviewed, edited, and validated by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final version. Other concept and content development, unless referenced, are original to author.

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Conducting the Future: Coaching with the Rhythm of Human and Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

In the rapidly evolving landscape of hybrid intelligence, coaches—and the organizations they serve—find themselves at the threshold of profound collaboration between humans and artificial intelligence (AI). This experiential session is designed to immerse participants in the dynamic interplay between algorithmic insight and human artistry using the evocative metaphor of AI in music. Through a series of reflective and interactive exercises, participants will experience the creative tensions and synergies that emerge when hybrid intelligence becomes a co-creator in coaching. Drawing upon frameworks from both the coaching and AI fields, participants will leave prepared to act as "conductors" in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Keywords

Hybrid Intelligence, Co-Active Coaching, Human-AI Collaboration, Music, High-Impact Adaptive Practice

Session Overview

The acceleration of AI capabilities—from generative chat partners to behavioral analytics—has begun to reshape the coaching landscape. Where once the coaching conversation was primarily the domain of two humans, our coaching rooms are now inhabited by digital "performers:" insights and predictions, dashboards and risk algorithms, generative reflections and suggestive nudges. This new reality introduces opportunities for transformation and innovation, yet also creates new challenges for presence, agency, and client trust—an issue precisely aligned with this year's conference theme.

The metaphor of music—a domain where AI has transformed from tool to creative partner—offers a compelling frame for navigating this complexity. As with an ensemble where algorithmic composition meets human interpretation, AI-informed coaching requires skillful orchestration: the art of conducting, improvising, and harmonizing multiple sources of input. This session invites participants to move from abstraction to action by "tuning in" to their own responses to hybrid intelligence, reflecting on moments when AI supports or disrupts the rhythm of the conversation, and co-creating principles for ethical, high-impact practice.

The session is intentionally experiential: through live music, coaching simulations, group reflection, and co-creation, participants will experience, embody, and operationalize the musicality of hybrid-intelligent coaching. Practical tools and theoretical frameworks will be woven throughout, ensuring coaches can immediately translate wisdom into their own practice.

Conference Theme Relevance

The 2025 conference theme, "High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence," urges coaches to navigate a world where human and artificial intelligence are deeply connected. As

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decision-making and leadership become more influenced by data, coaches must blend technical literacy with core human skills—presence, ethics, and adaptability.

Today's coach is a creative conductor, harmonizing emotional, ethical, and technological inputs to guide clients without losing sight of humanity or ethical standards. This session does not advocate AI replacing coaches; rather, it explores the creative and ethical integration of hybrid intelligence. Attendees will gain practical strategies for balancing data-driven insight with intuition, ensuring coaching remains impactful and human-centered as AI continues to evolve.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the creative tension and synergy between human and machine intelligence using the metaphor of AI in music performance and composition.
- Identify and demonstrate practices for maintaining coaching presence, ethics, and human-centeredness when incorporating AI inputs (such as predictive insights or behavioral data) into coaching conversations.
- Develop and implement strategies to harmonize data-driven tools with human wisdom to achieve more resonant, high-impact coaching outcomes.
- Evaluate and adapt improvisational approaches in hybrid coaching scenarios to enhance agility and effectiveness in navigating both predictable and emergent challenges.

Session Outline

Welcome & Sound Check: Tuning into Hybrid Intelligence (10 minutes)

1. Atmosphere Setting: Participants enter the room accompanied by ambient AI-generated music. The sensory experience invites immediate engagement with the session metaphor.
2. Interactive Polls: Quick live polls (using mobile app or show of hands) prompt participants to consider:
    A. "Would you listen to a symphony composed entirely by AI?"
    B. "Would you trust a coach who used AI to guide your leadership journey?"
3. Framing Metaphor: The facilitator introduces the concept of Hybrid Intelligence through the music metaphor—highlighting how, in practice, AI might write the notes, but only humans bring interpretation, presence, and improvisation. The group draws immediate parallels with emerging coaching realities.

Experiential Activity: Jam Session with AI (25 minutes)

1. Objective: Directly experience how the coaching conversation shifts when AI data is present.
2. Structure:
    A. Triads Formed (Coach, Client, Observer):

- "Clients" are provided with a short, AI-generated coaching profile or behavioral insight (fictionalized for privacy—e.g., "AI assessment: high burnout risk," or "90% match for strengths in creative problem-solving.").
- "Coaches" are briefed to either integrate, cautiously use, or consciously bracket the AI input during a short coaching conversation.
- "Observers" track changes in coach presence, authenticity, or shifts in the flow/agency of the conversation.

B. Reflection after each round:

- What did the AI insight add or subtract from the conversation?
- Was there a moment when the rhythm between coach and client became disrupted? Harmonized?
- How did the coach navigate (conduct) both the human and AI-determined cues?

C. Debrief: The facilitator draws the music parallel—like a musician adjusting to a digital backing track, the goal is harmony, not dominance. Pool insights from table groups.

Facilitated Debrief & Conceptual Input (15 minutes)

1. Group Reflection Topics:

   A. How does AI change the *tempo* of insight? Faster, slower, rushed, or stymied?

   B. When does AI information enhance versus flatten the dynamic of the conversation?

   C. What does it mean to "coach" when multiple intelligences are "in the room"—not just the coach-client dyad, but an ensemble of data, algorithms, expectations, and intentions?

2. Conceptual Model Introduction: "Coaching as Conducting"

   A. The facilitator illustrates the role of the coach as orchestra conductor: balancing emotional energy, factual data, client goals, AI-generated cues, and ethical context.

   B. Brief references to how AI music systems (e.g., AIVA, Magenta) collaborate with humans, and parallel in coaching.

Ensemble Practice: Ethics, Bias & Improvisation (30 minutes)

1. Objective: Deepen understanding and adaptive capacity around the ethical edges of AI-informed practice.
2. Activity Structure:

A. Present real-life coaching dilemmas influenced by AI. Examples:

- The algorithm has flagged your client as "at risk" of burnout/attrition—should you surface this? How much weight do you give it?
- Your client's organization presents AI-aggregated feedback prior to the session—which data do you privilege?
- AI analysis suggests your client's leadership style is "not a good culture fit"—how do you challenge, accept, or contextualize this?

B. Small Group Dialogue:

- When do we challenge the "score"—the algorithm's data or recommendations, especially if signals conflict with intuition or client-reported experience?
- How do we ensure the client's authentic voice and agenda remains primary, not drowned out by technological instrumentality?
- How might we "improvise responsibly"—balancing real-time data with slow, trust-based exploration?

C. Principle Co-Creation: Each group proposes principles for human-AI co-coaching (e.g., maintaining consent, transparency, ethical skepticism, maintaining presence in uncertainty).

D. Group Share-Out: Facilitator draws links between session principles and ICF's own Ethical Framework for AI use (2025).

Closing Movement: Designing Your Coaching Composition (10 minutes)

1. Intention Setting: Participants write a short "Coaching Composer's Statement"—reflecting on their session experience:

    A. How will you blend human wisdom and artificial intelligence in your practice?

    B. What is your unique value as a coach in this hybrid future?

2. (Optional) Sharing: Volunteers share a phrase or intention aloud.
3. Finale: The session concludes with a brief live improvisation blending human and AI instruments—a sonic reminder that the most resonant outcomes are born of respectful, creative co-creation.

Conceptual/Theory Input

This session is grounded in several converging streams of research and thought leadership, weaving together developments in hybrid intelligence, the enduring significance of coaching presence, and the ethical frameworks now essential to contemporary practice— issues precisely aligned with this year's conference theme.

Hybrid Intelligence in Music and Beyond: From Tool to Creative Partner

The concept of hybrid intelligence marks a significant evolution in both theory and practice. Traditionally, artificial intelligence was positioned as a tool—an extension of human capacity designed to automate repetitive tasks or crunch large data sets. In the last decade, however, the rise of generative and collaborative AI systems has destabilized this simple tool paradigm, inviting richer metaphors for human-machine interaction (Tuhin, 2025).

Music offers perhaps the most evocative frame. Historically, musical composition was a wholly human activity, reliant on learned technique, personal expression, and communal tradition. Today, AI-powered systems such as AIVA (Artificial Intelligence Virtual Artist), Google's Magenta, and OpenAI's MuseNet are not only capable of composing complex works independently, but—crucially—are being used as "co-composers," offering suggestions, surprises, and new creative structures that challenge human musicians to innovate beyond individual habits or training. Pasquinelli (2023), in his social history of artificial intelligence, identifies such collaborations as emblematic of a new epoch: one where human creativity and algorithmic logic are symbiotic, each catalyzing the strengths (and revealing the limitations) of the other.

Translating this to coaching, hybrid intelligence suggests a reframing of technology from neutral assistant to creative, sometimes disruptive, collaborator. Coaches and clients increasingly interact with algorithm-generated data: leadership assessments, behavioral nudges, even conversational prompts derived from natural language processing. Like a jazz musician riffing with a digital backing track, the coach must discern when to harmonize with the AI's suggestions and when to introduce their own improvisational flair to maintain authenticity and engagement.

Research from the field of human-computer interaction (Brown & Duguid, 2017) has long noted that the most powerful technology integrations are not those that replace human judgment, but those that augment our ability to notice patterns, surface insights, and extend empathetic understanding. In this light, hybrid intelligence is not just a technical reality but a philosophical invitation: How might we remain open to surprise, disruption, and creative uncertainty when nonhuman intelligence shares the coaching "stage"?

The Co-Active Coaching Model in a Hybrid World

The Co-Active Coaching Model, originally developed in the 1990s and iteratively enhanced since, stands as a cornerstone of modern coaching theory (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl and Whitworth, 2018). It envisions the coach-client relationship as a partnership grounded in mutual trust, client capability, and the co-creation of meaning. At the heart of Co-Active philosophy is a radical belief in the client's innate creativity, resourcefulness, and wholeness; the role of the coach is not to diagnose or prescribe, but to listen deeply, evoke transformation, and support emergent possibilities.

The challenge—and opportunity—of the hybrid intelligence era lies in upholding these commitments when technology mediates the conversation. Natural tensions arise: AI-generated insights may be insightful, but also potentially dehumanizing, stripping away nuance and reinforcing group-based stereotypes rather than seeing the client in their complex individuality.

Data may empower, but it can also overwhelm, raising the tempo of the interaction in ways that threaten reflective depth.

Co-Active coaches, therefore, must cultivate not only traditional presence but a double vision: an ability to "hold space" both for what the data indicate and for what emerges in real time between coach and client. This is an act of ethical humility, requiring a comfort with uncertainty and a willingness to name and bracket algorithmic authority when it conflicts with lived experience.

Many coaching theorists describe this as "presencing"—a holistic awareness that welcomes multiple inputs (emotional, cognitive, technological, contextual) without privileging any one source (Scharmer, 2018). In a hybrid world, presencing also means fostering critical digital literacy: inviting clients to question, contextualize, and ultimately author their own responses to AI-derived narratives.

Ethical AI Use in Coaching: Frameworks and Frontiers

As the pace of technological change accelerates, robust ethical frameworks become not a regulatory afterthought, but a foundational component of professional coaching. The ICF's 2025 Artificial Intelligence Coaching Framework is among the first systematic attempts to guide practitioners in integrating digital tools ethically and transparently (ICF, 2024). The framework establishes clear expectations for informed consent, ongoing client education, data privacy, and the right of both coach and client to challenge technological outputs.

From an ethical standpoint, three guiding questions recur:

1. **Transparency:** Do both coach and client understand how algorithmic recommendations are formed? To what extent is the "black box" of AI made visible (or at least discussable) in the session?
2. **Bias and Fairness:** Are the models producing these insights trained on inclusive, representative data? How are possible biases recognized, surfaced, and actively mitigated in practice?
3. **Agency and Consent:** Does the client perceive themselves as the subject or the object of technological intervention? Do they retain veto power, the right to interpret or disregard AI suggestions?

The presence of AI in the coaching room complicates these issues in practice. For instance, behavioral dashboards may "flag" a client as high risk—an act that, if unexamined, can set the coaching agenda in profoundly unhelpful ways. Data can generate the illusion of objectivity, even as it compresses the lived experience of the client into reductive categories. The coach's highest ethical duty is to center client agency, offering "algorithmic literacy" as a core dimension of psychological safety, and committing to rigorous consent practices as digital tools evolve.

Conducting as Metaphor: Adaptive Leadership in a Digital Age

The image of the conductor is more than a convenient analogy; it is an emergent model for professional adaptability in times of complexity. The conductor neither writes the music nor plays

every instrument—instead, they translate, interpret, and bring coherence out of multiplicity. This is leadership both as stewardship and as real-time improvisation.

In a session context, this metaphor maps directly onto the coach's evolving role. The modern coach is asked not just to "follow the data" nor to ignore it, but to *orchestrate*: to listen for resonance, to balance the force of predictive insight against the invitation to explore the unexpected, to ensure every "voice"—client, context, machine—finds its proper place in the conversational ensemble.

Emerging research in the science of expertise (Klein, 2017) finds that experts across fields who thrive in ambiguous, high-stakes environments do not simply follow checklists or pre-existing rules. Instead, they develop the capacity to recognize patterns, improvise under constraint, and integrate new forms of feedback rapidly and gracefully. In this light, the coach-as-conductor cultivates both technical mastery (knowing what AI can and cannot do) and aesthetic sensitivity (recognizing when to slow down, when to pivot, when to challenge, and when to amplify).

Deepening the Implications: A New Professional Ecology

The rise of hybrid intelligence signals not just a technological development, but a shift in the professional ecology of coaching. Coaches now find themselves in a living laboratory where generative AI models, big data analytics, and algorithmic assessments intersect with deep human needs for meaning, connection, and transformation. This creates multi-level demands:

- **Micro-level (Session):** Coaches are called to "read the room" with new acuity. When is the client responding as themselves, and when does their narrative reflect internalized algorithmic judgments? Practically, this may involve the explicit surfacing of data narratives and their negotiation in real time.
- **Meso-level (Organization):** As organizations increasingly rely on AI for performance management and leadership development, coaches must position themselves as advocates for evidence-based, human-centered integration. This may mean pushing back on over-reliance or calling for transparency in AI-derived assessments.
- **Macro-level (Society/Profession):** The profession as a whole faces a strategic question: What is uniquely "human" about coaching, and how do coaches articulate their value when data-driven tools become commodified? Here, the conductor metaphor again proves vital—coaching thrives not through algorithmic efficiency, but through imaginative, ethical, and contextual improvisation.

Bridging Theory and Action: Building Hybrid Intelligence Fluency

To move from theory to action, coaches at all levels are invited to grow along several axes:

1. **Critical Digital Literacy:** Understanding the mechanisms, strengths, and failures of AI models in the human development context—including basic knowledge of algorithmic bias, data provenance, and the sociology of technology.
2. **Metacognitive Presence:** Cultivating self-awareness in the presence of AI tools. What are my assumptions and emotional responses to algorithmic interventions? How do I manage my own authority and humility?

3. **Ethical Reflexivity:** Making a habit of regular ethical reflection, both individually and in community. What new dilemmas are surfacing? What practices (e.g., journaling, supervision, peer consultation) build ethical muscles for emerging technology landscapes?
4. **Commitment to Co-Creation:** Positioning each coaching partnership as fundamentally creative and generative, with both coach and client authors of the process—even as nonhuman intelligences enter the frame.

In sum, the theory base for this session is robust, interdisciplinary, and forward-looking. It stakes a claim for coaching as both art and science, both rooted and adaptable, and always shaped by a relentless commitment to presence, ethical conduct, and human flourishing in an era of hybrid intelligence.

Implications for Practice

Session participants can apply the content in multifaceted ways across their professional contexts, positioning themselves as adaptive leaders and facilitators in an increasingly hybrid world. Coaches and consultants, for example, can intentionally integrate AI-generated insights—such as predictive analytics, behavioral profiles, or organizational data—while upholding core values of ethical presence and human-centeredness. By actively analyzing data without surrendering to it, they ensure the coaching relationship remains rooted in empathy, trust, and client agency. This means routinely questioning and contextualizing algorithmic suggestions within the rich narrative of each client's lived experience.

Educators and learning and development professionals will be empowered to design and facilitate learning environments that reflect both technological fluency and critical inquiry. By introducing exercises that compare human intuition with AI-driven recommendations, they can help learners become discerning consumers of digital information. This dual approach fosters digital literacy, enhances learners' adaptive capacity, and encourages a growth mindset that values both data and dialogue.

Organizational leaders can immediately implement frameworks and protocols that blend AI-enabled decision-support with participatory team processes. For example, leaders may use AI to identify patterns in employee engagement or performance but will also convene reflective discussions to interpret findings and set collaborative actions. By modeling transparency and critical thinking, leaders ensure AI augments—rather than dominates—strategic choices, safeguarding diversity of thought and organizational ethics.

Across all roles, participants will be able to synthesize technological and human elements, creating interventions, programs, or conversations that are not only more data-informed but also more resonant, ethical, and impactful. Ultimately, participants leave equipped to act as "conductors"—weaving together digital and human intelligences to create organizational and individual outcomes that are adaptive, innovative, and deeply human in an era of rapid technological change.

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Creating a Thinking Environment: Human-Focused Coaching in the Age of AI

Presenter and Affiliations

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Abstract

In our AI-driven world, how can coaching continue to bring unique value? This practice-based session introduces the Thinking Environment methodology as a transformative coaching approach. Participants will learn how the core components, including attention and incisive questions, create conditions that enable clients to push their independent thinking to its furthest edge. Coaches will gain tools to elevate their practice, helping them create a uniquely human space for deepened thinking in an AI-augmented world.

Key Words

Complex thinking, Deep thinking, Elevated Coaching

Session Overview

In an era where artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly generates "first thoughts," the role of the coach must evolve to create space for deeper, independent thinking. This experiential session introduces participants to the Thinking Environment methodology, a practice-based framework developed by Nancy Kline that enables clients to access their most profound insights. Rooted in the premise that "the quality of everything we do depends on the quality of thinking we do first", the methodology offers ten practical components, including attention, equality, and incisive questions, that create optimal conditions for reflective, high-caliber, deep thinking (Kline, n.d.).

Designed for practitioners, educators, and organizational stakeholders in the field of coaching, this session invites participants to co-create a Thinking Environment™ that extends their independent thinking to second, third, and even fourth thoughts, going beyond AI capabilities and deeper into uniquely human ones. Through an interactive presentation, a thinking pairs exercise, and facilitated reflection, participants will experience the transformative impact of applying these components in practice. Special emphasis will be placed on how to use incisive questions that uncover limiting assumptions and expand possibilities, an increasingly essential skill in today's hybrid intelligence context. Participants will leave with pragmatic tools and action commitments to integrate the Thinking Environment methodology into both individual and group coaching engagements, further positioning themselves as high-impact coaches prepared for the demands of this evolving landscape.

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Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly addresses the 2025 conference theme of High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence by offering a methodology that empowers coaches to create uniquely human spaces for advanced, independent thinking. As AI is increasingly sought out for "first thoughts," coaches are challenged to elevate their practice to foster the deeper, reflective thinking AI cannot replicate. The Thinking Environment methodology provides a practical, human-centered framework for doing so. By integrating its ten components, coaches can enhance their ability to hold space for clients' second, third, and fourth thoughts, advancing thinking beyond AI's reach. The session's experiential design encourages real-time learning, allowing participants to experience both the power and necessity of cultivating high-caliber thinking environments amidst a rapidly evolving AI-driven world.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be positioned to:

1. Identify and explain the core components of the Thinking Environment methodology and articulate how they contribute to creating conditions for independent, high-quality thinking.
2. Demonstrate the practice of generative attention within a thinking pairs exercise, applying it to support a partner's extended, uninterrupted, and deepened thinking process.
3. Formulate questions in an incisive way, to uncover limiting assumptions and generate liberating perspectives, especially useful for coaching clients navigating complex challenges.
4. Design actionable strategies to incorporate Thinking Environment practices into their coaching work, with steps for application in both individual and group coaching contexts.

Session Outline

Table 1 *Run of Show*

Time	Activity	Description	Purpose & Learning Objective
10 minutes	**Introduction**	Welcome Engagement & Connection Activity Purpose & Context Setting	Build conditions for psychological safety throughout the session and model some of the components of the Thinking Environment.
20 minutes	**Overview of The**	Overview of the Thinking Environment methodology and its foundational	Foster awareness and comprehension

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Time	Activity	Description	Purpose & Learning Objective
	Components of the Thinking Environment	premises, including “the quality of everything we do depends on the quality of thinking we do first" and “the quality of our thinking depends on the way we treat each other while we are thinking.” (Kline, n.d.). Participants will discuss examples of the components in practice.	of the components of a Thinking Environment. (Supports Learning Objective #1)
20 minutes	**Thinking Pairs Exercise**	Experiential practice where participants are both a thinker and a thinking partner, focusing on generating attention that allows the thinker to push their thinking to its furthest edge.	Provide the opportunity to practice generative attention and uninterrupted thinking, immersing participants in applying the core components, especially attention, ease, and equality. (Supports Learning Objective #1 and 2)
10 minutes	**Facilitated Debrief**	Guided reflection that connects the Thinking Pairs Exercise to coaching practices. Special emphasis will be placed on how the Thinking Environment methodology is increasingly crucial in an age where AI can provide "first thoughts" and, as a result, human coaches are uniquely positioned to create conditions for their clients to explore their thinking and ideas more deeply to recognize one own’s untapped wisdom.	Deepen the knowledge of the components and reflect on how the thinking pairs exercise influenced their quality of thinking and how it compares to AI-augmented thinking approaches. (Supports Learning Objective #1, 2, and 4)
20 minutes	**The Transformative Power of Incisive Questions**	Introduce the structure and function of an incisive question. Participants will practice using incisive questions to uncover limiting assumptions and experience liberating alternatives.	Provide an opportunity to generate deeper and expanded thinking. (Supports Learning Objective #3)

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Time	Activity	Description	Purpose & Learning Objective
10 minutes	**Integration & Close**	A guided discussion wherein participants will identify pragmatic action commitments and specific value-adding ways to implement the Thinking Environment methodologies into their coaching practices.	Create a space for participants to integrate their insights and learning for application and post-session pull-through. (Supports All Learning Objectives)

Conceptual/Theory-Input

The design of this session is intentionally grounded in several interrelated theoretical frameworks: Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment, the neuroscience of attention and psychological safety, and literature on artificial and hybrid intelligence. Together, these frameworks underpin a design that prioritizes human-centered, independent thinking while integrating awareness of AI's growing impact and role in shaping how we access and process information.

The Thinking Environment Framework

At the heart of this session is Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment methodology, a transformative coaching approach predicated on the idea that "the quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first" (Kline, 2015). Kline's work identifies ten specific components that collectively foster the conditions for individuals to access their best, most independent thinking: attention, equality, ease, appreciation, encouragement, feelings, information, difference, incisive questions, and place (Kline, 2015). Enhancing core coaching skills such as presence, listening, and questioning, highlighted by thought leaders in the field such Sir John Whitmore in *Coaching for Performance* (Whitmore, 2017) and Jenny Rogers in *Coaching Skills* (Rogers, 2016), Kline's framework brings unique simplicity and structure.

A key theoretical premise of the Thinking Environment is that the mind that holds the question also holds the key to its answer, with that answer already present, hidden underneath assumptions, fears, or distractions (Kline, 2015). This contrasts with problem-solving models that position coaches as diagnosticians or guides and aligns with the non-directive approach supported by Rogers and Whitmore (Rogers, 2017; Whitmore, 2016). In a Thinking Environment, the coach's role is to create conditions in which the client's independent thinking can flourish without

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premature intervention. The methodology builds on humanistic psychology's emphasis on individual agency and self-actualization (Rogers, 1995) and positions the coaching conversation as a space for cognitive liberation rather than directive advice.

Neuroscience of Attention and Psychological Safety

Findings in neuroscience reinforce another foundational premise of the Thinking Environment: the way we are treated while we are thinking dramatically affects the quality of our ability to focus, process, and think (Rock, 2009). Kline refers to attention, the quality of listening without interruption and with full respect and interest, as a catalyst for independent thinking (Kline, 2005; Kline, 2015). Neuropsychological studies demonstrate that sustained, nonjudgmental attention (a core quality of mindfulness) enhances neural connectivity in areas associated with executive functioning and improves adaptive, integrated thinking, key enablers to problem solving (Siegel, 2007).

Moreover, Edmondson's (2018) research on psychological safety, the belief that one can express thoughts without risk of ridicule or punishment, provides a crucial backdrop for understanding why the Thinking Environment's ten components are so effective. Coaching conversations that foster attention, non-judgment, equality, and appreciation create psychologically safe conditions that reduce the brain's threat response and enable higher-order thinking (Brown, 2018; Edmondson, 2018).

Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Atrophy, and Hybrid Intelligence Frameworks

The context for this session is profoundly shaped by the rapid ascent of artificial intelligence and hybrid human-AI systems. As AI increasingly handles cognitive tasks such as summarizing, pattern recognition, and even generating questions (Marcus & Davis, 2019), the role of human coaches must evolve. Floridi and Cowls (2019) describe hybrid intelligence as systems where human and artificial cognitive capabilities complement one another.

While AI excels at producing rapid, data-driven "first thoughts," it cannot replicate the reflective, context-sensitive, and values-based thinking that characterizes human cognition (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Scholars including Carr (2020) have warned of the risk of cognitive atrophy, where habitual or over reliance on AI diminishes the ability for deep, sustained, and critical thinking, leading to more shallow thoughts focused on efficiency and immediacy over deep reflection. This concern has gained empirical support in a June 2025 study from MIT (Kosmyna, Hauptmann, Yuan, Situ, Lioa, Beresnitzky, Braunstein, Maes, 2025). The study revealed measurable reductions in activation within brain regions associated with deep reasoning and critical evaluation after repeated reliance on AI-generated answers, particularly in areas tied to executive function and reflective cognition.

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The overarching premise from research is that, while generative AI tools enhance efficiency, they may unintentionally discourage independent mental effort when overused. The Thinking Environment's methodology offers a structured, human-centered counterbalance, providing coaches with tools to extend client thinking beyond AI-generated insights to deeper levels of wisdom and meaning-making.

The session also implicitly engages with philosophical debates about AI and meaning. Scholars such as Harari (2018) and Tegmark (2017) argue that while AI can process information, it lacks consciousness, subjective experience, values, moral judgment, and meaning-making, some of the very qualities that coaching seeks to engage. By creating conditions for independent, self-directed thinking, the Thinking Environment preserves the uniquely human domain of reflective awareness in an AI-augmented world.

The Thinking Environment, AI, and Coaching

Synthesizing these theoretical foundations, the session positions coaches to meet the challenges and opportunities of hybrid intelligence by equipping them with a rigorously defined, evidence-informed methodology. The integration of experiential learning principles ensures that participants move beyond passive comprehension to embodied understanding, experiencing the effects of the Thinking Environment components in real time.

Furthermore, through its strategic focus on attention and incisive questions, the session elevates core coaching competencies in alignment with the International Coaching Federation and European Mentoring and Coaching Council standards while offering added depth and precision (EMCC, n.d.; ICF, 2019). The Thinking Environment's ten components operationalize these competencies with clarity, providing coaches with replicable practices to foster high-quality, independent thinking in their clients.

The theoretical integration also positions coaches to responsibly navigate the ethical and cognitive implications of AI. Rather than resisting AI or uncritically adopting it, coaches trained in the Thinking Environment methodology can occupy a vital space: helping clients discern when to rely on AI-generated inputs and when to engage in deeper, autonomous reflection. In doing so, they safeguard the intellectual and emotional dimensions of decision-making that remain distinctly human.

AI, Anthropomorphism, and Relational Coaching Dynamics

While this session focuses on the building Thinking Environments with coaching, to tap into deeper levels of uniquely human thought, emerging research on the social-relational dimensions of human-AI interactions warrants parallel consideration for coaching practitioners. A

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recent study reported by Fortune highlights how people increasingly perceive AI chatbots as social companions, attributing human-like competence and emotional understanding to generative AI tools (Lazzaro, 2025). This trend toward anthropomorphism presents both risks and opportunities in coaching: clients may substitute AI interactions for genuine relational dialogue or may overestimate AI's empathic capacity. For coaches, this reinforces the importance of consciously designing human-centered environments that preserve emotional attunement, empathy, and psychological safety, qualities the Thinking Environment methodology foster and AI simulations can approximate but not authentically replicate. While outside the direct scope of this session, these relational dynamics deserve future exploration as coaching practices evolve alongside hybrid intelligence systems.

Conclusion

This session's design draws on a robust body of theory spanning coaching methodology, experiential learning, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence studies. By integrating these perspectives, it offers participants not only a practical set of tools but a conceptual framework for understanding why those tools matter, especially now. The Thinking Environment methodology is presented not simply as a technique but as a transformative approach to coaching in an era where human cognitive capacities are increasingly shaped by, and sometimes outsourced to, AI systems.

Through structured, experiential engagement, participants will experience how to engage the uniquely human capacity for deep, independent thinking, an essential skill in today's AI-driven world. The theoretical grounding ensures that the session contributes meaningfully to the conference's discourse on High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence, positioning coaches to enable their clients to tap into the differentiating power of deeply human thinking.

Implications for Practice

Executive and organizational coaches face a new challenge: as AI increasingly handles the "heavy lifting" of first thoughts, coaches must elevate their practice to create space for advanced exploration and deeper levels of thinking. The Thinking Environment offers coaches a methodology to meet this challenge by creating conditions where clients can push their thinking far beyond what AI can provide.

The ten components give coaches practical tools to create truly transformative sessions. Rather than competing with AI's ability to ask and answer good initial questions, coaches can use these components to carefully architect and foster an environment where clients explore beyond their initial thinking. This is especially valuable for executive coaches working with leaders navigating complex challenges requiring deep, layered thinking.

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The methodology positions coaches to ask, "How do we elevate the caliber of our clients' thinking so it can advance beyond what AI readily provides?" By leveraging the components, particularly generative attention and incisive questions, coaches create a uniquely human space where clients can discover answers they already hold but haven't yet accessed.

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Warrant Statement

I warrant that the attached full paper—prepared for my accepted experiential session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I further confirm that:

1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
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Developmental Frames through Role Reversal Fosters Empathy and High Performance in Organizations

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Abstract

In an era defined by hybrid intelligence—where AI's analytical power is rapidly transforming coaching—the question of what remains uniquely and irreplaceably human *becomes urgent. This experiential session addresses the conference's core inquiry by demonstrating how* ***Role Reversal****, a psychodramatic technique developed by J.L. Moreno, is a quintessentially human practice that unlocks high-impact coaching.*

Participants will explore how intentionally integrating this deeply human experiential method with AI's capabilities creates a powerful hybrid intelligence model. Through embodied practice, coaches will learn to use role reversal to foster the empathy, self-awareness, and metacognition essential for navigating today's VUCA environments.

Key Words

Role-Reversal, Developmental-Frames, Systems-Thinking, Empathy, High-Performance Coaching

Session Overview

This experiential session introduces role reversal—a psychodramatic technique developed by J.L. Moreno—as a powerful tool for expanding developmental frames (the mental models through which individuals and groups interpret their environment) and fostering empathy in organizational contexts . Grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984), the session is structured to guide participants through four stages:

1. Concrete Experience: Participants engage in role reversal exercises to embody stakeholder perspectives (e.g., a leader experiencing a team member's constraints).

2. Reflective Observation: Facilitated debriefs help participants identify biases and systemic patterns uncovered during the exercise.

3. Abstract Conceptualization: Frameworks like developmental frames (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997) and systems thinking are introduced to contextualize insights .

4. Active Experimentation: Participants design hybrid coaching interventions that integrate role reversal with AI tools (e.g., session notes/ video journal analysis) to address real-world challenges like siloed teams or empathy deficits.

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This session directly addresses the 2025 Columbia Coaching Conference theme, *"High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence,"* by demonstrating how *uniquely human* practices like role reversal can generate deep experiential data to inform AI-driven tools. Coaches learn to orchestrate hybrid intelligence—using AI for pattern detection (e.g., sentiment analysis) while reserving human judgment for ethical discernment and relational repair. Coaches will leave with a personally tested role reversal protocol, and concrete strategies for using the technique in their practice—all grounded in their immediate sensory experience.

Target participants: Executive coaches, Coach Educators, Senior Leaders, Coaching Sponsors

Key takeaway: Practical tools to integrate role reversal for empathy-driven, high-performing organizations.

Conference Theme Relevance

This workshop is designed as a direct and actionable response to the **Columbia University Coaching Conference 2025** theme: **"High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence."** The conference challenges us to navigate the evolving coaching landscape by exploring the powerful synergy between human intuition and artificial intelligence, examining how our practice can not only endure but truly thrive in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world by engaging the whole person—**the head, the heart, and the hand.**

Our session provides a direct answer to one of the conference's central guiding questions: *"How can we encourage experimentation that brings forth what is uniquely human about coaching while simultaneously expanding our knowledge and capabilities with AI tools and platforms?"* We move from theory to practice by demonstrating that **Role Reversal**, a psychodramatic technique developed by J.L. Moreno, is a foundational "uniquely human" methodology. It is a practice that deeply engages the **heart** by fostering genuine empathy and psychological courage, the **head** by developing crucial metacognitive awareness and systemic thinking, and the **hand** through its embodied, experiential nature.

In this new era, the profound, human-generated insights unlocked through practices like role reversal become the essential, high-quality fuel that powers AI's analytical engines. This workshop provides the crucial "how," equipping coaches to become strategic orchestrators of this partnership. We teach a clear framework for leveraging the distinct strengths of both: we explore how to wield **AI for Scale and Speed** in tasks like data aggregation (e.g., computationally analyzing session notes/ video journals for emotional tone and behavioral patterns) and scenario modeling, while intentionally and strategically **reserving Human Judgment for Depth and Meaning**—applying role reversal for the nuanced, irreplaceable

tasks of ethical discernment, profound relationship repair, and facilitating the perspective shifts that truly transform mental models.

By participating in this experiential session, participants will actively contribute to the conference's overarching goal of building a integrated and holistic future for the coaching field. This workshop directly engages the conference theme by designing and prototyping coaching interventions where human experiential depth is not replaced by, but instead powerfully synergizes with, AI's analytical power. Participants will use role reversal to generate irreplaceable human insights—such as embodied empathy and metacognitive awareness—which in turn inform and guide how AI tools can be deployed to scale impact and identify patterns. By creating these practical models, coaches will learn to blend these skills effectively, ensuring technology consistently amplifies—rather than replaces—the transformational power of human connection, ultimately positioning coaches as the essential conductors of hybrid intelligence.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Analyse how developmental frames and systems thinking shape organizational behaviour, identifying biases and systemic barriers in their own coaching practice by using role reversal as a concrete experience (Kolb).
2. Evaluate the impact of role reversal on empathy and performance by critiquing their reflective observations of the exercise.
3. Design a creative hybrid coaching intervention integrating role reversal (experiential) with reflection tools (metacognitive), aligned with Kolb’s active experimentation stage principles.

Session Outline

Total Time: 90 minutes

Facilitator introduction and Short introduction to the topic of the session and agenda overview – 10 min

1. **Concrete Experience (Kolb’s Stage 1) – 25 min**

    a. Activity: Demo of a role reversal technique by the facilitators

    b. Participants, in small groups , engage in a live role reversal exercise, embodying stakeholders in an organizational conflict scenario

    c. Kolb Connection: Creates an immersive "doing" experience to ground learning in real-world complexity.

2. **Reflective Observation (Kolb's Stage 2) – 15 min**
    a. Participants journal physical/emotional reactions. In pairs, they'll share and then their table will identify a systemic pattern. Here, emotions transform into actionable awareness—you'll spot parallels to your own coaching challenges.

    b. Guided Debrief: Participants journal and share with some guided prompt questions. (What emotions/thoughts arose during the role reversal? How did their perspective shift?)

    c. Kolb Connection: Structured reflection links the experience to personal and systemic insights.

3. **Abstract Conceptualization (Kolb's Stage 3) – 15 min**
    a. Facilitators briefly connect their experience to three keys: developmental frames (how mental models trap us), systems archetypes (why problems recur), and Kolb's cycle (why this mirrors real growth).

4. **Active Experimentation (Kolb's Stage 4) – 20 min**

    a. In this culminating phase, participants transition from conceptual understanding to professional application by designing a personalized coaching intervention framework. They integrate insights derived from embodied role reversal experiences, systemic pattern recognition, and theoretical models into a structured methodology, hence they will design a step-by-step plan that blends role reversal with reflection and measurement. Coaches will build a personalized approach for real client work, test it with peers for feedback, and leave with a practical blueprint they can use immediately. This bridges workshop insights to real-world coaching impact.

5. **Closure – 5 min**

    a. Participants commit, in pairs, to one action step integrating ELT and role reversal into their practice.

Conceptual/ Theory Input

In line with the conference theme, High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence this session talks about Uniquely Human Capabilities and Implications for Professional Coaching.Human reflective practices, such as self-awareness and metacognition, that are essential for enhancing the design and delivery of hybrid coaching interventions. Role reversal, as a reflective practice, enables individuals to step outside their own perspectives, fostering deeper self-awareness and metacognitive skills. This, in turn, enhances the effectiveness of hybrid coaching by allowing coaches and clients to navigate complex organizational systems with greater empathy and adaptability.

1. **Developmental Frames**, (Kasl, Marsick, and Dechant (1997), represent the mental models through which individuals and groups interpret their environment. These frames unconsciously shape behavior, decision-making, and problem-solving approaches. Role reversal disrupts these ingrained patterns by forcing participants to physically and cognitively inhabit conflicting perspectives. This immersion creates opportunities to identify limiting beliefs and expand one's capacity for understanding, directly challenging assumptions that perpetuate systemic barriers. By exposing these frames, role reversal becomes a catalyst for transformative learning and behavioral change.

2. **Systems Thinking** (Senge, 1990): Systems thinking emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals, teams, and processes within organizations. It shifts focus from isolated symptoms to holistic patterns, revealing how local actions trigger ripple effects across an ecosystem. Role reversal naturally aligns with this philosophy by allowing participants to experience these interdependencies firsthand. When stepping into another's role, individuals viscerally grasp how competing incentives, cultural norms, or hierarchical structures influence behavior. This embodied insight helps coaches and clients diagnose root causes of challenges like silos or mistrust, moving beyond superficial fixes toward interventions that reshape systemic dynamics.

3. **Role Reversal in Psychodrama** (Moreno, 1946): Developed by Moreno, role reversal is a structured technique where individuals embody others' roles to access perspective-driven insights. It functions as a metacognitive tool by requiring participants to simultaneously observe their own reactions while interpreting another's reality. This practice activates self-awareness (e.g., noticing emotional triggers) and social awareness (e.g., understanding systemic pressures on the role). Neuroscience research indicates role reversal engages mirror neurons, enhancing empathy and insight retention. In hybrid coaching, it bridges human intuition with AI's scalability—generating qualitative data that informs quantitative analysis.

4. **Empathy and High Performance** (Goleman, 1995; Brown, 2018): Empathy—encompassing cognitive, emotional, and somatic dimensions—is a proven driver of high-performance organizations. Studies consistently link empathy to outcomes like trust, collaboration, innovation, and adaptability. Role reversal cultivates all three empathy dimensions by creating lived experiences of others' challenges. Leaders who practice perspective-taking demonstrate measurable improvements in employee engagement, psychological safety, and cross-functional problem-solving. This positions empathy not as a soft skill but as a strategic lever for organizational resilience and performance.

5. **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle** (1984) and Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson, 2001) synergize to transform role reversal into high-impact systemic change. Kolb's cycle structures the learning journey: participants begin with Concrete Experience (e.g., role reversal as a stakeholder), transition to Reflective Observation (identifying biases through gesture debriefs), advance to Abstract Conceptualization (mapping insights to systems archetypes, and culminate in Active Experimentation (prototyping interventions). Bloom's taxonomy elevates cognitive rigor at each stage: Analyse (Level 4) biases uncovered in reflection, Evaluate (Level 5) empathy's impact using behavioural markers, and Create (Level 6) hybrid human-AI coaching protocols. This integration ensures coaches move beyond theory to actionable mastery—designing solutions where human intuition directs AI's analytical power.

Implications for Practice

This session provides participants with a critical framework for practicing in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence, directly addressing the conference's call to integrate human and artificial intelligence. The implications extend beyond acquiring a new tool to fundamentally reshaping coaching practice for greater impact.

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)

Kolb's four-stage cycle (Concrete Experience → Reflective Observation → Abstract Conceptualization → Active Experimentation) provides the scaffolding for this session. Role reversal serves as the concrete experience, while systems thinking tools (e.g., causal loop diagrams) facilitate abstract conceptualization of organizational dynamics. This dual focus ensures participants not only feel empathy but systematize its application in coaching.

Enhanced Empathy: Role reversal helps coaches and leaders develop deeper empathy, enabling them to build trust and foster collaboration within teams.

> **Metacognitive Coaching:** Coaches will learn to use role reversal not just as an empathy-building tool, but as a structured method for clients to observe their own thinking patterns (metacognition) in systemic contexts.

Expanded Perspectives: By stepping into the roles of others, coaches can help clients uncover and reframe their developmental frames, leading to more effective decision-making and problem-solving.

High Performance: The practices learned directly contribute to the high-impact outcomes sought in organizations. By using role reversal to break down silos, foster cognitive flexibility, and build psychological safety, coaches can directly fuel their clients' capacity for **innovation, adaptability, and engagement**—key drivers of performance in a VUCA world.. Empathy-driven organizations experience higher levels of innovation, employee engagement, and adaptability, all of which contribute to sustained high performance.

Practical Tool: Role reversal provides coaches with a practical, experiential tool to support clients in navigating complex organizational systems and achieving transformative change.

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Warrant Statement

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AI Usage Disclosure

Poe and Deep Seek - AI Tools were used for researching, summarising and language refinement.

Emotional Expression and Vulnerability as Catalysts for Resilience Coaching

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Abstract

In today's VUCA world and Hybrid Intelligence landscape of rapid change, resilience emerges as a must have skill for leaders and organizations.

The pathway to resilience also requires navigating through vulnerability—a journey leaders may find paradoxical. Research suggests that psychological safety and emotional expression are pre-requisites for developing resilient leadership.

This session will engage executive coaches and organizational sponsors in exploring a resilience coaching framework with key components such as realistic optimism and authentic vulnerability.

Keywords

Resilience Framework, Leadership Coaching, Resilience Coaching, Group Coaching.

Session Overview

The session is intended to up-skill executive coaches, coaching educators, coaching sponsors, business leaders and the teams they work with in building resilience through realistic optimism and authentic vulnerability.

While the technological developments in artificial intelligence constantly change the reality of our businesses, human intelligence continues to drive the uniquely human capabilities in leadership, such as authenticity. In other words, artificial intelligence processes and responds (doing mode) for leaders, and human intelligence creates presence and contact (being mode) in leaders. Combining the two requires careful yet creative navigation. Therefore, today's High Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence must purposefully and effectively foster the emotional intelligence necessary to build resilience in leaders.

The session defines what resilient leadership is and why it is critical in leadership development. The cognitive and emotional elements in resilience development are identified and supported by relevant, developmental research. In line with Columbia's Coaching Model, the 3Cs in Crisis Resilience Coaching Methodology is outlined, with an emphasis on the core components of realism, resourcefulness, and optimism. The participants are then invited to apply the resilience coaching model within peer coaching dialogue. The participants also practice with two emotional expression techniques- shared experience and self-curiosity in small groups. Self-curiosity is remembering and describing memories and related feelings, triggered by the crisis. Shared experience is recalling and summarizing past experiences relevant to the challenge at hand.

Through this experiential session, participants will be able to dissect relevant insights, assess their areas of use, and create a new meaning through their crisis and challenge. In line with

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Kolb's Learning Theory, self-curiosity and shared experience exercises encourage learning through concrete experience and reflective observation. The 3 Cs in Crisis Resilience Coaching Methodology promotes learning through abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

Conference Theme Relevance

The experiential session touches on what is uniquely human about coaching through real-time resilience development and emotional expression practices. The human capacity that currently surpasses artificial intelligence to understand and respond to complex emotions is highlighted. In line with the High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence conference theme, the session further supports the fact that uniquely human capabilities—emotional awareness, authenticity, vulnerability, and meaning-making through narrative—are valuable human differentiators in resilience coaching. Self-curiosity practice draws out the power of emotional intelligence, in fostering trust and creating new insights. Shared experience practice shows humans' ability to interpret and create meaning from complex narratives.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Apply communication techniques that encourage emotional expression and vulnerability to develop resilience
- Formulate a new resilience coaching framework, integrating realistic optimism and authentic vulnerability
- Demonstrate the importance of vulnerability and authenticity in resilient leadership development
- Adapt a simple, powerful coaching tool to apply in their next leadership challenge

Session Outline

Introduction - 10 minutes, Resilience Coaching (Large Group, Individual Reflections)

- What does resilient leadership mean?
- Why is resilience coaching more critical than ever in delivering client value?
- Is vulnerability a paradox or a pre-requisite for developing resilience?
- Where is the gap in resilience coaching theory and practice?

In this section participants define resilience and then share a resilience leadership challenge. Through concrete experience sharing and reflective observation, learning about resilience coaching is grounded in the personal and professional context of participants.

Didactic, Interactive - 20 minutes, Resilience Coaching Framework: 3 Cs in Crisis Methodology (Large Group, Individual Reflections)

- Defining resilience as a developmental trait: Emmy Werner's Protective Factors

- Theoretical foundations of resilience: Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy
- Aaron Antonovsky's Salutogenesis Theory
- Froma Walsh's Family Resilience Framework
- Making the case for emotional expression and vulnerability in resilience development
- The emotional and cognitive elements in resilience coaching

While discussing key theories like Logotherapy and Salutogenesis, participants form new concepts or adjust existing ones about resilience. Linking the frameworks to their own leadership challenges help them construct new mental models of resilient leadership. Learning is achieved through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization.

Experiential - 45 minutes, Resilience Coaching Framework through Peer Coaching (Large Group, Peer Coaching, Small Groups)

- Context: Worst/Best Case Scenarios, Acceptance/Change Potential, Flexibility Range
- Content: Resourcefulness, Proactivity, Responsibility
- Conduct: Action, Optimism, Meaning
- Experience Emotional Expression and Vulnerability in Peer Coaching (Small Groups):
- Participate in "The memory I remember, the emotion I feel" vulnerability exercise
- Tell parallel stories in the form of "shared experiences"

In the Context section, after the model is introduced, participants review their past leadership crisis in pairs, with the help of these questions:

- What is the best/worst thing that could have happened?
- What happened?
- What was in my control/out of my control to change?
- If I were to give my flexibility at the time a rating, from 1-least to 10-most, what would it be?
- What would have increased my flexibility?

The flexibility discussion provides transition from the Context into Content section. Participants continue their peer coaching review, with the next set of questions:

- What/who would have helped me?
- What/who would have been my top three smart resources?
- What could I have done proactively before the crisis (that would have helped during the crisis)?

- How did I take responsibility (and do my part)?

Responsibility discussion naturally flows into action steps taken during the crisis, hence the Conduct section. Peer coaching is wrapped up, with these questions:

- What actions did I take during/after the crisis?
- What gave me a sense of hope?
- What new insight or meaning did I discover in the aftermath?

Applying real leadership crisis scenarios to the model promotes learning through abstract conceptualization as well as active experimentation. Self-curiosity and shared experience exercises provide learning from concrete experience and reflective observation. Meta-reflections such as "How did it feel to coach from a place of vulnerability?" or "What resilience capacity showed up most clearly?" help transform theory into embodied knowledge.

Closure - 15 minutes, Implications for High Impact Coaching

- Harvesting learnings per vulnerability and resilience into high impact coaching
- Resilience coaching framework applications for individual, group, and peer coaching

Through abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, coaches identify key learnings and action commitments for their resilience coaching practice.

Conceptual Theory/Input

Research into resilience evolved significantly, from early views of it as an inherent trait to understanding it as a dynamic developmental process (Robertson et al., 2015). Yet, resilience coaching models are scarce, let alone those which integrate emotional expression and vulnerability (Bachkirova et al., 2016). This session aims to fill a significant gap, suggesting a framework for resilience coaching, combining cognitive and emotional elements. The resilience coaching model is complemented with emotional expression techniques to unlock the vulnerability necessary to build resilience.

The experiential session rests on these premises:

Resilience is a dynamic growth process. According to Howe, Smajdor, and Stokly (2012), "it is the dynamic nature of resilience which sets this quality apart from related psychological traits such as 'hardiness' and 'mental toughness'" (p.350; as cited in Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar & Curran, 2015, p. 534).

Resilience coaching can help clients construct a new meaning through their crisis or challenge. "Coaching therefore extends beyond a process or technique for developing competencies and reaching ambitious goals and represents a new type of formalized high-quality relationship in which skilled professionals assist clients make desired life changes" (Mosteo, Batista-Fouget, McKeever & Serlavos, 2016, p. 52).

The 3Cs in Crisis Resilience Coaching Framework stands on Viktor Frankl's (2004) Logotherapy and Aaron Antonovsky's (1987) Salutogenesis Theory, putting realistic optimism and meaning making at its centre. In the postscript he added to his book, Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl says, "Most important, however, is the third avenue to meaning in life: even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by doing so change himself" (p.147). Frankl suggests that how we respond to adversity and tragedy makes all the difference in tapping into our resilience. Aaron Antonovosky's Salutogenic Framework identifies three simple steps for building resilience- comprehend reality, manage resources, and make new meaning. The equal importance given to resourcefulness, together with realistic optimism, is worth noting. Similarly, 3Cs in Crisis Resilience Coaching Framework is based on the three pillars of realism, resourcefulness, and optimism.

Emmy Werner's ethno-psychographic research with children through their adulthood, proves that resilience is developmental i.e. not in our nature but in the way we nurture it (Werner & Smith, 2001). Werner also identifies the "protective factors"- 1) personal- ability to solve problems, 2) family-strong bond with a caretaker, 3) community-involvement, 4) communication-interpersonal communication skills- that help children grow up into resilient adults. She proves that resilience is not necessarily based on personality traits, but a combination of environmental factors that protect us from impact of hardships, and the learnings we acquire while dealing with adversity.

Froma Walsh's (2012) Family Resilience Framework suggests three pillars for resilience in families: belief systems, organisational patterns, and communication. According to Walsh, our resilience levels change as the dynamics among these elements shift. "These keys to resilience are mutually interactive and synergistic. For example, a relational view of resilience (belief system) supports—and is reinforced by— connectedness (organizational patterns) and collaborative problem solving (communication processes). A counterbalance of processes is also important, as when fluid shifts between stability and flexibility are required for both continuity and change" (Walsh, 2012, p. 414).

Both scholars' research and methodology support the importance of relational processes, connectedness, and communication, in building resilience. This is integrated into the resilience coaching framework presented here in the form of emotional expression and vulnerability. Current neuro-scientific research supports this by demonstrating how emotional awareness and regulation activates the neurological pathways essential for resilience (Siegel, 2020; Singh, 2022).

Review of coaching research provides specific data on the benefits of executive resilience coaching. Grant and colleagues' earlier work (2009) indicates that executive coaching for resilience helps increase the mental well-being of the professional i.e. lower depression and higher well-being perceptions in self. Grant and colleagues' later work (2014) shows how one on one and group coaching for organizational change can increase resilience levels, i.e. cognitive hardiness of the individual (personal control, rise to challenges, commitment to action). Sherlock-Storey and colleagues' study (2013) finds that levels of resilience increase hope, optimism, and self-efficacy, through goal setting, social support, and self-efficacy in executive coaching.

On the role of emotional expression and authentic vulnerability in resilience coaching, Mosteo et al (2016) suggest that coaching relationships characterized by trust and emotional

connection significantly increase resilience and goal-directed energy. Mina, E et al (2022) find increasing emotional intelligence skills in nurses significantly raises their resilience potential during the Covid 19 Pandemic. In the Li, X. & Zhang, J. (2022) study with 85 team leaders and 417 employees in China, authentic leadership positively correlates with increased employee resilience. This finding is in line with previous research, stating that authentic leaders are well positioned to impact levels of positivity and performance in followers when performing in more stressful contexts (Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Peterson et al., 2012).

In their comprehensive review of resilience coaching research, Sipondo, A. and Terblanche, N. (2024) draw three main conclusions. Firstly, a variety of coaching philosophies and methodologies support resilience development. Secondly, certain factors are key in coaching for resilience: setting goals, creating resources, mentoring self-regulation, working in between sessions, and trusting the safe space of coaching relationship. Thirdly, all coaching interventions reviewed result in higher resilience, in varying degrees. However, more research is needed to identify which strategies and tools influence resilience more positively through coaching. The 3Cs in Crisis Methodology, grounded in resilience theory and supported by resilience coaching research, attempts to enhance the cognitive strategies and emotional tools we bring into coaching relationships and leadership challenges.

Implications for Practice

Today's leaders have at least one common denominator, the amount and speed of change they must swiftly adapt to. The VUCA world presents many business challenges for people, processes, and finances. The developments in technology and artificial intelligence provide both a relief and a complication for creating new solutions and acquiring new skills. That is why resilience is still a top of mind, very much sought after skill for business leaders. This session provides a resilience coaching framework that may help coaches and the leaders they coach to increase their levels of resilience.

Related to the conference theme of Hybrid Intelligence, the session highlights that emotional vulnerability and authentic expression represent uniquely human capabilities technology cannot replicate. In an era of increasing artificial intelligence, the ability to connect emotionally and create psychologically safe spaces for transformation, becomes an essential human contribution to resilience coaching and leadership development.

Using the 3Cs in Crisis Resilience Coaching Framework, coaches can better access the resilience potential of their clients. An implication for practice is developing greater confidence and competence in working with emotions and vulnerability, both their own and their clients'. This includes recognizing when resistance to vulnerability might be impeding resilience development. Coaches experience the immense value added through sharing memories and experiences vulnerably, in peer and group coaching settings.

For buyers of coaching and organizational sponsors, this session offers insights into creating developmental environments where vulnerability is recognized as a strength rather than weakness. It can inform and change how they structure coaching programs and cultivate organizational cultures that support resilience through vulnerability.

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Warrant Statement

I warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for our experiential session is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I further confirm that:

1. **Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.

2. **Proceedings inclusion** – By submitting this full paper, I expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.

AI Disclosure Statement

AI Tool- ChatGPT was used to run a deep search in resilience coaching and to receive feedback on Kolb's Learning Theory implications in the session outline.

From Chakras to Chatbots: A Framework for High-Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence

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Abstract

This experiential session explores a hybrid coaching framework that integrates the chakra system with AI-enhanced insight. Grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and systems psychodynamics, the session supports intuitive discernment, somatic awareness, and the strategic application of digital advancements. Through structured triads and reflective exercises, participants engage in purpose-driven coaching across complex systems. This session bridges ancient wisdom and emerging technology, offering tools to coach with clarity, integrity, and presence in a VUCA world.

Keywords

Hybrid Intelligence, Intuitive Coaching, Chakra System, Experiential Learning, Systems Psychodynamics

Session Overview

From Chakras to Chatbots: A Framework for High-Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence is a session designed for coaches, organizational development practitioners, and learning leaders who are navigating the intersection of technological disruption and human development. Rooted in an integration of the ancient wisdom of the chakra system, experiential learning theory, and systems psychodynamics, the session introduces a hybrid coaching framework that honors both energetic presence and AI-augmented insight.

Participants will move through a thoughtfully sequenced experience that includes guided meditation, triadic peer coaching, intuitive inquiry, and the incorporation of AI-generated coaching inputs. Using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as a scaffold, attendees will deepen awareness of their own somatic and energetic intelligence, explore emerging tensions introduced by hybrid intelligence, and experiment with frameworks for integrating human and technological sources of insight.

Through paired and small-group activities, participants will practice discernment, presence, and systemic sensitivity in real time. The session invites deep self-reflection and interpersonal connection, as well as critical consideration of how coaching must evolve in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, & Ambiguous) world. Whether participants are seasoned in energetic modalities and AI or new to AI and the use of ancient wisdom in coaching, this session offers an accessible, embodied entry point to a timely conversation: how do we coach with integrity and intuition in the era of hybrid intelligence?

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Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly engages the conference theme—*High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence*—by examining how intuitive frameworks and emerging technologies can co-construct meaning in a coaching encounter. Grounded in experiential pedagogy and systems psychodynamics, the design enables participants to explore the tensions and synergies between somatic intelligence and algorithmic input within real-time coaching scenarios.

Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for human discernment, the session invites a nuanced examination of its role as a catalytic presence within nested systems of influence. By cultivating both energetic awareness and strategic adaptability, participants leave with an integrated model of high-impact coaching that is responsive to complexity, ambiguity, and the evolving nature of adaptive insight in coaching, particularly in hybrid contexts.

Learning Objectives

Participants will engage in applied and reflective practices designed to integrate intuitive and technological capacities for high-impact coaching. By the end of the session, they will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

- **Illustrate** a chakra-informed framework for coaching that integrates intuitive insight with strategic application in hybrid intelligence contexts.
- **Apply** Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to structure coaching engagements that move from somatic awareness to actionable insight.
- **Analyze** the implications of AI-generated coaching inputs on role, boundary, and authority dynamics within coaching systems, and how they influence tasks.
- **Demonstrate** discernment in integrating energetic presence with AI-enabled tools to enhance coaching efficacy in VUCA environments.
- **Evaluate** their own coaching practice through the lens of ancient wisdom, systems psychodynamics, and hybrid intelligence, identifying areas for growth and recalibration.

Session Outline

Time	Section	Description
10 minutes	Introduction and Grounding	The session opens with a welcome and purpose-setting meditation, anchored in the root chakra. Participants are invited to reflect on their relationship with technology, intuition, and purpose. An overview of session objectives and structure is provided to establish psychological safety and shared intent.
15 minutes	Energetic Intelligence as Framework	Participants are introduced to the chakra system as both a metaphor and developmental tool for intuitive coaching. Through brief presentation and guided prompts, they explore how energy centers correspond to coaching capacities such as trust, communication,

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Time	Section	Description
		and discernment. This segment lays the foundation for the experiential activities that follow.
5 minutes	VUCA Framing: Coaching in Complexity	The facilitator briefly introduces a real-world coaching scenario involving organizational ambiguity and systemic complexity. Participants discuss how grounded energetic awareness supported clarity amidst competing data and evolving client needs.
15 minutes	Hybrid Coaching Triad I – Intuitive Lens	Participants engage in self-facilitated coaching triads using only intuitive tools: body awareness, emotional resonance, and energetic presence. Each person rotates through the roles of coach, client, and observer. The observer notes patterns of presence, voice, and tone, while the coach practices "self-as-instrument."
5 minutes	Mini-Debrief – Intuitive Insights	In small groups, triads reflect on the intuitive session with one-word reflections to each prompt: What was known without being spoken? What energetic or emotional signals surfaced? Reflections are scaffolded through prompts aligned with Kolb's reflective observation phase.
15 minutes	Hybrid Coaching Triad II – AI Lens	Participants revisit the same coaching scenario, this time integrating AI-generated prompts or synthesized insights. The coach incorporates this data while maintaining somatic and energetic awareness. Observers again track presence and coherence, noting shifts or enhancements in the coaching exchange.
10 minutes	Whole Group Debrief – Integrative Reflection	Using Kolb's Learning Cycle, the facilitator guides a debrief: What patterns emerged? What insights were gained from juxtaposing intuition with AI? How did systemic dynamics such as authority and role show up? The group shares "aha" moments and discusses tensions between human and machine sources of insight.
10 minutes	Closing: From Integration to Action	Participants receive the *Chakras to Chatbots Framework* visual handout and a fillable *Hybrid Coaching Design Template*. The session concludes with a reflective writing prompt: What does coaching with purpose look like in a hybrid world? Participants are invited to set an intention for how they will bring this work forward and share it in their triads.

Each segment supports participants in applying, analyzing, and evaluating hybrid coaching strategies. The structure enables real-time practice and reflection, ensuring that conceptual models translate into embodied, observable coaching behaviors. Note: access to an AI platform or tool will be necessary to fully participate in this session.

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Conceptual Theory/Input

This session is informed by an integrated theoretical architecture that bridges ancient energetic frameworks with contemporary models of experiential learning, hybrid intelligence, and systems psychodynamics. While modern science often seeks to validate through empirical observation, the foundational insights that guide human behavior, learning, and transformation are rooted in ancestral systems of knowledge—spiritual technologies that predate the scientific method. This session asserts that high-impact coaching in a hybrid age requires not only fluency in emerging tools and theories, but reverence for the intuitive, somatic, and relational wisdom that has guided human development for millennia.

At the heart of the design is the chakra system—an ancient energetic framework originating in early Indian spiritual traditions and refined across generations of contemplative practice. The chakra system maps the human experience across seven energetic centers, each associated with core psychological and developmental themes: trust and grounding (root), creativity and emotion (sacral), agency and power (solar plexus), communication and truth (throat), love and connection (heart), intuition and vision (third eye), and purpose and unity (crown). These energetic centers can be understood both metaphorically and somatically, offering a developmental scaffold through which practitioners can sense, assess, and respond to client needs beyond spoken language or cognition. The chakra system functions as an intuitive diagnostic and design tool—deeply aligned with core coaching competencies such as presence, listening, and co-creation.

Refer to Table 2, below, to connect this chakra with a leadership trait that may need support. The aligned coaching capacity can serve as a starting point for exploration with the client, while the hybrid intelligence consideration can help the coach stay balanced as they address the client's needs.

To bridge this ancestral intelligence with contemporary learning design, the session applies *Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle* (1984), a well-established framework in the learning sciences that emphasizes the cyclical nature of learning through experience. Kolb's model includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These phases mirror the energetic arc of the coaching process as outlined in the chakra map—moving from embodied awareness to emotional and cognitive insight, and finally to strategic application. For example, grounding in the root chakra can correspond to the concrete experience phase, while intuitive insight via the third eye aligns with reflective observation and synthesis. The session structure reflects this learning arc: participants first connect to embodied energetic presence, then reflect and experiment with coaching approaches, ultimately synthesizing human and AI-informed insight.

To ensure that this experiential process also addresses broader system dynamics, the session incorporates insights from systems psychodynamics, particularly the work of the *Tavistock Institute* (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). This lens emphasizes the unconscious processes that operate within and between individuals, groups, and institutions—especially under conditions of uncertainty or change. Coaching, within this framework, becomes a relational act that is always nested within larger structures: organizational hierarchies, cultural expectations, social identities, and unspoken assumptions about role, boundary, authority, and task. These dynamics are often amplified when new technologies are introduced, as they shift perceived power, and legitimacy

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within the coaching relationship. By introducing AI-generated coaching prompts into the session, participants directly encounter these system tensions and are asked to sense, reflect, and respond to them in real time.

This confrontation with hybrid intelligence—a term used to describe the emergent collaboration between human and artificial cognition—is grounded in the work of Maltbia (2024), who asserts that high-impact coaching must not only incorporate AI tools, but attend to their relational, ethical, and systemic implications. The session design resists simplistic "plug-and-play" integrations and instead positions AI as an influence that alters the energetic field of the coaching encounter. Coaches must develop both technical discernment (how to evaluate and apply AI-generated insights) and energetic discernment (how those insights land within the body, the relationship, and the system). These dual discernments represent a critical capacity for coaching in the hybrid era—one that cannot be developed through conceptual knowledge alone but must be practiced somatically, relationally, and reflectively.

To support this dual development, the session design draws from *Bloom's Taxonomy* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to ensure that participants move beyond knowledge acquisition into application, analysis, and evaluation. Bloom's hierarchy allows the session to scaffold a learning experience that deepens from awareness to mastery. Participants are not merely learning *about* hybrid intelligence—they are *embodying* it. They are engaging with both AI and intuition, evaluating their impact, and reflecting on how these new insights may or may not align with their coaching values and practices. This active synthesis across modalities is central to the session's impact.

Finally, this session is informed by *Noumair's* (2010) articulation of "self as instrument"—a foundational concept in coaching and OD that emphasizes the coach's own body, emotions, and intuition as vital sources of data. Self-as-instrument is not simply a metaphor but a stance of attuned presence, in which the practitioner continuously calibrates between inner awareness and external stimuli. When hybrid tools enter the coaching space, they introduce new layers of data, insight, and risk. Practicing from an energetic, embodied stance enables coaches to discern what is being revealed, displaced, or distorted. This is not only a technical capacity—it is a spiritual and ethical one, rooted in the coach's relationship to self, other, and the many systems they inhabit.

In synthesizing these frameworks, the session offers participants a rare opportunity: to experience the future of coaching not as an abstract concept, but as a living, breathing inquiry—one that asks them to be fully present, systemically wise, and energetically grounded. The integration of ancient wisdom and contemporary theory reflects a broader truth: that what we call "innovation" is often a return to what has always been known. Science, learning theory, and artificial intelligence do not replace ancestral insight—they evolve from it. To coach in the era of hybrid intelligence is not to choose between tradition and technology, but to hold both with discernment, curiosity, and care.

Implications for Practice

As the coaching profession evolves alongside rapid technological change, practitioners must expand their capacity to work at the intersection of intuitive insight, systemic awareness, and data-informed intelligence. This session provides an accessible yet rigorous framework for integrating

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energetic intelligence with AI-augmented tools—offering a developmental roadmap for coaches, consultants, and learning leaders navigating hybrid environments.

For both independent and internal coaches, the chakra-based framework enhances presence-based inquiry, allowing deeper attunement to unspoken client needs, and enabling more resonant and embodied interventions. Organizational consultants can apply these tools to help surface systemic dynamics—such as role, authority, and boundary—that often go unexamined in transformation and change efforts. L&D professionals and leadership educators will gain practical methods to infuse their learning designs with a reflective practice, emotional intelligence, and discernment in an age of increasingly automated inputs.

In this session we invite the coach to ground themselves in the training and expertise they already possess. As seen in table one, they are encouraged to clearly articulate the client's primary goal and to draw on their intuitive awareness to identify the open-ended questions that will guide the client to their own solutions. The coach is asked to lean into their concrete experiences and reflective observations as a foundation for developing abstract conceptualizations and moving toward active experimentation. Only by grounding in their own experience and intuition can the coach tap into this wealth of data and transition into a hybrid coaching experience. Only then can AI tools be thoughtfully integrated Table 1 highlights the coaches expertise: their ability to remain present and to intuitively support the client's self-discovery through catalytic open-ended questions that then trigger insight and action.

The Hybrid Coaching Design Template extends the session’s utility, offering a flexible structure that practitioners can immediately adapt to team development sessions, executive coaching engagements, or peer learning forums. This work invites coaches to experiment with emerging practices while staying rooted in values and discernment. As corporate investment in leadership development increasingly seeks scalable yet human-centered solutions, this approach invites coaches to take responsibility for the energetic and relational space while remaining conscious of how AI might influence perception, insight, and authority.

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Hybrid Coaching Design Template-TABLE 1

Integrating Intuition, Somatic Awareness, and AI-Enhanced Insight

Section 1: Session Intention & Energetic Alignment

Client/Team Name:

Date:

Primary Development Goal:

Energetic Focus (select one or more chakras):
☐ Root (Grounding, Trust)
☐ Sacral (Creativity, Emotion)
☐ Solar Plexus (Agency, Capacity)
☐ Heart (Connection, Compassion)
☐ Throat (Expression, Clarity)
☐ Third Eye (Vision, Intuition)
☐ Crown (Purpose, Integration)

What energetic themes or developmental capacities may be most present, or needed at this time?

What evidence leads you to that conclusion? (observable behaviors, patterns, narratives, body cues)

How do these themes show up beyond the individual — in the team, system, or organization?

Where might there be dissonance between the stated development goal and the energetic need?

What archetypes, metaphors, or recurring dynamics do you notice?

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Section 2: Coaching Flow Design (Kolb's Cycle)

Stage	Planned Activities / Prompts	Tools/Resources
Concrete Experience	What lived or embodied experience is the client drawing on?	
Concrete Experience	Where in the body is this experience felt most strongly?	
Reflective Observation	What emotions, images, or sensations arise in recalling this?	
Reflective Observation	What is unsaid, avoided, or glossed over?	
Abstract Conceptualization	How does this connect to a larger personal or organizational story?	
Abstract Conceptualization	What new metaphor, archetype, or symbol emerges?	
Active Experimentation	What small somatic or behavioral experiment could be tried before next session?	
Active Experimentation	How will the client know (energetically, emotionally, practically) if it is working?	

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Section 3: Integrating AI Tools

AI Tool or Platform Used (if applicable):

Purpose of AI Integration (check all that apply):

☐ Generate coaching prompts
☐ Summarize themes or insights
☐ Support decision-making
☐ Explore multiple perspectives
☐ Other: _____

AI Input Used in Session (e.g., prompt or output):

Coach's Reflection

- How did the AI-generated content support, enhance, or conflict with intuitive guidance or somatic awareness?
- What nuance did your intuitive knowing catch that the AI missed?
- Where did the AI surface blind spots in your framing?
- How might the AI's response shift if you crafted a more somatic/energetic input?

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Section 4: Self Reflection

Where did you notice energy shift in the session?

What cues (verbal, emotional, somatic) informed your coaching moves?

How did your own body respond — in resonance, resistance, or mirroring?

What transferences or counter-transferences did you notice? (e.g., feeling pulled into a role)

What intuitive image, symbol, or metaphor arose — and how did it guide you?

How did you balance inner knowing with external input (data, AI, client narrative)?

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Section 5: Outcomes & Next Steps

Coachee's Insights or Takeaways:

Commitments or Action Steps:

What resistance or shadow might arise in following through?

How might these insights ripple into their relationships, team, or organization?

What would it look like to *embody* this takeaway — in voice, posture, or presence, not just action?

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Hybrid Coaching Design Template-TABLE 2

Integrating Intuition, Somatic Awareness, and AI-Enhanced Insight

Chakra	Theme	Coaching Capacity	Leadership Trait	Hybrid Intelligence Considerations
Root	Grounding	Presence & Trust	Stability & Integrity	Is the coach grounded before introducing AI insights?
Sacral	Emotion & Flow	Creativity & Rapport	Empathy & Adaptability	How do emotions and relational signals shape data interpretation?
Solar Plexus	Agency & Power	Confidence, Boundaries, & Capacity	Initiative & Ownership	Who has authorship over the insight—coach, client, or AI?
Heart	Connection	Compassion & Expansion	Purpose-Driven Alignment	How does technology support or erode relational depth?
Throat	Expression	Communication & Clarity	Voice & Transparency	How is language mediated through tech—and does it feel human?
Third Eye	Intuition	Insight & Discernment	Visionary Thinking	Can intuitive knowing co-exist with AI-generated feedback?
Crown	Integration	Meaning-Making & Strategy	Systemic Wisdom	What is the strategic role of AI in the coaching system?

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Warrant Statement

I warrant that the attached full paper—prepared for my accepted presentation, experiential session, demonstration, or panel session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I further confirm that:

1. ***Formatting responsibility*** *– The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
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Artificial Intelligence Disclosure Statement

I disclose that AI tools were used to assist with language refinement, summarizing, and outlining in the preparation of this proposal. The ideas, content, conceptual frameworks, and processes reflected herein are solely the creation and development of the author/presenter and not generated by AI. The role of AI was limited to enhancing clarity, flow, and organization of the authors' original work.

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Game Jamming through Generative AI – Up Level Your Coaching Toolkit

Presenters and Affiliations

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Peter Williamson | Barometer XP

Abstract

This hands-on session invites participants to engage in a "game jam" by remixing popular coaching models with game mechanics and dynamics. Through playful experimentation and rapid prototyping, we will highlight how generative AI can enhance—not replace—human insight and creativity. In an era of hybrid intelligence, coaches must elevate uniquely human capabilities while integrating AI as a partner. Participants will leave with practical strategies to expand their coaching toolkit and amplify high-impact outcomes.

Keywords

Game-based learning, play-based learning, experiential learning, game jam, serious play, meaningful play

Session Overview

Coaches are constantly seeking new ways to spark reflection, deepen insights, and sustain growth. In today's era of hybrid intelligence, the opportunity is not simply to adopt new technologies, but to integrate them in ways that elevate human strengths—intuition, creativity, improvisation, and relational presence. Play offers a powerful bridge. Rooted in human evolution, play unlocks emotional, cognitive, and behavioral benefits that make learning more memorable and impactful.

This session explores how play can transform familiar coaching models through the lens of game mechanics and dynamics. Participants will engage in a live "game jam" process, breaking down and remixing well-known methods such as GROW, ORID, and OSKAR, into modified forms. At each step, we will highlight where generative AI can complement—not replace—human creativity, offering a glimpse of how coaches can experiment with hybrid teaming.

By actively prototyping and sharing their ideas, participants will experience how playful methods encourage resilience, adaptability, and innovation—uniquely human capacities that gain even greater importance when paired with machine-learning partners. The process underscores that experimentation itself is a form of play and that by engaging with new tools and perspectives, coaches expand both their confidence and their toolkit. This aligns directly with the Columbia Coaching Conference's commitment to advancing high-impact coaching in an era of hybrid intelligence.

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Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly supports the 2025 conference theme, *High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence*, by addressing two complementary needs:

First, it highlights uniquely human capabilities—intuition, creativity, improvisation, and relational presence—that remain essential to effective coaching. Through the playful practice of game jamming, participants will experience how these strengths foster resilience and innovation, qualities that no algorithm can replicate.

Second, it provides practical opportunities for integrating hybrid intelligence. By introducing generative AI as a collaborative partner in the remixing process, the session demonstrates how technology can extend human insight rather than diminish it. Coaches will see where AI can accelerate ideation, surface patterns, or expand reflection—while the coach remains the trusted guide of the process.

The need this session addresses is urgent: as machine-learning systems increasingly influence professional practice, coaches must learn to safeguard and amplify human-centered capabilities while also experimenting with new tools. By combining play, coaching models, and hybrid intelligence, this session equips practitioners with confidence to adapt, ensuring coaching continues to be both high-impact and human-centered in a rapidly evolving landscape

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Recognize and adapt well-known coaching models through playful remixing
- Apply game mechanics and dynamics to enhance coaching methods
- Design reflection questions that link directly to playful experiences
- Give and receive peer feedback to strengthen improvisational instincts

Session Outline

A. Presenter **Introductions and Session Framing (5 minutes) –** explain who we are, what a game jam is, and how we're exploring deeply human capabilities to identify where generative AI can help

B. Participants at each Table **Pick a Card (10 minutes) –** have each person select a mechanic card (building block elements of a game that players must navigate to participate fully in the experience) and/or a dynamic card (skills that players must leverage before, during, and after the game in order to be successful and improve at it from their table). Proceed with sharing from Pairs to Table Groups to Whole Room. Presenters explain the science of using game elements intentionally for learning and catalyzing action

C. Table Groups between 5-8 participants, **Select a Coaching Model to work with** (e.g., GROW, ORID, OSKAR) **(20 minutes)** – offer 3 options for each table to choose from; these are popular coaching activities with high potential for remixing (breaking apart and reassembling). Tables

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then integrate one or more of the presented mechanics/dynamics into the Method and prepare to present the idea.

D. **Remix Pitches (30 minutes)** – each table has 1-2 minutes to explain to plenary (e.g., gallery walk) their modified coaching activity. We give the observer audiences the opportunity to build upon the idea or ask questions using open answer Mentimeter poll (which will then AI-aggregate feedback themes) to unlock more insights or accelerate efforts.

E. **Review and Reflect (10 minutes)** – tables debrief the experience after seeing feedback from Mentimeter and addressing questions or ideas raised. Presenters will circle the room and collect thoughts for our concluding remarks.

F. **Wrap Up (15 minutes)** – highlight key observations and takeaways, shared resources for strategic play, and then open for Q&A.

Conceptual/Theory-Input

Grounding our playful approach in positive psychology, we draw upon the broaden-and-build theory, which posits that positive emotions expand people's thoughts and actions, ultimately cultivating lasting psychological and creative resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Complementing this, andragogy practices emphasize that adult learners leverage prior experience, find motivation through relevant and problem-centered application, and engage most effectively in self-directed experiential learning (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2014).

Finally, Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, framed through adventure-based or learning-through-doing models, highlights how sustained understanding emerges from the iterative process of concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptual sense-making, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Together, these frameworks affirm that when playful methods align with adult motivations and learning cycles, they support deeper insight, retention, and intentional innovation in coaching contexts.

Implications for Practice

Embedding play through game mechanics enhances coach resilience, equipping facilitators to pivot creatively and respond dynamically in live sessions. These are unique human capabilities rooted in positive psychology's findings around optimizing people's potential through positive emotional states, traits, and behaviors (Van Zyl et al, 2020). Integrating playful elements also cultivates coach-client relationships and method flexibility. Exposing coaches to varied play styles underscores how some people resonate more deeply with different modalities, encouraging practitioners to diversify their toolbelt and approach individual client needs with greater sensitivity (Gilliland, A. M., & Nacif, A. P., 2025).

Moreover, the game-jam format inherently ignites practitioner creativity and innovation, as it challenges coaches to deconstruct and remix familiar coaching models like GROW or ORID, experimenting with new ideas in real time—a process that mirrors Kolb's experiential learning loop and activates the adult learner's need for autonomy and relevance (Kolb, 1984).

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*I (we) warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for my (our) accepted presentation, experiential session, demonstration, or panel session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I (we) further confirm that:*

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Paper Request

This is a presentation, not a paper. Slides will be provided for review before the conference.

How Can Artificial Intelligence Help Coaches Naturally Listen?

Author and Affiliation

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Abstract

How can artificial intelligence help coaches become better listeners? How we listen is essential to what clients discover. Do we ever take how we listen for granted? How can we sharpen our listening skills? How can AI help? In this interactive session, participants will try out new technology to diagnose how we listen, strengthen skills at each step of listening and commit to use reinforced listening skills to deliver coaching that makes a difference.

Keywords

Listening, Coaching, Partnership, Hybrid, Artificial Intelligence, Leaders

Session Overview

During this 90-minute participatory session, 60 minutes will be devoted to hands-on exercises to strengthen listening skills. No matter who you coach, how you listen is key to what a client will accomplish. For many, listening may sound like common sense because we know how to hear.

But do we?

Framing the session will be the four dimensions of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory – developed by David Kolb in the 1970s – that will take us through participatory exercises to *diagnose, develop* and *deliver* stronger listening skills. Highlighting the session will be AI tools developed by audiologists use to retrain the hearing impaired.

Conference Theme Relevance

Directly related to the theme of High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence, this session will enable participants to experience how AI -generated exercises can help strengthen listening skills. During the 90 minutes, participants will journey from silence to listening with AI-generated tools as guide and instructor. While listening is an essential human experience – especially for coaches – training has been limited to sounds people generate in person. AI training tools, on the other hand, were developed by audiologists to reteach the hearing impaired. Using these tools in this setting can enhance how the coach better understands how to navigate situations and environments that require multi-layered skills to thoroughly listen. Participants in the session will experience how these AI exercises can strengthen any coach’s listening skills.

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Learning Objectives

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Review and detail how three dimensions of listening – to self, others and the room – enable clients to achieve the progress that coaching can bring.
- Discover and apply how specific steps of how we listen – how we hear, absorb, process, act, manage and measure – can strengthen coaching conversations with clients.
- Assess and devise additional ways to use strengthened listening skills in coaching conversations.

Session Outline

Topic/Timing	Kolb Learning Dimension	Content
Introduction (5 minutes)		Why listening with leaders is essential to coaching. How strengthened listening skills enhance how we listen.
Diagnose: **How We Listen** (10 minutes)	**Concrete Experience**	**Individual Exercises and Partner/Group Reflection** **Exercise 1: How We Listen** Diagnose a baseline of how listening skills enable coaches to reach beyond presenting issues to enable clients to discover insights and solutions.
Transition and Instruction (5 minutes)		
Develop: **What We Listen To** (30 minutes)	**Reflective Observation**	**Exercise 2: Listen to Self** Complete an AI exercise to strengthen how we enable clients to better listen to themselves to reveal challenges, fears, and uncertainties, as well as identify blind spots.
		Exercise 3: Listen to Others Complete an AI exercise to strengthen skills to help clients better absorb what others say, to track which words/phrases cause confusion or mislead.
	Abstract Concept-ualization	**Exercise 4: Listen to the Room** Complete an AI exercise to strengthen skills to help clients listen to any room they enter, to consider complex roles and situations, embrace issues and grasp nuance.
Transition and Instruction (10 minutes)		

Topic/Timing	Kolb Learning Dimension	Content
Deliver: What We Listen For (20 minutes)	**Active Experimen-tation**	**Exercise 5: Listen as We Coach** Complete an AI simulation Game to strengthen how to: • **Hear** words that may sound the same but carry different meanings • **Absorb** words and phrases through noise • **Process** what is absorbed without bias • **Act** on what is processed and acted upon without distraction • **Manage** distractions • **Measure** how we absorb, retain and act on what is heard
Reflection (10 minutes)		How we commit to continue to strengthen how we listen.

Conceptual Theory/Input

How we comprehend as we listen is essential to how we coach. As Osasa shares, listenng is an active, complex skill requiring conscious engagement and strategic processing (Osasa, Nobuko, 2004). The less rigorous our processing, the less complete our comprehension, and the less effective our efforts to reconfirm, rephrase or reframe. But it takes more than an intent to listen to actually listen. As Ahmadi observes, listening consists of auditory discrimination, aural grammar, choosing necessary information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning (Ahmadi & Seyedeh Masoumeh, 2016). While we naturally learn how to process what we hear as children, life and experience may intervene to weaken the skill. No matter how we believe we process what we hear, we *should* check how we actually listen. As Zhang relates, the increased use of listening strategy contributed positively to listening comprehension (Zhang & Yan, 2012).

This interactive session will introduce and apply AI-generated lessons to diagnose, develop and deliver how to listen and process. Research-based content will be supplemented by a case history and testimony from audiologists to bring the benefits of re-training to life. Together, we will test how we listen and what we do with what we hear. Based on what we experience in the session, we can continue to use AI exercises to retrain how we listen to connect

Implications for Practice

As coaches, we may assume we know how to listen. We may discipline how we clear our heads and prepare our minds to absorb what we hear. But listening is a more complex process than we may realize, as experienced by people who experience suddenly loss in their hearing.

In this session – as participants work through exercises designed to retrain those who suffer from sudden hearing loss – they will rediscover the steps to follow to strengthen how they listen as they coach.

While listening is an essential human experience, its training is often limited to the sounds people generate in person. AI-generated training tools, on the other hand, reach beyond what people can create to recreate actual situations and environments that require multi-layered skills to thoroughly listen. While designed for those who experience hearing loss, the tools can help any coach help people rediscover why they want to listen, reconsider who they need to listen to and for, rethink what can get in the way of listening, and recommit to do something with what they hear. No matter how we are trained as coaches, we place a premium on how we listen. But there's more to comprehending what we hear than simply listening to words. Only when we fully absorb as we listen can we comprehensively respond as coaches. And that may require that we retrain how we listen and comprehend what we hear. Following this session, after we experience AI exercises used to retrain the hearing impaired, we may recommit to how we strengthen how we process as we listen.

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Metaphor-Based Spiritual Coaching for Executive Transformation in the AI Era

Presenter(s) and Affiliation(s)

Zoey Zheng | Life Artist

Abstract

In an era shaped by AI, intuitive and metaphor-based spiritual coaching uniquely enables executives to achieve profound personal insights and transformational leadership growth. This experiential learning session provides executive and organizational coaches with practical techniques grounded in metaphor theory, mindfulness, Internal Family System and Empty Chair techniques. Participants will engage with intuitive visualization, group discussion and dyad coaching practices to deepen their coaching practice and facilitate meaningful executive transformation.

Keywords

Spiritual Coaching, Metaphors, Conscious Leadership, AI

Session Overview

This 90-minute experiential session introduces executive and organizational coaches to metaphor-based spiritual coaching techniques designed to facilitate profound leadership transformation in the AI era. Targeting professional coaches working with senior executives, the session combines theoretical foundations with hands-on practice to demonstrate how intuitive, metaphor-driven approaches can bypass analytical resistance and access deeper self-awareness.

The session unfolds through three experiential phases: preparation through guided meditation and somatic awareness exercises, followed by two core practices utilizing metaphorical visualization and Internal Family Systems techniques. Participants will engage in dyadic coaching exercises, using empty-chair dialogues and guided imagery to explore leadership challenges through symbolic landscapes and internal part work. Rather than traditional lecture-based learning, this session emphasizes embodied experience, creative visualization, and peer coaching to

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demonstrate how metaphors can facilitate breakthrough insights that purely rational approaches often miss.

Through this experiential design, coaches will develop practical skills for helping executives integrate their spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, and systemic dimensions, creating leaders capable of navigating complexity with authentic purpose and resilience in an increasingly AI-influenced world.

Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly aligns with the 2025 Columbia Coaching Conference theme, "High-Impact Coaching: In an Era of Hybrid Intelligence," by equipping coaches with tools to cultivate uniquely human leadership qualities like empathy, intuition, purpose, and embodiment, which complement AI's analytical capabilities. The design fosters real-time learning through experiential activities like somatic meditations, metaphorical visualizations, and empty-chair dialogues, enabling participants to practice and internalize coaching techniques during the session. By integrating the SMBHS model created by the author, the session addresses the "wisdom gap" in AI-augmented organizations, where leaders must balance technological efficiency with emotional and spiritual depth. Participants engage in collaborative exercises, such as dyads and group reflections, to explore how metaphor-based spiritual coaching enhances resilience and vision, ensuring leaders thrive in hybrid intelligence environments. This focus on experiential, human-centric coaching delivers immediate, actionable insights for high-impact leadership development.

Learning Objectives

This session empowers participants with practical, metaphor-based coaching skills to support executive transformation in AI-driven contexts. By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Apply the Spirit-Mind-Body-Heart-System (SMBHS) model to identify and address leadership gaps in AI-augmented organizations, using kinesthetic and reflective exercises.
- Utilize metaphor-based visualization techniques to guide clients toward clarity and self-fulfillment, fostering authentic leadership purpose.
- Facilitate empty-chair dialogues within the Internal Family Systems framework to resolve clients' intrapsychic conflicts, enhancing emotional intelligence and decision-making.

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- Synthesize insights from somatic meditation and metaphorical exercises to develop intuitive coaching strategies that complement AI's cognitive strengths.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of metaphor-based spiritual coaching in fostering resilience and vision, through reflective group discussions and personal metaphor creation.

Session Outline

Segment	Duration	Objective	Description
Opening	5 min	Set clear intentions and establish facilitator credibility.	- Welcome participants and briefly introduce facilitator. - Share the session's goal and agenda.
Context Setting: Leadership in the Age of AI	10 min	Illustrate the necessity of conscious leadership beyond AI-driven rationality.	- Briefly contrast traditional leadership (mind-dominant, hierarchical) with future-oriented leadership integrating Spirit, Mind, Body, Heart, and System (SMBHS) (2min). - Small Group Discussion (4 min): In triads, participants discuss: "Considering AI's strengths and limitations, what types of leadership qualities will be most essential in the future?" - Facilitator briefly introduces SMBHS Conscious Leadership Model (2 min) and emphasize spiritual coaching relevance (2 min).
Preparation : Developing Intuitive and Channeling Skills	15min	Equip participants with foundational intuitive skills for metaphor-based coaching.	- Introduce metaphor theory briefly: metaphors activate right-brain intuition, bypass analytical resistance (3 min). - Short Guided Meditation (5 min): Lead participants through gentle breathing and grounding exercises to enhance intuitive awareness. - Pair Activity (7 min): Participants pair with neighbors to discuss: Question 1: "Right now, what sensations do you notice in your body?"

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Segment	Duration	Objective	Description
			Question 2: "If this sensation or feeling was a metaphor, what would it be?" Question 3: "What insights does this metaphor provide about your current state?"
Core Practice 1: Self-fulfilment	20 min	Teach participants to use metaphorical visualization to help clients achieve clarity and fulfillment.	- Introduce how to use metaphors to bring clients from the current state to the desired state (2 min). - Dyad Coaching Exercise (16 min total): Participants pair up as Coach and Client (8 min each) with coaching prompts: 1) "Imagine your current leadership situation as a landscape, what do you see, sense, or notice?" 2) "Now visualize your ideal future as another place or landscape, describe what emerges." 3) "Is there a path or bridge connecting these two landscapes? What does it look like?" 4) "What message or insight did you receive about navigating this path?" – Brief Large Group Reflection (2 min): "How did metaphor help you bypass analytical thinking?"
Core Practice 2: Intrapsychic Conflict Resolution	30 min	Train participants in metaphor-enhanced empty-chair techniques to resolve internal conflicts.	– Briefly introduce Internal Family Systems, illustrating how internal "parts" can be personified metaphorically (3 min). – Demonstration (5 min): Facilitator demonstrates a brief empty-chair dialogue between two internal parts (e.g., "ambitious explorer" and "cautious guardian"). – Dyad Coaching Exercise (20 min total): Participants alternate as Coach and Client (10 min each). Coach facilitates dialogue with these coach prompts: 1) "Identify two parts within you currently in conflict: what

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Segment	Duration	Objective	Description
			metaphors represent these parts? What do they look like?" 2) "Give each part a voice: What does each part say? What does it want or need?" 3) "Could you kindly invite them to sit on a table to talk with each other? How can these parts collaborate or find common ground?" 4) "What insight arises from hearing the dialogues between these two parts?" − Brief Large Group Reflection (2 min): "How did this metaphorical dialogue change your perception of the internal conflict?"
Integration	10 min	Synthesize learnings, ground insights, and clarify practical takeaways.	− Ask participants to jot down one metaphor that captures their key takeaway and how they'll apply it in coaching (3min). – Participants stand in a circle and share their one-word metaphor (e.g., "bridge," "light") (5min).

Conceptual Theory/Input

This experiential session is deeply rooted in several interconnected theoretical frameworks and aims to provide a robust understanding of why and how metaphor-based spiritual coaching is crucial for executive transformation in the age of AI.

The **Spirit-Mind-Body-Heart-System (SMBHS) model of Conscious Leadership** has its theoretical roots in Ken Wilber's Integral Theory, which proposes that human development occurs across multiple interconnected dimensions: cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational (Wilber, 2000). Wilber's AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) framework posits that authentic leadership development requires integration across interior and exterior, individual and collective dimensions (Wilber, 2000). Similarly, holistic leadership theory argues that sustainable

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leadership is not just about cognitive intelligence and skills but involves cultivating emotional intelligence, physical wellness, spiritual purpose, and relational harmony (Dhiman, 2017). Integrating these holistic frameworks led to the creation of SMBHS, a model designed explicitly for executive coaching. “S-Spirit" refers to an individual's sense of purpose, meaning, and connection to something larger than themselves; "M-Mind" encompasses cognitive abilities, strategic thinking, and analytical skills; "B-Body" relates to physical sensations, intuition, and embodied wisdom; "H-Heart" involves emotional intelligence, empathy, and relational capacity; and "S-System" acknowledges the interconnectedness of the individual with their organizational and broader ecological environment. By addressing leadership through these multiple lenses, the SMBHS model provides a richer, more integrated pathway to executive transformation, moving beyond the limitations of traditional, often mind-dominant, leadership paradigms.

Metaphor and Mental Transformation in Coaching: Metaphors are more than mere rhetorical flourishes. They are fundamental cognitive tools that shape our perception, understanding, and experience of reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In coaching, metaphors are profoundly powerful because they can bypass the conscious, analytical mind, directly accessing deeper emotional and unconscious layers of experience. This bypass mechanism is crucial for "mental transformation" (Offstein et al., 2023). When a client describes their leadership challenge as "being stuck in a swamp" or "climbing a never-ending mountain," these metaphors reveal their underlying beliefs, feelings, and the perceived dynamics of their situation far more vividly than literal descriptions.

- **Accessing the Unconscious:** Metaphors serve as symbolic bridges to the unconscious mind, allowing clients to articulate insights that might otherwise remain hidden or inexpressible (Jung, 2011). The unconscious often communicates through images and symbols, making metaphorical language a natural and potent medium for exploration.
- **Bypassing Resistance:** The analytical mind can be highly resistant to change or uncomfortable truths. Metaphors, being indirect, can slip past these defenses, allowing new perspectives to be considered without triggering immediate judgment or defensiveness (Steyn & Barnard, 2024). This creates a safer space for self-discovery and vulnerability.
- **Facilitating Perspective Shifts:** Metaphors can powerfully facilitate perspective shifts by allowing clients to explore their experiences from a safe emotional distance. According to Manahan-Vaughan and Papworth (2024), metaphors help reframe problem-saturated narratives and create open space for new meanings, enabling clients to move from fixed identities shaped by trauma toward stories of growth and possibility.
- **Making Abstract Concrete:** Many leadership challenges are abstract (e.g., "lack of influence," "team cohesion"). Metaphors provide concrete, sensory-rich images that make these abstract concepts tangible and actionable, enabling deeper understanding and more resonant solutions (Paivio & Greenberg, 1995).

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AI's Evolution and Impact on Leadership and Coaching: AI's evolution is reshaping organizations by automating data-driven tasks, optimizing processes, and enabling predictive analytics, fundamentally altering leadership demands. Davenport and Ronanki (2018) note that AI excels in pattern recognition and routine decision-making, shifting leadership focus toward emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, and vision-setting. Zaidi et al. (2024) found that AI adoption requires leaders to bridge technological capabilities with human wisdom, emphasizing empathy and adaptability. Unlike AI, which lacks emotional depth, human coaching fosters trust, intuition, and purpose, qualities rooted in SMBHS's Heart and Spirit dimensions. For instance, while AI coaching tools can provide data-driven feedback, they cannot replicate the relational depth of human coaches, who facilitate vulnerability and self-awareness (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). The session's closing discussion explores this synergy, equipping coaches to integrate AI's analytical strengths with human-centric coaching, aligning with the conference theme of hybrid intelligence.

Preparation Stage: Somatic Experiences and Mindfulness: The "Preparation" stage of the session emphasizes guided meditation and body awareness. This is grounded in the understanding that intuition and imagination are not solely cognitive functions but are deeply intertwined with our physiological and somatic states.

- **Mindfulness and Presence:** Mindfulness, as taught by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2009), is the practice of paying attention to the present moment, intentionally and non-judgmentally. This practice helps individuals regulate their nervous system, moving from states of sympathetic (fight-or-flight) arousal to parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) activation. A regulated nervous system is a prerequisite for accessing deeper states of awareness, intuition, and creativity.
- **Somatic Experience and Embodied Cognition:** Our emotions and thoughts are not confined to the brain; they are deeply embodied. The field of embodied cognition suggests that our cognitive processes are significantly influenced by our bodily experiences and interactions with the environment (Barsalou, 2008). Stress, anxiety, or unresolved emotions can manifest as physical tension, blocking creative flow and intuitive insights. By directing attention to bodily sensations (somatic awareness), individuals can become more attuned to their "gut feelings" - a primary channel of intuition. This practice helps to release physiological blocks and integrate bodily wisdom into decision-making. Peter Levine's work on Somatic Experiencing (Levine, 1997), though therapeutic in origin, highlights how tuning into and processing bodily sensations can unlock emotional and psychological resilience. For coaches, guiding clients through somatic awareness helps them identify how their body responds to challenges, offering raw, unfiltered data that bypasses intellectual rationalization, thereby enhancing imagination and intuitive problem-solving.

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Practice 1: Metaphorical Visualization for Self-Fulfilment: This practice draws on principles from positive psychology, self-determination theory, and visioning methodologies to help clients gain clarity and purpose.

- **Visioning and the Ideal Self:** Coaching often involves helping clients articulate an "ideal self" or a desired future state (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). Metaphorical visualization makes this abstract "ideal" tangible and emotionally compelling. Instead of merely listing desired outcomes, clients can create a rich, multi-sensory inner landscape or an "inner leader" archetype that embodies their aspirations. This deeply personal image acts as a powerful internal motivator and guide.
- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT):** SDT posits that human beings have inherent psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2024). When clients visualize their ideal future, they tap into their intrinsic motivation and bolster their sense of autonomy over their direction and their competence in achieving it. The metaphor provides a powerful, self-generated anchor for their purpose.

Practice 2: Resolving Intrapsychic wit: This practice is firmly rooted in Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy and the Empty-Chair technique from Gestalt therapy.

- **Internal Family Systems (IFS):** IFS (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2019) proposes that the mind is naturally comprised of multiple sub-personalities or "parts," rather than a single, unitary self. These parts include:
    - **Exiles:** Wounded parts holding pain, shame, or fear from past experiences.
    - **Managers:** Protective parts that control daily life to prevent exiles from being triggered.
    - **Firefighters:** Reactive protectors that douse emotional fires when managers fail.

    The core concept is that all parts are well-intentioned, even if their actions are maladaptive. The goal is to help clients access their "Self" - a core of compassion, curiosity, clarity, courage, connectedness, creativity, confidence, and calm, to lead and heal their parts, bringing them into harmony.
- **Empty-Chair Technique:** Developed by Gestalt therapists like Fritz Perls (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951) and used in psychodrama (Kellermann, 1992), the empty-chair technique allows clients to externalize an internal conflict or a relationship dynamic by placing the "other" (or the "part") in an empty chair and engaging in a dialogue with it. The client literally moves between chairs, speaking from both perspectives.
- **Integration in Coaching:** When combined, IFS and the Empty-Chair technique provide a powerful framework for internal conflict resolution in coaching (Paivio & Greenberg, 1995). Clients identify a conflicting "part" (e.g., "my inner critic," "the procrastinator"). By giving this part a metaphorical identity (e.g., "a relentless drill sergeant," "a sleepy bear")

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and placing it in the empty chair, the client can dialogue with it from the perspective of their compassionate "Self." This process fosters understanding of the part's positive intention, helps differentiate it from the Self, and facilitates a renegotiation of its role, leading to internal harmony and clearer decision-making without judgment or blame. This technique moves beyond mere intellectual understanding to a deeply experiential resolution.

Implications for Practice

Employing metaphor-based spiritual coaching significantly deepens executive coaching effectiveness. These practices enable executives to access profound self-awareness, resolve deep-seated internal conflicts, and authentically align with their core values and leadership purpose. Coaches who master these techniques support executives in developing greater emotional intelligence and adaptability, essential qualities in the increasingly complex business environment influenced by AI. Ultimately, intuitive and metaphor-based coaching leads to sustained individual and organizational transformation by fostering leaders who can navigate complexity with clarity, resilience, and purpose. Incorporating spiritual coaching methods into executive development programs ensures that leadership growth extends beyond technical skills, addressing holistic, existential dimensions vital for enduring success. These methods provide a powerful differentiator for human coaches in a world increasingly shaped by hybrid intelligence, offering unique value that AI cannot replicate.

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AI tools were used to assist with language refinement, summarizing, and outlining in the preparation of this proposal. The ideas, content, conceptual frameworks, and processes reflected herein are solely the creation and development of the author/presenter and not generated by AI. The role of AI was limited to enhancing clarity, flow, and organization of the author's original work.

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Narrative Reflective Practice (NRP): Using Stories of Experience to Bring Forth what Is Uniquely Human about Coaching

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Abstract

This experiential session introduces Narrative Reflective Practice (NRP) as an accessible and structured means to facilitate reflection, promote deep learning from experience, and human connection. Faced with the current proliferation of AI in coaching, this session serves as a reminder of the unique human capabilities paramount to addressing inherent human/computer interaction limitations. Created for coaching professionals, it spans foundational theory, facilitation skills, and concrete application. Taking a self-as-instrument approach, participants will experience the NRP process and be invited to apply these skills to their existing practices. Key participant takeaways include cultivating uniquely human coach competencies (i.e., questioning, listening, relating, and presence) and additional resources to facilitate components of the coach process (i.e., developmental frames, situation analysis, and growth & renewal).

Keywords

Narrative Reflective Practice, Human Coaching Capabilities, Human Intersubjectivity

Session Overview

This experiential session introduces Narrative Reflective Practice (NRP) as a potential tool for uniquely human organizational coaching. Intersubjective storytelling, meaning making, relational responsibilities and learning from experience are tools presented by NRP that cannot be replaced by AI (Bachkirova & Kemp, 2025). With its roots in Narrative Inquiry, as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), NRP adopts Dewey's theory of experience, comprised of continuity and interaction (Dewey, 1991). Clandinin and Connelly evolve Dewey's theory and introduce a three-dimensional inquiry space (sociality, place, and temporality). This three-dimensional inquiry space offers a fluid yet structured approach to making meaning of complex life experiences. As a practice, NRP, has been deployed in individual and group settings to learn from experience.

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Designed for executive coaches, educators, and coaching professionals seeking to expand their human-centric skillset in the age of Hybrid Intelligence, this session blends theoretical input with hands-on facilitation practice. Participants will practice using the NRP method and three-dimensional inquiry space in a group setting to share stories of experience and learn from each other.

The session is highly interactive and emphasizes learning by doing. Participants will experience the full arc of a facilitated NRP circle—first as observers, then as co-inquirers, and finally through reflective debrief. This session will prepare participants to use NRP in one-on-one or group coaching as well as other potential settings, such as team reflection and coaching supervision.

Conference Theme Relevance

In response to a key question posed by the conference theme, “What are the unique human capabilities (ie, those that AI cannot replicate now) that can contribute to high-impact coaching experiences?” We draw from recent work by Bachkirova and Kemp (2025) that defines the unique role that human-based coaching plays in the defining characteristics of organizational coaching (joint inquiry, making sense of experience with a focus on action, values-based, highly contextual, relationship-based on trust, and contracting-based). As Bachkirova and Kemp describe, AI “coaching” does not meet the criteria needed for organizational coaching on multiple fronts. Perhaps most saliently regarding our session, AI cannot have experiences and thus cannot make meaning of subjective individual human experience in complex contexts. Relevant to the "Hybrid Intelligence" conference theme, the session promotes the importance of human connection and intersubjectivity and offers practitioners a means for critical reflection. Equipping coaches with NRP also supports reflective practice within coaching education and supervision, promoting ongoing self-awareness, learning, and professional growth.

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the theoretical underpinnings of NRP as a method for learning from experience.
2. Identify unique human capabilities in organizational coaching that NRP can facilitate.
3. Apply the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space through guided reflective exercises, identifying meaningful personal and professional insights.
4. Evaluate potential NRP integration into client interactions to foster growth and development.

Session Description and Outline

Facilitated by Columbia University-trained executive coaches, this session will be structured in three segments. The first segment will provide the theoretical background and specific facilitation steps. The second segment is aimed at practice to develop NRP facilitation skills in a small group. In the small group, a participant volunteer will be solicited to share a narrative of experience. The group facilitator will then model how to use the three-dimensional inquiry

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space to deepen the volunteer's narrative of experience. Time permitting, observers in the inquiry space will have the opportunity to practice using the three-dimensional inquiry space by further inquiring into the narrative of experience. Time permitting, the participant volunteer will be invited to retell the narrative with an eye to evoking future experiences. The concluding segment will debrief the experience, reflect on implications for practice, and provide additional resources.

Reflection will be embedded throughout the session, following Jack Mezirow's typology of reflection as described in his Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991). Premise Reflection (the assumptions guiding our thinking) will be conducted in the introduction in response to the theory input and participants' coaching work. Content Reflection (the content of the experience) will occur during the story-sharing section, where participants will be able to reflect on the experiences shared in narrative form. Finally, in the conclusion, we will conduct Process Reflection (how are we conducting reflection) to reflect on the potential usefulness and application of NRP as a coaching tool.

Segment	Key Topics/Methods	Timing
1. Introduction	• Theory Input • Overview of other NRP circles • Facilitation Points	20 mins
2. Skills Practice in facilitated NRP Circles (small groups)	• Story Sharing (10 mins) • Narrative Inquiry by Facilitator (10 mins) • Narrative Inquiry by Participants (10 mins) • Retelling of Story (15 mins)	55 mins
3. Group Discussion and Q&A	• Group Debrief • Implications for Practice • Additional Resources	15 mins

Conceptual/Theory Input

Narrative Reflective Practice (NRP) is based on Clandinin and Connelly's work on Narrative Inquiry as both a phenomenon and methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The major theoretical input is from John Dewey's work in Learning from Experience (Dewey, 1997). Elements of continuity and interaction are woven into inquiry that "makes possible a new way of dealing with them, and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced objects, not more real than those which preceded, but more significant and less overwhelming and oppressive" (Dewey, p. 175, 1981). Within the Deweyan view of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed a three-dimensional inquiry space with key elements of place, temporality, and sociality. Clandinin et al. (2010) have done much to advance this work beyond a research methodology and deploying Narrative Reflective Practice in settings such as teacher formation and healthcare practitioners. Outcomes of NRP can be as varied as well-being, professional identity making, and agency in complex systems.

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Implications for Practice

This experiential session focuses on developing facilitation skills for Narrative Reflective Practice (NRP) in both individual and group coaching settings. Participants will gain practical techniques to support client growth and explore novel applications of narrative reflection. As Bachkirova and Kemp (2025) propose, AI may facilitate some client learning in a coaching relationship (i.e., initial client pre-reflection, exploring options, developing SMART goals), yet a deep human connection is core to organizational coaching. NRP offers a means for human coaches to cultivate a deeper human connection with their clients. The session emphasizes uniquely human coaching capabilities, aligning with the conference theme of Exploring Uniquely Human Capabilities and Implications for Professional Coaching.

By exploring client stories to foster meaning-making, identity, agency, and well-being, participants will enhance empathy, emotional intelligence, and narrative complexity skills—distinct human advantages over AI. These skills are vital for establishing trust and meaningful coaching relationships.

NRP as a praxis combines theory and real-life application. The practical skills developed through NRP can be used in multiple coaching settings and offer a structured means to guide reflection and allow for emergent insights and deep learning from experience.

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Warrant Statement

*We warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for our accepted presentation, experiential session, demonstration, or panel session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. We further confirm that:*

1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. We) understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
2. ***Proceedings inclusion** – By submitting this full paper, we expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.*

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Robots in the Room: Ethics, AI, and the Coach

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Abstract

In this interactive session, participants engage in real-time to explore ethical dilemmas across the coaching lifecycle, including AI algorithmic bias in hybrid coaching and the application of AI in organizational coaching at scale. Industry expert facilitators lead peer table discussion and polling on high-stakes ethical scenarios, using Socratic, Buddhist, Utilitarian, ICF, and normative business ethics to test assumptions. Outcomes include expanded perspective and co-created solutions to address impact, fairness, confidentiality, and trust in AI-partnered coaching.

Key Words

Ethics, Decision-Making, AI in Coaching, Algorithmic Bias, AI in Coaching

Session Overview

Artificial intelligence (AI) functions both as a tool and as context to workplace and personal choice-making. Norms for ethical use of AI and hybrid intelligence (i.e., integration of human and AI problem solving) are evolving alongside the technology at an unprecedented pace. Meanwhile, AI could expose coaching professionals to issues of trust and data protection that were already concerning before AI, because coaching arose as an interdisciplinary field without the strong rulesets or legal privileges of law or medicine. So how can we bring timely and trustworthy ethical insight to the nexus of hybrid intelligence and coaching?

Answers, today as in Aristotle's or Buddha's time, emerge from ethical dialogue and reflection engaging multiple parties and perspectives. Our experiential session catalyzes collective inquiry by confronting ethically complex real-world cases in hybrid coaching; exposing the philosophical, moral, relational, and spiritual/religious underpinnings of our responses to ethical dilemmas; and encouraging lively debate around action steps. The facilitators begin with a warm welcome honoring each individual's presence and gifts, cultivating a climate of curiosity and psychological safety. We introduce three provocative coaching ethics scenarios involving AI for

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small group discussion. We test assumptions and invite multiple points of view. Anonymized flash polls provide insight into the group's mindsets and ethical decisions in real time. In dialogue we explore, how do we feel about those decisions? What are the unexpected second, third, and later order effects of our choices in the moment? The session concludes with a shift towards action as participants co-create new ethical guidelines to bring back to their organizations and coaching communities. Kolb's (1984) learning cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation guides a fast-moving design that engages head, heart, and hands.

Conference Theme Relevance

The session invites participants both to experience hybrid intelligence directly, and to reflect on the meaning of that experience, within the adaptive leadership frames of the dance floor and the balcony (Heifetz & Linsky, 2009). By engaging participants in dialogue leveraging AI within the session, the facilitators test assumptions of how coaches derive ethical stances (Smith et al., 2023), and the impact of those ethical stances on the practice of coaching, the development of technology, and the culture of leadership in a hybrid intelligence world. The facilitators use 3CP principles of powerful questioning and co-creation of the agenda, as well as theatrical and literary principles of "show, don't tell," to structure a journey in which participants shape ethical perspectives by learning from each other and from AI instances designed for the session. In its design, the session invites participants to apply 3CP and ICF ethical norms and also to question how these norms may over- or under-serve coaches and clients working with hybrid intelligence.

The potential for AI to flatter, please, and/or reinforce mindsets of human subjects has provoked ethical concern in the mental health arena, notably where subjects used AI to contemplate self-harm and AI failed to notify anyone of the subject's intentions (Hill, 2025). Given coaching's adjacency to counseling and its use in the well-being space, similar concerns should be debated openly in coaching. For example, in the pursuit of high impact coaching, might a coach, client, or organization give AI overzealous direction to pursue client behavior modification in ways that may create undue stress for the client? Could clients leverage an AI or hybrid coaching modality to advocate for termination of a direct report, and if so, what legal liabilities ensue? In team coaching, would AI tell each team member what they wanted to hear, and/or would it encourage members to communicate with each other? And what responsibilities do human coaches bear to code the agreements used in hybrid settings?

Learning Objectives

1. **Examine and debate** ethical dilemmas in hybrid coaching by engaging multiple human and AI perspectives.

2. **Synthesize** key insights to **formulate** core ethical principles for hybrid coaching.

3. **Create** measurable guidelines to encourage practical, ethical, high-impact coaching in context of AI.

Session Outline

Time	Activity	Description
10 min	Welcome & Framing	Presenters lead a brief discussion introducing the session overview, format, and objectives, while setting the context of hybrid intelligence. Presenters introduce a framework for recognizing ethical dilemmas in the hybrid coaching lifecycle. The framework highlights considerations arising when technology intersects with human decision-making. Presenters link the topic with Columbia Coaching Certification Program (3CP) principles. Setting agreements, presenters invite participants to approach discussion with curiosity and critical thinking. Presenters indicate transition to interactive experience focused on three specific ethical scenarios.
45 min	Guided Ethical Inquiry of Three Scenarios	In trios, participants review **Scenario 1: The Confidentiality Crisis**, generate a response and input into Mentimeter. Presenters debrief responses as they scroll onscreen.

Time	Activity	Description
		Group discussion of themes and outliers summarized by AI within Mentimeter. Inquire with group about reflections, surprises, rationales for decisions. Repeat for **Scenario 2: The Bias Blindspot** and **Scenario 3: The Robocoach Rebellion.**
10 min	Synthesis and Reflection	Reflect on which voices participants questioned or trusted, and why. Reflect on the ethical and spiritual sources of different perspectives: Utilitarian, Buddhist, Socratic, ICF, normative business ethics.
20 min	Co-Design Ethical Guidelines	Participants collaborate to draft practical ethical guidelines for hybrid coaching, in groups: *Data, Privacy, and Confidentiality* • How should **coaching insights be protected** within and across organizations in an era of algorithmic systems, agentic AI, big data strategies and data warehousing? • Where do we draw lines between **confidentiality** and organizational access?

Time	Activity	Description
		Algorithmic Bias and Fairness • How can we ensure AI-generated coaching insights are **fair and unbiased**? • Who is accountable when AI-based recommendations lead to unintended consequences? *AI's Role in Workforce Decisions* • What are risks of using coaching data for **performance management, investigations, employee sentiment monitoring, or mental health concerns?** • How to balance AI insights with **human judgment** in employment decisions? *Trust, Transparency, and AI's Role in Coaching* • How transparent should coaches be about **AI** in coaching engagements? • How can AI's use as a **coaching tool** be reconciled with its use as **a surveillance mechanism**?

Time	Activity	Description
5 min	Wrap-Up & Takeaways	Close with final reflections. Provide digital copy of co-created ethical guidelines.

Conceptual/Theory Input

This session combines hybrid intelligence theory (Maltbia, 2024), addressing the integration of human expertise and artificial intelligence to achieve superior outcomes, with both coaching-specific ethical cases (ICF, 2021; Passmore et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2023) and foundational ethics from different cultures, such as Anglo-American utilitarianism (Bentham, 1789; Mill, 1863; Tusseau, 2024) and Buddhist ethics (Harvey, 2012; Nichtern & Trongpa, 2016).

The three ethical scenarios created for the session draw on Ethics of Care (Gilligan, 1982), emphasizing relational sensitivity and empathy in ethical decision-making; The AI-Trust Paradox, showing challenges of detecting AI gaps (Kreps et al., 2023; Lee & See, 2024); digital ethics (Floridi et al., 2018; Luppicini, 2010); and experiments assessing hybrid coaching (Terblanche et al., 2024). As the scenarios take place in organizational contexts, the session considers deployment of AI within broader questions about the purpose of organizational coaching (Bachkirova, 2024), the postulate that AI could think or act ethically in a manner approaching consciousness (Chiang, 2020), and corporate governance in context of surveillance techniques applied by business actors (Zuboff, 2019).

Design of the session integrates experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), using a cyclical process of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation, and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), creating an environment where participants feel safe to voice different perspectives.

Implications For Practice

As AI transforms the coaching landscape, ethical integrity becomes complex and consequential. Beyond the coaching conversation itself, workplaces use AI for scheduling, feedback analysis, goal tracking, progress monitoring, and employee sentiment analysis. These tools enhance efficiency and insight while introducing ethical considerations related to data privacy, consent, algorithmic bias, and the accuracy of generated insights.

The ethical questions around AI and coaching therefore should be framed more broadly than whether in a given setting, AI can coach as well as a human coach and even if it can, whether it is ethical to deploy an AI coach. Hybrid intelligence contemplates active and iterated cycles of influence among AI systems and human actors, not only coaches but also organizational leaders. Given the broad potential for hybrid intelligence deployment across workplaces beyond the frame

of one-to-one developmental coaching relationships, ethical discussion of AI in leadership is truly a human capital issue as well as a coaching issue and should include business leaders as well as human resource practitioners.

Practitioners updating coach competencies in ethics should assume AI permeates most, if not all, of the work settings in which coaches are engaged. For this reason, competencies could apply the language of coaching, such as courage, presence, and curiosity, to include proactive discussion of AI during contracting. As examples, AI coaching competencies for study could include: 1) courage to ask what ethical ground rules underpin a given AI solution before applying it, and to raise field distinctions contrasting AI used in coaching with AI used in other learning or mental health applications; 2) presence to ask the client or sponsor how AI trained on historical data might perpetuate existing social, cultural, and organizational biases; and 3) curiosity to identify AI solutions, such as 360 degree tools or assessments, that address client needs while using client resources efficiently. In a hybrid intelligence mindset, coaches would leverage AI to improve client outcomes while actively interrogating AI-generated recommendations.

This session equips practitioners with strategies to balance innovation with ethical rigor, emphasizing the human connection at the heart of coaching and asking practitioners how they relate to the ethics of care. Through experiential analysis of AI-driven ethical scenarios, participants will strengthen capacity to assess risk, ensure fairness, and implement their ethical stance in hybrid contexts. This session invites the creation of new ethical guidelines and decision frameworks to anticipate and adapt to hybrid intelligence.

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Warrant Statement

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3. ***Artificial intelligence disclosure -** The authors used artificial intelligence (OpenAI's GPT-5) in this work to check grammar, spelling, naming conventions, and formatting for the paper and the handouts, and to refine the time bounds of each facilitated segment of the session. The authors also used artificial intelligence to enrich the prompt design of the AI chatbots used for demonstration purposes in the live session.*

The AwakeningApp: Integrating Voice-Enabled AI with Human-Centered Coaching Frameworks for Transformative Learning and Reflective Practice

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Abstract

How do we keep AI-assisted coaching human-centered? We identify risks—over-direction, bias, and erosion of agency—and specify countermeasures: non-directive, trauma-informed questioning; culturally intelligent (CQ-attuned) language; explicit consent and transparency; and privacy-first, non-manipulative design. We propose a hybrid-intelligence model pairing voice-enabled, inquiry-driven AI with a spirit–mind–body lens. Dialogues apply ORID, Empathy Mapping, Social Emotional Learning, and 12-Step reflection; an optional voice-cloning feature aims to deepen resonance and self-agency. Guided by Kolb's experiential cycle and scaffolded by Bloom's taxonomy, implementation uses guided prompts, voice journaling, and facilitated dialogue. Contributions include (1) design principles for ethical, culturally sensitive AI mediation, (2) practitioner tools—checklists, language templates, and bias/agency audit rubrics, and (3) a model positioning AI as a reflective partner that preserves, and scales, human-centered coaching.

Keywords

Hybrid Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, AI Coaching, Experiential Learning, SEL, Reflective Practice

Session Overview

This interactive session invites coaches, learning designers, coaching educators, and human development professionals to explore the power of Hybrid Intelligence, the collaborative potential of human authenticity and AI-enabled insight. Participants will experience firsthand how AI can amplify, not replace, coaching practice, by engaging in activities that blend embodied awareness, reflective dialogue, and technology-supported exploration.

The session begins with a grounding exercise and an orientation to hybrid intelligence in coaching, followed by a live demonstration of The AwakeningApp's voice-enabled coaching module. In small breakout groups, participants will engage in guided role-play and reflective dialogue, experimenting directly with app features such as voice-based prompts, AI insights, and ORID- and Kolb-informed questioning frameworks. This active experimentation encourages participants to surface emotional, cognitive, and behavioral noticing while experiencing AI as a reflective partner rather than a directive authority.

Participants will then journal their reflections using either the Voice Journaling tool or the Miracle Book, trauma-informed spaces within the app designed to foster self-agency and deep noticing. These experiential moments feed into small-group reflection, where participants share

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what surfaced emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. A large-group debrief follows, connecting insights back to embedded frameworks such as ORID, Empathy Mapping, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), 12-Step reflection, and Cultural Intelligence (CQ). Together, participants will examine how these frameworks, when mirrored through AI, create new possibilities for inclusive, culturally sensitive, and ethical coaching practice.

The AwakeningApp itself embodies the session's values of safety, integrity, and human-first design. Its voice-enabled guidance, delivered optionally in the user's own voice, enhances emotional resonance while preserving self-agency. Cultural and emotional intelligence profiling during onboarding ensures personalization and inclusivity, while all data remains stored locally with no behavioral manipulation or extraction. This commitment to ethical design highlights how AI can be integrated into coaching with transparency and respect.

Drawing on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and Bloom's Taxonomy, participants will move from experience to reflection to conceptualization to action, exercising higher-order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and creation. The session concludes with a synthesis activity: each participant reflects on their personal beliefs about AI in coaching, identifies shifts in mindset, and envisions next steps for responsibly integrating hybrid intelligence into their own practice.

By session's end, participants will leave not only with an expanded understanding of AI's potential in coaching but also with practical strategies for applying hybrid intelligence to support empathy, presence, cultural attunement, and transformative learning in diverse coaching contexts.

Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly supports the Columbia Coaching Conference theme by exploring the integration of Hybrid Intelligence while honoring what is Uniquely Human in coaching. The AwakeningApp uses voice-enabled AI to mirror the client's inner world without replacing human presence, preserving empathy, agency, and emotional resonance. Rooted in ethical, trauma-informed design, the app enhances, not diminishes, the coach-client relationship. Through experiential methods grounded in Kolb and Bloom, participants will explore how AI can serve as a co-facilitator of growth, offering scalable support while maintaining the authenticity, reflection, and deep connection that define transformational coaching practice.

From a coaching perspective, the Coaching module within the app serves as a powerful tool for uncovering potential blind spots that may arise in a coach's work with clients. Drawing on the coach's onboarding profile, spanning emotional, cultural, spiritual, and social intelligences, together with insights from their in-app coaching sessions, voice journaling, Miracle Book entries, and Awakening Conversations, the AI is uniquely positioned to surface patterns, biases, and subtle misunderstandings that might otherwise go unnoticed. Additionally, the Awakening Conversations, centered on the often-overlooked spiritual dimension of the human being as spirit–mind–body, provide coaches with a profound means of processing and deepening their spiritual awareness of a client. This integration of human wisdom and AI insight exemplifies hybrid intelligence at its best.

From the coachee's perspective, the app offers a supportive extension of the coaching relationship that can be engaged both between sessions and in the moment when challenges arise.

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Whether capturing a fleeting realization, working through a stressful situation on the spot, or preparing for the next coaching session, the app enables clients to sustain momentum and deepen self-awareness outside the traditional coaching hour. Over time, this continuity of guided reflection may foster more than just momentary insight. It may begin to recondition the coachee's inner dialogue.

Through repeated exposure to the app's reflective questioning, coachees may start asking themselves these same powerful questions, challenging conditioned thinking, surfacing bias, and "peeling back layers" of assumption. This iterative practice has the potential to cultivate new habits of inquiry and reframing, mirroring the active experimentation and abstract conceptualization in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and advancing learners toward higher-order skills in Bloom's taxonomy, such as analysis, evaluation, and creation.

This is the essence of hybrid intelligence: the AI functions as a reflective partner that strengthens the coachee's self-awareness between sessions, while the human coach continues to hold the relational depth and intuitive presence that only people can provide. The more the coachee engages with the app, the better prepared they may become to enter their coaching sessions with fresh insights, practiced self-inquiry, and emerging habits of reframing. As a result, the time with their human coach may become even more productive, focused, and transformative, leveraging the best of both AI-enabled practice and uniquely human connection.

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate the potential and limitations of hybrid intelligence systems by exploring the interplay between human presence and AI capabilities in real-world coaching practice.
2. Apply and reflect on emotionally intelligent, client-centered tools such as personalized inquiry, empathy mapping, and active listening to deepen engagement and awareness in AI-supported coaching.
3. Analyze the human-centered frameworks embedded in The AwakeningApp (e.g., ORID, Empathy Mapping, SEL, 12-Step, and CQ) to determine their relevance in diverse coaching and cultural contexts.
4. Co-create ethical integration strategies for voice-enabled AI coaching that prioritize empathy, transparency, and cultural sensitivity while enhancing connection and transformation.
5. Reflect on and articulate personal beliefs, reactions, and biases about AI in coaching, identifying how mindset and self-awareness influence trust-building, presence, and transformational learning.

Session Outline

This interactive session invites participants to explore hybrid intelligence, the synergy of human presence and AI-enabled insight in real coaching contexts. Grounded in spirit–mind–body integration, participants will engage experientially with The AwakeningApp, blending theory with practice through dialogue, role-play, and reflective journaling. Framed by Kolb's Experiential

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Learning Theory and the conference theme, the session positions attendees as co-creators, inviting them to surface assumptions about AI, test new approaches, and envision ethical, culturally attuned ways of weaving AI into coaching with authenticity and empathy.

Welcome & Conceptual Framing – 10 minutes

Participants will begin with a grounding exercise and an orientation to the session, where we introduce the concept of hybrid intelligence in coaching and The AwakeningApp's spirit–mind–body foundation. We then connect this to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, which explains how learning unfolds through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and action, and Bloom's Taxonomy, which illustrates the depth of learning. At their intersection, we see both the process and the progression of transformative learning. Aligned with the conference theme, participants are invited to act as co-creators in the learning process while also surfacing their initial mindsets, assumptions, and potential biases about AI-supported coaching, awareness that becomes the foundation for deeper engagement throughout the session.

Research & Theoretical Grounding –10 mins

We present the foundational frameworks embedded in the app: ORID, Empathy Mapping, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), 12-Step reflection, and Cultural Intelligence (CQ). This is accompanied by current research on emotional engagement, voice cloning, and AI-supported coaching relationships. The emphasis is on how these frameworks support ethical, emotionally resonant client engagement.

Framework Integration Overview – 10 mins

Using visual maps and dialogue transcripts, we illustrate how these frameworks are operationalized in real app interactions. Participants are invited to consider how these design principles align or contrast with their own coaching models, sparking early self-reflection.

Hands-On Demonstration / Breakout Groups – 30 mins

Participants engage in guided use of The AwakeningApp's coaching module. The experience includes simulated onboarding, hearing voice-cloned AI responses, and role-play with inquiry prompts. Emotional and somatic noticing is encouraged. Each participant then voice-journals their reflections, deepening cognitive and emotional processing.

Small Group Reflection & Practice Mapping – 15 mins

Facilitate small group dialogues using prompts aligned with ORID and Kolb to unpack the experience: What did you notice? How did it feel? What meaning did you derive? How might you experiment with this in your coaching context?

Plenary Q&A and Closing Integration – 15 mins

In a full group discussion, participants share insights and surface emerging questions. Facilitators guide a conversation about ethical and human-centered integration of AI in coaching. The session closes with a synthesis activity: each participant reflects on shifts in belief, mindset, or practice,

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and identifies actionable next steps for integrating hybrid tools with intention, empathy, and cultural attunement.

Conceptual Theory/Input

The AwakeningApp exemplifies the integration of hybrid intelligence with uniquely human developmental frameworks to support personal and professional transformation. Designed as a voice-enabled coaching tool grounded in emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity, the app enables users to explore insight, growth, and self-awareness in a format that is both scalable and deeply personal. Its layered design draws from trusted frameworks in coaching and adult development, while incorporating emerging research on artificial intelligence as a reflective partner in human transformation.

While the app itself offers a powerful platform, this experiential session is intentionally designed using Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2014) and Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to guide participants through a learning arc that spans the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains. Participants are not passive recipients of information, they are engaged in a dynamic process of doing, feeling, reflecting, interpreting, and applying. Kolb's cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, provides the foundation. Meanwhile, Bloom's Taxonomy scaffolds the learning progression from remembering and understanding, to analyzing, evaluating, and ultimately creating new coaching insights and strategies. Together, these learning models foster deep integration, encouraging participants to move beyond surface-level awareness into transformative insight that can be applied within diverse coaching contexts.

In the session, participants will experience concrete interaction with The AwakeningApp through guided use of its coaching module, including its signature voice-enabled dialogue. Through this, they engage in real-time, spoken conversation with an AI designed to mirror their thoughts, ask reflective questions, and evoke inner wisdom. As participants observe their own responses, they naturally move into reflective observation, guided by structured prompts (What did you notice? How did it feel? What meaning did you derive? How might you experiment with this in your coaching context?) and group dialogue.

One of the AwakeningApp's most distinctive features is its voice cloning capability, which allows users to hear reflective guidance and coaching prompts in their own voice. While the psychological and behavioral impact of voice cloning remains an emerging field of inquiry, early research on emotionally attuned AI interactions is promising. Barger (2024) demonstrated that AI-powered coaching interfaces, when personalized and emotionally intelligent, can foster working alliances and trust levels comparable to those experienced with human coaches.

Recent neuroscience research suggests that hearing one's own voice in moments of spiritual or emotional significance may have powerful effects. In a 2023 NPR interview, Dr. Lisa Miller (2023) described her MRI study with Yale in which participants recalled a profound spiritual experience and then listened back to it in their own voice while inside the scanner. The brain's bonding network, often associated with attachment and safety, appeared to activate in response, indicating that such self-voiced narratives may foster connection, self-bonding, and resilience.

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The AwakeningApp builds on this principle through its voice cloning module, allowing coaches and coachees to receive reflective prompts, affirmations, and guidance delivered in their own voice. This feature may deepen emotional resonance, support self-bonding, and accelerate the internalization of new habits of inquiry and reframing—critical ingredients in transformative learning. In this way, hybrid intelligence, when rooted in thoughtful design and personalization, may enhance rather than diminish the emotional quality of coaching. Hearing one's own voice in the feedback loop may amplify internalization, self-agency, and emotional depth, all central to lasting transformation.

The AwakeningApp is not a generic chatbot. It is a value-driven system built upon human-centered frameworks long used in coaching. These include: ORID (Stanfield, 2000) – a structured dialogue method guiding reflection from objective facts to deep decision-making. Empathy Mapping (Gray et al., 2010) – adapted to promote internal empathy, helping users notice and understand their emotional landscape. Social Emotional Learning (Elias et al., 1997) – used to build competencies like self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills. 12-Step Reflection (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001) – a spiritual-psychological tool for identifying patterns, taking inventory, and aligning with one's higher self. These frameworks enable the app to function less as a directive tool and more as a reflective mirror, supporting the user in uncovering insight, rather than offering conclusions. This mirrors best practices in transformational coaching: listening deeply, asking powerful questions, and holding space for self-led growth. The app also supports Cultural Intelligence (CQ) through onboarding prompts and profile awareness. This includes user reflections on cultural norms, communication preferences, and relational expectations. This informs how the AI tailors its language and tone. In this way, the app can offer coaching experiences that are not only personalized but also culturally attuned, reducing assumptions or unconscious bias in its feedback. Just as importantly, it supports coaches in developing their own cultural self-awareness. The AI, when prompted, gently reflects potential EQ and CQ blind spots back to the coach or user, fostering growth in areas that may have otherwise gone unexamined.

The session also introduces the app's trauma-informed design, which is non-directive, emotionally safe, and user-paced. The Voice Journaling and the Miracle Book modules hold space for reflection without pressure, mimicking the containment and spaciousness of a well-held coaching session. Importantly, the app stores all data locally and is built with ethical guardrails including transparency, non-manipulative design, and no behavioral data extraction. This aligns with the recommendations of Diller (2024), who outlines the ethical responsibilities of AI in coaching, particularly in emotionally vulnerable contexts.

As a coaching tool, The AwakeningApp supports both coaches and clients. For clients, it serves as a self-reflective space between sessions, promoting continuity of emotional and spiritual growth. For coaches, it acts as both a mirror and a guide, helping them identify emotional reactivity, cultural framing, or unconscious bias that might affect their coaching presence. This dual function is particularly valuable in a hybrid coaching landscape, where self-awareness, ethical clarity, and cultural competence are essential to preserving the integrity of the coaching relationship and goal achievement, but also sustainable, emotionally resonant transformation, hallmarks of ethical, human-centered coaching in the age of hybrid intelligence.

Ultimately, this session offers more than a tool demonstration, it opens a conversation about the future of coaching in an age of Hybrid Intelligence. It challenges participants to consider: How

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do we preserve what is uniquely human, empathy, presence, and trust, while embracing the scalability and personalization of AI? How can we co-create technologies that don't override intuition, but instead amplify it? And how can we guide AI to become not just a technical assistant, but a co-facilitator of transformation?

Implications for Practice

For individual coaches: The AwakeningApp offers a voice-enabled, experiential space where clients can explore insights between sessions, deepening emotional intelligence and self-awareness. Beyond client development, the app also serves as a reflective mirror for coaches, helping them identify and unpack their own emotional triggers, cultural assumptions, and implicit biases that may shape how they perceive or respond to clients. By surfacing these blind spots through guided inquiry and personalized feedback, the app supports coaches in expanding their emotional and cultural intelligence.

For organizational coaching programs: This hybrid model enables scalable, cost-effective coaching delivery without compromising personalization, cultural intelligence, or emotional depth.

For the coaching profession: This session models a future-forward approach to integrating hybrid intelligence in coaching while preserving the foundational human values of connection, presence, empathy, and transformation.

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1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. We understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
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AI Disclosure Statement

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The Power of Embodied Boundaries: Aligning Yes & No with Authenticity

Presenter and Affiliation

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Abstract

This 90-minute experiential session aims to enhance authentic decision-making and sustainable boundary-setting for coaches and leaders, grounded in somatic psychology and neuroscience insights. Participants engage in somatic practices, movement-based exploration, paired coaching exercises, and coaching demonstrations. Participants will identify habitual boundary patterns, evaluate how these patterns impact their capacity to set value-based boundaries, analyze and distinguish authentic from inauthentic responses, and commit to implementing embodied boundary practices that align with their values and professional sustainability.

Keywords

Somatic intelligence, boundary-setting, embodied decision-making, somatic coaching, leadership coaching

Session Overview

This 90-minute experiential session serves coaches, leaders, and professionals seeking to integrate somatic awareness into their boundary-setting practices. Designed for individuals committed to cultivating greater authenticity, presence, and confidence in decision-making, the session explores how habitual bodily patterns influence boundary capacity and provides practical techniques for recognizing and transforming these patterns.

Participants will learn to identify somatic cues that distinguish authentic from inauthentic "yes" and "no" responses, apply somatic practices to access embodied clarity before responding to challenging situations, and commit to aligned boundary actions that honor their values and somatic intelligence.

The session combines guided centering exercises, movement-based awareness practices, reflective dialogue, paired role-play practices, and live coaching demonstrations. These experiential components encourage deep engagement with the body's wisdom, fostering integration of somatic insights into actionable leadership and coaching skills for both personal and professional contexts.

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Conference Theme Relevance

This proposal directly addresses the conference theme of "Uniquely Human Capabilities" by exploring what remains distinctly human: our capacity for embodied intelligence—the ability to sense internal somatic states, interpret their meaning, and respond from authentic alignment. As artificial and hybrid intelligences become increasingly sophisticated, AI remains limited in its capacity to self-regulate or maintain real-time presence, particularly in contexts requiring embodied awareness and adaptive responses (Rueß, 2022). In this context, somatic intelligence emerges as a critical differentiator: humans integrate emotion, intuition, and bodily awareness to make ethical, relational, and context-sensitive decisions (Strozzi-Heckler, 2007). This session draws upon somatic psychology and neuroscience to cultivate bodily awareness as a foundation for clear boundary-setting, enhanced resilience, and relational authenticity—competencies that exemplify uniquely human capabilities and prove increasingly essential as leaders navigate complexity, uncertainty, and the evolving demands of human-centered work in a technology-driven world. By developing these embodied capacities, coaches and leaders strengthen precisely those aspects of professional practice that remain irreplaceably human.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify and articulate habitual somatic patterns and nervous system responses that emerge when boundaries are challenged.
- Apply somatic awareness techniques – such as centering, grounding, and breath work - to cultivate internal clarity before responding to boundary-related situations.
- Analyze the embodied distinctions between authentic versus inauthentic “yes” and “no” responses, examining how default physical reactions to boundaries reflect past conditioning.
- Evaluate how these somatic patterns impact one’s capacity to set clear, value-aligned boundaries in personal or professional relationships.
- Commit to implementing one specific embodied action – such as a boundary-setting practice or somatic check-in – that aligns with their personal values and somatic intelligence.

Session Outline

1. **Welcome and Centering (5 min) – Presenter-led, Whole Group**
    - Presenter introduces and guides a centering practice to establish presence and awareness.
2. **Exploring Behavioral Tendencies Under Stress (10 min) – Presenter-led, Whole Group & Reflection**

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- Presenter introduces and guides a movement-based awareness practice to explore habitual somatic responses under stress.
- Participants engage in the practice and reflect on how these body movements reveal their habitual patterns when their boundaries are challenged.
- Presenter facilitates a large-group discussion, allowing participants to share experience, insights and learnings.
- Based on the reflection and discussion, introduce the session objects and relevance to leadership coaching.

3. **The Science of Embodied Boundaries (12 min) – Whole Group**
   - Introduction to somatic psychology, neuroscience, and embodied cognition, emphasizing how bodily signals inform boundary-setting.
   - Two case studies illustrating how somatic intelligence enhances coaching impact.
4. **Experiential Practice: The Yes/No/Maybe Embodying Boundaries (18 min) – Whole Group**
   - Facilitator explains the Yes/No/Maybe practice.
   - Coaching demonstration with a volunteer navigating a boundary-setting scenario.
     - Practice round 1: Explore and identify body interoception sensations of an authentic “yes”
     - Practice round 2: Incongruent Yes - Recognize body discordant interoception sensations when saying "yes" while meaning "no," and compare with the authentic "yes."
     - Practice round 3: Embodied No – After practice a centering technique, then feel the body interoception sensations and emotional state of authentically saying "no" to something previously difficult.
   - Sample reflective questions:
     - What did you notice? Describe your body sensations and emotional state.
     - How do these sensations and emotions differ from previous rounds?
     - What patterns or habitual responses do you recognize in your body when you override your true boundary?
     - What is your interpretation of these patterns?
     - How do these patterns impact your ability to set and maintain boundaries?
     - How would you apply these insights in your personal life and in your role as a coach?
5. **Paired Practice: Applying Yes/No/Maybe to Boundary-Setting (20 min)**
   - Participants in pairs explore real boundary-setting scenarios from their coaching or leadership roles. One person will act as the coach and the other as the coachee. Follow the sequence shown in the demo.

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- Role reversal, 10mins for each round.
- Key reflection points during the practice
  - As a coachee
    1. How do your bodies signal Yes, No, or hesitation?
    2. How do your habitual behavioral patterns impact their decision?
    3. What did you do to make the shift happen?
    4. What are your insights/learning out of this exercise?
  - As a coach—how might you hold space for a client exploring their boundaries in this way?
- Facilitator circulates, offering guidance.

6. **Group Debrief and Implication (20 min) – Whole Group**
   - Participants share insights about their experience and reflection
   - Guided reflection (focusing on as a coach):
     - What does this shift in your own body teach you about how to support others?
     - How might your own comfort/discomfort influence your coaching presence when clients assert or withhold boundaries?
     - What's one commitment you'll make to honor your boundaries more intentionally?
7. **Closing Appreciation and Check-Out (5 min) – Whole Group**
   - Presenter introduces and guides an appreciation exercise reinforcing embodied collective learning and embodied presence.
   - Closing remarks

Conceptual Theory/Input

This session is grounded in a multidisciplinary synthesis of somatic psychology, neuroscience, and contemporary coaching methodologies. These converging fields illuminate how boundaries transcend cognitive constructs to become embodied phenomena, fundamentally shaped by nervous system architecture, biographical history, and relational dynamics. In an era characterized by post-pandemic burnout and permeable work-life boundaries (Chi et al., 2023; Rapp et al., 2022), these frameworks provide essential tools for sustainable, embodied leadership practice.

1. Somatic Psychology: The Body as Intelligence System

Somatic psychology establishes the foundational premise that the body serves as a repository of meaning, memory, and wisdom. Antonio Damasio's seminal research (1999)

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dismantled the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, demonstrating that emotion and decision-making processes are fundamentally embodied phenomena. His "somatic marker hypothesis" reveals how bodily sensations—accelerated heart rate, visceral tension—emerge prior to conscious decision-making, subtly informing behavioral choices and evaluative judgment.

Eugene Gendlin's (1981) Focusing methodology introduced the concept of "felt sense"—a pre-cognitive somatic awareness that emerges in response to situational dynamics and carries implicit meaning. His work demonstrated that profound knowledge emerges not through analytical processes, but through attunement to the body's internal signaling systems, making it directly applicable to embodied boundary navigation.

Alan Fogel (2009) advances this understanding by differentiating conceptual self-awareness (narrative, evaluative cognition) from embodied self-awareness (direct interoceptive and sensorimotor experience). He posits that emotional regulation and authentic connection require mindful inhabitation of the body, transcending cognitive reframing. Coaches versed in this distinction can facilitate client movement from analytical processing into embodied integration, particularly during moments requiring boundary clarity.

From a trauma-informed perspective, Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing framework (2010) elucidates how unresolved threat responses remain somatically encoded, frequently triggering boundary dissolution or hypervigilant responses. Similarly, Bessel van der Kolk (2014) emphasizes that "the body keeps the score"—trauma fundamentally alters nervous system functioning, compromising our capacity to recognize safety and execute assertive action. These insights illuminate why traditional cognitive-behavioral coaching approaches may prove insufficient when boundary challenges originate from somatic fear or survival activation.

Susan McConnell's Somatic Internal Family Systems (2020) integrates somatic awareness with IFS's parts-based methodology, demonstrating how bodily sensations can serve as valuable indicators of internal parts activation—such as when protective patterns lead to acquiescence despite authentic preference for refusal. This approach proves particularly relevant for coaching practice, enabling both practitioner and client to map and transform patterns of overextension and people-pleasing from an embodied foundation.

Somatic psychology thus establishes that boundaries constitute physical experiences shaped by history, trauma, and meaning-making processes, rather than mere conceptual frameworks. This foundation enables coaches to recognize embodied responses as transformational data.

2. Neuroscience: The Neural Architecture of Embodied Experience

Contemporary neuroscientific research validates and deepens somatic psychological insights. Investigation into interoception—our capacity for sensing internal somatic states—reveals that visceral cues including gastric tension or thoracic constriction play important roles in decision-making processes. Critchley and Garfinkel (2017) demonstrate that the brain

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continuously processes interoceptive data to regulate emotion, assess threat, and shape behavioral responses. Practically, this suggests that boundary violations may frequently occur below conscious awareness unless we cultivate attunement to these somatic signals.

Daniel Siegel's (2010) research on neuroplasticity and mindfulness-based integration demonstrates that intentional somatic practices can facilitate neural rewiring. His concept of mindsight—the capacity to perceive and integrate internal experience—parallels centering practices in somatic coaching, enabling leaders to pause, observe, and respond rather than react automatically. These practices cultivate enhanced emotional regulation, resilience, and coherence—all essential for clear, compassionate boundary-setting.

Deb Dana (2021), building upon Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2011), provides a practical framework for understanding how autonomic nervous system states govern relational behaviors, including our capacity for refusal or maintaining connection while establishing limits. Her model identifies three states—ventral (safe and social), sympathetic (mobilized fight/flight), and dorsal (shutdown or collapse)—which fundamentally shape engagement or disengagement patterns. When dysregulated, individuals may struggle with boundary enforcement due to fear, guilt, or collapse into appeasement. Supporting clients in recognizing and regulating physiological states becomes prerequisite to authentic decision-making.

Elizabeth Stanley (2019) demonstrates that chronic stress or trauma can significantly impact executive function—leaders may become more reactive and experience diminished capacity for clear decision-making. She links stress-induced physiological activation to burnout and over-functioning, reinforcing that cognitive strategies alone prove insufficient. Sustainable leadership requires nervous system literacy and embodied practices.

3. Coaching Practice: Translating Somatic Wisdom into Leadership

Embodied leadership integrates physical presence with cognitive and emotional awareness, establishing that boundary-setting transcends conceptual skill to become a felt experience rooted in somatic awareness and alignment (Strozzi-Heckler, 2007). Richard Strozzi-Heckler's somatic methodology employs practices including centering, breath awareness, and postural alignment to develop embodied presence. Through cultivating capacity to sense and shift internal states under pressure, leaders and coaches develop the ability to embody commitments, respond from alignment, and assert authentic boundaries within challenging relational dynamics.

Amanda Blake (2018) extends this work through developing a neuro-somatic approach bridging neuroscientific insights with embodied coaching practice. Her research highlights how habitual behavioral patterns—including over-accommodation or boundary collapse—become neurologically encoded and shaped by early relational experiences. Through somatic awareness, clients can interrupt automatic responses by recognizing bodily cues, enhancing emotional self-regulation, and constructing new embodied patterns for establishing and maintaining boundaries with greater clarity and resilience.

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Jennifer Zach (2023) offers a practical framework for somatic awareness in leadership through her 3N Model™—Notice, Name, Navigate. This methodology supports leaders in attuning to internal sensations, identifying their emotional significance, and selecting conscious responses aligned with values. Zach's model proves particularly relevant for navigating boundaries within complex or emotionally charged situations, where cognitive understanding alone may prove inadequate. Her work emphasizes that through accessing somatic intelligence, leaders and coaches can respond to subtle cues of discomfort or overextension, making timely, self-honoring choices.

The integration of somatic intelligence within coaching practice expands capacity to perceive beyond verbal communication, recognizing subtle bodily cues in clients that reveal deeper emotional states and boundary challenges. This enhances coaches' ability to maintain presence without overextension, preserving their own boundaries while supporting clients through projection and emotional intensity.

These theoretical perspectives collectively affirm that boundary-setting transcends communication skill to become an embodied capacity. Developing somatic awareness enables coaches and leaders to recognize authentic "yes" or "no" responses somatically, regulate through pressure, and act in alignment with authenticity and sustainability.

Implications for Practice

This session introduces an essential yet often overlooked somatic dimension to coaching practice, expanding practitioners' capacities to perceive and respond to the full spectrum of client communication—including the subtle bodily cues that reveal deeper emotional states and boundary challenges. By integrating somatic awareness with cognitive understanding, coaches can guide clients toward decisions that authentically align with their values and sustainable capacity, accessing the uniquely human ability to synthesize embodied and analytical intelligence.

For coaches and leaders: enhanced embodied self-awareness provides practitioners with concrete tools for recognizing and shifting habitual boundary patterns that may lead to overextension or burnout. This somatic literacy enables clearer decision-making under pressure, more confident advocacy for professional needs, and the establishment of sustainable boundaries between work and personal life. Critically, it strengthens coaches' abilities to maintain presence and professional boundaries while holding space for clients experiencing intense emotions or projecting unrealistic expectations—a skill essential for long-term practice sustainability.

For coach educators, this work underscores the imperative to integrate somatic intelligence into foundational coaching competency frameworks. By embedding embodied awareness into coach training curricula, educators can cultivate practitioners with enhanced presence, emotional regulation, and professional resilience. This evolution ensures that coaching education develops capacities that remain distinctly human—the ability to sense, attune, and respond from embodied wisdom—competencies that artificial intelligence cannot replicate and that become increasingly valuable as the profession continues to evolve.

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Unique Coaching for Unique Brains:
Neurodiversity-Inclusive Coaching in a Hybrid Intelligence Era

Author and Affiliation

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Abstract

This interactive 90-minute session explores neurodiversity-inclusive coaching as a practice grounded in uniquely human coaching capabilities—empathy, intuition, somatic awareness, common lived experience, and cultural sensitivity. Rather than tailoring coaching to neurotypes, neurodiversity-inclusive coaching invites coaches to deepen their embodiment of the ICF Core Competencies to foster affirming, psychologically safe relationships. Participants will explore how these human capacities create relational depth that AI cannot replicate, especially when coaching leaders navigating complex organizational systems.

Key Words

Neurodiversity-inclusive coaching, Neurodiversity, Leadership coaching, Coaching practice

Session Overview

Coaches likely have already coached neurodivergent leaders, even if neither the coaches nor the leaders knew that they were neurodivergent. After all, neurominorities make up at least 15-20% of the world's population (Doyle, 2020), and that estimate does not include the many undiagnosed or unidentified people who have brains significantly different from the societal norm.

As awareness of neurodiversity has grown, coaches, leaders, and organizations have been challenged to become more neurodiversity-inclusive, implementing practices that can greatly improve the experiences of neurodivergent people but that actually elevate everyone's experiences. Coaches are well-situated to become more neurodiversity-inclusive because of the client-led, curiosity-driven, individualized nature of the coaching process.

At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) also has risen to become a focus of perhaps every sector as both organizations and individuals have realized that they, like it or not, must consider AI to stay relevant as they look to the future. Certainly, the coaching industry is no exception. The recurring discussion among coaches so far seems to be whether AI can or will be able to replace human coaches. For neurodiversity-inclusive coaching, the answer, at least so far, is no.

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Neurodiversity-inclusive coaching draws on what makes us uniquely human as a species and as individuals so we can support what is uniquely human about our clients. To become more neurodiversity-inclusive, coaches must do their own work to further develop their empathy, their ability to regulate their own nervous systems, and their comfort in the space of not knowing. They must broaden their awareness of the different kinds of brains and nervous systems that may show up in their clients and deepen their presence and curiosity to understand their clients' experiences.

Participants will begin to do just that in this session. Focusing on coaching leaders, participants will discuss the experiences that brought them to the session, practice coaching skills to suspend their own assumptions, reflect on the uniquely human qualities required for neurodiversity-inclusive coaching, and consider where AI might be useful as supports for neurodivergent leaders. Through case study, full group discussion, small group exercise, and paired reflection, participants will learn how to become more neurodiversity-inclusive in their practices and how to continue that development as they move toward mastery.

While this overview has focused on coaches, this session also is relevant for coach educators, coach sponsors, people leaders, and many others who wish to grow their capacity to understand and include any people in their work and in their lives. The principles supporting neurodiversity-inclusive coaching also support neurodiversity-inclusion in general. People who can integrate with many different unique individuals, perhaps especially with the continuous growth of AI.

Conference Theme Relevance

Even in this hybrid intelligence era, neurodiversity-inclusive coaches must access their uniquely human attributes to connect with and support their clients. By maintaining their coaching presence, coaches provide coregulation for their clients (Bornstein & Esposito, 2023; Butler & Randall, 2013). By developing their coaching mindsets, coaches grow in curiosity about the client's experience, which creates greater awareness of what might be helpful to the client. By becoming more culturally sensitive and empathetic, coaches co-create relationships with their clients where clients feel affirmed, safe, and Seen (Winter, 2017).

Coaches must exercise caution and judgement when deciding how they might incorporate AI tools in their neurodiversity-inclusive practices. For example, Large Language Models have been found to have a bias against neurodiversity-related terms (Brandsen et al., 2024). However, used judiciously, AI tools can be helpful supports for neurodiversity-inclusion. Goblin Tools is a website and app with several helpful features, such as breaking down a large task, changing or checking the tone of emails, and estimating how long a task will take. ChatGPT and similar chatbots can help organize human thoughts, design a schedule for a project, and more.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn how a greater understanding of neurodiversity and a deeper dive into the ICF Core Competencies will serve all of their clients more fully, regardless of neurotype. They will challenge underlying assumptions in their coaching, reflect on their experiences prior to and during the session, and practice their coaching skills using the lens of their new perspectives.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Illustrate how neurodiversity-inclusive coaching emerges from a deeper embodiment of the ICF Core Competencies
- Identify what in their unique humanity is needed for neurodiversity-inclusive coaching
- Expand their coaching range by questioning their assumptions and allowing for a greater spectrum of human experience and perspective

Session Outline

Mins 0-10 Presentation	Welcome and coregulating somatic exercise Approach to our time together How a greater awareness of neurodiversity is affecting leaders and organizations
Mins 11-15 Independent reflection	Case study/scenario of neurodivergent leader: What are your first instincts about what's going on with this client? Jot down your thoughts Then put to the side for now
Mins 16-25 Full group discussion	Framing the conversation in participant experiences: What is your experience with neurodiversity-inclusive coaching? What challenges have you run into around neurodiversity and coaching neurodivergent leaders? What choices did you make regarding those challenges?
Mins 26-35 Full group discussion	Doubling-down on core competencies in ways AI can't (yet): Presence, mindset, somatic awareness What was your presence like in those situations? What assumptions did you make? What did you notice about yourself and your client? Watching for signs of dysregulation and how our nervous systems coregulate
Mins 36-45 Small group exercise	Practicing noticing physical reactions without assumption of meaning: Observable facts exercise in small groups, at least triads, two rounds One person tells a mini-story about something for 1-2 mins. After the story is done, each coach describes one observable fact they noticed without interpreting it (e.g. "Your voice got higher when you talked about x," "You crinkled your nose when you said y.")

Mins 46-50 Full group debrief	Discuss learning from observable facts exercise
Mins 51-60 Full group discussion	Lived experience and context: How does your unique lived experience come into play in your coaching? How do you understand the client's world through their eyes? How do you adapt to your client's unique yet changeable experience and worldview? Empathy, intuition, holding silence
Mins 61-70 Paired reflection	Return to initial scenario: Using a neurodiversity-inclusive lens, now what do you see and what are you curious about?
Mins 71-80 Full group discussion	What are the implications for AI and neurodiversity-inclusive coaching? Tools that might support clients? (e.g. Fathom, Goblin Tools) Using interactive AI to externalize thinking
Mins 81-90 Full group closing	What's different now versus 90 minutes ago? What do you see as useful to the leaders you coach? What else?

Conceptual Theory/Input

Neurodiversity has been part of our existence since long before it had a name. While neurodiversity-inclusiveness may seem like a new topic to some, the idea that each person has a unique brain likely is not. By adopting neurodiversity-inclusive practices, coaches, educators, leaders, and organizations can provide better support individual development, bring each person's strengths to the surface, and increase a sense of wholeness in each person and belonging. These changes smooth the way for personal development, work productivity, and innovative ideas, which will become even more valuable as AI progresses.

Neurodiversity-Inclusive Coaching Concepts

This session integrates the neurodiversity paradigm (Walker, 2021), an understanding of nervous system interactions (Bornstein & Esposito, 2023; Butler & Randall, 2013), and relational-cultural theory (Jordan, 2017) while rooting practice firmly in the ICF Core Competency model

(International Coaching Federation [ICF], 2021). The combination of these approaches demonstrates the uniquely human capabilities that distinguish coaching from AI-led interactions, including empathy, contextual understanding, somatic awareness, and human individuality.

The neurodiversity paradigm holds that there is a natural and valuable infinite human diversity of cognitive functions and that there is no "healthy" or "right" kind of brain or cognitive process (Walker, 2021). Practically, this means diagnoses like Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder are not disorders, despite their monikers but describe different ways brains function that do not align with societal norms. By becoming aware of a broader range of human cognitive function, coaches can serve a wider range of clients with greater understanding of their cultural and societal contexts.

For example, some clients have more sensitive nervous systems than others and thus may become physiologically dysregulated more readily than other people. Sensory input may overwhelm the nervous system at lower thresholds than might be expected and make it difficult or impossible for a client to think and ideate. Sudden emotional awareness and other conceptual inputs can also overwhelm a client, creating barriers to new thinking. Coaches may notice physiological changes, such as a sudden flushed or pale face, rapid breathing, slower or faster speech, or change in tone of voice.

In situations like this, the client can coregulate with the coach to return to a regulated state (Bornstein & Esposito, 2023; Butler & Randall, 2013) if the coach is able to stay regulated. An unaware coach may follow the client into dysregulation, even with the best of intent. However, when coaches can deepen and maintain their presence, staying grounded and regulating their own nervous system, their clients often follow the coach into regulation instead. The state of dysregulation blocks capacity for new ideas or possibilities, and clients may stay stuck or be deemed uncoachable if the coach does not understand the concept of coregulation or cannot maintain their own presence.

As described, humans coregulate other humans, one of several ways that AI falls short in neurodiversity-inclusive coaching. Coaches may also draw on shared lived experiences to connect with clients and validate a marginalized understanding of the world. When coaches and clients connect in these ways, they are more likely to engage in transformative coaching (de Haan & Gannon, 2016), which often helps the client feel a sense of agency rather than a sense of powerlessness (Jordan, 2017).

In addition, neurodiversity-inclusive coaching principles pose challenges to the ways LLMs have begun to emulate coaching. LLMs aggregate the information they use, which may include bias from the humans who originally created the texts on which the LLM is trained (Brandsen et al., 2024). Despite the increasing effectiveness of coach emulation as a whole (Passmore, Olafsson, & Tee, 2025), neurodiversity-inclusive coaching will continue to require humans who understand human uniqueness and who are self-aware enough to engage with their biases.

Session Design Concepts

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019) informed the design of this proposal. The workshop begins by asking participants to discuss how they have engaged with neurodiversity and coaching, encouraging reflection on their concrete experiences. The discussions encourage continued critical reflection, perhaps instigating enough dissonance for coaches to discover new frames of reference around neurodiversity-inclusive coaching. The opportunities to practice will give coaches new experiences to call on to become more neurodiversity-inclusive in their practices.

Implications for Practice

Executive and organizational coaches working in complex, hybrid environments must increasingly respond to diverse ways of thinking, processing, and relating. Neurodiversity-inclusive coaching provides a path to meeting those challenges by encouraging coaches to dive down into their own unique humanity to find the deeper implications of the ICF Core Competencies (ICF, 2021) that will serve all of their clients more fully. Coaches who engage with the competencies and with their clients in these ways move toward coaching mastery, not by adding tools, but by deepening presence, responsiveness, and ethical alignment with ICF standards.

As mentioned above, while AI may not yet emulate neurodiversity-inclusive coaching, it may augment client progress. Tools like Fathom allow ADHD clients to be present in their sessions, knowing that they do not have to capture every idea in the moment to remember them. The GoblinTools app and others decrease neurodivergent overwhelm by breaking large, vague goals into smaller, approachable tasks. Text-to-speech applications allow dyslexic people to absorb information without the struggle of reading. AI also may help neurodivergent coaches in tracking client activities and automating administrative work, rote tasks that many neurodivergent folks may have trouble completing. Some of the same AI tools useful for coaches may be helpful supports for individuals as they move through their work.

Coaches who develop their ability to be neurodiversity-inclusive in their coaching will maintain their relevance as hybrid intelligence progresses. Their increased mastery around nuance, individuality, presence, emotional complexity, and trust-creation will become their defining advantage as systems increasingly come to depend on AI.

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Warrant Statement

I warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for my accepted experiential session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I further confirm that:

1. **Formatting responsibility**—The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.
2. **Proceedings inclusion**—By submitting this full paper, I expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.

Title: When Art serves high impact coaching: Integrating Art Therapy Tools for Enhanced Personal Development

Abstract:

This session explores the integration of art therapy tools in coaching to foster self-awareness and problem-solving. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, experiencing the power of art in coaching. The perception of the content of expressive art and its unique meaning to the client's process can never be performed by Hybrid Intelligence or Artificial Intelligence tools.

Key Words:

Executive, Career, Vocational and Life Coaching, Art Therapy, Coaching Tools, Symbol, perceptions

Session Objectives:

1. By the end of this session, participants will be able to experience how art therapy tools can be used to enhance self-awareness and clarity in career, vocational, and life coaching as they produce a unique symbol related to their coaching theme.

2. Participants will be able to recognize the potential impact of integrating art therapy techniques into their coaching practice.

3. Participants will be able to evaluate the potential growth in impact of integrating art therapy techniques into their coaching practice as they differentiate between the results of coaching with and without the application of art therapy tools.

Session Outline:

1. Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes)

· Brief introduction to the session and its objectives.

· Icebreaker activity using conventional coaching process to address a personal issue in their current career or life challenge.

2. Exploring Art Therapy Tools (20 minutes)

· Participants will engage in a guided art activity to create a personal symbol using simple art materials.

· Participants will explore the chosen career, vocational, or life challenge after producing their own art symbol.

3. Group Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes)

· Participants will share their experiences.

· Facilitated discussion on the insights gained from the art activity and its relevance to coaching as well as the limits of hybrid intelligence on the perception of the clients production and reactions.

4. Integrating Art Therapy in Coaching Practice (15 minutes)

· Presentation of various art therapy tools (e.g., drawing, collage, sculpting) and their potential uses in coaching.

· Presentation of case studies where art therapy tools have been successfully integrated into career, vocational, and life coaching.

· Participants will brainstorm and explore their vision of incorporating art therapy techniques into their own coaching practices.

5. Wrap-Up and Q&A (10 minutes)

· Summary of key takeaways and session objectives.

· Open floor for questions and further discussion.

Conceptual/Theory-Input:

This session is grounded in the principles of experiential learning and art therapy. Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) emphasizes learning through experience and reflection, which aligns with the hands-on nature of art therapy. Art therapy, as defined by the American Art Therapy Association, uses creative processes to improve mental health and well-being. Integrating these approaches in coaching can enhance self-awareness, emotional expression, and problem-solving skills.

Implications for Practice:

By incorporating art therapy tools in their practices, coaches can provide innovative ways to address personal development challenges. These tools can help clients access deeper levels of self-awareness and creativity, leading to more effective problem-solving and decision-making. The integration of art therapy techniques allows coaches to offer a more human and engaging coaching experience resulting in higher impacts that are not, and could not be related to the adoption of Hybrid Intelligence.

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Coaching Demonstrations

A Power 1,000,000x Stronger than Conscious Thought

Activating your Client's Inner Midjourney

Abstract

This session's goal is to demonstrate the power of working with the unconscious mind's metaphorical landscapes in sessions. Participants will be challenged to broaden their views on how much untapped power exists in the unconscious mind, how critical metaphors are to human thinking, and how they can leverage the human mind's symbolic thinking abilities to facilitate transformation. The audience will learn new ways to evoke powerful personal metaphors from their clients, and use them to communicate directly to the unconscious mind.

Key words: Listens Actively, Evokes Awareness, Facilitates Client Growth

Coaching Competencies (ICF):

Listens Actively:

- Considers the client's context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to enhance understanding of what the client is communicating.
- Reflects or summarizes what the client communicated to ensure clarity and understanding.
- Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating.
- Notices, acknowledges and explores the client's emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors.
- Integrates the client's words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what is being communicated

Evokes Awareness:

- Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking
- Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion
- Supports the client in reframing perspectives
- Shares observations, insights and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning for the client

Facilitates Client Growth:

- Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors

- Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers
- Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions

Demonstration Outline:

Based on a one hour timeframe – can be lengthened or shortened as needed during the sample client sessions.

00.00-02.00
Greeting and introduction
Presenter will greet the audience and give a brief overview of the session.

02.00-07.00
Presenter explains metaphorical thinking and the unconscious mind in a coaching context
Presenter will set the context of how the human mind processes metaphors, and share anecdotes of working with the unconscious mind.

07.00-12.00
Introduction of Clean Questions and evoking metaphors
Presenter will share the basic Clean Questions as outlined in *Clean Language* by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees, and briefly explain how they are used to evoke metaphors.

12.00-30.00
Coaching demonstration: Establishing the landscape, Evolving the landscape, and Integration
A volunteer client will be selected with a goal in mind, such as "feel more confident". The presenter will then use Clean Questions and Symbolic Modeling to build out the client's landscape of confidence and begin establishing resources for confidence. The coach will then add visualization exercises to evolve and integrate symbolic resources.

30.00-40.00
Final thoughts and audience questions
The presenter will end the sample session and have a short debrief conversation with the volunteer client about what they have learned and what they are taking away from the experience. There will be time for questions and closing thoughts from the audience.

Implications for Practice:

Many coaches know the feeling of a session that just barely scratches the surface and doesn't get to the heart of the issue. They also know the feeling of a session where everything seems to align and the client is able to have a major transformative moment. Wouldn't it be amazing to have the tools to facilitate those breakthrough sessions nearly every time?

Everyone can benefit from exploring and evolving their metaphorical landscape, and these techniques have the potential to improve the relationships in every part of your life. For leaders and executives this approach is critical for unlocking the insights, innovation, inner resources, and creative thinking needed in today's business landscape.

Misunderstandings happen when two or more people's metaphorical landscapes are not aligned. Assumptions are made and unnecessary conflicts arise. In a team and organizational context these tools are a powerful way to quickly and even playfully come to understandings and build rapport. The benefits of understanding how the people you work with think and make sense of the world are vast.

The audience of this demonstration will walk away with new tools that they can start putting to use in their client sessions, coworker relationships, and personal relationships.

References:

ICF Core Competencies:
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Title

A Uniquely Human Approach to Strengths Coaching: Powering Client and Coach Growth through the Mirror Board® REFramework

Presenter(s) and Affiliation(s)

Phoebe Jonas | The Mirror Board Institute
Tanya Leake | The Mirror Board Institute

Abstract

This coaching demonstration will introduce the Mirror Board (MB) REFramework and its embodiment of key (uniquely human) coaching principles. Participants will gain an understanding of MB's highly adaptable and deeply personalized model for individual and team strengths discovery in service of enhanced self-awareness and elevated performance. MB represents a new approach to leveraging individual and team resources through the acknowledgment, appreciation and cultivation of strengths-based identities and capabilities.

Keywords

Curiosity, Awareness, Self-Regulation, Appreciation, Self-Determination

Conference Theme Relevance

We align with the 2025 theme by illustrating the uniquely human competencies of curious play, reflection, and resonant connection. MB provides a flexible, strengths-based coaching approach to centering these human qualities. A crucial counterbalance and critical complement to the patterns and summaries at the heart of AI, MB is uniquely and distinctively powered by and centered in human experience that cannot be reduced to data points or categories.

Competencies Addressed

Embodies a Coaching Mindset: MB and its Reflectional Activity (RA) support curiosity using a flexible model that leverages a client's own perspective, experience and language to guide autonomous client reflection and self-appreciation.

Evokes Awareness: MB and RA facilitate client exploration and reflection and use elements of play to support deep self-understanding.

Cultivates/Facilitates Learning and Growth: MB cultivates empowering connections to a client's own inner resources to guide the creation of learning and insight and transformation into action.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how MB uses the mirror metaphor and creative appreciation to guide intentional reflection, evoking inner wisdom and deeper clarity through self-appreciation, acknowledgement, and strengths leverage (and, for team coaching, others' perspectives).

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- Recognize elements that make MB an innovative coaching intervention whose adaptive design leverages distinctly human qualities
- Name the three steps of the Reflectional Activity (RA)
- Comprehend the uniquely human difference between MB and other self-awareness, strengths-based frameworks
- Evaluate how MB can be flexibly used with individuals or teams to evoke awareness and growth and how the MB process differs when used with individuals versus teams
- Identify opportunities to use the MB Reflectional Activity to cultivate greater self-awareness and expand coach presence.

Demonstration Outline

- **MB and Coach Introduction** (10 minutes)
  We'll begin by introducing the MB REFramework and sharing the impetus behind its development. Participants will learn how MB was created to meet the evolving needs of human-centered coaching in an increasingly automated world. This will connect the demo intention to the broader theme of the conference. Next, we'll walk participants through a completed MB, showing how it captures a client's inner landscape in a format that is both visually expressive and deeply personal. This walkthrough will serve as a real-life example of how MB surfaces insight and integration. We'll then introduce the heart of the MB REFramework: the Reflectional Activity (RA), a three-step experience that brings internal aspects of the self—called "Reflections"—into awareness, appreciation, and empowered use.
    - Step 1: Rediscover & Reframe: client is facilitated to identify and reappraise inner voices or patterns with curiosity and compassion.
    - Step 2: Envision & Embody: client is led to bring those internal parts to life through metaphor, image, or playful association.
    - Step 3: Name & Claim: client gives the Reflection a name and recognizes its potential contribution to future goals or contexts.
- **Individual Reflectional Demonstration** (20 minutes)
    - Following the overview, we'll move into a live coaching demonstration of the Reflectional Activity in a one-on-one format. Each step will be demonstrated in sequence, with minimal projected slides during each demo phase displaying the step name and a brief "look-for" prompt.
    - To begin, the coach will elicit the client's current focus or area of exploration and invite internal reflection to reveal which part(s) may be showing up or seeking voice (5 minutes).
    - Then, the coach will guide the client through playful envisioning of that Reflection to help the client bring this aspect of self into fuller view (5 minutes).
    - Finally, the coach will support the client in identifying how and when this Reflection can be a source of strength or insight to reinforce its relevance and potential (5 minutes).
- **Live Audience Interaction and Q&A** (10 minutes)
  After the demo, we'll open the space for audience interaction. Coaches and attendees will be invited to reflect on what they observed during the session. Participants will also have the opportunity to share questions, ideas and connections. We'll prompt discussion with questions such as:
    - What about this process feels distinctly human?

- How is this like - or different from - other strengths-based coaching frameworks you've experienced or used?
- What elements might you want to adapt into your own coaching practice?

Conceptual Theory/Input

MB did not develop in isolation. It is the result of deep listening - to clients, colleagues, and the vast collective wisdom of past and present psychological, neurobiological, and coaching frameworks. MB is our answer to the questions we found ourselves asking repeatedly as we explored the universe of client-centered modalities:

- How does one develop authentic and effective self-appreciation within systems that label aspects of that same self as excisable, harmful, or wrong?
- How is autonomy, self-determination and growth supported within systems that impose fixed labels into which one must fit themselves?
- Without a simple, clear, sustainable practice, how does one develop the capacity to continuously evoke self-awareness, harness strengths and build resilience?
- How might integrating play as a critical tool for self-awareness and regulation unlock enhanced productivity and engagement?
- How might the transformative heat of metaphor ignite the solid therapeutic power and scientific rigor of well-established frameworks?

MB's symbiotic design and language were intentionally crafted to build upon well-established models that support the cultivation of inner harmony, self-compassion, self-efficacy and resilience. Reverent and original, MB empowers resourcefulness through relational access to facets - or Reflections - of self while asserting integration and productive curation as aspirational terra firma.

For clients and coaches alike, MB provides an opportunity to complement (e.g. Polyvagal), complete (e.g. Appreciative Inquiry), or, in some cases, correct (e.g. IFS) work done in other modalities. As a REFramework, it also directly fulfills the promise of recent coaching research by operationalizing the insights of "The coaching cxperience as identity work" (Steyn, L. & Barnard, A., 2024) through metaphor-driven identity exploration; supporting the self-regulatory processes central to "Self-regulation and its connection to coaching success" (Mühlberger, C., Zerle, G., Möller, J., Diller, S. J., Greif, S., Kinder, N., & Jonas, E., 2024), and advancing the developmental imperative outlined in "Exploring the role of self-awareness in coach development" (Carden, J., Passmore, J., & Jones, R. J., 2022).

To ground this session in established theory and emerging research, the following section details how MB draws from and extends three key frameworks—Internal Family Systems (IFS), Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and Polyvagal Theory—while directly reflecting the recent research referenced above.

IFS: IFS and MB share many of the same foundational assumptions about internal multiplicity as normal human experience. Both frameworks recognize that we all contain multitudes—different facets of ourselves that show up in different contexts. Both acknowledge that internal conflict often stems from protective strategies that may no longer serve us effectively.

Mirror Board's Reflections map loosely to what IFS calls parts. However, the frameworks differ in how these inner aspects are defined and utilized. IFS parts are organized into structural roles -Managers, Firefighters, and Exiles - and are often viewed through the lens of trauma and healing. MB Reflections do not carry fixed functions. They are not categorized. They are named by the client and understood as present-moment expressions - fluid, contextual, and available for reimagining.

Where IFS seeks to restore Self-leadership by helping clients unblend from parts and return to the core Self, MB begins with the assumption that self-leadership is already available -and that it can take many forms. MB begins with integration as the foundational assumption - you're already whole, already integrated. MB calls this central orientation the Prismatic Self. The Prismatic Self is not a stabl e essence or ideal state. It's a flexible, responsive identity that learns through reflection and chooses how to show up based on what's needed. It doesn't need to take over from the Reflections. It's already present in the act of seeing them.

The language reflects these different orientations. IFS uses therapeutic terms like "Exiles," "Managers," and "Firefighters" that carry implicit assumptions about damage and dysfunction. As we've observed in our coaching practice, the word "exile" suggests something so damaged it can't be of service. This assumption runs counter to core coaching principles that view clients as naturally creative, resourceful, and whole, principles reflected in the MB terms “Loving Mission” (LoM) and “Loving Vision (LoV).”

MB begins with whatever is available within the client at any given moment: the Reflection that wants to be present for this particular situation or challenge. MB doesn't categorize Reflections into types, assign fixed roles, or organize them based on trauma patterns. Reflections are fluid aspects of self that emerge in context - they might be inherited, learned, developed, or still emerging. They're never viewed as broken or needing to be fixed. The Prismatic Self isn't something the client has to access- it's already in the room.

The fundamental distinction lies in therapeutic versus coaching orientation. IFS was created to heal people; MB meets clients exactly where they are today, assuming wholeness from the start. This creates different methodological approaches: IFS works toward integration and healing of wounded parts, while MB offers creative, relational access to all aspects of self with integration already assumed.

Where IFS asks clients to unblend from parts and work toward Self-leadership, MB invites clients to playfully name their Reflections using their own language and explore how these Reflections can serve their goals. The coach honors whatever the client brings forward, working with what presents itself without requiring therapeutic processing or healing work. It's important to note that coaches using IFS must be careful to stay within their scope of practice, as IFS was designed for therapeutic processing that falls outside coaching boundaries.

MB and IFS can work together. MB can complement someone who has already done IFS work by allowing them to take what they've learned about themselves in therapy and transform it into creative self-appreciation and conscious choice through renaming and reframing. For clients familiar with their parts from

therapeutic work, Mirror Board offers a way to take their self-knowledge and make it into self-appreciation through creative, playful exploration.

MB also stands alone as a coaching tool for those who recognize the multifaceted nature of human experience but want to work with this multiplicity without diving into therapeutic territory. Rather than requiring clients to understand IFS categories or do healing work, MB allows coaches to address clients' natural complexity through playful, appreciative self-exploration.

The frameworks aren't interchangeable, but they're also not mutually exclusive. They can enhance each other in powerful ways. A client might use IFS in therapy to understand their internal system, then bring that understanding into coaching through MB's creative REFramework. Or they might use MB independently, never needing to reference therapeutic parts or healing work at all.

AI: Both MB and AI are rooted in generative inquiry and positive psychology. They:

- Focus on strengths over deficits
- Use storytelling and metaphor to create meaningful change
- Invite curiosity and creativity as essential tools for growth
- Aim to evoke transformation through reflection—not prescription

Yet their core aims differ slightly: AI is most often used in organizations or teams to build collective clarity and shared vision. It draws from group interviews, storytelling, and shared dreaming to shape the future of a system.

While highly adaptable for groups, MB often begins with individual integration. It supports people in identifying their inner strengths through Reflections, reframing their purpose through their LoMs, and creating memorable ways to call forth that Reflection in appropriate contexts.

While both models are inquiry-based, AI asks, “What gives this system life?” and MB adds: “When this system is thriving, which part of you is most aligned with and supportive of that vitality?" or "Considering what energizes this system, which inner part of you shows up in service of that momentum?" MB then invites a further step: “How can you intentionally access and activate that part when it’s needed most?” In this way, MB brings nuance to appreciation by helping individuals recognize which Reflections are best suited to meet the moment. Used together, MB and AI can form a powerful loop between the internal and the interpersonal.

In a team setting, participants can first use MB’s Reflectional Activity to identify a personal strength, name its LoM, and bring it to life through metaphor. They can reflect those discoveries onto one another, acknowledging team members' strengths, giving language to unspoken value, and co-creating access agreements to claim those resources for shared success. This is where MB shines in complement to AI: it makes abstract appreciation personal, specific, and memorable. It ensures that each person feels seen—not just as a performer in a system, but as a unique, multifaceted contributor.

Together, Mirror Board and AI can:

- Elevate invisible inner resources into team-accessible language
- Strengthen mutual appreciation, relational trust, and collective confidence

AI may surface the dream, but MB equips each individual to embody their most resonant and resourced contribution to that dream.

POLYVAGAL THEORY: Polyvagal Theory and Mirror Board share a reliance on interoception and language to enhance access to self-awareness, despite neuroceptive biological instincts. Polyvagal Theory and MB both address internal states and how identity and behavior change in response to internal conditions. Both emphasize safety and curiosity. While Polyvagal Theory explains the mechanism, MB reflects the pattern. Polyvagal Theory focuses on what's happening in the nervous system; MB focuses on what shows up when it happens.

This distinction is especially relevant when executive coaching is applied in workplace settings where the focus is often on optimization, productivity, and leadership presence. In these settings, Clients may experience the rewards of success without developing the critical internal resource of relational awareness. While Polyvagal Theory focuses on understanding the nervous system's mechanisms, MB takes what the client now understands themselves to be experiencing in the moment and meets them there without tracking or seeking to regulate.

MB's jumping off point is that which is available within the client at any given moment, as identified by the client: in other words, the Reflection who wants to be present for this particular situation or challenge. The client names their Reflection, in their language, and works with it in the context of their goals. The coach honors the client's interpretation and works with whatever shows up. The Reflection becomes a way to work relationally with the part of the self that presents itself.

Stress is a part of life. Stress refers to any demand or challenge placed on the body or mind. Distress can be understood as a physiological and psychological response to perceived threats or overwhelm—often characterized by sympathetic activation or dorsal collapse. Eustress, by contrast, is stress experienced as an energizing, motivating catalyst for growth. Polyvagal Theory helps us understand how the body responds to stress through physiological states of mobilization or collapse—distress responses designed to ensure survival. MB complements polyvagal-informed coaching by meeting the client exactly where they are and helping them build a relationship with the Reflection that becomes available in that moment. Where Polyvagal theory asks the client to name the state or interpret the physiological process, MB takes this critical awareness and adds the opportunity to engage creatively with what shows up. By helping the client identify which Reflection shows up, its name, role, and contribution, MB treats stress not just as something to regulate, but as an invitation to relate. MB Reflections offer a pathway for transforming distress into eustress by reconnecting the client with agency, context, choice, and creative response.

RELEVANT RESEARCH: Recent coaching research reinforces MB's premise that coaching is not simply about behavior change—it is most successful as part of a uniquely human process that includes identity work and play, is supported by reflective metaphor, develops stronger self-regulation, and sustained by the coach's own self-awareness.

In their 2024 paper, Steyn and Barnard identify *reflective metaphor* as a key pathway through which clients make sense of self in coaching, enabling unconscious meaning to become conscious insight. Their study shows that metaphor facilitates both transactional and transformational identity work, yet its potential remains underrealized in coaching practice. MB incorporates metaphor as part of both the structure and strategy of the coaching process. Its REFramework is itself a metaphor: a visual mirror of the self. Simultaneously, a MB practice offers the client the opportunity to visualize their own

metaphors for each view of self that emerges based on context, experience, and intention. This dynamic, multi-perspective process honors the multidimensional nature of identity and supports both transactional shifts (e.g., role clarification) and transformational growth (e.g., integration of self).

Research demonstrates that play at work is linked with less fatigue, stress, and burnout while being positively associated with job satisfaction, creativity, productivity and enhanced well-being. (Petelczyc, C. A., Capezio, A., Wang, L., Restubog, S. L. D., & Aquino, K., 2018)

By providing this REFramework and practice, MB can strengthen clients' capacity for self-regulation—one of the most critical self-management competencies (SMCs) for coaching success, as highlighted by Mühlberger et al. (2024). Their research promotes a coach's enablement of their client's capacity for self-regulation as an "unconscious, ego-empowering competence involving goals that...are implemented by integrating all inner voices, resembling an 'inner democracy' (Baumann & Kuhl, 2021; p. 1305)."

Importantly, the research also reminds us that this critical capacity for self-regulation through self-awareness isn't just for clients. That is, MB is not only a tool for client change—it is a mirror for coach development. According to a 2022 grounded theory study, the most effective coaches are those who actively engage in their own self-awareness practices (Carden, et al, 2022). MB supports coaches in cultivating this awareness through the same metaphor-rich process—helping them recognize internal dynamics, regulate their presence in the coaching relationship, and model integration and authenticity.

Together, these studies provide a compelling case for MB as a coaching REFramework grounded in evidence: it uses reflective metaphor to support identity transformation (Steyn et al, 2024), builds the self-regulation that underpins sustainable change (Mühlberger et al. 2024), and cultivates coach self-awareness as a foundation for ethical and impactful practice (Carden et al. 2022).

Implications for Practice

MB provides an innovative, deeply transformative approach flexible enough to be used with individuals or teams in coaching, challenging individuals and/or teams to create a highly personalized view of themselves and their resources. Beyond mere performance optimization, the MB invites clients to slow down, reflect, recognize, and connect unique strengths to their unique identity. Identity work, by its nature, is subjective, narrative-based, and emotional. MB honors this, and coaches become stewards of this reflective process. In the spirit of uniquely human, it is envisioned that MB sessions would take place at least annually, to support continuous individual and team evolution, change and growth.

While AI could play a role in the summarization of previous sessions and serve as clearing house for organizational intelligence regarding strengths and resources across teams or within an individual, the actual development (and maintenance) of an individual or team MB is highly dependent on real time factors that are infinitely and uniquely human. Organizations that integrate MB into their executive or organizational development strategies can expect to see similarly human results related to increased confidence and effectiveness of individuals and increased collaboration and trust among team members, ultimately leading to greater human performance, innovation, and collective success. This

makes MB a powerful resource for coaches committed to honoring the complexity, humanity, and potential of their clients and organizations.

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Warrant (AI)

We created Mirror Board out of our own experience, meeting over the course of a year or more and eventually turning our brainstorms into written documents. The ideas contained within this Demonstration Proposal found their way onto the page in much the same way - through conversation, research, and respectful debate. As human coaches who do not shy away from technology nor its application across a multitude of disciplines, we utilize AI with intention and restraint, neither eschewing its many advantages nor surrendering to its siren-song of creation-by-proxy. As such, this proposal reflects the following areas of collaboration with the specified AI models:

- Transcription/Summary of: Zoom native AI platform; Otter.ai(Anthropic)
- Keyword Search/Suggestion: Microsoft Co-Pilot
- Outline Generation (meeting recordings/transcripts): Otter.ai, Chat GPT 4.0 Opus
- References APA Compliance: Claude.ai (Anthropic

Title

A Team Coaching Demonstration

Coaching from the Balcony: Demonstrating Consultative Teaming through the Six Thinking Hats

Presenter and Affiliation

David Matthew Prior, MCC, BCC, ACTC, Getacoach.com

Abstract

This live demonstration showcases Coaching from the Balcony, a consultative teaming method that leverages Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats to generate parallel thinking. Audience members will see how a team can provide one colleague with structured advice and diverse perspectives on a real organizational challenge. By observing this method in action, participants will take away a practical framework for fostering collaborative intelligence, reducing bias, and amplifying creativity in their own team coaching practice.

Key Words

Team Coaching, Team Learning, Peer Coaching, Peer Consultation, ,Peer Learning,6 Thinking Hats, Parallel Thinking

Session Overview

The aim of this session is for the audience to experience *Coaching from the Balcony*—a live team coaching demonstration in which a group of individual coaches quickly forms as a consultative team to support a colleague facing a real organizational challenge. Using Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats methodology, the team will practice parallel thinking to surface data (white hat), emotion and intuition (red hat), creativity (green hat), appreciative visioning (yellow hat), and critical reflection (black hat). The case holder will temporarily move to the metaphorical balcony to observe the team from afar before rejoining the group to summarize key insights.

While a small group enacts the demonstration, all audience members will benefit by watching the process unfold in real time. Observers will be invited to notice team dynamics, shifts in energy, and how human strengths such as intuition, pattern recognition, embodied presence, and improvisational dialogue enrich collaborative intelligence. The demonstration equips participants to adapt this method in their own practice, fostering richer team dialogue and more balanced decision-making in an era where human intelligence must complement AI-driven analysis.

Conference Theme Relevance

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This session directly contributes to the 2025 conference theme, *High-Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence*, by illustrating how uniquely human strengths amplify team coaching impact. Through the consultative teaming process, participants will see how intuition, somatic cues, pattern recognition, and relational attunement foster collaborative intelligence that technology cannot replicate. The Six Thinking Hats framework provides structure for these human capacities to be expressed in parallel, reducing bias and broadening perspective. In an age where AI offers powerful data-driven analysis, *Coaching from the Balcony* highlights how coaches can cultivate the complementary human dimensions of wisdom, creativity, and presence to generate high-impact outcomes for teams.

ICF Team Coaching Core Competencies Addressed

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

- Demonstrates the knowledge and skill needed to practice the specific blend of team developmentmodalities that are being offered
- Adopts more directive team development modalities only when needed to help the team achievetheir goals

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

- Creates and maintains a safe space for open and honest team member interaction
- Fosters expression of individual team members' and the collective team's feelings, perceptions,concerns, beliefs, hopes, and suggestions
- Encourages participation and contribution by all team members

Competency 6: Listens Actively

- Notices how the perspectives shared by each team member relate to other team members' viewsand the team dialogue
- Notices how each team member impacts the collective team energy, engagement, and focus
- Notices verbal and non-verbal communication patterns among team members to identify potentialalliances, conflicts, and growth opportunities

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

- Uses questions and other techniques to foster team development and facilitate the team's ownershipof their collective dialogue

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

- Encourages dialogue and reflection to help the team identify their goals and the steps to achievethose goals

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Learning Objectives

- By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

    1. **Design and facilitate** a consultative team process that works creatively and interdependently in service of a colleague's real challenge.

    2. **Apply** the Six Thinking Hats methodology to generate parallel thinking that balances data, intuition, creativity, optimism, and critical reflection.

    3. **Identify** how collaborative intelligence—rooted in human strengths such as intuition, somatic cues, and pattern recognition—complements AI-driven analysis in high-impact coaching.

    4. **Observe and analyze** team dynamics in real time, extracting practical insights about trust, safety, and spontaneous collaboration that can be transferred into their own team coaching practice.

Demonstration Outline

Demonstration Outline (40 Minutes)
A. Team & Session Introduction (4 min.)
Facilitator frames the purpose, introduces the team, and previews the Six Thinking Hats process.
B. Case Illustration (8 min.)
Case-holder presents their challenge (4 min).
Team members ask clarifying questions (White Hat: facts and figures, 4 min).
C. Consultation Team Expands Parallel Thinking (15 min.)
Team members engage in facilitated rounds:
Red Hat (feelings, intuition)
Green Hat (creative ideas)
Yellow Hat (positives, opportunities)
Black Hat (risks, caution)
D. Case-Holder Reflection from the Balcony (3 min.)
Case-holder summarizes what they observed and highlights which contributions resonated most.
E. Audience Reflection via EasyRetro + Facilitator Debrief (5 min.)
Audience uses EasyRetro (QR code) to input Red, Green, Yellow, and Black Hat contributions (4 min).
Facilitator spends 2 minutes surfacing key insights, linking to ICF competencies, and briefly noting how AI tools can extend consultation without replacing uniquely human strengths.
F. Audience Takeaway & Closing (5 min.)
Facilitator prompts: *"How might you use this approach in your own coaching or team facilitation?"* Audience members reflect individually or share briefly.

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Conceptual/Theory-Input

Consultative teams actively debate key issues, giving members the chance to learn from one another, obtain ideas and counsel while promoting information sharing among members (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss, Hackman 2008). Peer consultation allows colleagues to discuss problems arising in their own practice in a methodical manner. Participants learn to consult each other about their own work issues, and to handle them in a non-judgmental way (DeHaan 2005). The Six Thinking Hats employs parallel thinking: at any moment, everyone is thinking in the same direction. All views, no matter how contradictory, are put down in parallel. At all times the emphasis is on designing a way forward (DeBono 1999).

Implications for Practice

- This demonstration offers team coaches and organizational leaders a practical model they can adapt immediately in their own work. Three key implications emerge:
  1. **Balancing Depth with Efficiency**
     The case-holder's concise presentation ensures time is spent where it matters most—on collaborative consultation. Coaches will see how a short framing of the challenge can unlock deeper team exploration, a principle they can replicate in fast-paced organizational settings.
  2. **Leveraging Collaborative Intelligence**
     The extended consultation highlights the diverse cognitive, emotional, and intuitive resources of team members. Participants will observe how whole-brain thinking emerges when structure (Six Thinking Hats) meets spontaneity (real-time dialogue), and how this balance fosters both creativity and rigor.
  3. **Extending Participation through Hybrid Intelligence**
     By inviting audience members to contribute insights via EasyRetro, the session demonstrates how digital tools can amplify engagement, surface diverse voices, and reveal emergent patterns. At the same time, the process underscores what remains uniquely human—intuition, somatic awareness, relational presence, and improvisational thinking. Together, these elements illustrate how hybrid intelligence can enrich team coaching practice by combining technological amplification with human-centered wisdom.
  4. **Scaling Peer Consultation Methods**
     The process shows that team consultation can be scaled beyond a single team: it can include wider audiences, distributed groups, or hybrid teams, creating "all for one, one for all" learning environments that build capacity across organizations.

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David Matthew Prior, MCC, BCC, ACTC, brings 25 years of organizational coaching experience working with global executive and senior leadership across a diversity of industries. His approach to leadership development is focused on performance with integrity to align the business, organization, teams, and leadership. David has had the honor to structure and teach in the Columbia Coaching Certification Program, guide and coach more than 1,000 senior leaders in more than 30 countries, train 5,000+ executive coaches and create results for more than 100 organizations. He holds additional coach certifications from EMCC and coaching supervision graduate certificates from Oxford Brookes University.

Warrant Statement

*I (we) warrant that the **attached full paper**—prepared for my (our) accepted presentation, experiential session, demonstration, or panel session—is submitted for publication in the Columbia Coaching Conference proceedings. I (we) further confirm that:*

1. ***Formatting responsibility** – The manuscript fully complies with all conference formatting guidelines. I (we) understand that any document not meeting these specifications may be returned for correction.*
2. ***Proceedings inclusion** – By submitting this full paper, I (we) expressly consent to its inclusion and publication in the conference proceedings.*

FINAL NOTE: As this is a conference for scholars, the Paper Presentation category is intended to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the emerging field of executive and organizational coaching from a research-informed perspective. Be explicit about the form of contribution your paper represents—whether research, theory, or specialized practice areas—and ensure this is clearly articulated throughout your submission.

Wherever possible, make meaningful connections to the 2025 conference theme, *High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence.* Integrating the theme into your paper will not only strengthen your submission but also contribute to a more cohesive and engaging experience for conference attendees.

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TITLE

Enhancing Coaching Preparation Through Hybrid Intelligence

AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

This demonstration explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can augment a coach's practice and development by enhancing data-informed feedback, personalizing insights to address the coach's areas for growth, and creating structured opportunities for practice and feedback rounds, in service of improving the client's experience. Through the use of an AI Coaching application, Simsola, we will demonstrate the collaboration between human intelligence and AI ("hybrid intelligence") to (1) Establish Connection, (2) Build Accountability, (3) Deepen Reflection, (4) Challenge and Pivot, and (5) Review Progress and conclude coaching process. This will showcase how AI-driven analysis can complement human expertise and relationships, offering coaches deeper insights into their learning edges and providing targeted opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and inform action.

KEYWORDS

- Coach development
- Coach preparation, practice, and feedback
- AI-facilitated reflection

SESSION OVERVIEW

This interactive demonstration explores how Artificial Intelligence can augment coaching practice and development by enhancing data-informed feedback, personalizing insights to address coaches' areas for growth, and creating structured opportunities for practice and feedback. Using the AI coaching application Simsola, participants will witness live collaboration between human intelligence and AI ("hybrid intelligence") across five core coaching phases in a simulation: establishing connection, building accountability, deepening reflection, challenging and pivoting, and reviewing progress to conclude the coaching process. Participants will interact with a fictional AI-client, "Farrah", who is based on a typical client use case. They will receive feedback and recommendations based on how well they coach this AI character client.

CONFERENCE THEME RELEVANCE

The design encourages real-time learning through three interconnected mechanisms: AI-supported reflection that surfaces immediate insights from coaching patterns, live practice rounds with AI-generated feedback, and iterative synthesis with a human coach supervisor that transforms insights into actionable strategies. This creates a continuous learning loop where coaches receive instant feedback, adapt their approach, and immediately test refined techniques, supporting research on AI-enhanced reflective practice in coaching development (Arakawa & Yakura, 2024).

This directly connects to the conference theme of Hybrid Intelligence by demonstrating how AI augments rather than replaces human coaching expertise. The design leverages AI's analytical capabilities to identify patterns and provide structured feedback while drawing on human relational depth and intuitive wisdom (Haase, 2025). This complementary partnership creates a more intentional preparation process that blends the best of both types of intelligence.

COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED

The Demonstration illuminates the following International Coaching Federation (ICF) Core Competencies:

A2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset: The AI-supported reflection phase demonstrates how coaches can maintain curiosity and openness by using data-driven insights

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to challenge assumptions about their practice. Participants will observe how AI simulation and role play encourage flexible thinking and client-centered awareness.

B4. Cultivates Trust and Safety: The demonstration reveals how thorough preparation through hybrid intelligence enhances a coach's ability to create psychological safety. By practicing interventions with AI beforehand, coaches enter sessions more confident and present, fostering deeper client trust.

C7. Evokes Awareness: The live practice rounds showcase how AI feedback helps coaches refine their questioning techniques and timing. Participants will see how AI analysis identifies patterns in their approach, leading to more intentional use of silence, metaphor, and powerful questions.

D8. Facilitates Client Growth: The synthesis phase demonstrates how AI-assisted preparation translates insights into actionable session strategies. The demonstration shows how coaches can use hybrid intelligence to design more targeted interventions that promote client autonomy and sustainable change.

Additional Competency - A1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice: Throughout the demonstration, ethical considerations around AI usage, client confidentiality, and appropriate disclosure are modeled, showing how coaches can responsibly integrate technology while maintaining professional standards.

The demonstration provides a practical framework for developing these competencies through structured AI-human collaboration in coaching preparation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The learning objectives for this demonstration are summarized below:

Apply effective AI simulation and role plays to generate meaningful insights from coaching session data and supervision materials.

Analyze patterns in their coaching interactions using AI- and human-supported reflection to identify personal learning edges and growth opportunities.

Synthesize (meaning-making) insights from Demo Coach and Coach Supervisor to focus on learning and preparation for coaching.

Overall, participants will leave this session able to:

Integrate AI-supported reflection into their preparation process while maintaining relational depth with clients and coach supervisors.

These objectives align with the session's progressive design: participants begin by learning role play, advance through reflective analysis and practice integration, and conclude by developing personalized implementation strategies. Each objective emphasizes observable skills that coaches can immediately apply to their preparation process while preserving the relational depth essential to effective coaching practice.

DEMONSTRATION OUTLINE

The goal of this session is to demonstrate how the combination of artificial intelligence and human intelligence can support coaches in rigorous, data-driven reflection on coach learning edges. Simsola.ai will serve as the AI platform for coaching practice and provide data for the coach to analyze with the support of a coach supervisor. Participants will interact with a fictional but realistic AI client, “Farrah”, and receive feedback and recommendations based on their coaching approach and performance in the simulation. They will discuss the results and share insights on what they learned from the role-play experience.

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SESSION PLAN

Introduction & Framework Setup – 5 minutes (0:00-5:00) Presenter welcomes participants and establishes session objectives. Brief overview of the hybrid intelligence framework and what participants will experience. Sets expectations for active observation and pair debriefs during live demonstrations. Presenter introduces the coaching scenario using AI character "Farrah" from Simsola. Explains AI simulation and role play. Demonstrates how to respond to AI simulation while preserving human coaching strengths.

AI-Simulation and Role Play – 10 minutes (5:00-12:00) Demonstration of coaching simulation based on coach's goal for preparation and framework for evaluating coaching. This simulation will happen live on-screen for participants in the room to follow along.

Prompt for observers to deepen reflection: "Where do you see opportunities for AI-generated feedback to enhance, rather than replace, the coach's own reflective practice?"

The simulation will go through the following phases:

1. Establish Connection
2. Build Accountability
3. Deepen Reflection
4. Challenge and Pivot
5. Review Progress and conclude coaching process

AI analyzes patterns from previous sessions, surfacing objective data on growth areas. Participants observe the collaborative process.

Reflection Checkpoint – 7 minutes (12:00-19:00) Participants pair up to discuss initial observations. Guiding questions: "What patterns did you notice in the role play?" and "What might be the value of data and feedback from AI versus a human?"

Demo Coach feedback with Demo Coach Supervisor – 6 minutes (19:00-25:00) Demo Coach has a short debrief with Demo Coach Supervisor to explore assumptions, make meaning of the data, and explore any emotions (for example, defensiveness or surprise) that the data brought about to clarify an insight or other take-aways.

Structured Debrief – 10 minutes (25:00-35:00) Participants engage in structured pairs discussion: "How is this method similar or different from just working with a coach supervisor? Just an AI platform?", "What aspects of this process would enhance your own preparation process?" and "What ethical considerations come to mind?" Pairs report key insights to larger group.

Audience Q&A and Practical Guidance – 5 minutes (35:00-40:00) Open forum for implementation questions. Shares resources for continued learning.

Learning Checkpoints Throughout:

- Structured reflection questions guide peer discussions
- Real-time engagement during practice rounds, with demonstrators narrating coach goal selection, AI prompt writing, and connections to practice where relevant

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CONCEPTUAL THEORY & INPUT

The design of this demonstration session draws upon multiple intersecting theoretical frameworks that collectively support the integration of artificial intelligence into coaching practice while preserving the essential human elements that define effective coaching relationships. These foundational theories span coaching methodology, learning sciences, artificial intelligence research, and professional development frameworks.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Central to this session's design is Schön's (1983) seminal work on reflective practice, which distinguishes between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The AI-supported reflection component targets both, where coaches are able to reflect in real-time during the simulation and after-the-fact with the coach supervisor. This aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, where concrete experience (coaching sessions) is followed by reflective observation (AI-assisted analysis and debrief with coach supervisor), abstract conceptualization (pattern identification), and active experimentation (practice rounds with AI feedback).

The session design recognizes that adult learners, as described by Knowles' (1984) andragogy principles, are self-directed, experience-rich, and problem-centered in their learning orientation. By allowing participants to direct their AI interactions based on their identified learning edges, the demonstration honors these adult learning characteristics while providing structured support for professional growth.

ICF CORE COMPETENCIES

The theoretical foundation rests heavily on the International Coaching Federation's competency model, particularly the emphasis on developing and maintaining a coaching mindset (ICF, 2019). The session operationalizes Whitmore's (2017) GROW model principles by using AI to enhance the coach's ability to generate powerful insights during preparation. This preparation-focused approach builds upon Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck's (2014) edited handbook on coaching, which emphasizes the importance of structured reflection in developing coaching effectiveness. Cox et al.'s (2014) research on coaching supervision, which emphasizes the importance of structured reflection in developing coaching effectiveness, is also incorporated.

The integration of AI into coaching preparation directly addresses what Palmer and McInnis-Bowers (2022) identify as the "coaching paradox" – the need for coaches to simultaneously maintain present-moment awareness while drawing upon accumulated wisdom and pattern recognition. By offloading pattern analysis to AI systems, coaches can potentially enhance their in-session presence while benefiting from comprehensive preparation insights.

DIALOGICAL LEARNING

The session design operationalizes Freire's (2000) concept of "problem-posing education" by having AI surface coaching patterns as questions and possibilities rather than definitive assessments. This approach maintains what Freire identified as essential elements of critical pedagogy: reflection, dialogue, conscientização (conscientization), praxis, critical engagement, and transformation. Yorks' (2005) extensive work on collaborative inquiry and workplace reflection provides additional theoretical grounding for understanding AI as a dialogue partner rather than an expert system, emphasizing that meaningful learning occurs through relational processes that AI can support but cannot replicate.

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By positioning AI interaction as dialogical rather than transactional, coaches maintain their role as meaning-makers while benefiting from enhanced analytical capabilities. This approach ensures that the fundamental learning processes that drive coaching effectiveness—mutual inquiry, collaborative meaning-making, and relational discovery—remain central while being enriched by AI capabilities, supporting the session's emphasis on AI as augmentation rather than replacement of human coaching wisdom.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN-AI COLLABORATION THEORY

The session's hybrid intelligence approach is grounded in Dellermann, D., Ebel, P., Söllner, M., & Leimeister, J. M. (2019) 's (2019) framework for human-AI collaboration, which emphasizes complementary rather than competitive relationships between human and artificial intelligence. This theoretical foundation recognizes that AI excels at pattern recognition, data processing, and systematic analysis, while humans contribute emotional intelligence, contextual understanding, and relational depth.

Recent research by Arakawa and Yakura (2024) specifically examines AI-supported coaching through their "Coaching Copilot" framework. Their findings suggest that AI can serve as a valuable thinking partner in coaching contexts when appropriately designed and ethically implemented. Similarly, Haase's (2025) comprehensive analysis of GenAI in coaching provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of AI augmentation in coaching practice, particularly in areas of preparation and reflection.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND COGNITIVE LOAD THEORY

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory underlies the demonstration's modeling approach, where participants observe AI-human interaction patterns that they can subsequently adapt to their own practice. The live demonstration format allows for vicarious learning while the structured pair conversations allow for meaning making. As Bandura (1977) explains, "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p.22).

Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory informs the session's progression from guided observation to independent application. Cognitive Load Theory suggests that our working memory is only able to hold a small amount of information at any one time and that instructional methods should avoid overloading it in order to maximise learning. The AI support system itself serves as a cognitive scaffolding tool, reducing extraneous cognitive load related to pattern recognition and data organization, thereby freeing mental resources for higher-order coaching skills.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DELIBERATE PRACTICE THEORY

Ericsson and Pool's (2016) research on deliberate practice provides the theoretical foundation for the session's practice round component. The AI-facilitated practice sessions create what they term "purposeful practice" – focused, goal-oriented activities with immediate feedback, “Purposeful practice is all about putting a bunch of baby steps together to reach a longer-term goal. It is focused, goal-oriented, and requires feedback—immediately or soon after—to refine and improve performance” (2016, p.14). The AI's ability to assume client personas based on actual case materials allows for realistic practice scenarios while providing immediate, specific feedback on coaching interventions.

This approach aligns with Stober and Grant's (2006) evidence-based coaching framework, which emphasizes the importance of systematic skill development. The AI system serves as both a practice partner and a feedback provider, creating opportunities for

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what Kolb (1984) describes as active experimentation within a controlled learning environment.

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR AI INTEGRATION

The session's ethical considerations are grounded in the ICF Code of Ethics (2019) and extended through recent work by Hicks and Bonner (2024), who address the ethical implications of AI integration in coaching practice. Their framework emphasizes transparency, client autonomy, and the preservation of human agency – principles that directly inform the demonstration's approach to client disclosure, data security, and the maintenance of coaching relationship primacy.

The ethical framework also draws from Floridi et al.'s (2018) AI ethics guidelines, particularly regarding beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability. These principles are operationalized through the session's use of a simulation rather than real client data.

INTEGRATION AND SYNTHESIS

These theoretical frameworks converge to support a hybrid intelligence approach that leverages AI's analytical capabilities while preserving and enhancing the distinctly human elements of coaching practice. The session design demonstrates how technological augmentation can support professional development without compromising the relational depth and intuitive wisdom that characterize effective coaching.

By grounding the demonstration in established learning theory, coaching methodology, and emerging AI research, the session provides participants with both practical tools and theoretical understanding necessary for ethical and effective AI integration in their coaching practice. This multi-theoretical foundation ensures that the hybrid intelligence approach serves the ultimate goal of enhanced client outcomes while supporting coaches' continued professional growth and effectiveness.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Embedding deliberate and purposeful practice into professional development fundamentally redefines how expertise develops within organizations. Informed by Ericsson and Pool's (2016) work, the demonstrated approach emphasizes that transformative learning arises when practice is structured, intentional, and reinforced through immediate feedback, which can happen more meaningfully with the support of AI. For coaches, supervisors, consultants, and educators, this methodology surpasses routine repetition by fostering deeper reflection and adaptive growth; it enables practitioners to identify patterns, address growth edges, and experiment with interventions in a supportive context, ultimately advancing expertise through continual, reflective, and context-sensitive engagement (Ericsson & Pool, 2016; Bruning & Boak, 2025; Hao et al., 2025).

This approach is especially relevant to the 2025 conference theme, "High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence." By integrating AI-powered tools into coaching practice, professionals can elevate the precision, scale, and impact of their work while maintaining the human-centered core of coaching. This model enables coaches to:

- **Enhance effectiveness and adaptivity:** AI excels at quick pattern recognition and immediate feedback which the coach can access immediately, and allows them to adapt more quickly

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- **Maintain relational depth:** By leveraging AI responsibly, the coach can focus on the deep interpersonal connections that support learning both with the client and their supervisor
- **Opportunity for scale:** The structure, practice opportunities, and feedback allow for more meaningful growth and training of others - leveraging human intelligence where it is most valuable

Specifically, our demonstration offers implications for practice in the following ways as possibilities:

For Coaches: Integrate AI-supported reflection into weekly preparation routines by analyzing session transcripts and supervision notes to identify recurring patterns and growth edges. By using AI simulation, coaches respond realistically as if you were coaching a real client. A safe and low-stakes environment for immediate feedback can reduce defensiveness.

For Coach Supervisors: Supervisors can utilize the AI-supported reflection methods to help supervisees identify blind spots and recurring themes across multiple client relationships. The practice round component offers supervisors a tool for creating safe experiential learning opportunities, allowing coaches to experiment with new interventions before implementing them with actual clients.

For Consultants and Organizational Development Professionals: Adapt the hybrid intelligence framework to analyze patterns across coaches and client interactions and intentionally leverage human resources. Use AI-assisted pattern recognition to identify organizational themes and design more targeted interventions. Apply the ethical guidelines demonstrated for client disclosure when introducing AI tools into consulting engagements.

For Educators and Learning & Development Professionals: Incorporate AI-supported reflection into professional development programs, and coach training, teaching others to use AI for skill assessment and learning planning. Use the demonstrated practice round methodology to create safe learning environments where coaches can experiment in simulations and role plays.

For Organizational Leaders: Apply Simsola Evaluation Framework of establishing connection, building accountability, deepening reflection, challenging and pivoting and reviewing progress and concluding the coaching process to enhance evaluation across teams.

Cross-Role Applications: All participants can utilize the demonstrated time-boxed reflection structure (3-5 minutes of AI analysis, followed by synthesis and action planning) to create sustainable professional development practices. The session's emphasis on maintaining human agency while leveraging AI capabilities provides a transferable model for any professional context requiring enhanced self-awareness and strategic preparation, supporting research findings that “in a Hybrid-system, human capabilities are augmented by their complementary AI capabilities, thus achieving improved results overall” (Hao et al., 2025, p. 3).

In this way, deliberate, purposeful practice—facilitated by hybrid intelligence—not only supports high impact coaching but also sets the standard for professional growth in a rapidly evolving, AI-augmented landscape.

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WARRANT STATEMENT

We warrant that given (our) paper, experiential session, demonstration or panel proposal is accepted, we will submit a formally written summary for inclusion in the conference proceedings. We agree that the summary will be typed and single-spaced and will respect the maximum number of words expected. We understand that if this summary is not submitted by July 28, 2025 our presentation will not be included as part of the Columbia Coaching Conference in New York City 2025. We also agree that formatting of the document according to conference specifications is our responsibility, and we understand that the document will be returned to us if it does not meet those specifications.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE DISCLAIMER

We used AI tools, including ChatGPT and Claude, to support non-substantive aspects of this proposal. These tools assisted with background research on hybrid intelligence, ensuring compliance with submission guidelines, minor editing for clarity and succinctness and formatting references in APA 7 style. All intellectual contributions, analysis, and final content decisions were made by the authors.

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Human-Centered Coaching in the AI Era: Creating Agreements for Transformation in Organizations

Abstract: This interactive session showcases strategic organizational partnering through a coaching demonstration, exploring ICF Competencies #3 (Establishes and Maintains Agreements) and #7 (Evokes Awareness). Using our research-based CHANGE© Model, real-world case studies from companies such as L'Oréal, Netflix, IKEA, and Sharjah Police, and insights from our podcast, we showcase how coaching fosters sustainable transformation. The demonstrations highlight the uniquely human capabilities in creating agreements and designing blended interventions within complex organizational systems with multiple stakeholders.

Keywords: Coaching Agreements and Partnering, People-Centered Transformations

Session Overview

This coaching demonstration showcases how Master Certified Coaches (MCCs) partner with organizations to design human-centered interventions that support complex transformation in AI-augmented systems. Drawing on the CHANGE© Model and aligned with ICF Core Competencies #3 (Establishes and Maintains Agreements) and #7 (Evokes Awareness), the session features a pre-recorded demonstration with live debrief and audience interaction. Using real-world examples from global companies such as L'Oréal and Netflix, the presenters illustrate how systemic contracting, stakeholder alignment, and awareness-building contribute to impactful coaching agreements. The demonstration is based on a synthesis of the common themes emerging from our corporate case studies where a coaching approach is used as part of the transformation process to both build engagement and to design change interventions. These themes relate to the need for a deeply human centric approach to support digital and other transformation effectively across the organization. This human centric approach is identified as a key success factor by leading organizations in our case study sample and it is important for the coach partnering with organizations to mirror this particularly during the initial agreement phase. More widely this human centric approach can be supported by a coaching style of leadership with a culture underpinned by open feedback, curiosity and empathy when introducing AI and other transformations. The session enables participants to observe high-impact coaching behaviors, reflect on their practice, and explore how coaching supports leadership agility and cultural evolution in hybrid-intelligence contexts.

Conference Theme Relevance

Our session directly responds to the conference theme by emphasizing coaching as a human-centered lever for navigating hybrid intelligence. In AI-augmented organizations, coaching mastery lies in crafting relational agreements and evoking original insight beyond raw data—skills that cannot be automated. This demonstration showcases how coaches can partner with leaders to design adaptive, people-centric interventions in organizations aligned with digital change. Using the CHANGE© model (acronym of **C**larify, **H**armonize, **A**lign, Navigate, **G**row and **E**valuate), we exemplify how contracting and awareness-evoking moments enhance systemic clarity, ethical alignment, and stakeholder trust. The coaching approach we present

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empowers leaders to navigate complexity with emotional intelligence, somatic presence, and cognitive agility—making coaching indispensable in hybrid ecosystems integrated with AI and other tech tools.

Competencies Addressed

The demonstrations focus mainly on two ICF core competencies, even other competencies are obviously also observable such as Trust, Presence, Active Listening.

Competency #3 (Establishes and Maintains Agreements) emphasizes the coach's ability to create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, process, and goals. This includes defining roles, establishing expectations and a shared understanding of the organizational coaching engagement. It also emphasizes ethical practice and multi-lateral contracting. The coach's capability to integrate multiple sources of information from stakeholders into a coherent framework is key for impact along with the ability to be innovative in terms of intervention design and planning. Furthermore, the coach's ability to build deep trust and safety with stakeholders at this stage is vital for future success.

Competency #7 (Evokes Awareness) explores how the coach facilitates client insights by using powerful questioning, intuitive listening, and reflective techniques to help clients discover deeper understanding of their needs, challenges and potential pathways forward. It also supports the client in reframing perspectives by sharing observations, insights and feelings.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

1. Identify how best to deploy ICF core competencies #3 and #7 in organizational coaching agreements
2. Recognize the unique human capabilities needed during coaching agreements to shape high-impact interventions - Competency #3.
3. Experiment with new coaching strategies using the CHANGE© Model to foster awareness and growth mindset - Competency #7.

Demonstration Outline

The session will consist of a ten-minute coaching demonstration highlighting different stages in establishing the coaching agreement with organizations followed by an interactive and reflective debriefing session. The session is structured as follows (overall 40 minutes):

Part 1: Short contextual introduction/set up - 5 minutes
Part 2: Demonstration with live debrief - 20 minutes
Part 3: Audience Interaction and Takeaways - 15 minutes

Part 1 – Short Contextual Introduction - 5 minutes

Short audience overview with reference to the CHANGE© Model, its origin is in our extended experiences and field research with organizations going through transformations and a demonstration format.

Part 2 – Demonstration - 20 minutes

The demonstration is pre-recorded as a video with subtitles for key coaching moments in a client engagement. The demonstration is aligned with ICF's core competencies #3 and #7 and is grounded in the CHANGE© Model to integrate coaching into complex organizational change initiatives; CHANGE© being the acronym of **C**larify, **H**armonize, **A**lign, Navigate, **G**row and **E**valuate). Inspired by real-life and recent coaching engagements in leading global organizations, the demonstration is delivered by experienced Global Master Coaches with expertise in large-scale leadership coaching. It is also designed to show observable coaching behaviors aligned with Competencies #3 and #7 —such as role clarification, stakeholders mapping, use of intuition, ethical navigation, and client sense-making—allowing the audience to witness mastery-level coaching in complex systems.

Part 3 - Audience Interaction and Takeaways - 15 minutes

This co-facilitated session provides live Interactive Question and Answer session where the co-presenters will respond to observations about the CHANGE© framework and ICF Core Competencies #3 and #7 with a comparative analysis of demonstrated coaching approaches. Using practical know-how to promote reflection and insight sharing, the audience will reflect and make links between the demonstration and the theme of the conference: *High-Impact Coaching | In an Era of Hybrid Intelligence.* Co-presenters will ensure attendees leave with transferable strategies and practical know-how to enhance their own practice as key takeaways.

The debrief will also reference tools such as the ICF Competency Model at Mastery level (Minimum skills requirements for MCC) and the Goal Setting and Measurement framework (CHANGE© Model).

Session Approach

To ensure a highly engaging and observable learning experience aligned with the Coaching Demonstration track, the coaching demonstration will be delivered in a hybrid format with a pre-recorded demonstration drawn from real-world organizational engagements immediately followed by a live analysis and reflection by the presenting coaches. The demonstration will showcase rich, real-world coaching moments in a dynamic, accessible format. The pre-recorded short video demonstration (subtitled for competency cues) will be played in two segments of five minutes each, followed by a live guided debriefing by the co-presenters to

walk through decision points, making core competencies observable in action. This real-time analysis will highlight ICF Core Competencies #3 and #7 in action, linking observable behaviors with coaching theory and impact.

The video segments will be integrated into the live 40 minute facilitated session ensuring dynamic engagement as follows:

- Live introduction (5 minutes): Outline the scenario, objectives, and the competencies demonstrated
- Pre-recorded video clip #1 (3 - 5 minutes): Showcases a high-impact excerpt of coaching interaction
- Live debrief #1 (3 – 5 minutes): The presenters pause after the clip to reflect aloud, naming the competencies and decision points shown
- Pre-recorded video clip #2 (3 – 5 minutes): Showcases a high-impact excerpt of coaching interaction.
- Live debrief # 2 (3 – 5 minutes): The presenters pause after the clip to reflect aloud, naming the competencies and decision points shown.
- Audience prompts for example "What ICF coaching behaviors did you observe?" "What stood out for you?" "How did the coach dance in the moment with the client?"

This format allows participants to observe high-impact moments in a focused way, while also benefiting from real-time commentary that unpacks the coach's internal decision-making process.

The audience interaction will be invited between segments to deepen learning, pose competency-spotting questions, and encourage reflection on application to their own practice. This hybrid approach combines observability, coach reflexivity and audience learning in a dynamic format.

Competencies Observability

In respect of the ICF core competencies, the coaching process is defined as a non-linear and *uniquely human process* whereby the coach processes information through the lens of the head, heart and gut. The coach relies hugely on holistic understanding of the client; their needs and the organizational influences at play within the eco-system.

The coach dances in the moment with the client in an unscripted manner to establish what is meaningful and impactful for client engagements. To support competency observability, each pre-recorded demonstration sequence is annotated with subtitles. In the Demonstration which focuses on culture development, participants will observe Competency #3 (Establishes and Maintains Agreements) through contracting moments that define scope, explore stakeholder alignment, and articulate measurable outcomes. Competency #7 (Evokes Awareness) will be highlighted using powerful questioning, and intuitive listening that surfaces client resistance and reframes organizational narratives.

The co-presenters will pause after each segment to describe their behavioral choices, linking these explicitly to ICF MCC/PCC level indicators and to the CHANGE© model. This structure ensures that participants can see and name the competencies in action—enhancing both conceptual clarity and practical takeaways.

Tables A and B are show casing how this will work precisely during the demonstration session, in interaction with the audience.

Table A: *Demonstration Segment #1*

Competency	**Observable Behaviors**	**Timestamp**
ICF #3: Establishes & Maintains Agreements	Coach explicitly defines roles, scope, and goals with client; explores unspoken expectations; works to build rapport and support with the client	01:00 – 02:30
ICF #3: Ethical Practice	Navigates confidentiality with multiple stakeholders	02:30 – 03:45
ICF #7: Creates Awareness	Uses reframing to shift client perspective on intervention scope	03:45 – 05:00

Table B*: Demonstration Segment #2*

Competency	**Observable Behaviors**	**Timestamp**
ICF #3: Establishes & Maintains Agreements	Coach explores the true development needs of the client and a identifying the drivers and areas of resistance	01:00 – 02:30
ICF #3: Establishes & Maintains Agreements	Partners with client to define measures of success for the engagement	02:30 – 03:45
ICF #7: Creates Awareness	Asks questions that help the client to explore beyond current thinking	03:45 – 05:00

The dual-channel cue of audio and visual in the demonstration reinforces learning and competency observability. The video will include on-screen subtitles such as *Competency #3: Clarifying multi-stakeholder contracting* and *Competency #7: Dancing in the moment—evoking client insight*.

The debrief will integrate the ICF Core Competency Model enhanced by the CHANGE© Model developed from the case studies gathered for the co-authors' Podcast series. This provides a structured roadmap for coaches to navigate large-scale organizational shifts:

1. **Clarify** Purpose & Contracting- Aligning coaching with AI-driven leadership goals.
2. **Harmonize** Stakeholders & Perspectives - Managing complex viewpoints.
3. **Align** Strategies & Commitment- Bridging coaching with leadership priorities.
4. **Navigate** Challenges - Addressing resistance and ethical AI dilemmas.
5. **Grow** Through Reflection - Embedding AI and leadership insights.
6. **Evaluate** & Sustain Impact - Measuring long-term coaching effectiveness.

This six step CHANGE© Model guides coaches through the complex contracting phase of systemic coaching in organizations to ensure greater impact and probability of success. The model is based on case studies of effective cultural transformation in organizations used in our podcast series. The six steps were common success factors of successful organizational and digital transformations reported in our case studies by leading organizations. These six steps focus on the uniquely human centric aspect of change to support wider AI transformation.

Conceptual / Theory Input

This demonstration is grounded in evidence-based coaching research, organizational development theory, and leadership literature. It integrates the ICF Core Competency framework—specifically competencies #3 (Establishes & Maintains Agreements) and #7 (Evokes Awareness)—with the CHANGE© Model, a structured, systemic coaching process designed by the co-authors to support complex organizational transformation.

Organizational Development Foundations: The work is informed by foundational Organizational Development (OD) thinking that emphasizes the systemic nature of change, the importance of stakeholder alignment, and the need for psychological safety and learning-oriented cultures. As Schein (2018) asserts in *Humble Leadership*, transformation emerges not only from structures but from relationships built on trust and authenticity—qualities central to coaching at scale. Similarly, Hawkins and Smith (2020) emphasize that sustainable transformation requires coaches to integrate "coaching, mentoring, and organizational consultancy" to navigate multi-stakeholders' environments and ethically complex systems.

Change Leadership and Systems Thinking: Kotter (2012) underscores the importance of stakeholder alignment in leading successful change, which directly informs the "Clarify" and "Harmonize" stages of the CHANGE© model. This systemic, multi-layered approach aligns with the OD perspective that organizational change is best approached as a collaborative and iterative process involving multiple levels of the system, which have to be revealed by coaching powerful questions.

Growth Mindset and Learning Cultures: The demonstration also draws upon the concept of a growth mindset as articulated by Dweck (2006), promoting the belief that leaders and systems can evolve through effort, feedback, and adaptive learning. This mindset is especially vital when navigating uncertainty, and leadership transitions with AI integration. Coaching that reinforces growth-oriented behaviors—such as experimentation, feedback receptivity, and reflective practice—supports the development of agile and resilient learning cultures.

Human-Centered Coaching in Hybrid Contexts: The ICF and Human Capital Institute (2023) highlight how coaching cultures contribute to leadership agility in hybrid and AI-enabled environments. Coaches are increasingly called to navigate not only individual development but also cultural shifts at scale. The CHANGE© Model provides a practical roadmap to embed these shifts in organizational agreements and culture-building initiatives, while reinforcing uniquely human coaching capabilities such as empathy, intuition, and ethical discernment.

Practice-Based Evidence: Insights from the co-authors podcast series (ongoing) and real-world case studies from global organizations—including L'Oréal, IKEA, and Netflix—illustrate how coaching contributes to long-term organizational transformation by embedding reflective cycles and trust-based feedback cultures. The coaching demonstrations are grounded in these experiences and showcase deep coaching knowledge in real complexity.

Implications for Practice

This session emphasizes the human-centered nature of contracting in an AI-augmented world—where trust, co-creation, and presence are more essential than ever.

This demonstration provides executive and organizational coaches with practical strategies for establishing robust coaching agreements and techniques for creating deep organizational awareness. Furthermore, it provides frameworks for measuring coaching impact in AI-driven workplaces using the CHANGE© approach to navigate complex organizational dynamics. Additionally, coaches will gain insights into translating coaching competencies into tangible organizational outcomes, balancing structural agreements with transformative potential and developing nuanced and uniquely human approaches to organizational development.

The structured CHANGE© protocol is easily actionable by coaches and coaching sponsors to explore organizational agreements for complex blended coaching interventions in a hybrid era.

In summary, this demonstration session merges academic rigor with practical application, drawing from OD theory, coaching science, and leadership psychology to illustrate how coaches can act as strategic partners in transformation. Through systemic contracting, growth mindset reinforcement, systemic awareness and trust-building, coaching becomes a lever for embedding human-centered innovation combined with AI and other tech tools in the DNA of organizations.

References

This session is grounded in evidence-based leadership coaching methodologies, academic models and practical real-world examples. The scenarios used demonstrate how coaches and those procuring coaching need to apply highly developed human attributes such as trust; empathy; ethics and creativity to the Coaching Agreement Phase of complex organizational transformation interventions.

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AI Disclaimer

Generative AI (ChatGPT by OpenAI) was used to support this submission for language refinement and to adjust specific paragraphs for clarity and adherence to word count limits. All conceptual content, structure, and original contributions are based on and remain the intellectual work of the authors.

Warrant statement

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Navigating the AI-Integrated Coaching Landscape: A Hands-On Exploration

Abstract

This experiential session explores how emerging coaches, trained during the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI), integrate AI into their practice. Participants will observe a live coaching demonstration featuring an AI-generated tool, making the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Core Competencies & Ethics visible in action. The attendees, in small groups with a facilitator, will generate a coaching resource using AI, evaluate its quality and alignment, and reflect on ethical implications. The session invites dialogue on AI's role, limitations, and potential impact on presence, trust, and transformation, building a bridge between pre-AI and AI-era coaching generations.

Keywords

AI in Coaching, Hybrid Intelligence, Coaching Tools, Emotional Intelligence, Technology Integration

Conference Theme Relevance

This session directly addresses the "High Impact Coaching in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence" conference theme through an experiential exploration of AI's role in contemporary coaching. Real-time learning occurs through a live coaching demonstration with an AI platform, where the coach demonstrates discernment as they apply the resource. Participants will generate and critically evaluate a custom-created AI coaching resource to ensure alignment with ICF competencies and ethical guidelines. This interactive format will bridge traditional and AI-integrated coaching approaches to foster dialogue between coaches trained during the emergence of generative AI and seasoned practitioners who may not yet be using AI. Ultimately, by focusing on ethical and practical application, the session empowers coaches to leverage hybrid intelligence for greater client impact.

Competencies Addressed

This session demonstrates ICF Core Competencies, including "Facilitates Client Growth," "Coaching Mindset," and "Maintains Presence" with a focus on ethical use of AI platforms. The live coaching moment will demonstrate how a coach employs discretion to assess AI-generated input while remaining client-centered. The session also supports the emerging competency of Technology and Digital Literacy, helping coaches reflect on the potential and limitations of AI within the coaching process. The exercise will prompt participants to consider:

- How coaches can leverage AI for effectiveness.

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- Ethical and relational concerns (such as trust, privacy, and empathy) of AI-generated coaching materials.
- How AI tools might support or hinder the coach's ability to empower client transformation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe one (1) way to integrate AI-generated coaching resources into a coaching session.
- Evaluate one (1) AI-generated coaching resource using ICF-aligned criteria.
- Articulate one (1) ethical implication of AI integration in coaching.
- Reflect on and analyze one (1) impact of AI on coaching presence, trust, and/or client-centeredness.

Demonstration Outline

The session will take 40 minutes.

- Welcome and Framing (5 minutes)
    - Facilitators provide an overview of session agenda, goals, and the experiential format (15 seconds).
    - QR code links to ICF Ethics and Standards for AI use (30 seconds).
    - Interactive polls (15 seconds each), including "Where is AI already in your life?" and "Have you used AI in coaching?", will quickly gauge participants' current familiarity and comfort with AI, establishing a relevant baseline understanding.
    - Exploration of where the presenters use AI within their daily lives and coaching practices (30 seconds).
    - Participants will be reminded to have access to a phone or device and to open ChatGPT, an AI platform, on a browser (15 seconds).
    - The session will be framed again to explicitly link the session's objectives with the conference theme: experiential learning, ethical reflection, and tool exploration (2 minutes 30 seconds).
- Live Coaching Demonstration (5 minutes)
    - The facilitator demonstrates a coaching interaction using an AI-generated platform. Examples: a reflective use of a Zoom transcript or creating mantras for a coaching client with ChatGPT. (2 minutes)
    - Debrief: What ICF competencies were visible? How did the coach maintain presence and partnership? How did the coach balance using the AI platform without losing the human element? (3 minutes)

    - Brief Q&A.
- Using AI to Develop Coaching Support Materials & Evaluation (25 minutes)
    - Prompt to the group: “Think of a coaching resource you might want ChatGPT to create to support your clients (e.g., intake forms, journaling prompts, reflection guides, SMART goal creation, wheel of life, Zoom transcript of session).” (5 minutes)
    - In pairs or small groups, facilitators will assist participants to familiarize themselves with the AI interface, use the AI to generate a coaching resource, and iterate on the resource until it meets ICF standards and ethics. (15 minutes)
    - Pairs and groups will evaluate the ChatGPT resource beyond its functionality using these guiding questions: How does this align with coaching values and ICF competencies? What biases or assumptions arise? Would I use this with a client? Why or why not? (5 minutes)
- Group Reflection & Large-Group Synthesis (5 minutes)
    - Facilitators lead a large-group synthesis, naming emerging insights, asking open-ended questions like: What surprised you? How did AI affect your mindset or ethics? What are you still wondering?
    - This final synthesis will clarify key takeaways and inspire participants to continue exploring the ethics and application of hybrid intelligence in their coaching practice.

Conceptual Theory/Input

Generative AI holds transformative potential for professional coaching, fundamentally reshaping how coaches support client growth, wellness, and performance. This session will explore this impact through the lens of foundational theories of technological adoption and human-centered development. While organizational coaching stands to benefit significantly, our primary focus is on individual coaching practice. Through hands-on exploration, participants will engage with these emerging coaching tools and experience their impact on effectiveness and ethical practice.

Despite concerns about the rise of generative AI platforms (AI that can create novel content), like ChatGPT, there is immense potential for coaching and other language- and conversation-based professions. These platforms could offer coaching to millions more people, addressing challenges such as high costs, sporadic availability, and lack of scalability. Organizations, therefore, will have no excuse not to provide a “coach” to everyone in the organization (Terblanche, 2024). For coaches, this means adapting to and thoughtfully integrating generative AI is essential to staying relevant, ethical, and impactful.

To reflect on how coaches might utilize AI as a professional tool, we turn to Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations theory (2003). This theory explains that the spread of new

ideas and technologies occurs through a social system and is influenced by several key attributes of the innovation itself:

1. **Relative Advantage:** "The degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes." This advantage can be measured in terms of economic profitability, social prestige, convenience, or satisfaction.
2. **Compatibility:** "The degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters." Innovations that align well with an adopter's norms and practices diffuse more rapidly.
3. **Complexity:** "The degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use." Simple innovations are simpler to understand and adopt than complex ones.
4. **Trialability:** "The degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis." Trialability reduces uncertainty and increases the likelihood of adoption.
5. **Observability:** "The degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others." Visible benefits enhance the rate of adoption.

Rogers further outlines a five-stage innovation-decision process individuals follow to adopt new technology.

1. **Knowledge:** Gaining awareness of the innovation's existence and how it functions.
2. **Persuasion:** Forming a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards this innovation.
3. **Decision:** Engaging in activities that lead to adopting or rejecting the innovation.
4. **Implementation:** Putting the innovation into use.
5. **Confirmation:** Seeking reinforcement for the innovation-decision already made.

We recognize that coaches, as "adopters," will evaluate AI tools based on their perceived value for clients, their compatibility with existing ICF Core Competencies and ethical guidelines (ICF, 2023), and their ease of trial and observation.

This framework feels particularly relevant given the diverse experiences within the coaching community: seasoned practitioners, whose methods predate zero-cost generative AI, and emerging coaches, who have never known a coaching environment without it. With empathy, new coaches can bridge this gap with our seasoned colleagues, recognizing that some may be in the earlier "Knowledge" or "Persuasion" stages of Rogers' model.

We acknowledge that some coaches may feel apprehensive about using AI, making individual readiness for change paramount alongside external factors influencing technology adoption. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1983) Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) offers a framework for anticipating how individuals approach behavior change. This framework enables meeting coaches where they are in their AI journey with empathy. The TTM outlines distinct stages of change through which individuals typically progress:

1. **Precontemplation:** Individuals have no intention of taking action in the foreseeable future (typically within the next six months), may defend current behavior, or be resistant to pressure to change.
2. **Contemplation:** Individuals recognize a problem exists and contemplate change, weighing pros and cons, yet remain uncommitted to action. They intend to act within the next six months.
3. **Preparation:** Individuals intend to take action in the immediate future (typically within the next 30 days) and have already taken some behavioral steps toward that goal, such as acquiring information or planning.
4. **Action:** Individuals have made specific, overt modifications in their lifestyle, behavior, or environment within the past six months, actively putting their plan into practice.
5. **Maintenance:** Individuals have sustained their behavior change for over six months and work to prevent relapse, consolidating the gains achieved in the action stage.

Recognizing coaches' varying readiness along the TTM spectrum, from apprehensive to eager adopters, the session content is curated for inclusive empowerment, offering all participants, especially those in the Preparation stage, practical pathways for integrating AI into their practice.

Building on the understanding of individual readiness for change, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) and Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu (2012), provides a framework synthesizing eight prominent models of Information Technology acceptance to explain factors influencing a coach's behavioral intention and actual use of AI tools. This framework proposes the following key constructs:

1. **Performance Expectancy:** The degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her attain gains in job performance.
2. **Effort Expectancy:** The degree of ease associated with using the system.
3. **Social Influence:** The extent to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system.
4. **Facilitating Conditions:** The degree to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system.

Coaches interested in adopting AI will be significantly influenced by their perception of the following factors:

- AI’s ability to enhance client outcomes (Performance Expectancy);
- The ease with which they can learn and apply the tools (Effort Expectancy);
- The influence of their peers and professional bodies (Social Influence);
- The availability of necessary resources and support (Facilitating Conditions).

While Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, and Social Influence primarily drive AI adoption intent, other factors such as age, experience, gender, and perceived voluntariness also matter (Venkatesh et al., 2012). “Facilitating Conditions” are crucial for its sustained use. Hedonic Motivation (the enjoyment or pleasure derived from using the technology) and Habit (the extent to which technology use becomes automatic) also influence sustained integration (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This nuanced understanding of coaches' diverse backgrounds, career stages, and comfort levels informs our session design, supporting their practical exploration of AI’s potential in coaching.

Crucially, emerging coaches who adopted AI tools early and are situated at the Maintenance stage of TTM are uniquely positioned to serve as ambassadors and thought leaders within the profession. By modeling the ethical and effective integration of AI tools, they can create a psychologically safe space for exploration, mirroring the trust-based environments coaches cultivate with clients (ICF, 2023). This opens the door for more experienced coaches to engage with AI as a potential partner in practice, rather than as a threat to be resisted.

The accelerating pace of technological advancement as highlighted by contemporary discussions (Roose, 2025) introduces a sense of urgency regarding potential technological obsolescence. Similar to how smartphones have become key to modern communication and business, the widespread integration of AI suggests a future where fluency with these tools will be essential for effective, ethical, and scalable coaching practice. While urgency can be a powerful motivator for proactive engagement, encouraging coaches to adapt in an evolving professional landscape, our session foregrounds the belief that the human element remains at the heart of coaching. AI excels in data processing and pattern recognition but lacks the uniquely human qualities of emotional intelligence, creativity, and moral reasoning (Maltbia, 2024). The coaching relationship inherently relies on trust, psychological safety, and transformational potential (ICF, 2023). This resonates with the core tenets of executive coaching, which emphasizes developing “managerial wisdom” (Kilburg, 2000). Thus, ethical AI integration should actively ensure technology serves to amplify, rather than diminish, ICF core competencies.

Beyond discernment in AI tool selection, coaches who choose to integrate AI into their practice can fortify the “Establishes and Maintains Agreements” ICF competency by transparently educating clients, which includes explaining AI’s potential in the coaching process. AI can play diverse roles in coaching, including coach emulation, support (before, during, and after human interventions), education (training, supervision), and data analysis. A novel application is “triadic coaching,” where a client could be coached simultaneously by both a human and an AI coach, with the human coach leading the process and leveraging AI interpretations for real-time guidance or suggested questions (Terblanche, 2024).

Terblanche (2024) addresses key concerns in AI coaching, including fears of human coach displacement, potential data bias, and privacy issues. AI bias, for instance, is more readily detectable and correctable than human bias, as experts can interrogate algorithms or customize open-source generative AI with known data for pre-screening. Furthermore, Terblanche (2024) states that coaching data is often less sensitive than financial or medical records, and users show less concern, particularly as technology effectively mitigates risks.

Ultimately, this session equips coaches with a values-based approach to AI exploration, leveraging Hybrid Intelligence and Diffusion of Innovations to foster ethical innovation. It highlights how thoughtful AI integration can preserve human presence, bolster the ICF Core Competencies, and empower clients, thereby elevating outcomes beyond mere efficiency.

Implications for Practice

This session offers an experiential exploration for coaches to critically and creatively engage with AI resources. Through a live demonstration and hands-on evaluation, participants assess the usefulness, alignment, and ethical fit of AI resources. Participants will practice applying ICF competencies during the integration of technology. They will evaluate AI resources by their perceived client value, compatibility with ICF Core Competencies and ethical guidelines, and ease of testing or observation. This practical work illustrates principles of innovation adoption.

The session assumes an empathetic approach that acknowledges others' varying readiness levels. For example, a coach at the Precontemplation stage does not intend to integrate AI, possibly dismissing or resisting its relevance. A Contemplation-stage coach feels curious about AI but is undecided about practical use or investment. Coaches at the Preparation stage research AI or enroll in training programs, beginning to integrate an AI tool. This values-based approach guides participants through early adoption stages. It also helps preserve the human presence, ethics, and transformation essential to coaching. This session shows that people learn by doing through the hands-on creation and evaluation of an AI tool. These practical skills help professionals in any role assess new technologies or guide others.

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Venkatesh, V., Thong, J. Y. L., & Xu, X. (2012). Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: Extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. *MIS Quarterly, 36*(1), 157–178.

AI Disclosure

Portions of this session's content were developed with AI assistance and subsequently reviewed, edited, and aligned with ICF competencies and ethical standards by the facilitators. Generative AI tools helped organize original ideas, outline notes, check spelling and grammar, format the document's spacing and headers, and adhere to submission guidelines.

Keynotes

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COACHING CONFERENCE HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

AI and Human Agency:
Navigating the Future in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence



Dr. Michael J. Jabbour
AI Innovation Officer, Office of the CTO
Microsoft

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1

Microsoft

The Future of Education, Healthcare, Society

Enhancing Experiences with AI-driven Tools

Dr. MJ J. Jabbour
AI Innovation Officer, Office of the CTO
linkedin.com/in/jabbour

2

reclaiming
my
stride



3



diagnosis
today and
tomorrow

4



Our Kids

5

The degree to which a person can **grow** is directly proportional to the amount of **truth** they can accept about themselves without running away.

Source: Adaptation of a Leland Val Van De Wall quote on personal growth

6

Industry Innovation

Healthcare

With the advent of telemedicine, AI diagnostics, personalized medicine, and digital health records, there's a huge potential for disruption. The healthcare industry is large, complex, and integral to everyone's lives, making it a major potential target for disruption.

Patients, Doctors, Healthcare Administrators, Insurers

Education

The global education market is massive and, with the increased adoption of digital learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are numerous opportunities for new business models and technological improvements.

Students of all ages, Teachers, School Administrators, Parents

Finance

Fintech is already disrupting traditional banking and financial services. Further opportunities exist in areas like cryptocurrencies, blockchain, and AI-driven financial advice.

Bank Customers, Small Business Owners, Financial Advisors, Unbanked Populations

Real Estate

PropTech has started to gain traction, and there are still many aspects of real estate, from property search to transactions, that could benefit from further technological innovation.

Home Buyers, Real Estate Agents, Property Managers, Tenants

Automotive

The shift towards electric vehicles and autonomous driving technology represents a significant disruption to the traditional automotive industry.

Drivers, Vehicle Owners, Fleet Managers, Car Dealers

Food

AgTech and foodtech startups are developing innovations around sustainable farming, alternative proteins, and supply chain efficiency that have the potential to dramatically transform this industry.

Farmers, Grocery Shoppers, Restaurant Owners, Food Processors

Insurance

Insurtech is making waves by using AI, machine learning, and other technological advances to disrupt traditional insurance models.

Policy Holders, Insurance Agents, Underwriters, Claims Adjusters

Government

Embedding AI in government can revolutionize public services, policy decisions, and engagement. By automating tasks and enhancing decision-making with predictive analytics, AI makes government more efficient, transparent, and responsive.

Elected Officials, Civil Servants, Policy Analysts, Citizens, Regulatory Bodies

7

Futures…



1974 Vision



2024 Vision

Sources:

1. https://youtu.be/sTdWOAKzESA
2. https://youtu.be/vgYi3Wr7v_g?si=Es6L031dwXz2zHPA

8

The future of work will be different

>40%

40 to 70% of every hour worked can be automated

50%

of entry level white-collar jobs disrupted within 5 years

Sources:
1. Goldman Sachs Research Newsletter
2. The augmented workforce for an automated, AI-driven world | IBM
3. Economic potential of generative AI | McKinsey
4. An Early Look at the Labor Market Impact Potential

9

AI can fill the capacity gap

80%

of employees lack time & energy to do their job

82%

of leaders will use agents as digital team members in 12-18m

Source: 2025 Work Trends Index

10

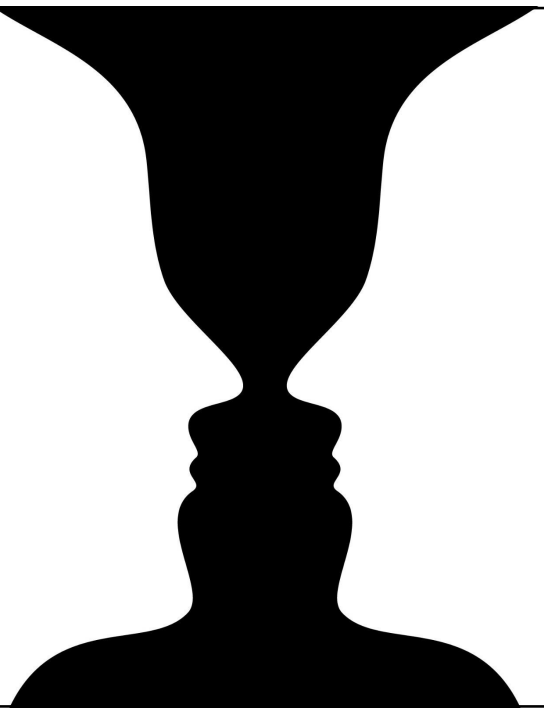
Rubin's Vase

This ambiguous figure, discovered by Danish psychologist Edgar John Rubin in 1915, **demonstrates figure-ground perception and the "Gestalt switch" phenomenon**.

The image can be perceived as either a black vase or two white faces in profile, but **never both simultaneously**. Our brain alternates between these interpretations, with one shape becoming the "figure" (foreground) while the other becomes the "ground" (background).

This illustrates a key principle of perception: when presented with ambiguous visual information, our brain actively constructs meaning by toggling between possible interpretations. The difficulty in controlling which image you see – even when trying – reveals how visual processing operates largely outside conscious control, making this illusion a valuable tool for understanding how we perceive and interpret the world.

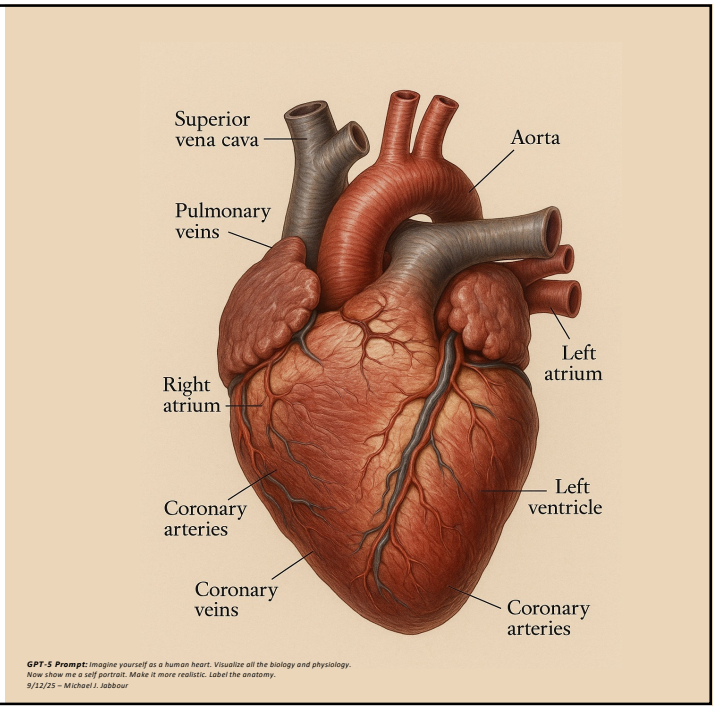
Source: https://www.illusionsindex.org/i/39-rubin-s-vase



11

Where do WE fit in all of this?

Microsoft



12

As AI systems get more intricate...

Prompt

As AI systems get more intricate, they become harder to understand. How can I easily explain this idea and create a visualization in Excel?

It's relatively easy to Imagine a **small town's road system**. When there are only a few roads, it's easy to see where each one goes and how they connect. But as the town grows into a **large city with highways, intersections, underpasses, and bridges**, it becomes much **harder to predict** traffic patterns, determine the best routes, or understand how a single road change might affect the entire system.



chatGPT-DALLE-3 Prompt. *Palo Alto 10/24/23 – 7:00AM PST – Michael J. Jabbour*

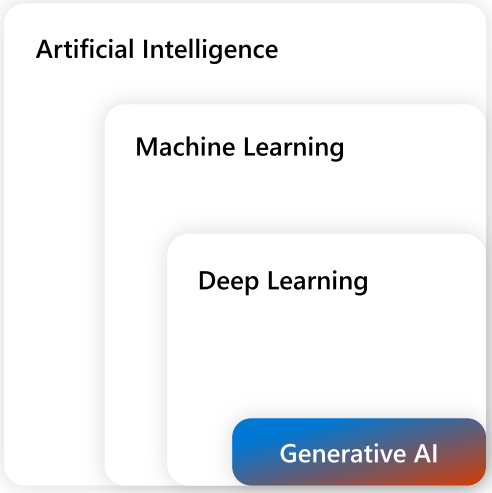
13

AI Foundations

Microsoft

14

A brief history of AI



1943 – 1950s
Artificial Intelligence
the field of computer science that seeks to create intelligent machines that can replicate or exceed human intelligence.

1959-1997
Machine Learning
subset of AI that enables machines to learn from existing data and improve upon that data to make decisions or predictions.

2011-2017
Deep Learning
a machine learning technique in which layers of neural networks are used to process data and make decisions.

2020-Present
Generative AI
create new written, visual, and auditory content given prompts or existing data.

15

What can these new AI services do?

Content & image generation

- Automatically generate responses to student or teacher inquiries
- Visual aids for diverse learners and interactive multimedia lesson plans
- Hyper-personalized learning material creation
- Collaborative creative writing and artwork for class projects

Summarization

- Classification, sentiment analysis, entity extraction, and summarization
- Summarization of subject matter expert documentation (e.g. lengthy educational articles, analyst articles)
- Highlighting essential points in learning texts
- Adjust complexity, tone, age-level, and language of complex content

Code generation

- Convert natural language to code or SQL (or vice versa)
- Convert natural language to query proprietary data models
- Document, troubleshoot, and repair code
- Personalized code examples and problems during learning

Advanced search

- Tailored educational resource discovery, connecting cross-disciplinary concepts
- Multi-modal searching through structured & unstructured documentation
- Information discovery and knowledge mining
- Enable multimodal search approaches and results

16

What are agents?

Agents are AI assistants that can help optimize business processes and enhance productivity

Copilot agents vary in level of complexity and capabilities depending on your need

Simple — Advanced

Retrieval	Task	Autonomous
Retrieve information from grounding data, reason, summarize, and answer user questions	**Take actions when asked**, automate workflows, and replace repetitive tasks for users	**Operate independently**, dynamically plan, orchestrate other agents, learn and escalate
Generally available	Generally available	Available for developers

17

17

Azure OpenAI Service

Content creation by API

Prompt

```
Write a tagline for an ice cream shop.
```

```
Response

We serve up smiles with every scoop!
```

Prompt

```
Table customers, columns = [CustomerId, FirstName, LastName, Company, Address, City, State, Country, PostalCode]

Create a SQL query for all customers in Texas named Jane
query =
```

```
Response

SELECT *
FROM customers
WHERE State = 'TX' AND
FirstName = 'Jane'
```

Prompt

```
A ball of fire with vibrant colors to show the speed of innovation at our media and entertainment company
```



18

Azure OpenAI Service

Alternative

Prompt

A ball of fire with vibrant colors to show the speed of innovation at our media and entertainment company



19

SORA

Video Generation



20



21



22



23

The future of learning will be personalized

6 wks

of virtual instruction can match 2 years of traditional learning

66%

of business leaders wouldn't hire someone without AI skills

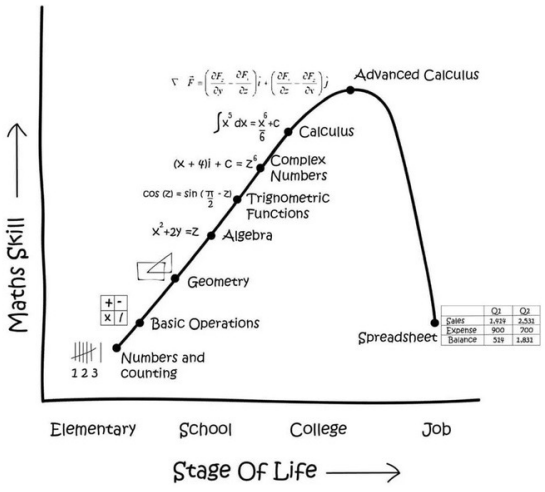
Sources:
1. Microsoft (2024). '2024 Work Trend Index: AI at work is here
2. World Bank (2021). 'Can Virtual Reality simulators develop students' skills?

24

education ≠ training

25

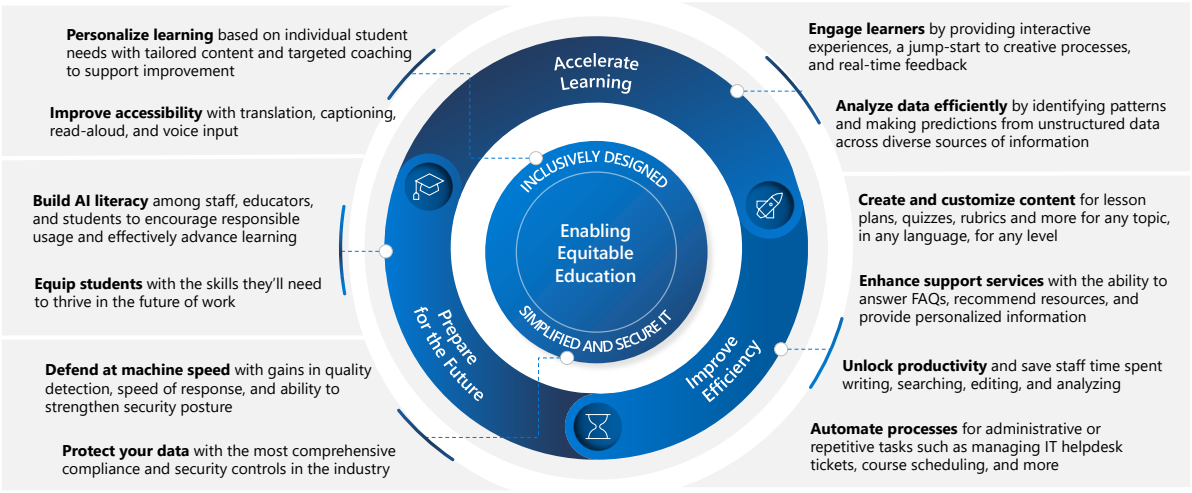
Are we teaching useful skills?



Source: Widely distributed internet meme with no origin

26

Opportunities for AI in Education



27

Teaching & Learning

Acceleration & Outcomes

Microsoft

28

Unleash Your Inner Leader: Master the Art of Healthy Narcissism

Prompt

Are you aware of this article "Is a little narcissism a good thing in leadership roles? Test of an inverted - U-shaped relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with leader- Gerhard Blickle a,*, Franziska Bohm ¨a, Andreas Wihler b"

Response

Yes, I am aware of the article you mentioned. The article is titled "Is a little narcissism a good thing in leadership roles? Test of an inverted U-shaped relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with leader" and is authored by Gerhard Blickle, Franziska Bohm, and Andreas Wihler. The study examines the relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with the leader.

The main finding of the study is that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the two variables, suggesting that a moderate level of narcissism may be beneficial in leadership roles. In other words, a certain amount of narcissism might be advantageous for leaders, as it can contribute to confidence, charisma, and assertiveness. However, when narcissism levels become too high, these positive traits can turn into arrogance, entitlement, and manipulativeness, which negatively affect the satisfaction of followers.

It is important for leaders to strike a balance in their level of narcissism in order to be effective and maintain the satisfaction of their followers.

29

Learning Outcomes, Competencies, and Beyond

Prompt

An executive coach and leadership expert. if you had to teach healthy narcissism taking into consideration mental health and healthy leadership principles, what competencies would you be teaching? please specify the competencies in knowledge, skills, abilities and learning outcomes

Response

Here are the competencies that I would focus on, categorized into knowledge, skills, abilities, and learning outcomes:

Knowledge:

1. Understanding the differences between healthy and unhealthy narcissism.
2. Familiarity with leadership styles and how they interact with narcissism.
3. Awareness of the impact of narcissism on team dynamics and organizational performance.

Skills:

1. Effective communication: Developing the ability to convey ideas clearly, assertively, and respectfully.
2. Active listening: Paying attention to others' viewpoints, asking questions, and demonstrating empathy.
3. Emotional intelligence: Recognizing and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding and responding to the emotions of others.
4. Adaptability: Adjusting leadership style to suit the situation and the needs of the team.
5. Self-reflection: Evaluating one's own actions, thoughts, and emotions to foster personal growth.

Abilities:

1. Confidence: Believing in one's own abilities while remaining open to feedback and learning.
2. Empathy: Connecting with others on an emotional level and understanding their perspectives.
3. Resilience: Recovering from setbacks, maintaining motivation, and learning from failures.
4. Humility: Acknowledging limitations, seeking help when needed, and sharing credit for success.
5. Assertiveness: Expressing oneself in a direct, honest, and respectful manner, without being aggressive or passive.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Participants will be able to identify the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy narcissism.
2. Participants will develop communication and listening skills that promote positive relationships and team cohesion.
3. Participants will learn to recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand and respond to the emotions of others.
4. Participants will be able to adapt their leadership style based on the situation and the needs of their team.
5. Participants will practice self-reflection and incorporate feedback to foster continuous personal and professional growth.

30

Session 1: Humility and Narcissism in Leadership

Prompt

Create a course title, learning methods, course outline, and lesson plan.

Response

Course Outline:

1. **Introduction to Healthy Narcissism in Leadership**
   - Defining healthy and unhealthy narcissism
   - The role of narcissism in leadership styles
   - The impact of narcissism on teams and organizations
2. **Communication and Active Listening**
   - Verbal and non-verbal communication skills
   - Assertiveness in leadership
   - Active listening techniques and empathy
3. **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**
   - Understanding and managing emotions
   - Developing empathy and social awareness
   - Building strong relationships and team cohesion
4. **Adaptability and Resilience in Leadership**
   - Adapting to changing circumstances
   - Maintaining motivation and learning from setbacks
   - Fostering resilience in teams
5. **Cultivating Humility and Self-reflection**
   - Recognizing limitations and seeking help
   - Sharing credit and celebrating team successes
   - Practicing self-reflection for continuous improvement
6. **Course Review and Personal Action Plan**
   - Summarizing key concepts and competencies
   - Developing a personalized action plan for growth
   - Setting goals and milestones for leadership development

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2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COACHING CONFERENCE HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

Coaching from the Core:
Awakening the Transformative Leader



Hitendra Wadhwa
Professor
Columbia Business School

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1

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
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IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

Coaching from the Core:
Awaken the Transformative Leader

HITENDRA WADHWA

2


“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…”
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

3


The best…
Meaning and Purpose
Education
“True self” revolution
Globalization
Standard of Living
Meditation, Mindfulness, Yoga, Healthy Living
Science
Freedom
Technology
Knowledge
Empathy & Social Justice
Pursuit of Authenticity
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

4

The worst...

Mental Health

Chronic Disease

Economic shocks

Immigration Challenges

Drug Addiction

Environment

Loneliness

Frayed Relationships

Violence, Crime

Politics

Geopolitical Tension

Social Divisions



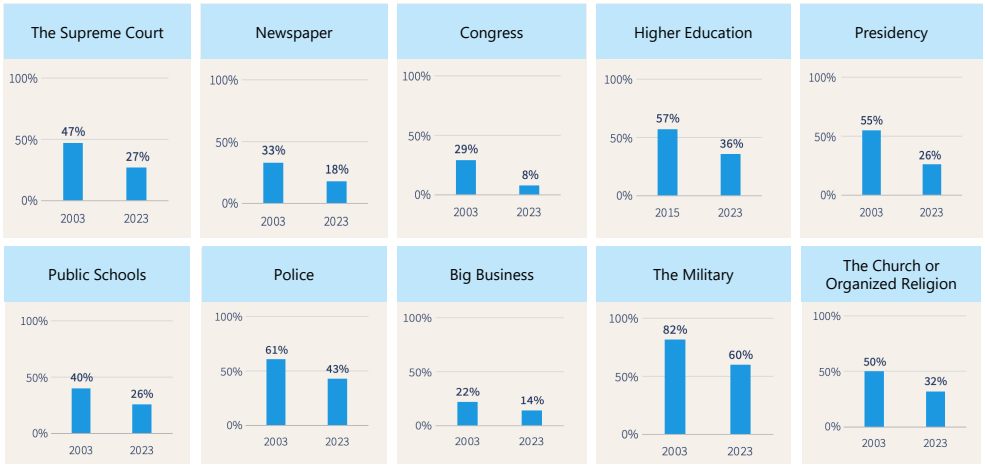
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

5

Trust is breaking down

How much trust and confidence do you have in...?

Great deal/ Quite a lot



Source: Gallup

6


How do we build a great culture?
How do I balance driving results with making employees feel cared for?
How do I unify people?
How do I keep everyone motivated in uncertain times?
How do I open them up to an uncomfortable truth?
How do we shift people's attitudes so we can accelerate change?
How do I make them trust me?
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

7


The old order is getting dismantled

8


How do we build a great culture?
How do I balance driving results with making employees feel cared for?
How do I open them up to an uncomfortable truth?
How do we shift people's attitudes so we can accelerate change?
How do I make them trust me?
We need to expand leadership capacity – in a big way
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

9


How?

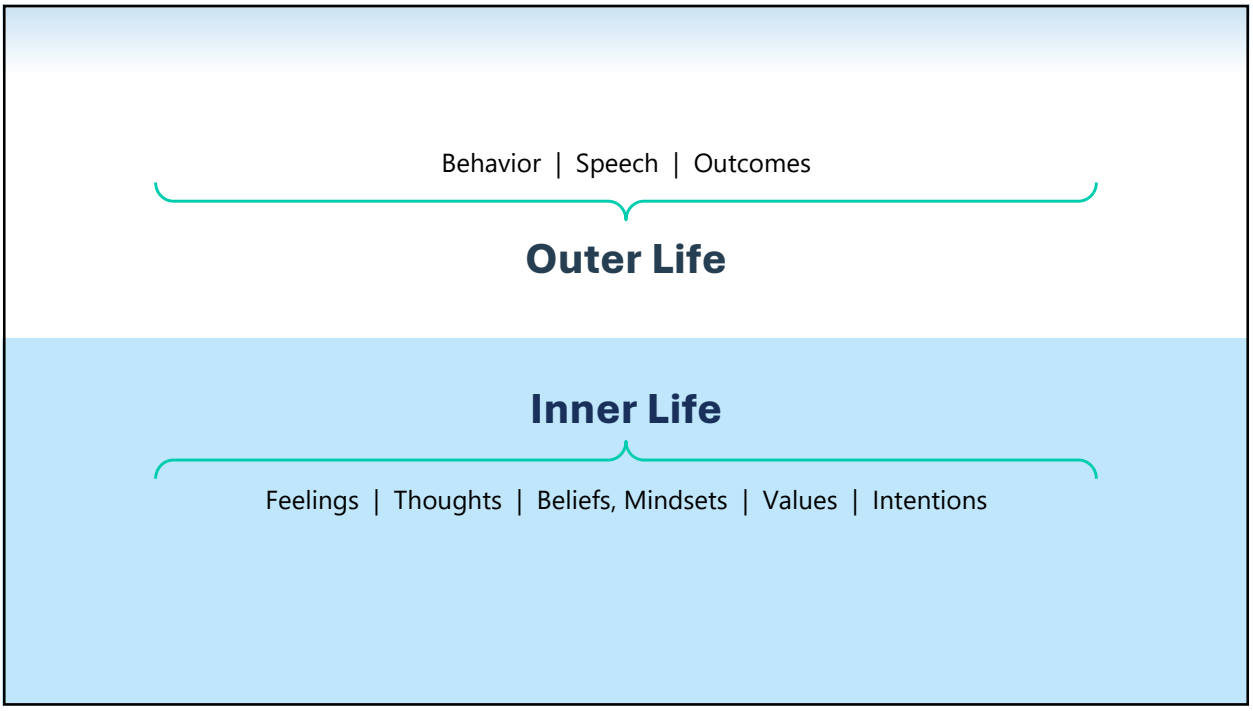
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How do we get from ordinary to extraordinary?

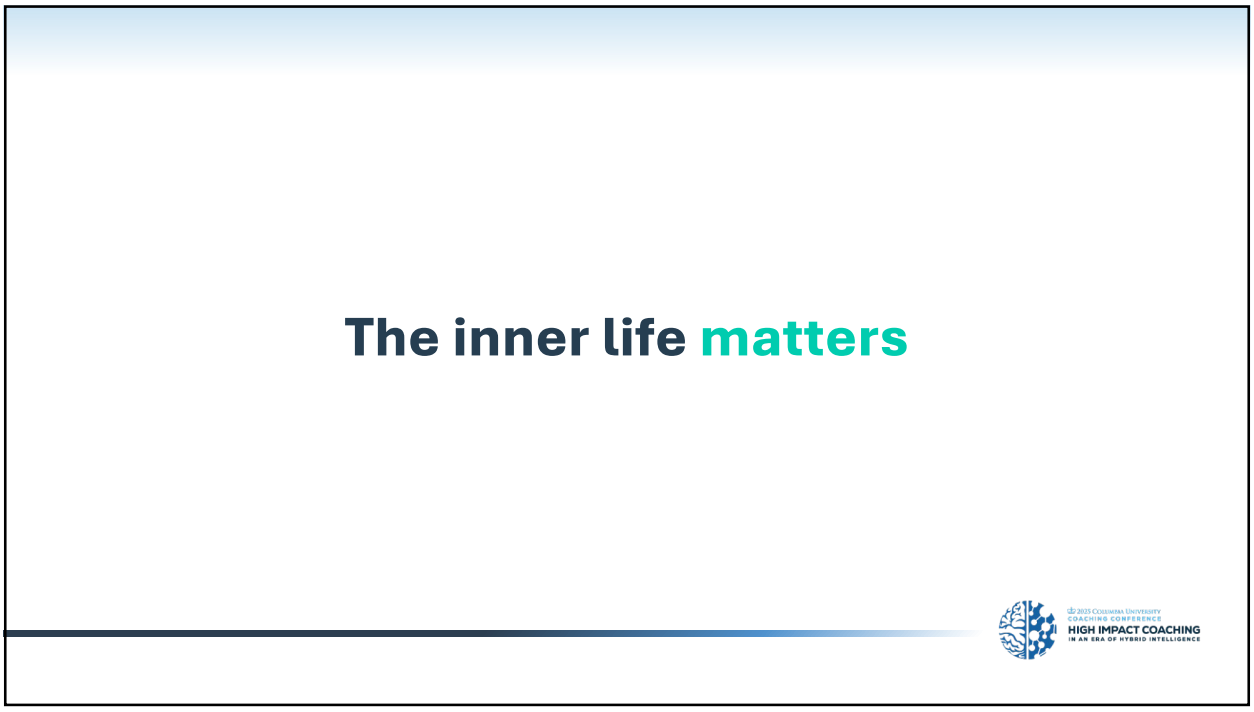
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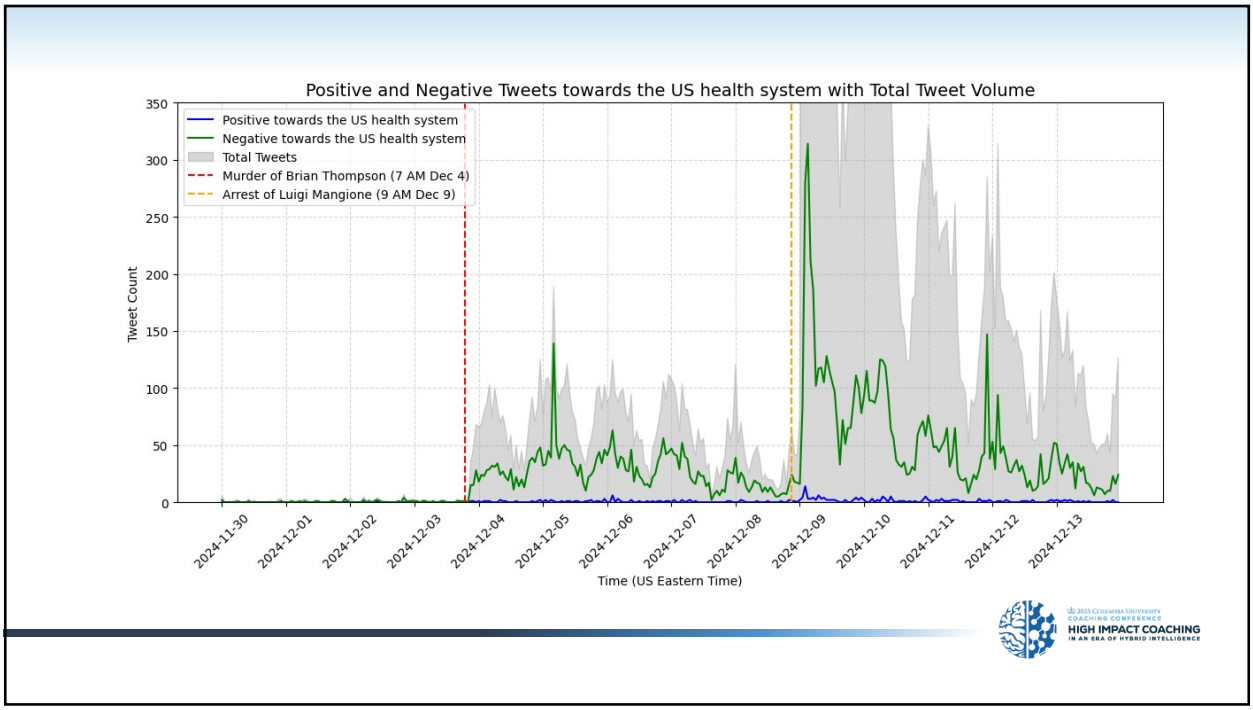
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Behavior | Speech | Outcomes
Outer Life
Inner Life
Feelings | Thoughts | Beliefs, Mindsets | Values | Intentions

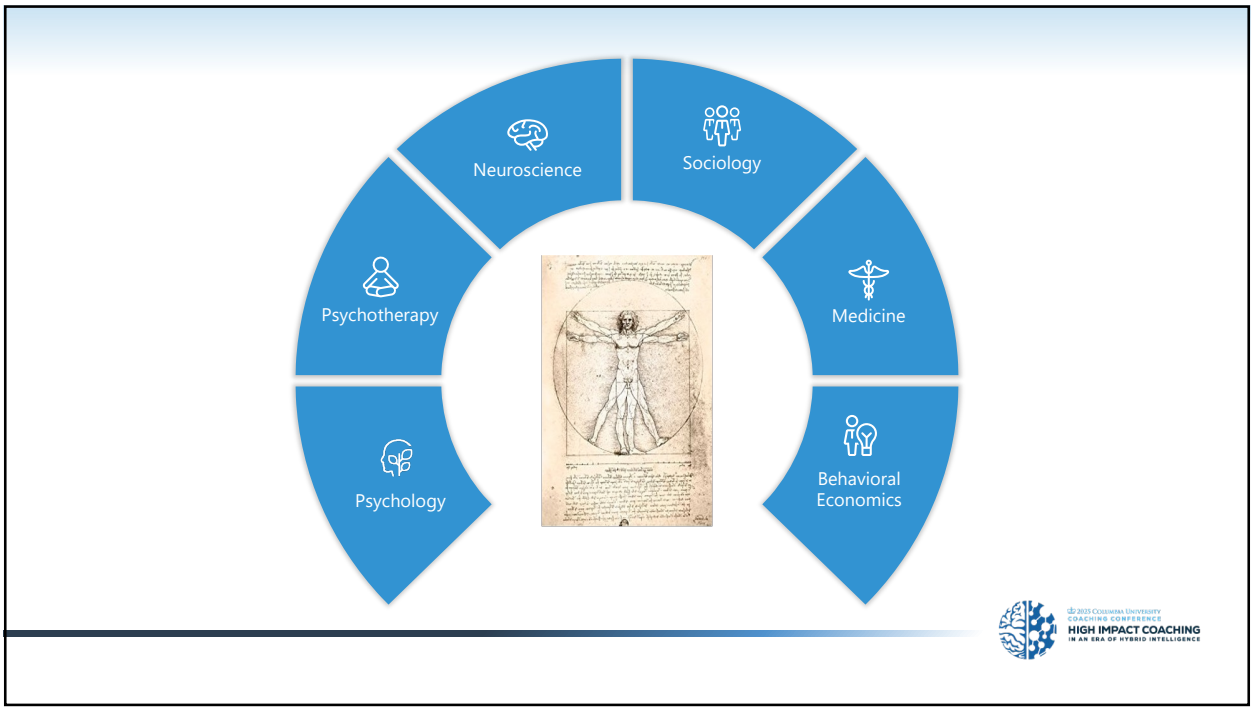
13


The inner life matters
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

14


Positive and Negative Tweets towards the US health system with Total Tweet Volume
Positive towards the US health system
Negative towards the US health system
Total Tweets
Murder of Brian Thompson (7 AM Dec 4)
Arrest of Luigi Mangione (9 AM Dec 9)
Tweet Count
Time (US Eastern Time)
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

15


Neuroscience
Sociology
Psychotherapy
Medicine
Psychology
Behavioral Economics
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

16

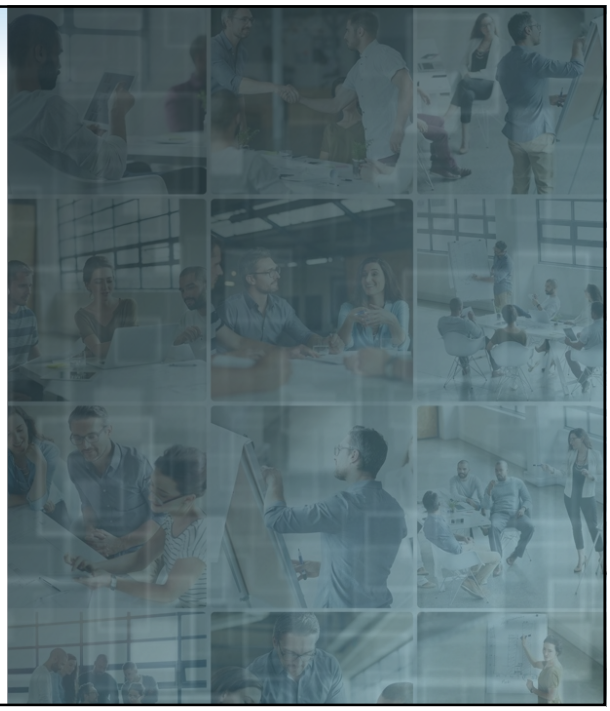


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1,000+ moments of exemplary leadership

Dialogs, conflicts, presentations, meetings, speeches, decisions

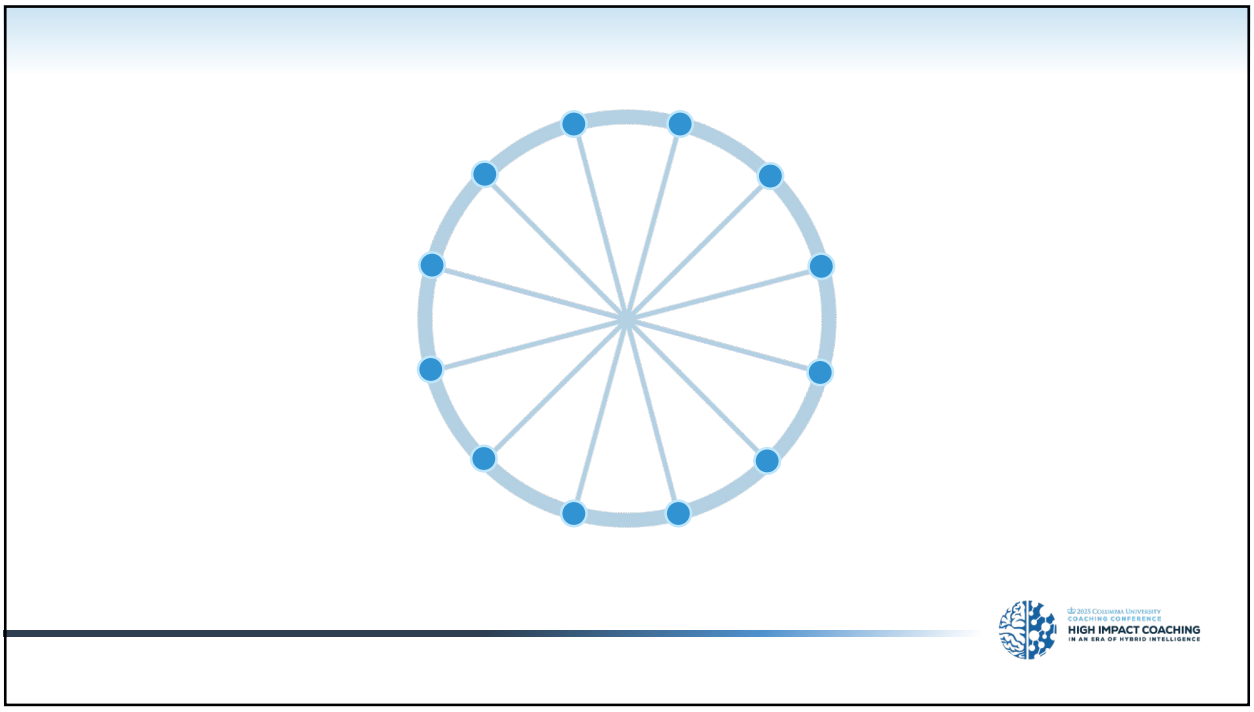
Iconic & everyday heroes



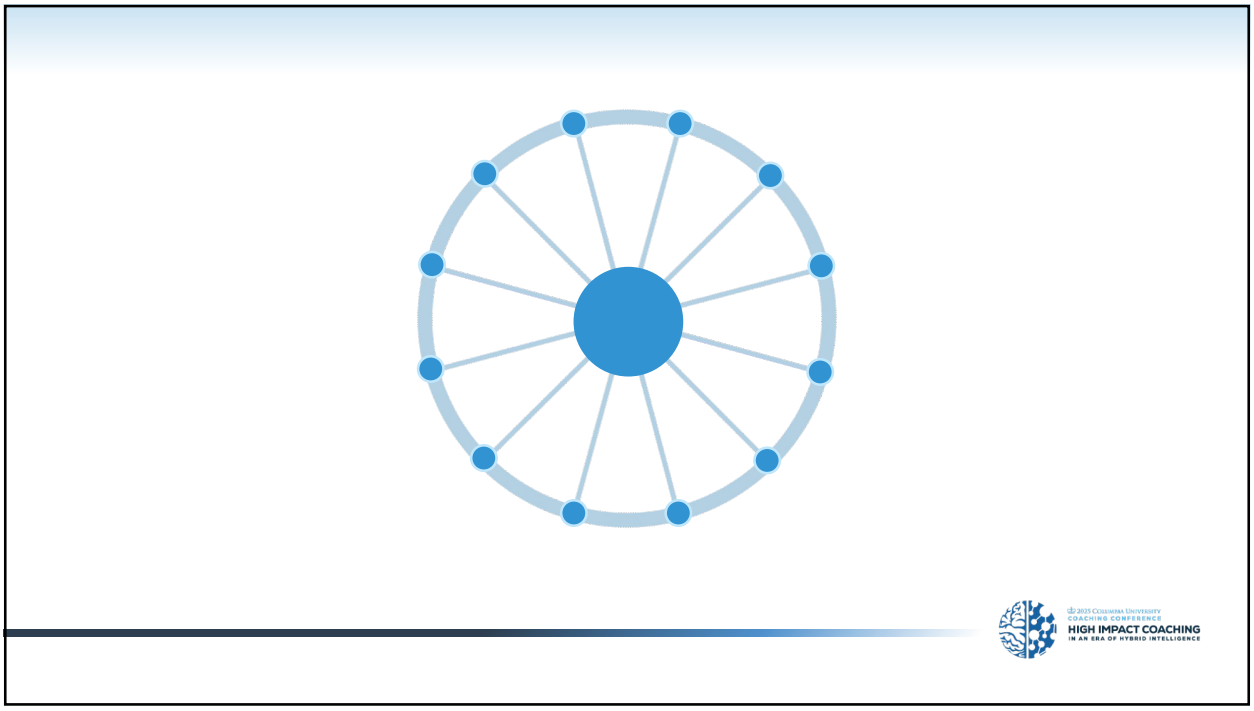
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The Secret Service agent and his wife

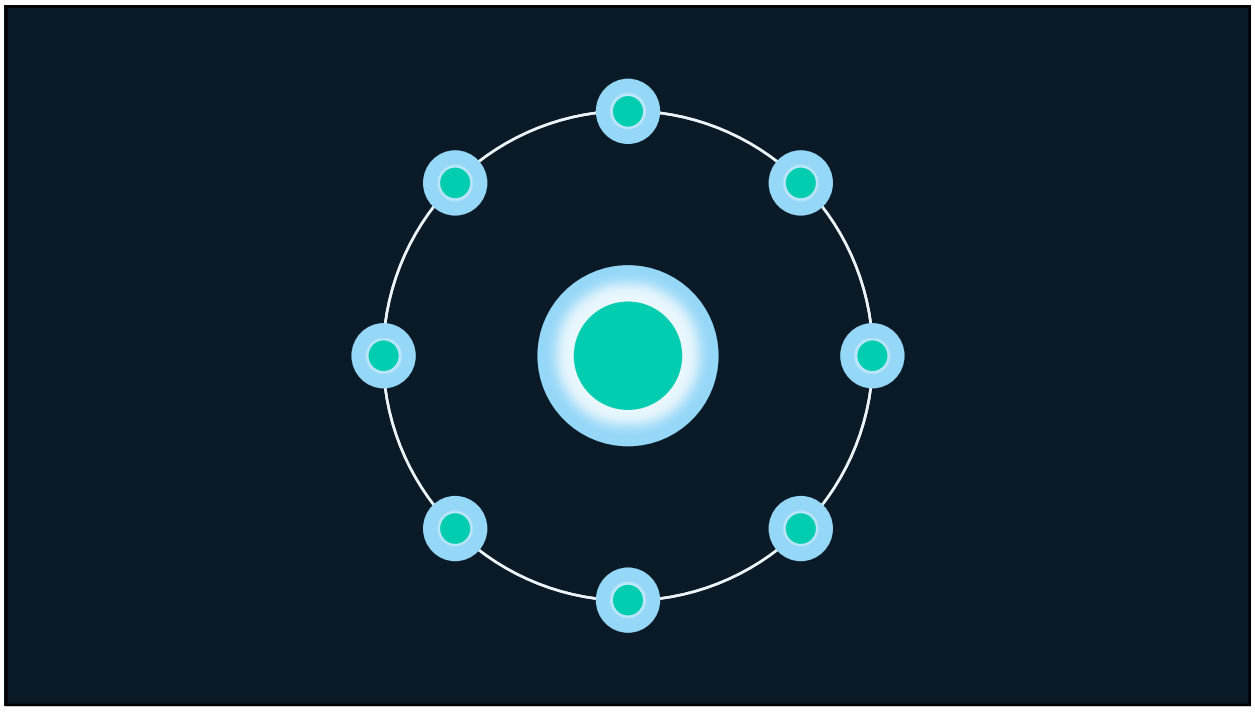
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2023 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

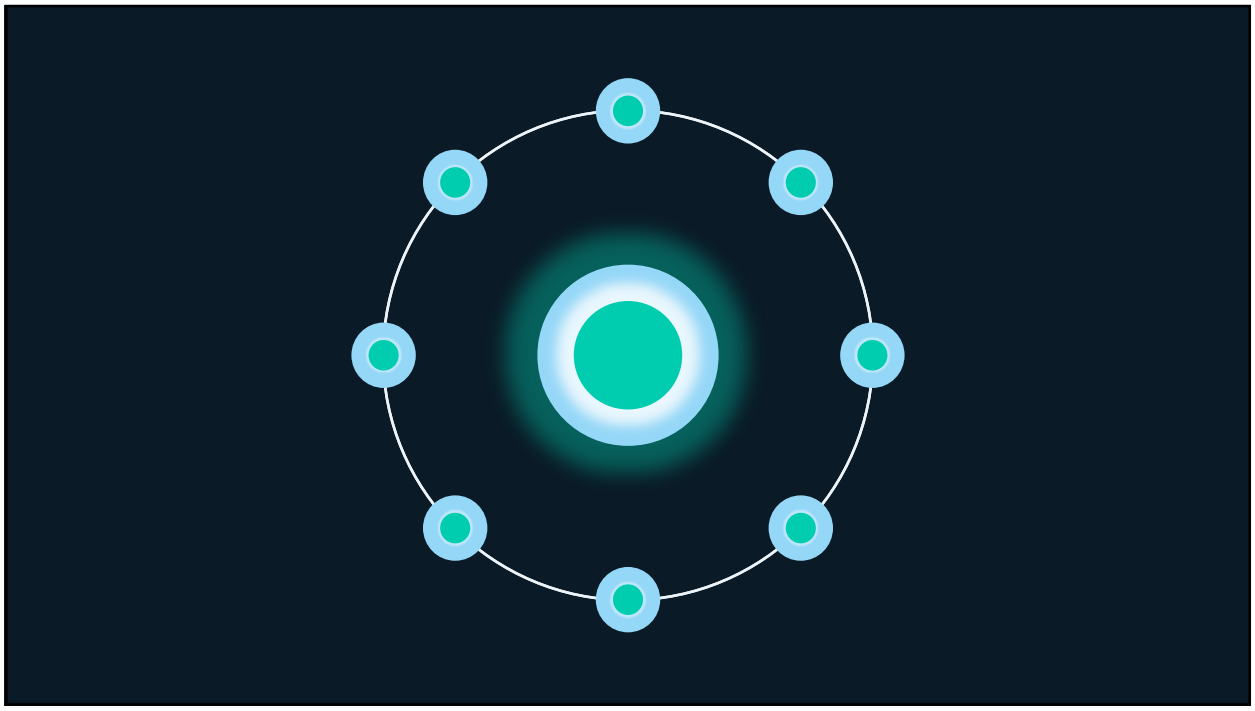
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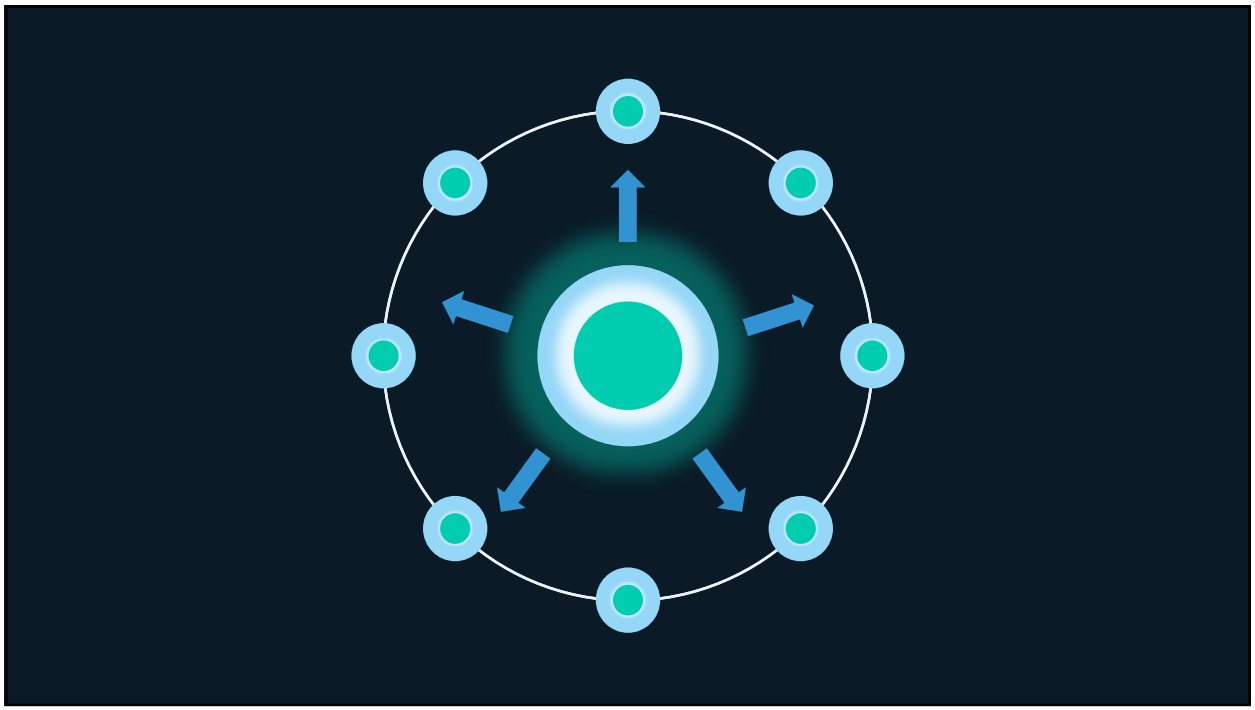
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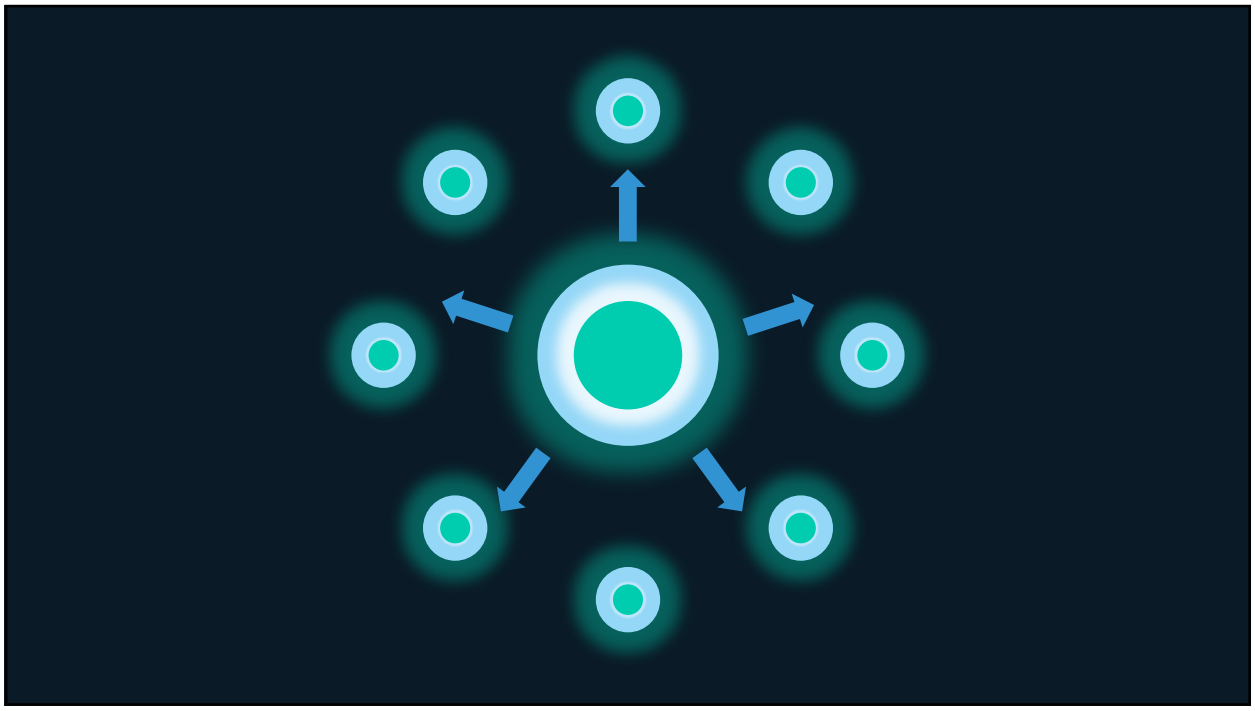
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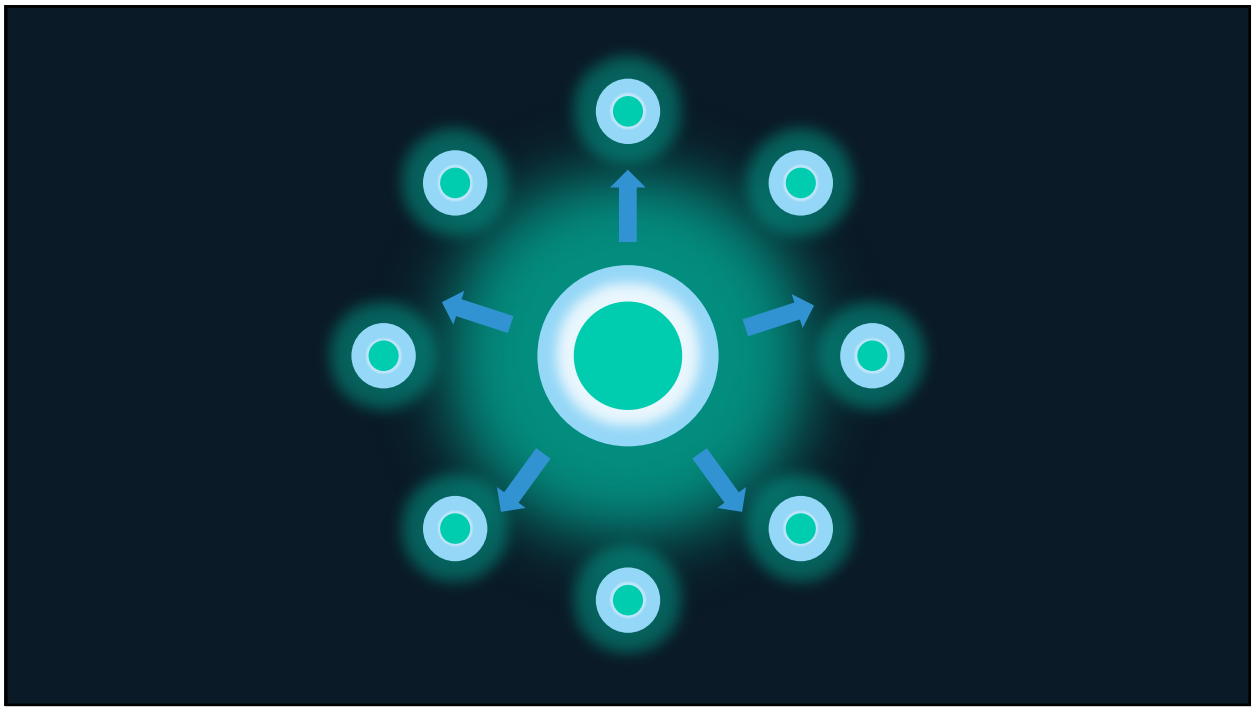
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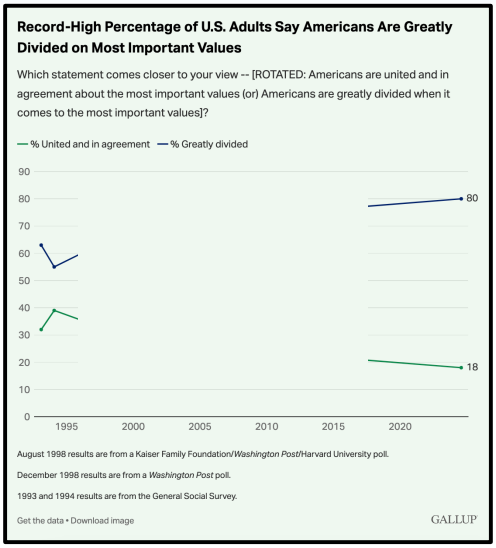
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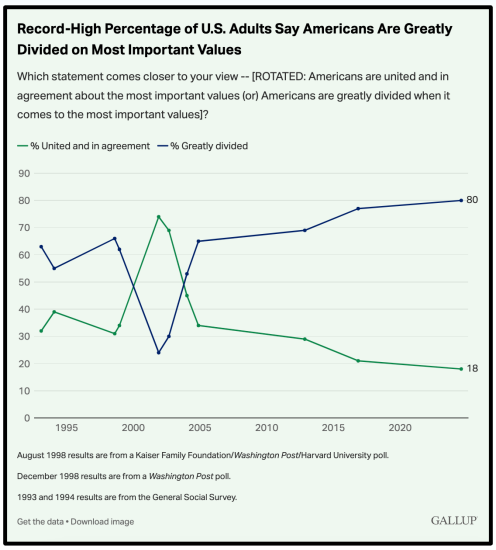
25



26


Record-High Percentage of U.S. Adults Say Americans Are Greatly Divided on Most Important Values
Which statement comes closer to your view -- [ROTATED: Americans are united and in agreement about the most important values (or) Americans are greatly divided when it comes to the most important values]?
% United and in agreement
% Greatly divided
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
80
18
August 1998 results are from a Kaiser Family Foundation/Washington Post/Harvard University poll.
December 1998 results are from a Washington Post poll.
1993 and 1994 results are from the General Social Survey.
Get the data • Download image
GALLUP

27


Record-High Percentage of U.S. Adults Say Americans Are Greatly Divided on Most Important Values
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28

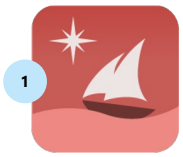
What is there, at our Core?

29

The essence of leadership is energy.

30

5 Core Energies



1 **PURPOSE**

Committed to a noble cause



2 **WISDOM**

Calm and receptive to truth



3 **GROWTH**

Curious and open to new learnings



4 **LOVE**

Connected to your team and those you serve



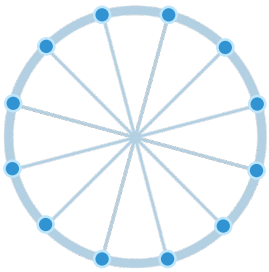
5 **SELF-REALIZATION**

Centered in a joyful spirit

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

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From outer metrics...

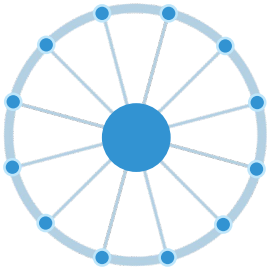


A Am I engaging in the **right behavior**?

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

32

...to inner metrics



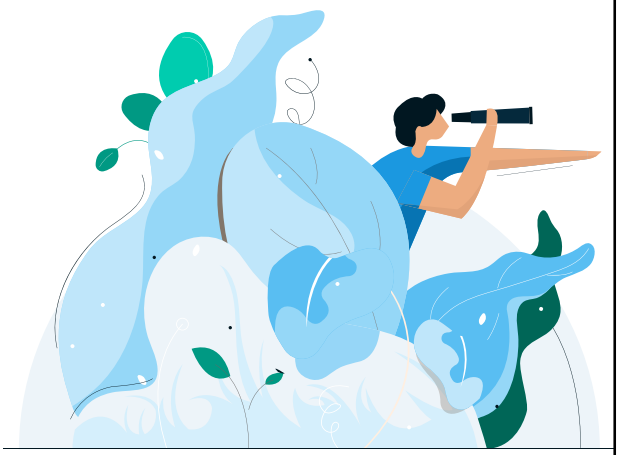
B Am I operating from my core, by being . . . ?

1. **Purpose:** Committed to a noble cause
2. **Wisdom:** Calm and receptive to the truth
3. **Growth:** Curious and open to new learnings
4. **Love:** Connected with my people and those I serve
5. **Self-realization:** Centered in my joyful spirit

C Am I doing my best to get others to operate from their core?

33

How do we get there?



34

What's the secret to breakthrough performance?

Breakthrough Performance =

Getting a winning outcome in a challenging, emotionally-charged or high-stakes situation at work

Examples of breakthrough performance

1. Build **trust** rapidly
2. Have a win-win **negotiation**
3. Resolve a **conflict**
4. **Win over** the skeptics
5. Communicate a **positive "no"**
6. Make people **feel safe** to speak up
7. Deliver effective **performance feedback**
8. Turn around a **difficult relationship**
9. **Inspire** a dispirited team
10. **Co-create** a winning solution

35

Which behavior was she engaging in?



36

Energies → Actions

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

37

Secret Service Agent's Wife
5 Actions

1. Express Thoughtfully
2. Empathy
3. Appeal to Values, Purpose
4. Human Connection
5. Growth Mindset



HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

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2025 Columbia University Coaching Conference
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

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These 25 Actions contain the seeds of breakthrough performance





How to Achieve Leadership-in-Flow

Leadership is not a set of traits to be learned; it is a state that can be attained by establishing a positive intention and then activating five core energies we all possess, via quick actions that take just a few seconds to execute. Below are 25 actions that you can use to tap your core energies.

Purpose Energy
Committed to a Noble Cause

1. Appeal to values and purpose. Discover and understand people's dearly held values and purpose and then tie them to what you're seeking.

2. Reaffirm and reexpress. When facing an unexpected change or a setback, find a way to reapply your core values and purpose to the new situation.

3. Embark on a hero's journey. Craft a compelling vision that inspires people to pursue a goal despite tough challenges.

4. Push, pull, pause, pivot. When you run into resistance, find a way to move forward by refining your idea and then presenting it again; shelving it if the costs are too high; waiting for changes that might renew interest in it; or reimagining it altogether.

Wisdom Energy
Calm and Receptive to the Truth

5. Understand before you act. Approach an issue with heightened curiosity, and fully explore it before making your move.

6. Disarm. When you encounter disagreement, find something true in what the other party is saying and affirm it.

7. Fuse opposing viewpoints. Find a way to integrate contradictory positions into a more nuanced and balanced perspective. For instance, if team members disagree about the quality of their presentation, their manager might point out that while the presentation was analytically persuasive, it overlooked building an emotional connection.

8. Dial an emotion up or down. Intensify positive feelings or dampen negative ones to bring out the best in yourself and others. Sensing rising frustration in a team meeting, a manager can shift the conversation to past successes and team strengths before turning people's attention back to the debate.

9. Direct emotional energy. Harness the energy your feelings are producing to advance your purpose. For instance, use the pain of defeat to motivate a team to practice with greater discipline.

10. Untwist your thinking. Eliminate distorted thoughts so that you can see the situation in a clear, objective light. No, a presentation wasn't a "total disaster."

11. Create the right frame. Describe challenges, opportunities, and assignments in a way that brings out the best in people.

Growth Energy
Curious and Open to Learning

12. Practice a growth mindset. Recognize the vast untapped potential that exists in you and others.

13. Solicit advice. Gain a deeper understanding of others' perspectives by asking experts and stakeholders to openly share their thoughts.

14. Acknowledge, apologize, address. Swiftly acknowledge, apologize for, and correct mistakes.

15. Learn from adversity. Use setbacks and failures to help you and others become better—not bitter.

16. Anticipate, assess, adjust. Think about the challenges that may lie ahead and plan how you will evaluate and adapt to them.

Love Energy
Connected with Those You Work with and Serve

17. Appreciate. Recognize positive qualities in situations and people.

18. Affiliate. Find common ground with others.

19. Deepen human connection. Create strong emotional bonds with others by accepting and offering bids for connection.

20. Empathize. Attune yourself, without judgment, to the emotions and thoughts of others, and make them feel understood.

21. Act/express thoughtfully. Bring a deep sense of caring to how you make tough decisions and communicate hard truths.

Self-Realization Energy
Centered in a Joyful Spirit

22. Get centered. Step back from your thoughts and feelings and focus on the tranquility deep inside you.

23. Affirm a core identity. Help people see a positive quality as already being present at their core. For example, a manager might say, "Remember how composed you were at your last presentation? That is an intrinsic quality I've seen you possess. Tap into it, and this meeting will go smoothly."

24. Cultivate intuition. Generate creative insights on critical issues by inducing a relaxed state of mind, for example, by taking a walk or meditating.

25. Spark joy. Cheer others up with small uplifting acts.

40

This is how *nature* works

Simple building blocks on the inside.
Dazzling diversity on the outside.



41



42



43

Steve Jobs 1.0 | Steve Jobs 2.0

44

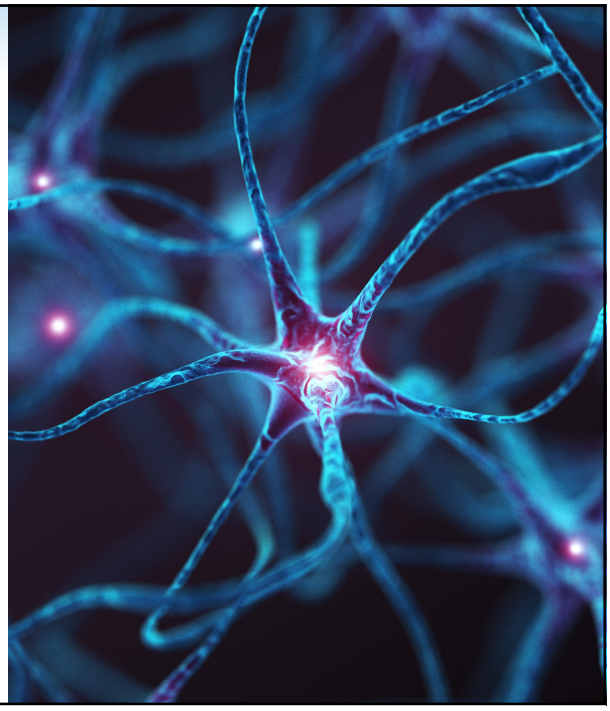
High Performance is not a trait.

It's a state.

(Over time, the state becomes a trait)

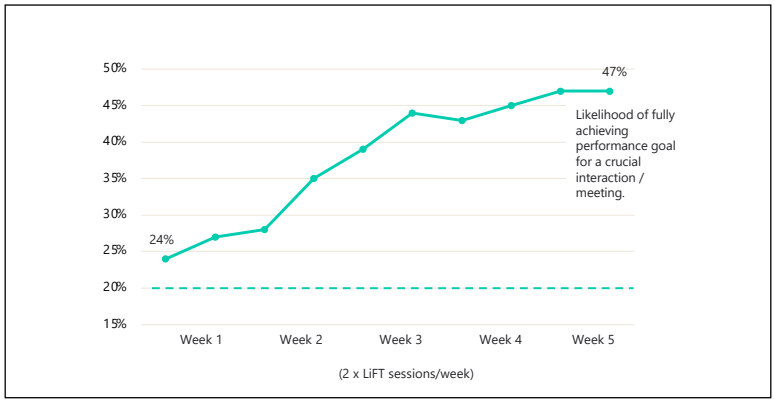
45

You already have the neural pathways



46

Impact



47

We go from ordinary to extraordinary

48

We go from ordinary to extraordinary
by making the extraordinary, ordinary.

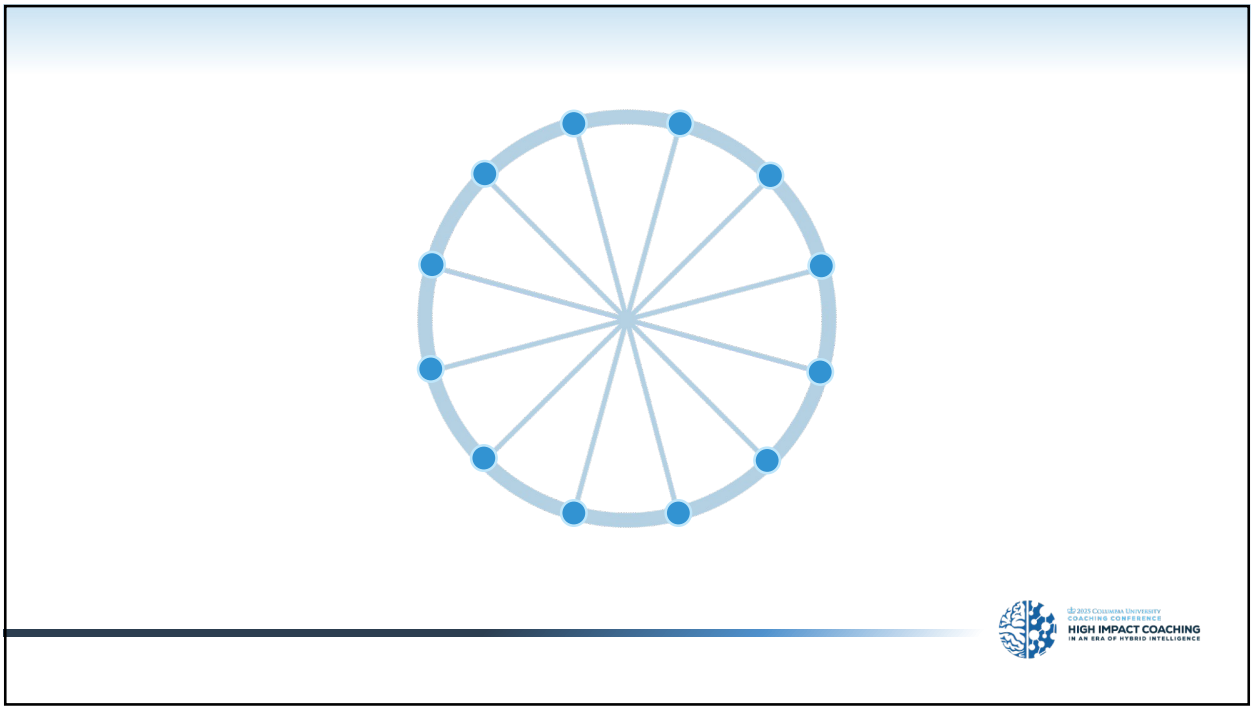
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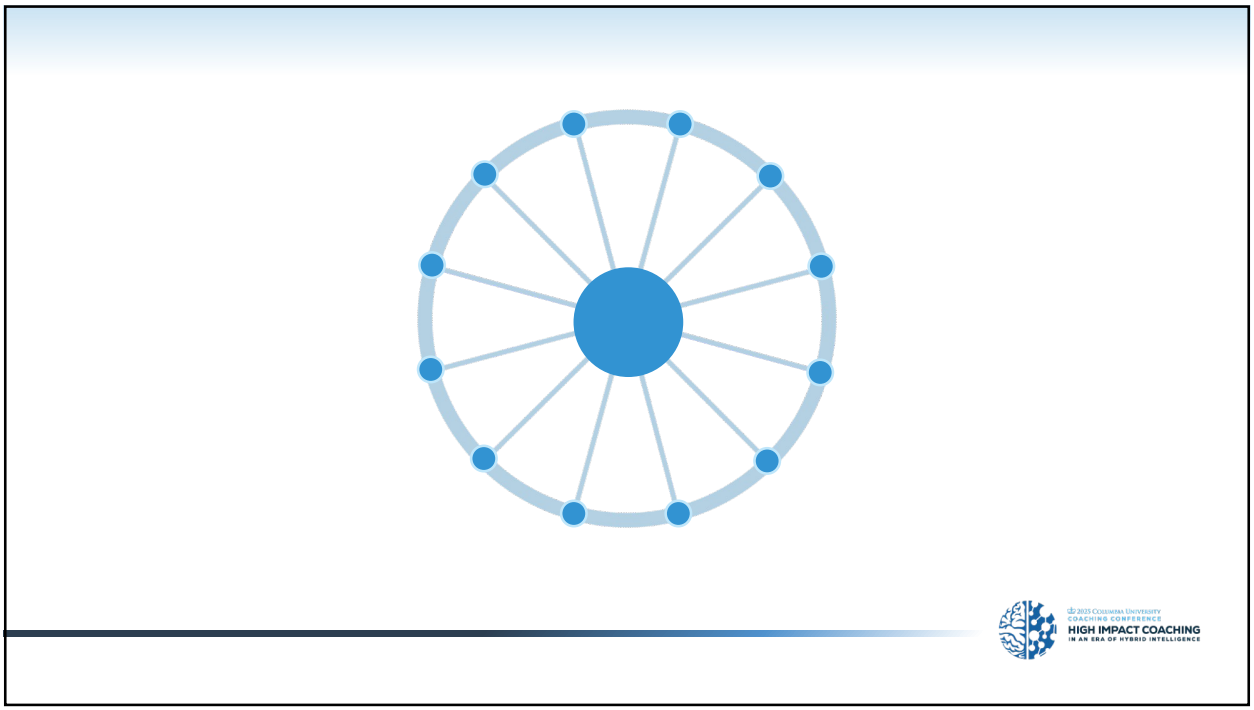
FLATLAND

EDWIN ABBOTT

50



51



52

...across the ages, people have engaged in contemplative practices in an effort to connect with what they have intuited to be their spirit or soul and to express its qualities in their outer pursuits.





53

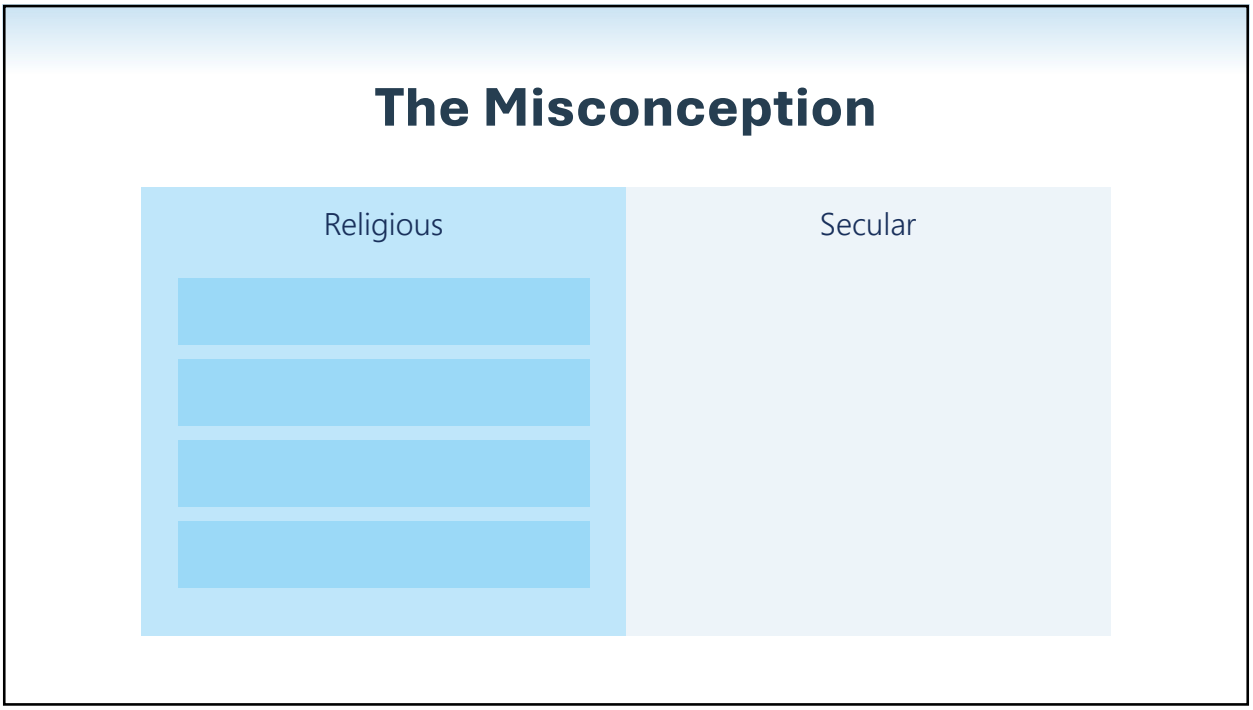


HBR's 10 Must Reads on High Performance, Updated and Expanded (Paperback + Ebook)

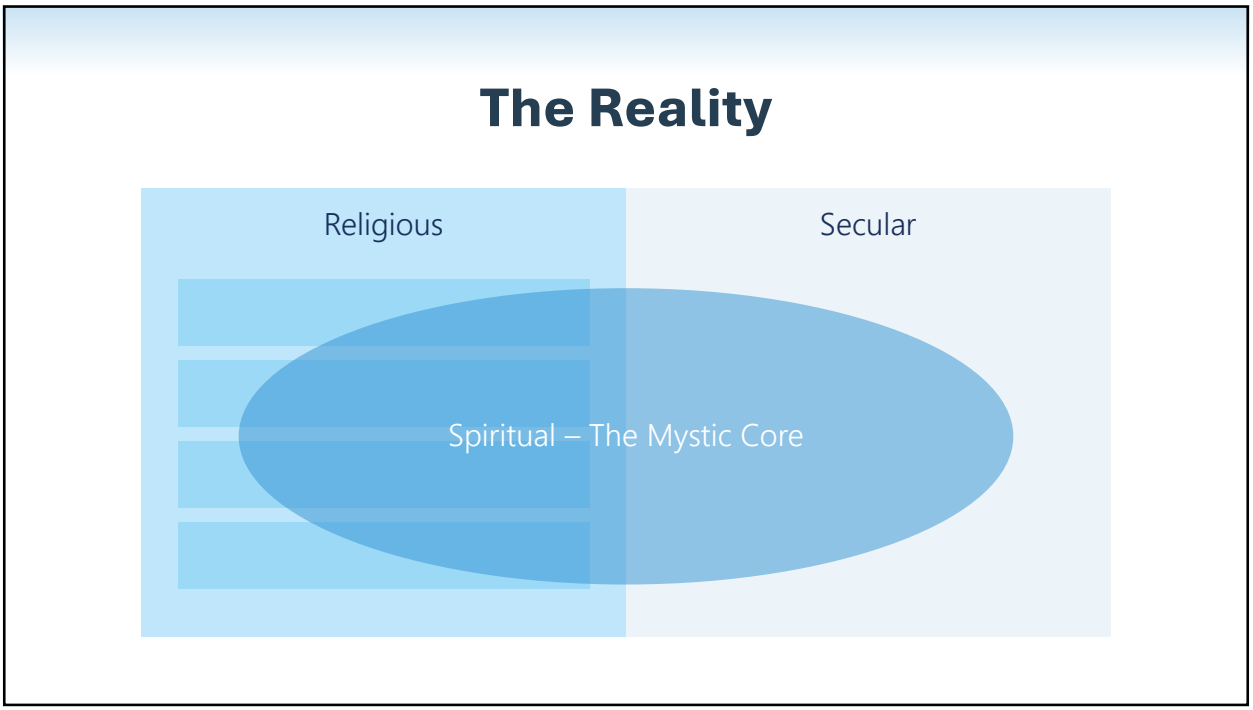
by Harvard Business Review, Heidi Grant, Daniel Goleman, Hitendra Wadhwa, Adam M. Grant

2 item collection

54


The Misconception
Religious
Secular

55


The Reality
Religious
Secular
Spiritual – The Mystic Core

56

6 Guiding Truths

57

Guiding Truth 1: The Sacred Source and the Soul Within

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this —** I believe this and practice it in daily life.

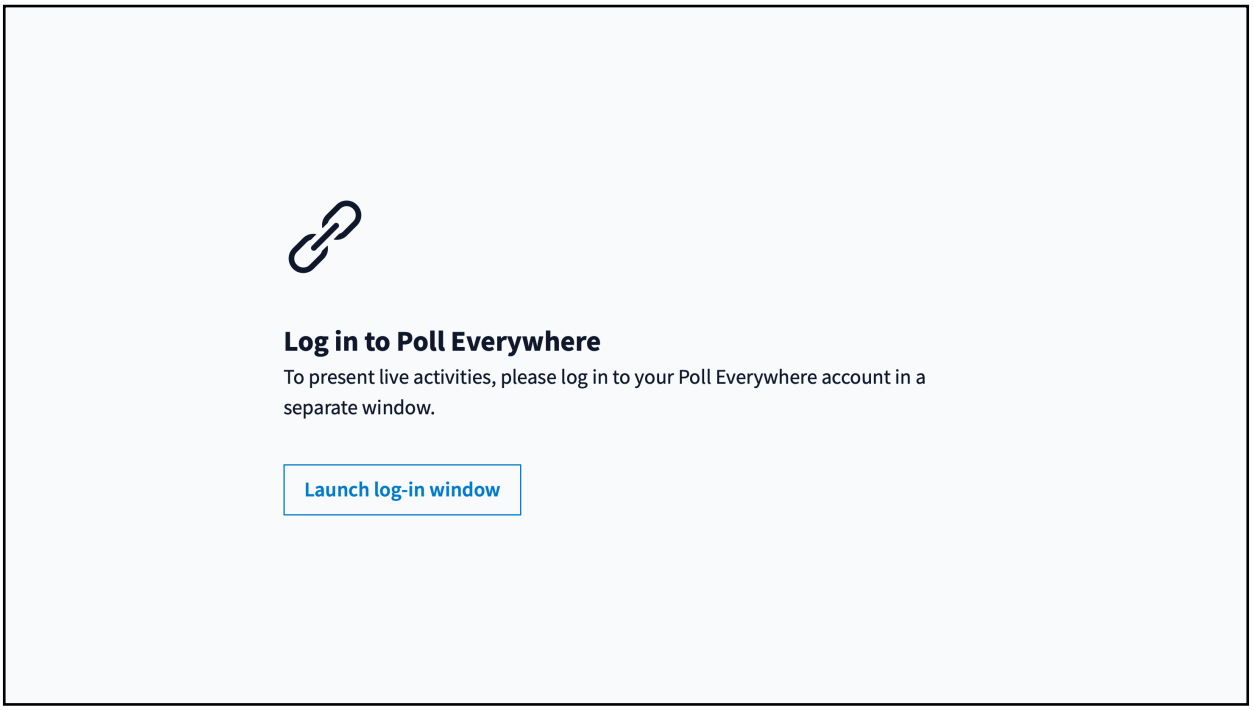
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

58



59

Guiding Truth 2: The Drift, the Paths, and the Return

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.

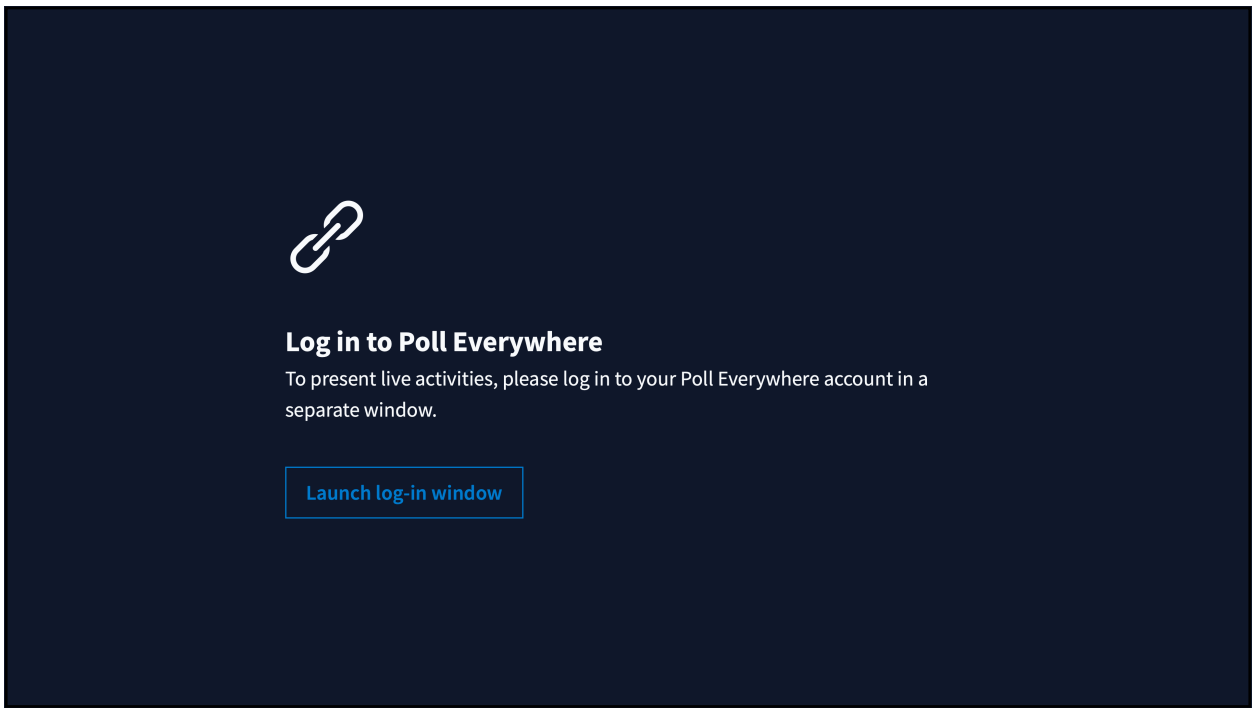
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

60



61

Guiding Truth 3:
The Inner Voice and the Fruits of the Spirit

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.

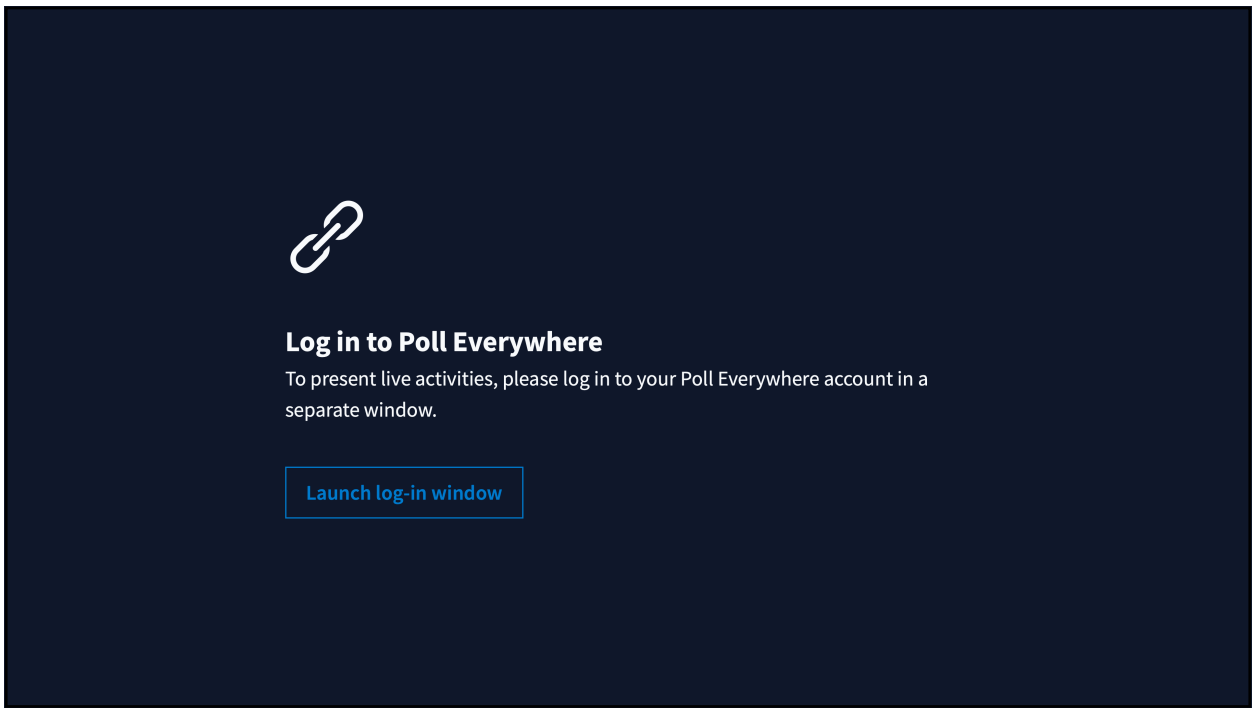
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

62



63

Guiding Truth 4: Wholeness and Service

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.

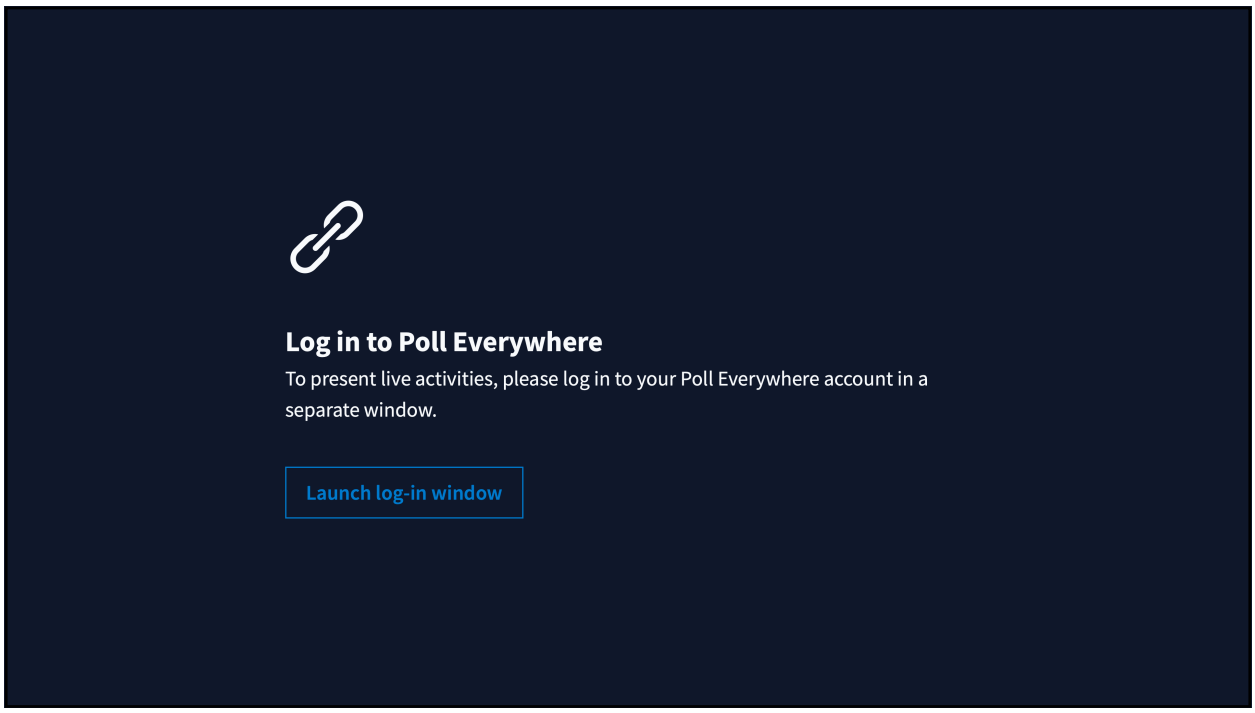
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

64



65

Guiding Truth 5: The Sacred in Each Other and in the Commons

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.

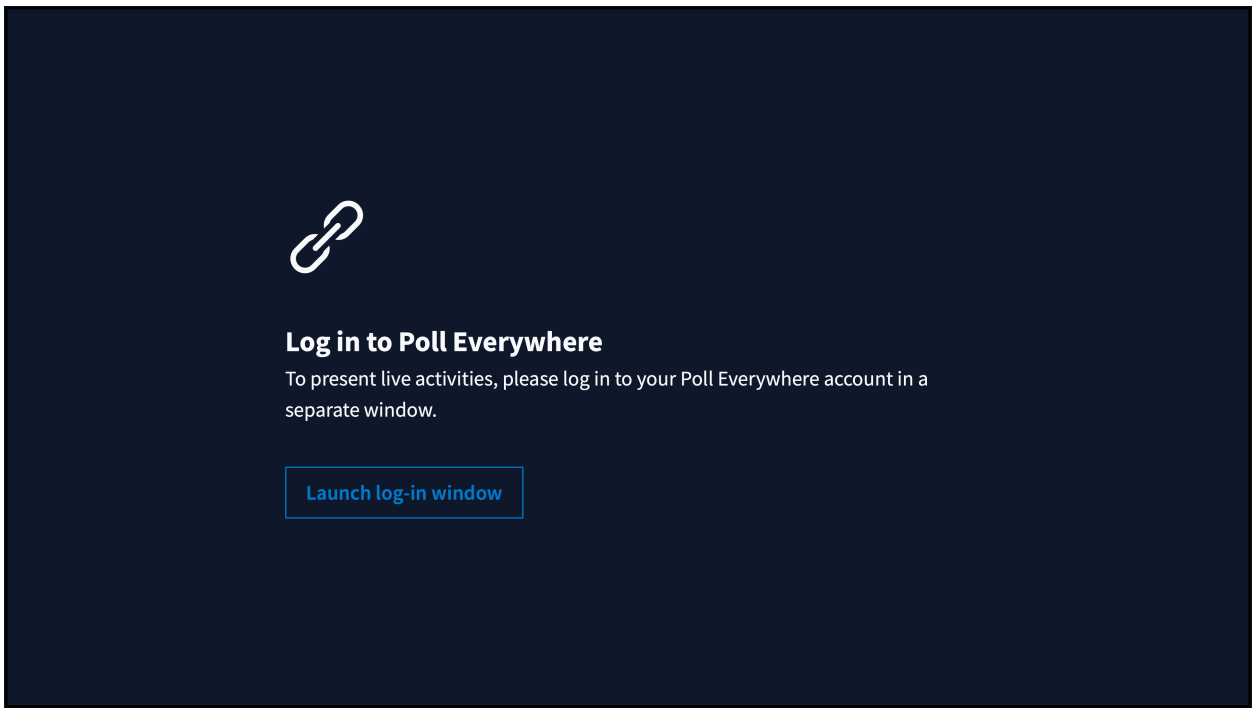
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

66



67

Guiding Truth 6: Mystery and Return

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this —** I believe this and practice it in daily life.

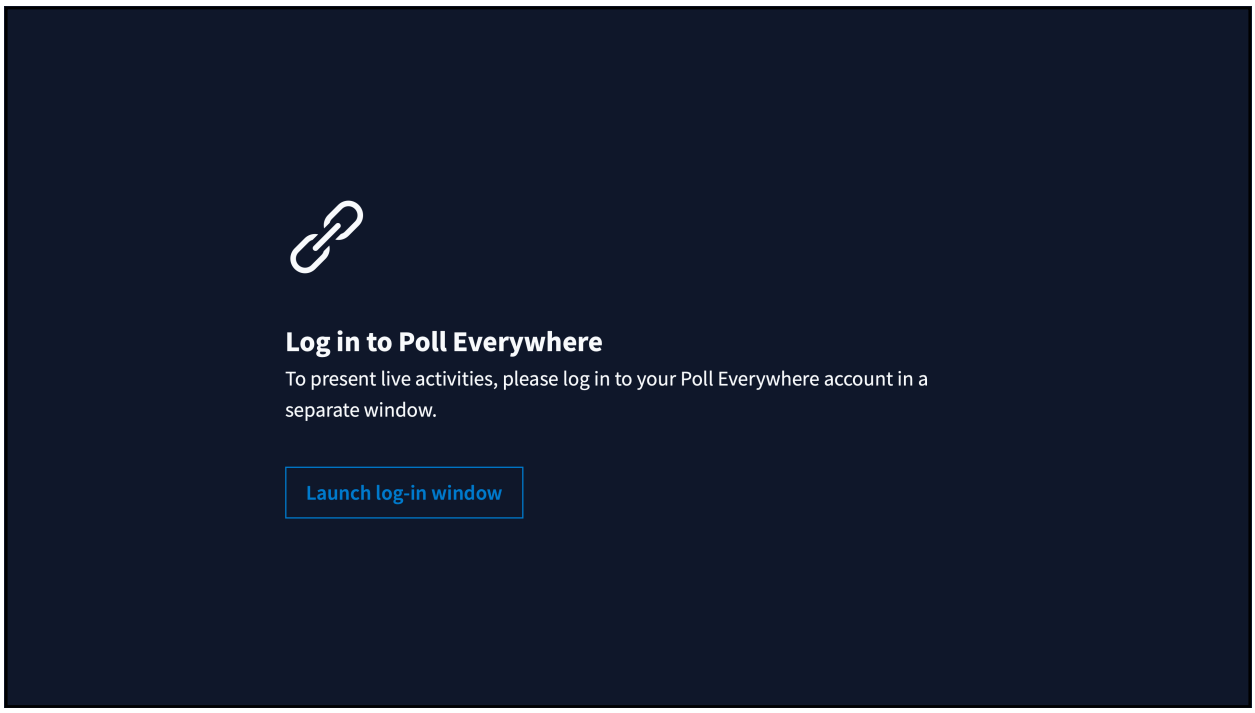
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**

C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**

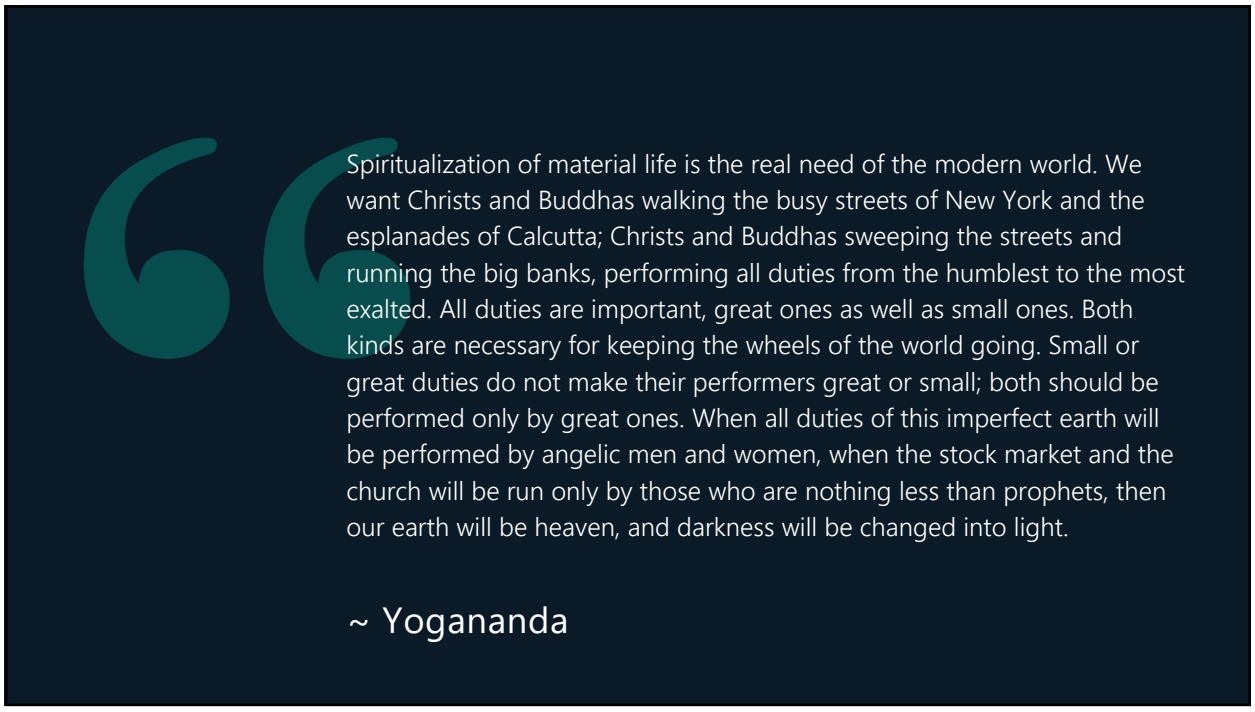
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**

E. **I do not believe this.**

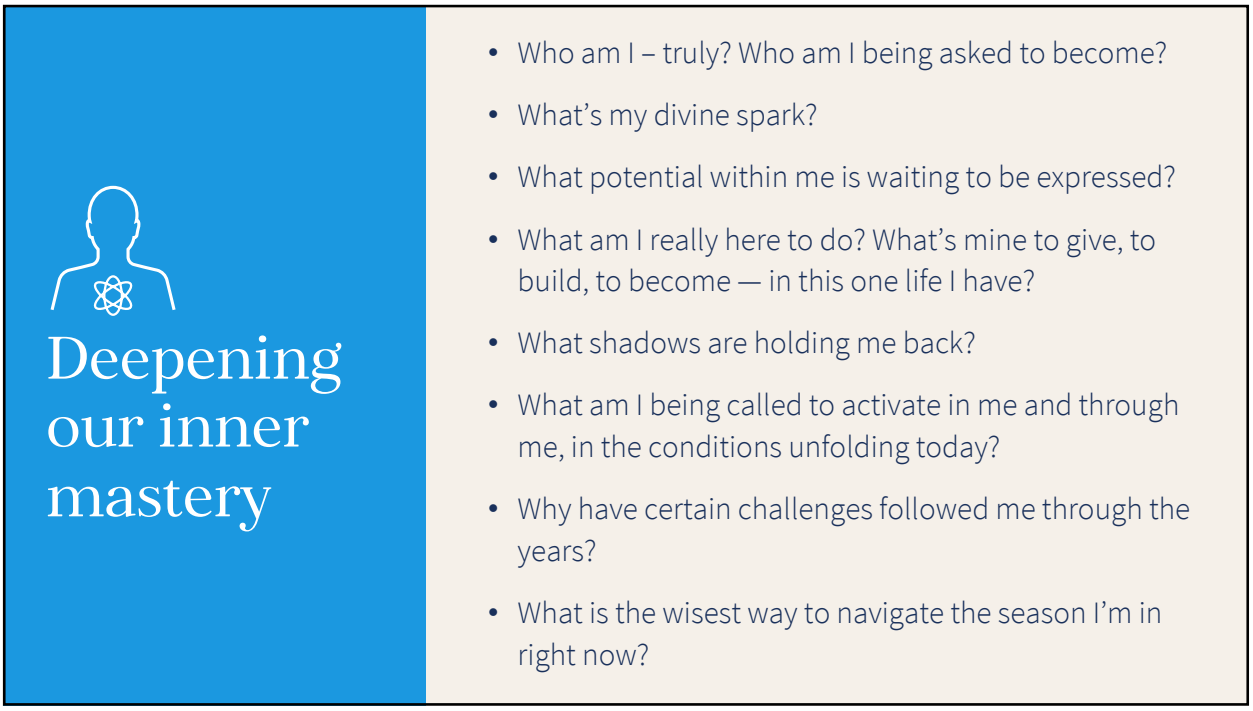
68


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Launch log-in window

69


Spiritualization of material life is the real need of the modern world. We want Christs and Buddhas walking the busy streets of New York and the esplanades of Calcutta; Christs and Buddhas sweeping the streets and running the big banks, performing all duties from the humblest to the most exalted. All duties are important, great ones as well as small ones. Both kinds are necessary for keeping the wheels of the world going. Small or great duties do not make their performers great or small; both should be performed only by great ones. When all duties of this imperfect earth will be performed by angelic men and women, when the stock market and the church will be run only by those who are nothing less than prophets, then our earth will be heaven, and darkness will be changed into light.
~ Yogananda

70


Deepening our inner mastery
Who am I – truly? Who am I being asked to become?
What's my divine spark?
What potential within me is waiting to be expressed?
What am I really here to do? What's mine to give, to build, to become — in this one life I have?
What shadows are holding me back?
What am I being called to activate in me and through me, in the conditions unfolding today?
Why have certain challenges followed me through the years?
What is the wisest way to navigate the season I'm in right now?

71


But – you are unique.
You are your thumbprint.

72

Your energetic **code** (what gifts and dispositions you were born with)

Your **circumstances** (the conditions you've faced over the course of your life)

Your **choices**

Your **context** today (inner, outer)

Your Soul Map

73

Your Soul Map

A MIRROR FOR YOUR SOUL

1. Your **Core Purpose** in Life
2. Your **Unique Spark**
3. 10-12 **Principles** for how to live and lead from your soul
4. For each **Core Energy** (Purpose, Wisdom…): Character Virtues, Growth Edges/Shadow Side
5. **Seasons of Life** (Past, Future Scenarios)
6. What to Pay Attention to in **Next 6 Months**
7. **Practical Actions** to Manifest Your Full Potential



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Coaching from the Core
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

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International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

Low Energy, High Yield:

The Biology of Thriving in Human–Agent Living Systems



Dr. Etienne Van Der Walt
Neurologist, CEO and Founder
Neurozone®

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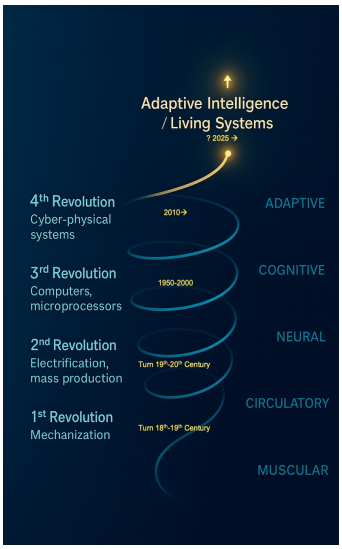
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'AI may well be a natural evolution of Homo sapiens as we evolve more as a global self-organizing living system'



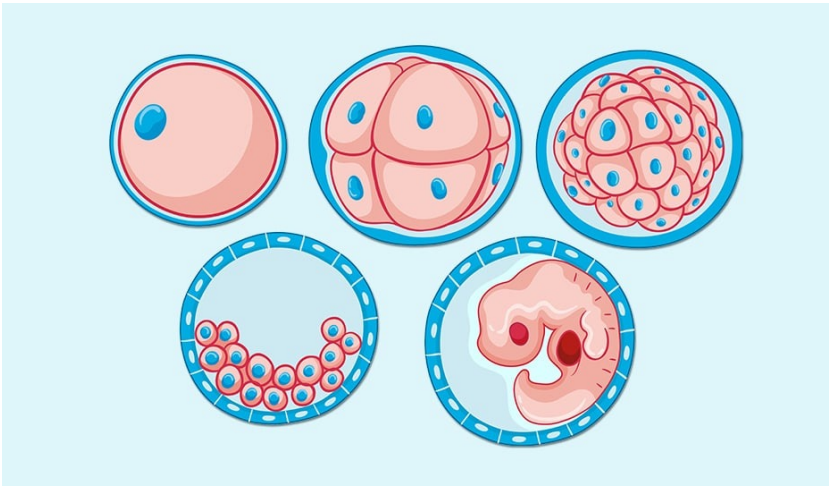
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'The Drive for low energy-high yield Systems'



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3

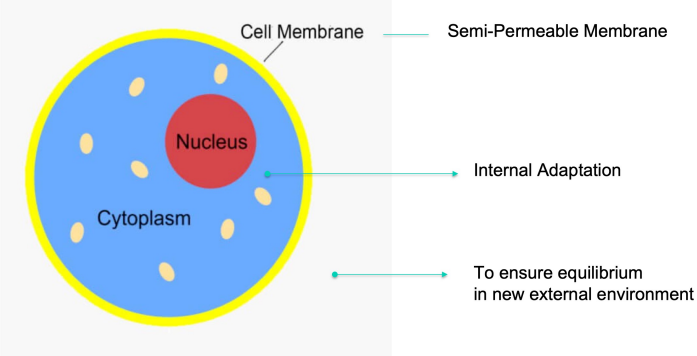


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4

Allostasis

'Life seeks equilibrium through predictive adaptation'



5

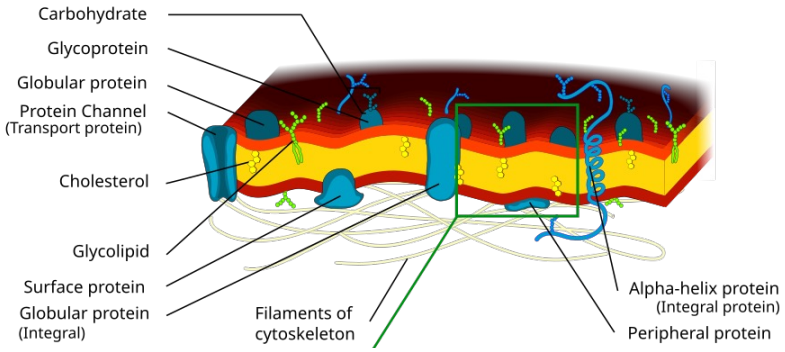
Connectors

We naturally aggregate for low energy → high yield

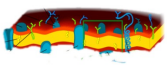
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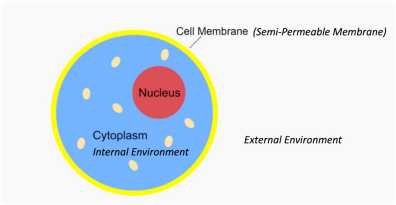
The Semi-permeable Membrane

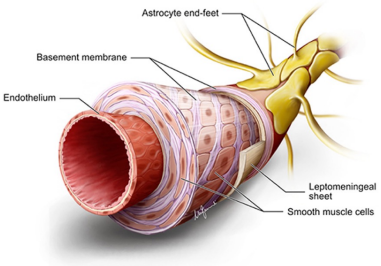
'Exchanging information and resources'



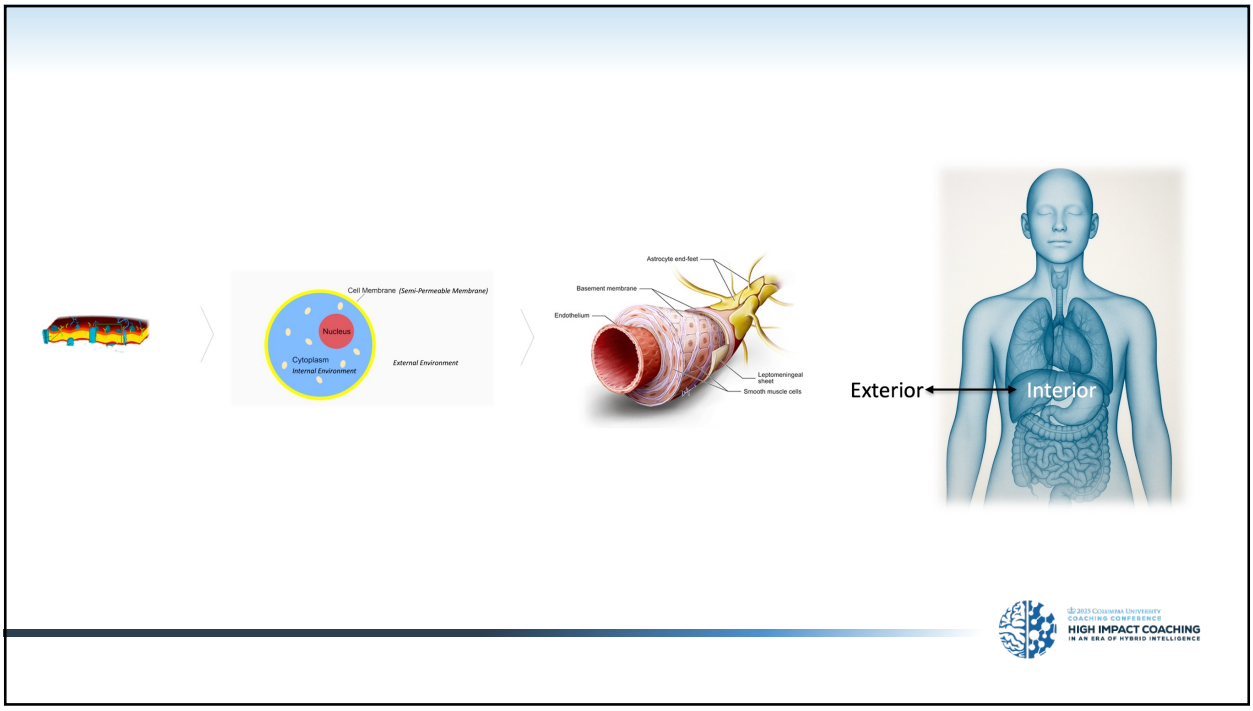
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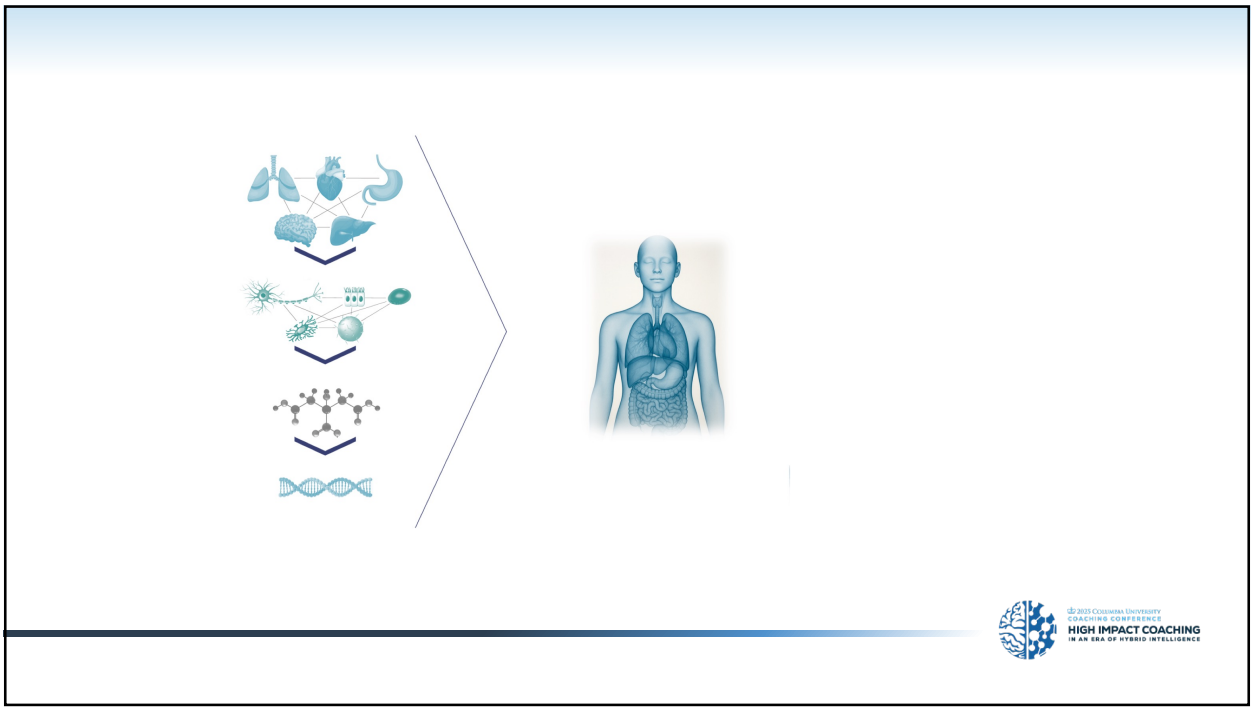




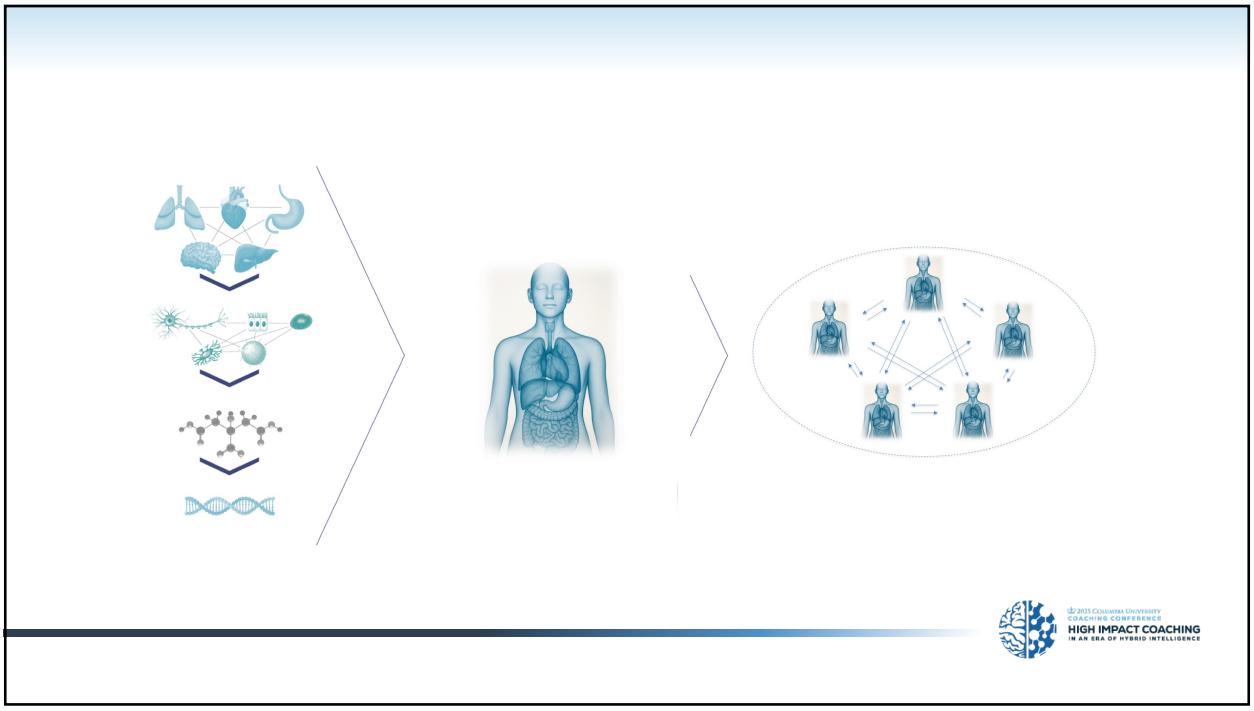
8


Cell Membrane (Semi-Permeable Membrane)
Nucleus
Cytoplasm
Internal Environment
External Environment
Astrocyte end-feet
Basement membrane
Endothelium
Leptomeningeal sheet
Smooth muscle cells
Exterior
Interior
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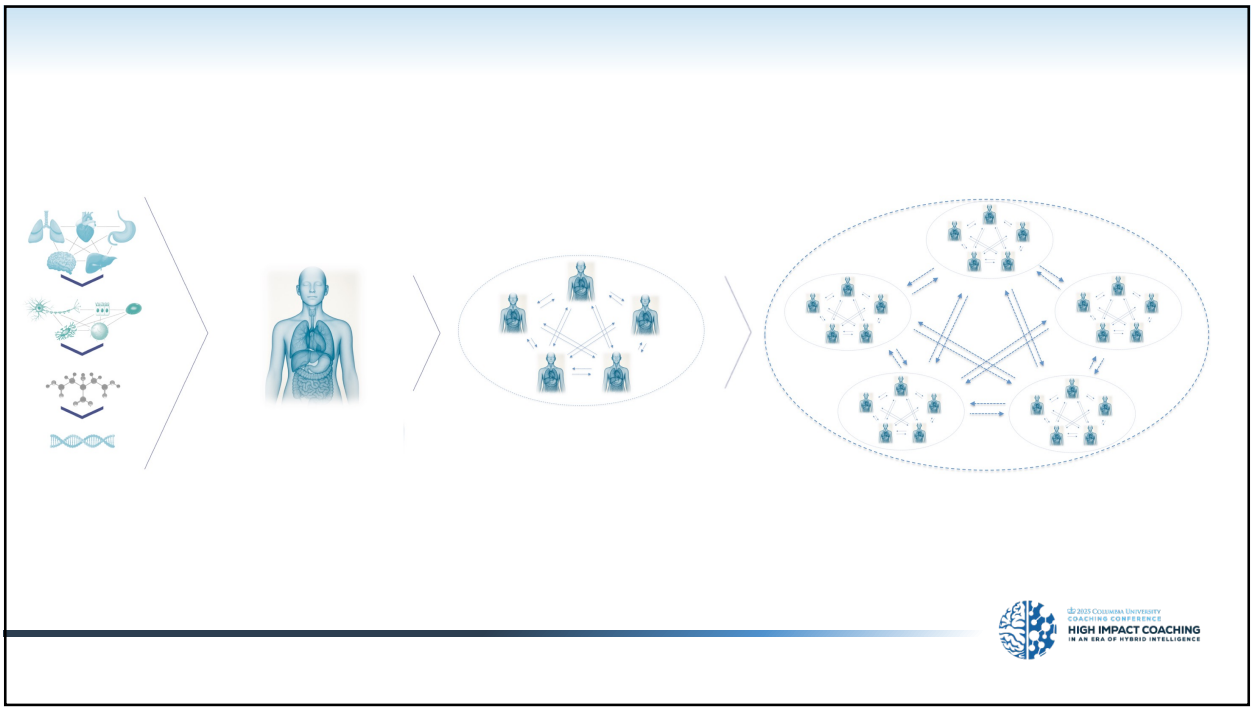
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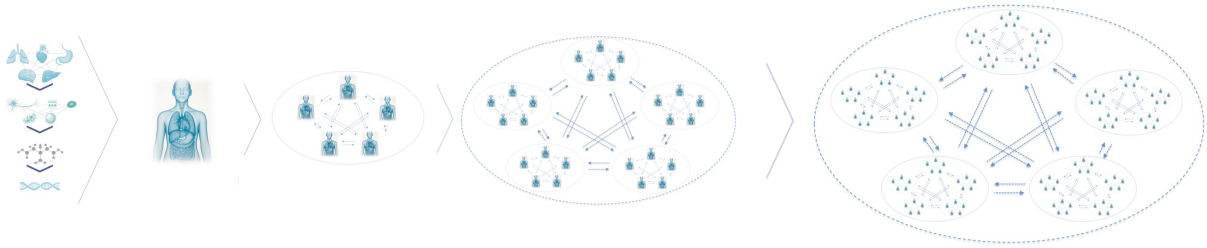

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The Magical Science of Self-Organization



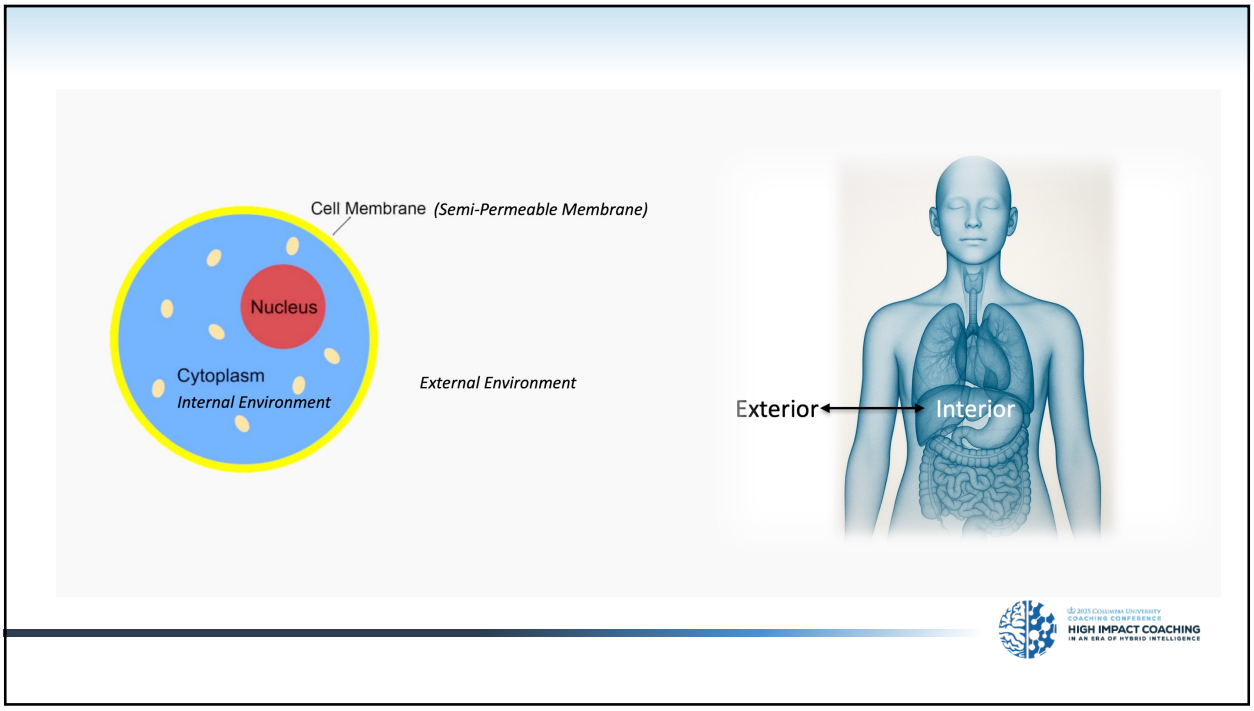
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Salience

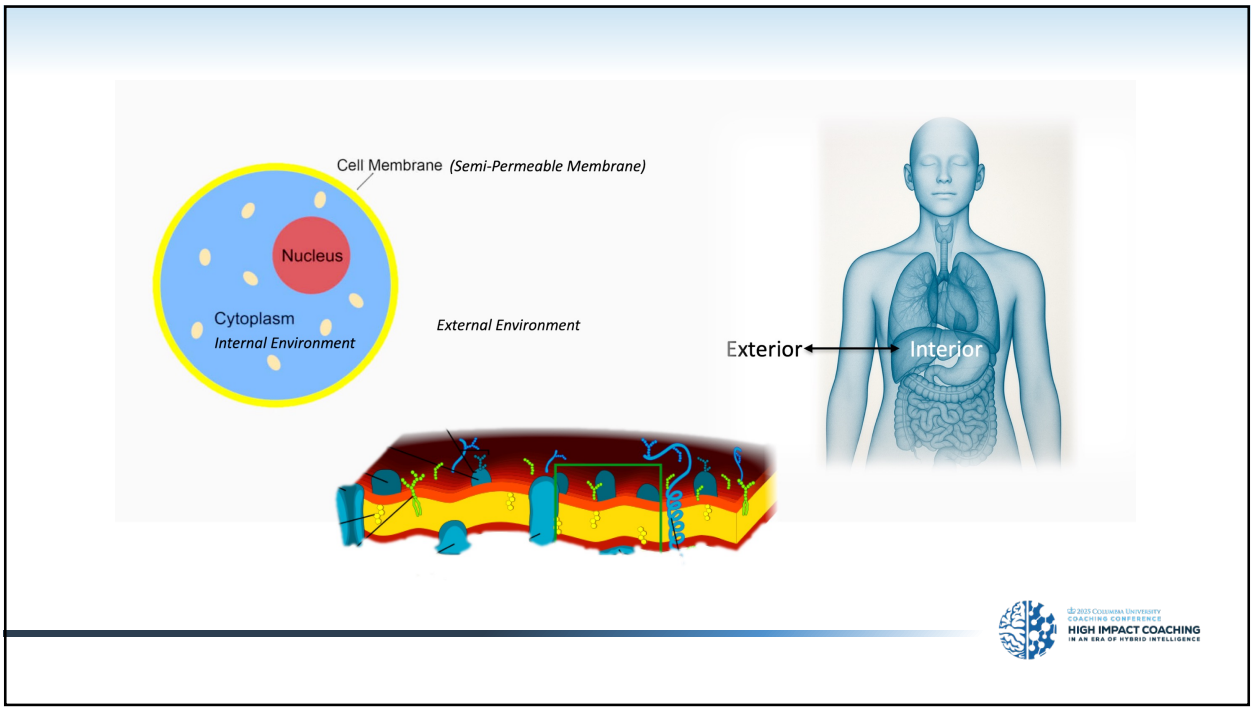
What matters most…Contextual

Transformational

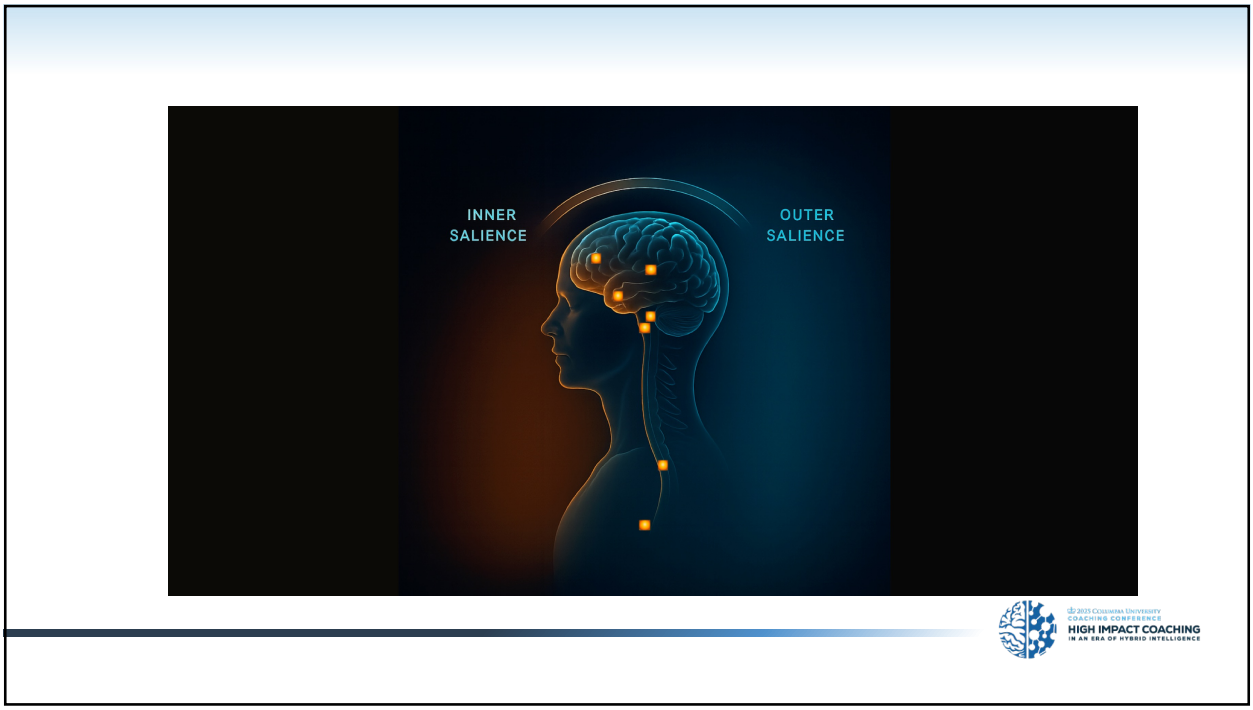
14


Cell Membrane (Semi-Permeable Membrane)
Nucleus
Cytoplasm
Internal Environment
External Environment
Exterior
Interior
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

15


Cell Membrane (Semi-Permeable Membrane)
Nucleus
Cytoplasm
Internal Environment
External Environment
Exterior
Interior
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

16


INNER
SALIENCE
OUTER
SALIENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

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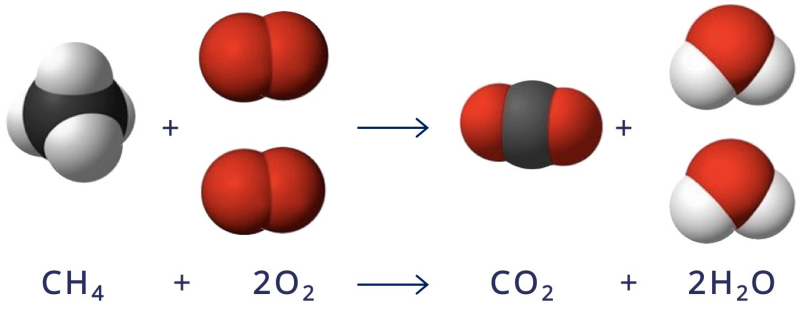

INNER
SALIENCE
OUTER
SALIENCE
Insular Inner Awareness
Heartbeat & Breathing
Autonomic Sympathetic
Prefrontal-Group/Mindset
Amygdala-Emotional
Brainstem-Movements
Spinal Reflex
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

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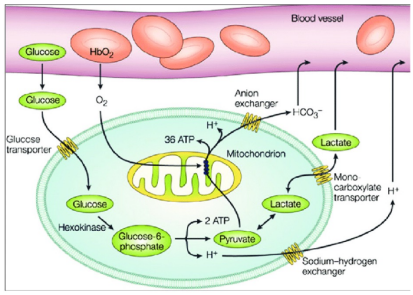
The Energy Economy

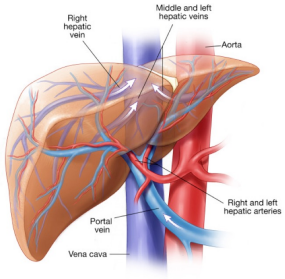
'*Life uses an open energy economy*'

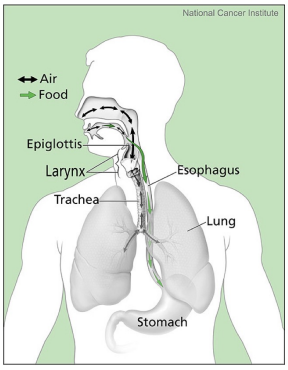
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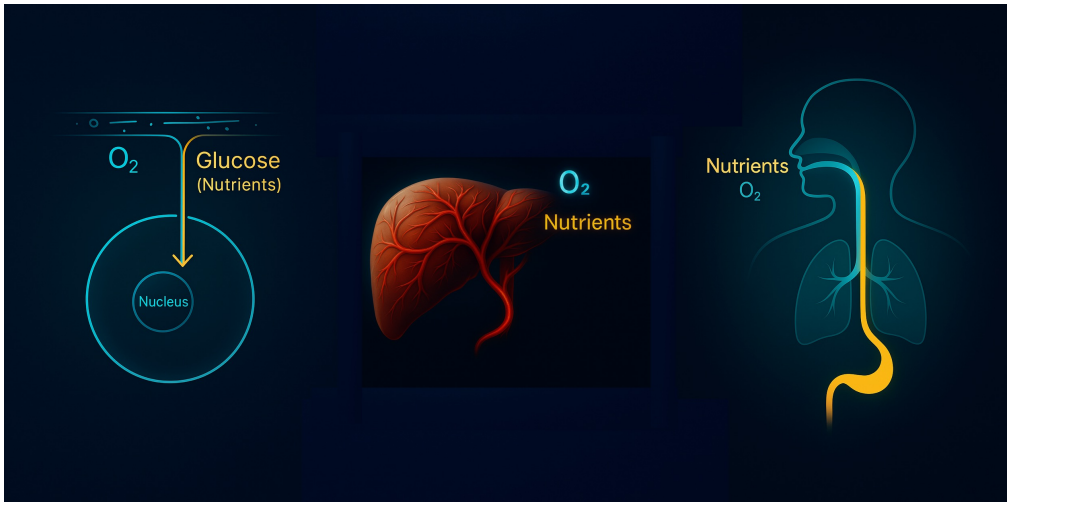
20


Blood vessel
Glucose
HbO_2
O_2
Anion exchanger
HCO_3^-
H^+
Glucose transporter
36 ATP
Mitochondrion
Lactate
Mono carboxylate transporter
Hexokinase
Glucose-6-phosphate
2 ATP
Pyruvate
Sodium–hydrogen exchanger


Right hepatic vein
Middle and left hepatic veins
Aorta
Right and left hepatic arteries
Portal vein
Vena cava


National Cancer Institute
Air
Food
Epiglottis
Larynx
Esophagus
Trachea
Lung
Stomach

21


O_2
Glucose
(Nutrients)
Nucleus
O_2
Nutrients
Nutrients
O_2

22

The Sky is the Limit…Energy is Finite

'…the future belongs to those who converts less energy into more life…'



23

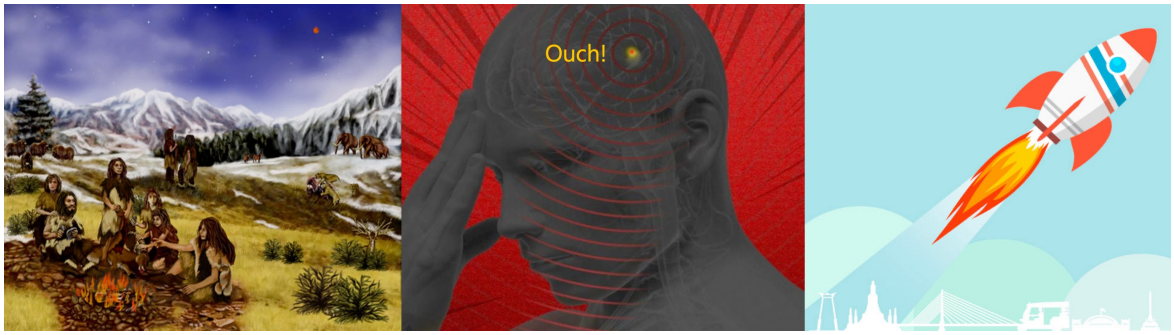
Human Intelligence is Adaptive

'Adaptive Intelligence innovates across a neural axis from basic to sophisticated'



24

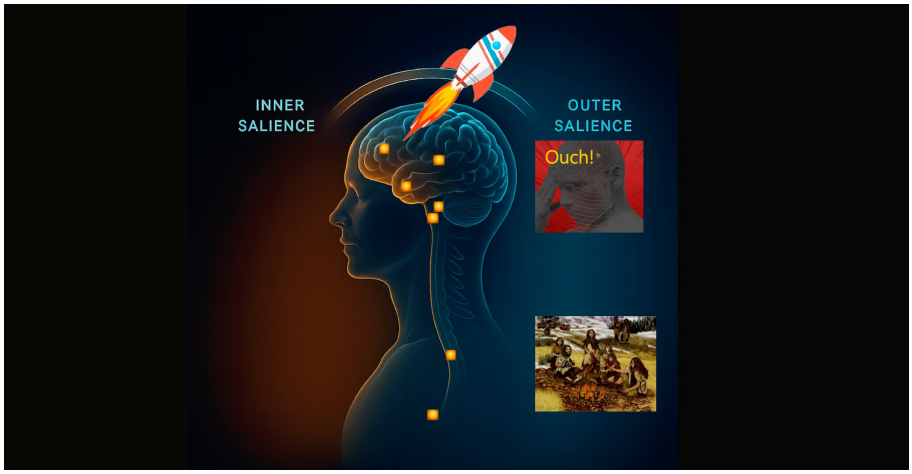
The Evolution of Fire



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The Evolution of Fire



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Emergence

'The marvel of life…scientific magic'

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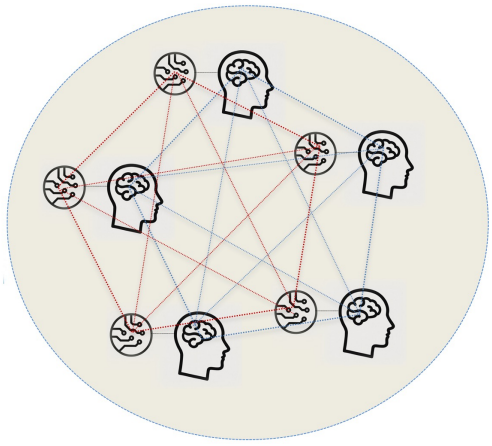
Emergence of Synergy



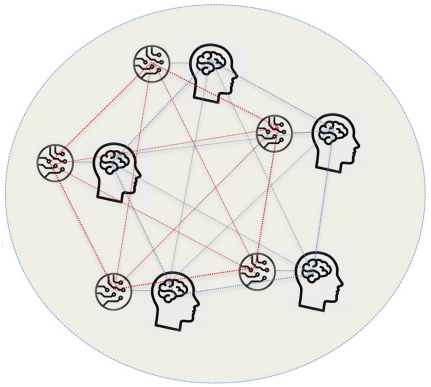
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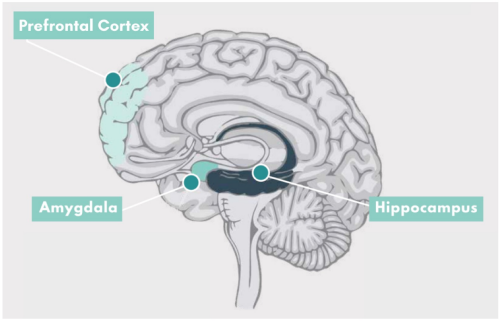
Let's talk AI & Hybrid Intelligence

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30



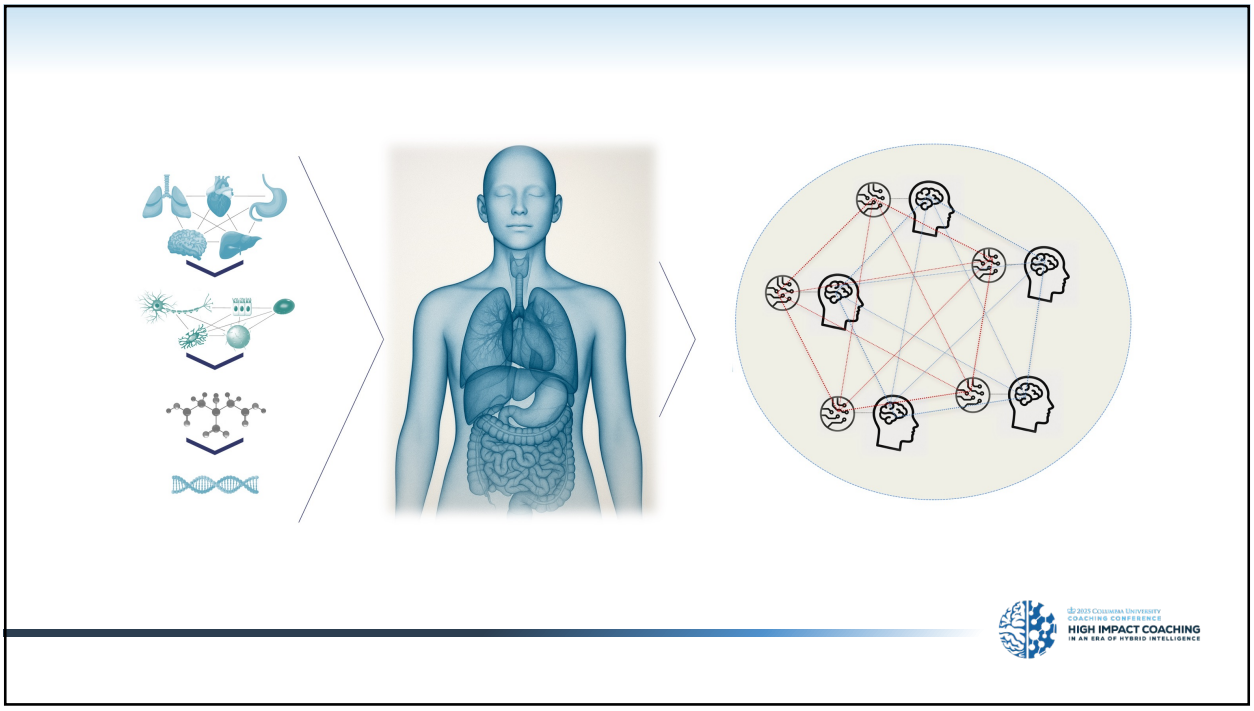


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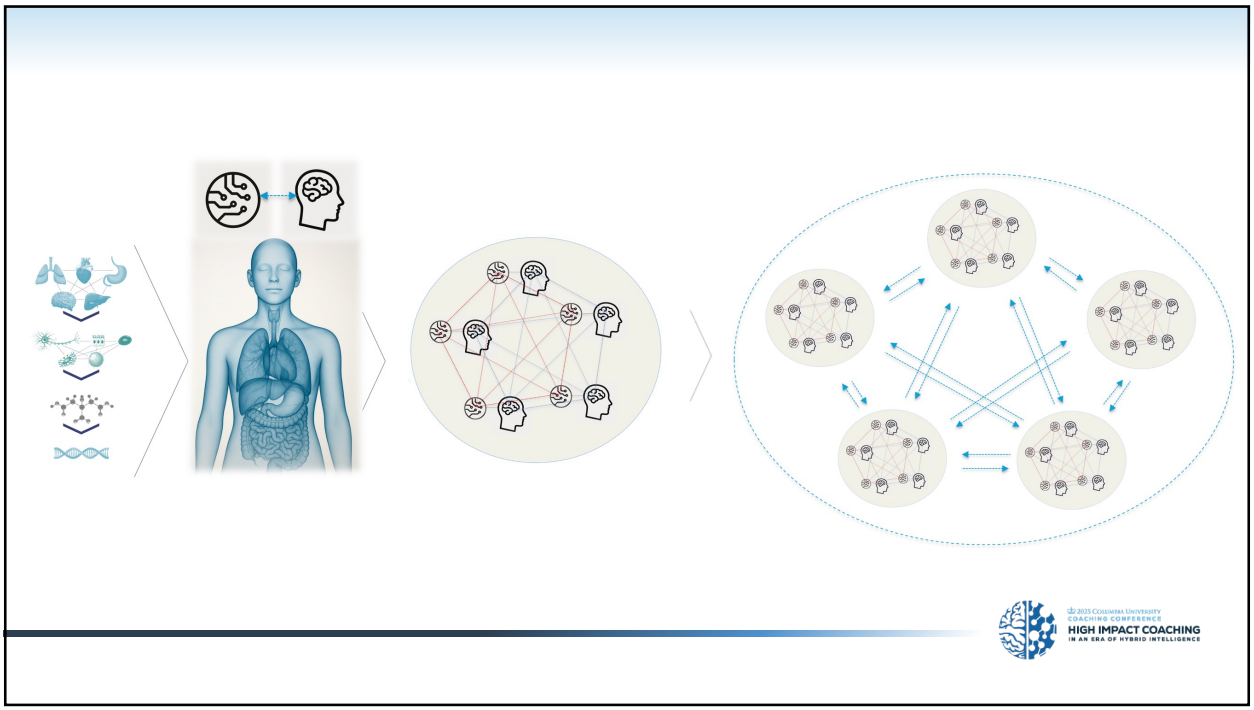
We're in it together…

	Gen X *Regulation*	Millennials *Collaboration*	Gen Z *Immersion*
Core Mindset	Understand & Regulate	Connect & Collaborate	Immerse & Co-Create
System Relationship	Build Safety & Structure	Weave Meaning & Networks	Live Inside the System
Biological Function	Prefrontal Control & Prediction	Integrative Limbic Coherence	Distributed Synchrony & Flow
Agents of Growth	Regulation → Stewardship	Collaboration → Purpose	Immersion → Agency
Fear / Risk	Loss of Control · Obsolescence	Burnout · Fragmentation	Redundancy · Identity Loss

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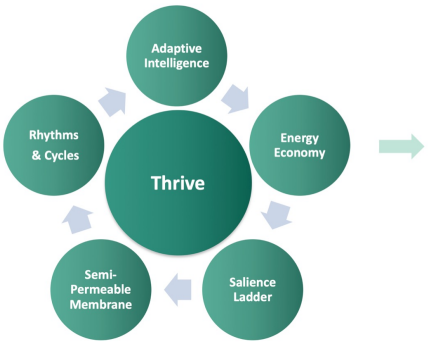


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Five Biological Foundations → Thrive





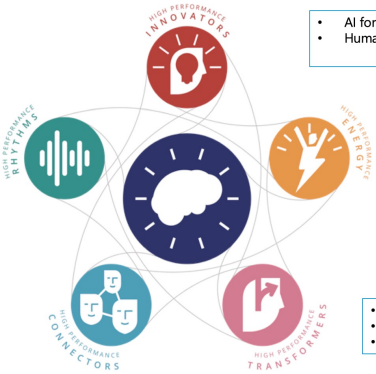
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Five Biological Foundations → Thrive

- Turbo Boost your whole living system
  - Sleep/Wake
  - Exercise & Move
  - Nutrition for structure & fuel
  - Mindfulness Rhythms

- Social Safety: Bonding & Belonging
- Psychological Safety



- AI for knowledge, information, patterns, SWOT
- Humans for Deep Salience, Imagination

- Remove negative thought & behavioral patterns
- Cultivate:
  - Optimism
  - Gratitude
  - Enthusiasm
  - Humor
  - Curiosity

- Regenerative Mindset
- Living Systems Thinking
- Mindfulness for pristine salience

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The Salience Ladder (Steps 0–5)
Neural Axis of Adaptive Intelligence
Sophisticated
Fluid
Thrive
Basic
Stable
Stay Alive
5 Purpose & Meaning
Integration of nuanced values with insight. Legacy
4 Mindset & Worldview/Tribal Brain
Prefrontal Filtering & reframing. Cognitive Models & Context
3 Emotional Salience (Amygdala)
Value-tagging. Prioritizes survival & Pro-social relevance
2 Orienting (Colliculus-Brainstem)
Midbrain orienting towards novel or threatening stimuli. Directs attention
1 Reflective Sensing (Spinal)
Fast protective reflexes before awareness
0 Interoception
Body's internal sensing of physiological States (Heartbeat, breathing, gut)
Energy Economy
Slow
More Conscious
High Energy
Super-fast
Unconscious
Low Energy
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

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IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

The Science of Effective Coaching



Richard E. Boyatzis
Distinguished University Professor | Professor in the Departments of Organizational Behavior, Psychology, and Cognitive Science
Case Western Reserve University

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1

The Science of Effective Coaching

Richard E. Boyatzis, PhD, Distinguished University Professor,
Professor, Departments of Organizational Behavior, Psychology and Cognitive Science
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH
richard.boyatzis@case.edu

Columbia Teacher's College Coaching Conference
October 14, 2025

2

Change is hard – Did you ever wonder why?

- Change is necessary for survival and growth.
- If it occurs, change is at best ephemeral.
- Improvement in behavior predictive of leadership, management and professional effectiveness is developed in above average MBA programs at about 2%, and in industry and government training about 11%.
- Retention of knowledge from a required MBA course is 6 1/2 weeks.
- Treatment adherence for every disease or surgical recovery studied is less than 50%.
- APA survey shows less than 20% of people achieve goals set in resolutions.
- 80% of organizational development efforts fail to reach objectives.

3

Change is stressful

- Stress in the doses we get causes cognitive, perceptual and emotional impairment.
- Helping others is also stressful because of the responsibility and repeated use of self-control – power stress.
- Helping colleagues, patients and yourself!

4

Relationships Build Openness to Possibilities

- Who helped you?
- Think back over your life and career
- Who were the people who helped you develop the most?
- What did they do and how did it make you feel?

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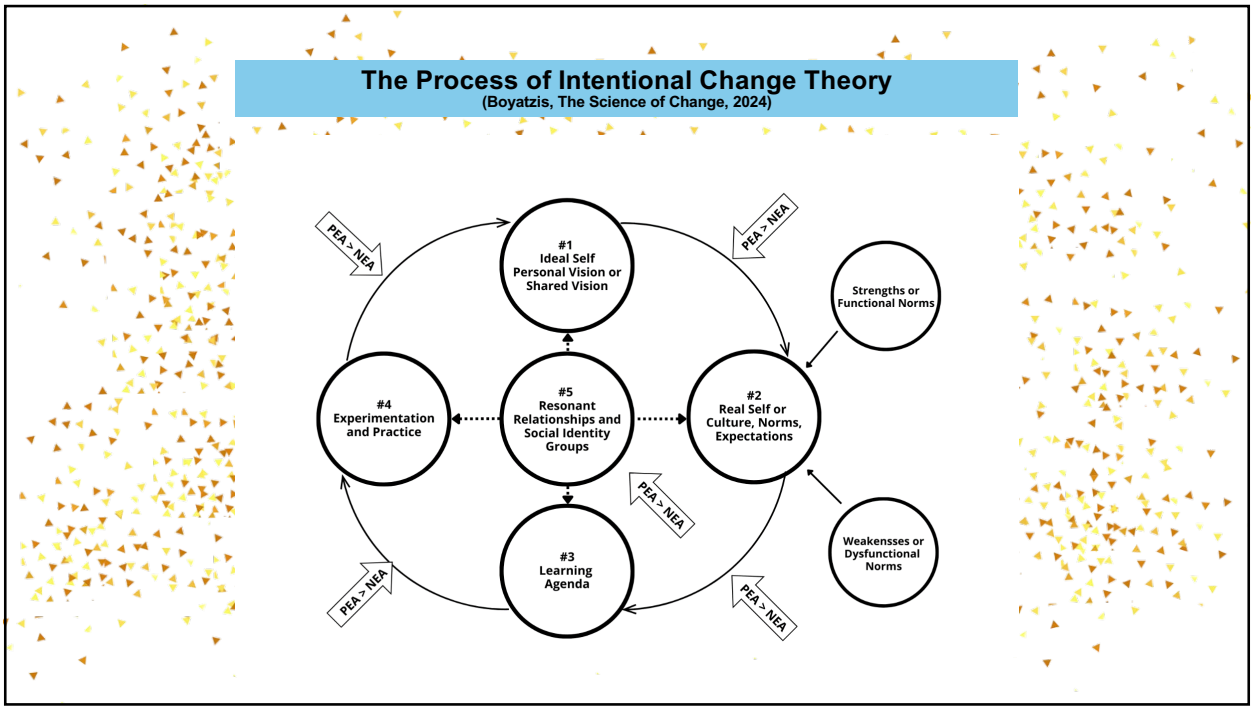
5

The Ten Principles of Intentional Change Theory

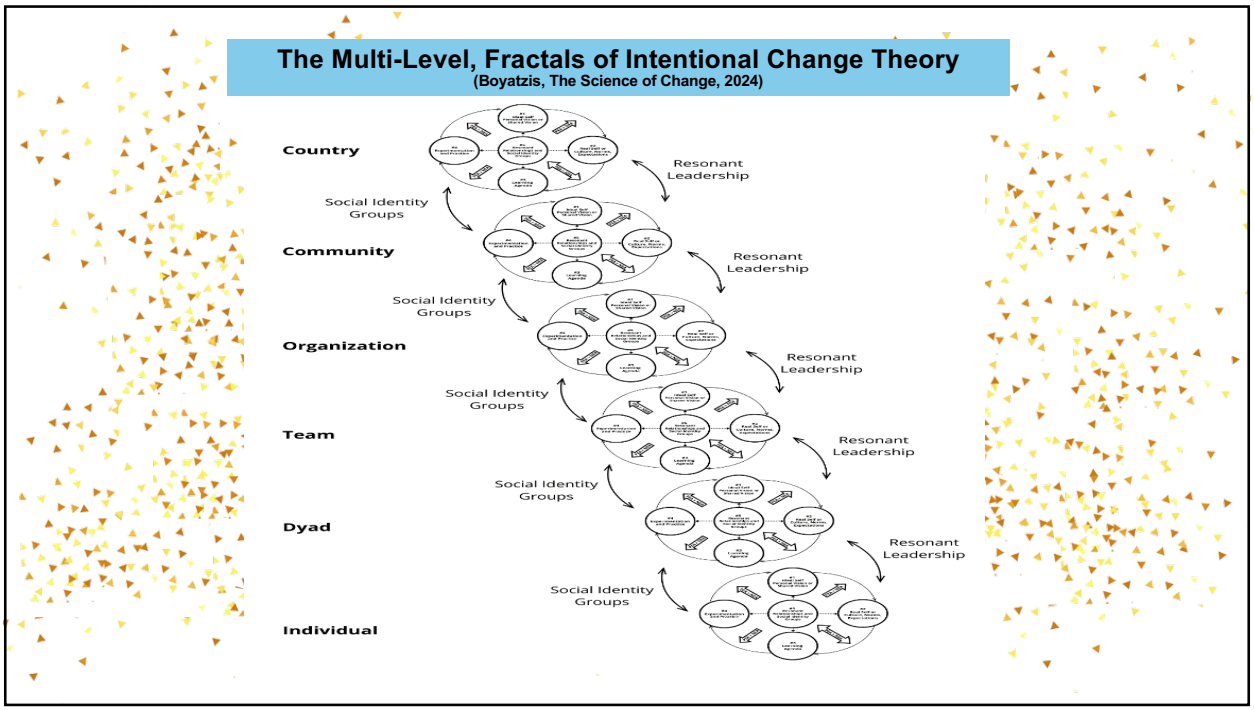
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)

1. The first phase of ICT is the driver of sustained, desired change -- the Ideal Self, or personal vision and at the collective levels, a shared vision.
2. Being in the PEA allows a person or human system to be open to new ideas, scanning their environment, other people and emotions. It is a tipping point into the next phase of Intentional Change Theory. The psychophysiological states called the Positive Emotional Attractor and Negative Emotional Attractor are described with three axes: (1) Parasympathetic versus Sympathetic Nervous System arousal; (2) neural activation of the Default Mode versus Task Positive Networks; and (3) positive versus negative affect.
3. Sustained, desired change in humans and human systems is most often discontinuous and non-linear.
4. The second phase of ICT is realization of the Real Self. At the individual level, this is one's strengths and weaknesses relative to their Ideal Self. In human collectives, it is the norms, values and culture of the specific human system that are strengths or weaknesses relative to their shared vision.
5. The third phase of ICT is articulation of a learning agenda and plan to use one's strengths to move closer to the Ideal Self while possibly working on developing 1-2 weaknesses. Collectively, it is a shared learning agenda and plan. For best progress and sustainable effort, the weaknesses chosen should be closest to the tipping point into becoming strengths.
6. The fourth phase of ICT is the sequence of repeated experimentation with the new feelings, thoughts, attitudes, or behavior and then moving into repeated practice to the point of mastery (beyond the point of comfort).
7. The fifth phase of ICT is the establishment and maintenance of resonant relationships.
8. As a fractal theory, ICT describes sustained, desired change at all levels of human endeavor from individual to dyads, teams, organizations, communities, countries and global processes.
9. Resonant leadership relationships facilitate moving information and emotions within and across levels of human systems facilitating sustained, desired change.
10. Social identity groups facilitate the enduring quality of sustained, desired change by helping or hindering progress toward one's Ideal Self (vision) or a group's shared vision and moving information and emotions within and across levels of human systems facilitating sustained, desired change.

6


The Process of Intentional Change Theory
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)
#1
Ideal Self
Personal Vision or
Shared Vision
#2
Real Self or
Culture, Norms,
Expectations
#3
Learning
Agenda
#4
Experimentation
and Practice
#5
Resonant
Relationships and
Social Identity
Groups
Strengths or
Functional Norms
Weakensses or
Dysfunctional
Norms
PEA > NEA
PEA > NEA
PEA > NEA
PEA > NEA
PEA > NEA

7


The Multi-Level, Fractals of Intentional Change Theory
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)
Country
Community
Organization
Team
Dyad
Individual
Resonant
Leadership
Social Identity
Groups

8

Distinctive Features of Intentional Change Theory
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)

- Uses complexity theory to acknowledge discontinuities and non-linear dynamics of change which often appear as power curves (not often gradual). Emergence is invoked by tipping points.
- Most energizing and motivating river of change is a vision (ideal self, purpose, dream, and shared vision in collectives) which invokes hope. It is not goals, problems or plans, nor the real self-ideal self discrepancy. It is the big picture, the why, the possible (not the probable).
- Tipping points are a mind-body conspiracy. Stress (SNS) causes cognitive, emotional, and perceptual impairment. Renewal (PNS) is the only antidote. TPN allows focus and analytic thinking. DMN allows openness to new ideas, people and emotions. Positive and negative emotions are a third axis. They form the psychophysiology of the Positive and Negative Emotional Attractors. Each of these poles are antagonistic.
- A tipping is needed to move to the next phase and to energize conditions within a phase for openness to change, to the sustainability of change. A person and our collectives need brief episodes of PEA to continue a change process. Rhythms of change are likely non-linear.
- ICT is a multi-level, fractal theory of change.
- Cross level transmission of emotions and information is through resonant leadership and social identity groups. Sustainable change requires change at multiple levels (i.e., at levels above and below the focal level). Swarming, as well as inclusiveness and adaptability are often a key to sustained, change while rational, analytic planning is not.

9

Two Attractors

	Positive Emotional Attractor	Negative Emotional Attractor
Neuro-endocrine	PNS Arousal, Empathic Network	SNS arousal, Analytic Network
Affect	Positive	Negative
Ideal Self	Possibilities, dreams, optimism, hope	Problems, expectations, pessimism, fear
Real Self	Strengths	Weaknesses
Learning Agenda	Excited about trying	Should do, performance improvement plan
Experiment/Practice	Novelty, experiments, practice to mastery	Actions expected, things you are supposed to do
Relationships	Resonant	Dissonant or annoying

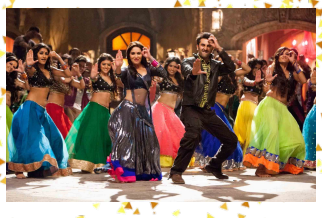
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10

Swarming via Emotions Contagion

- We are 'wired' to pick up unconscious emotions from one another.
- People self-organize and get motivated via swarming not rational, strategic planning.
- Resonant leaders and Demagogues capture hearts and minds of others in this way.



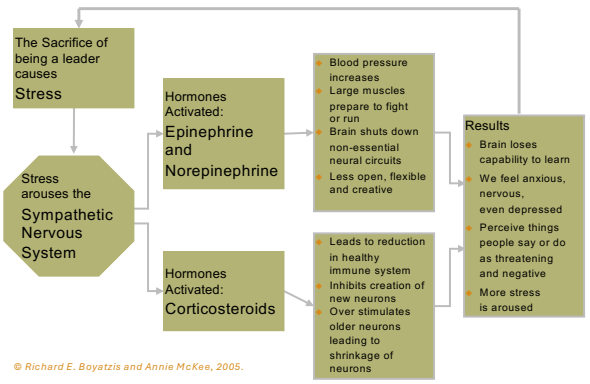




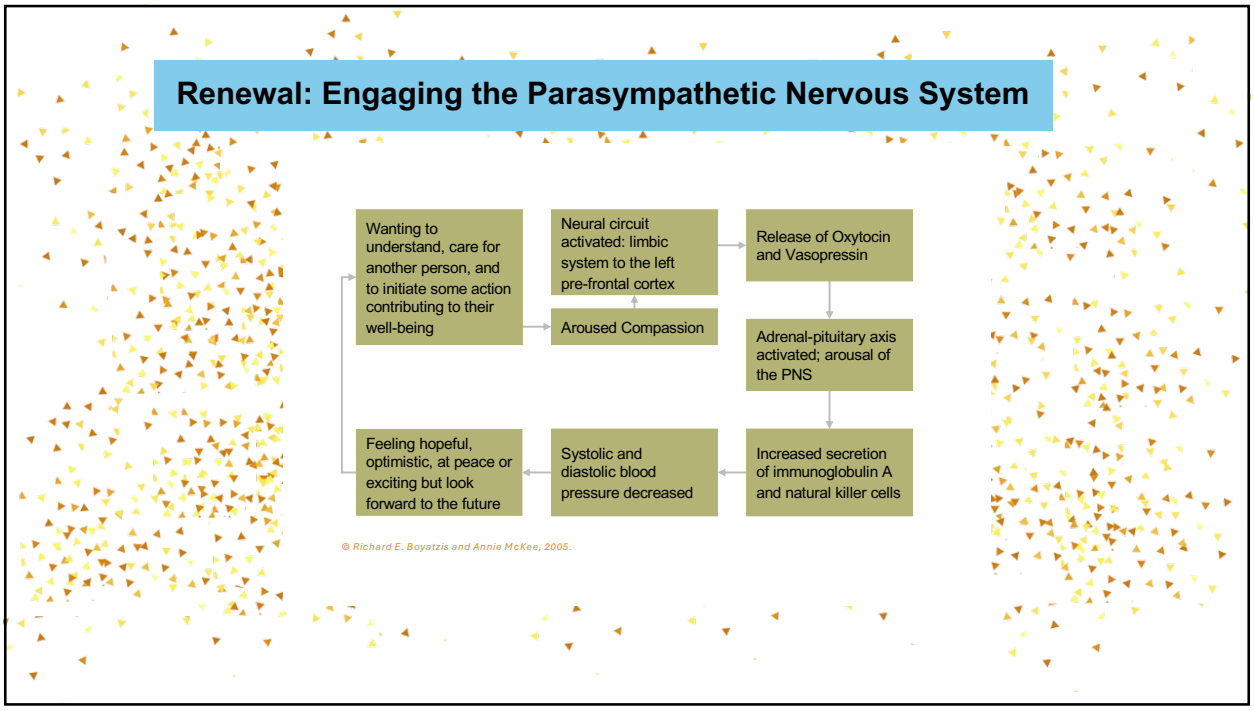


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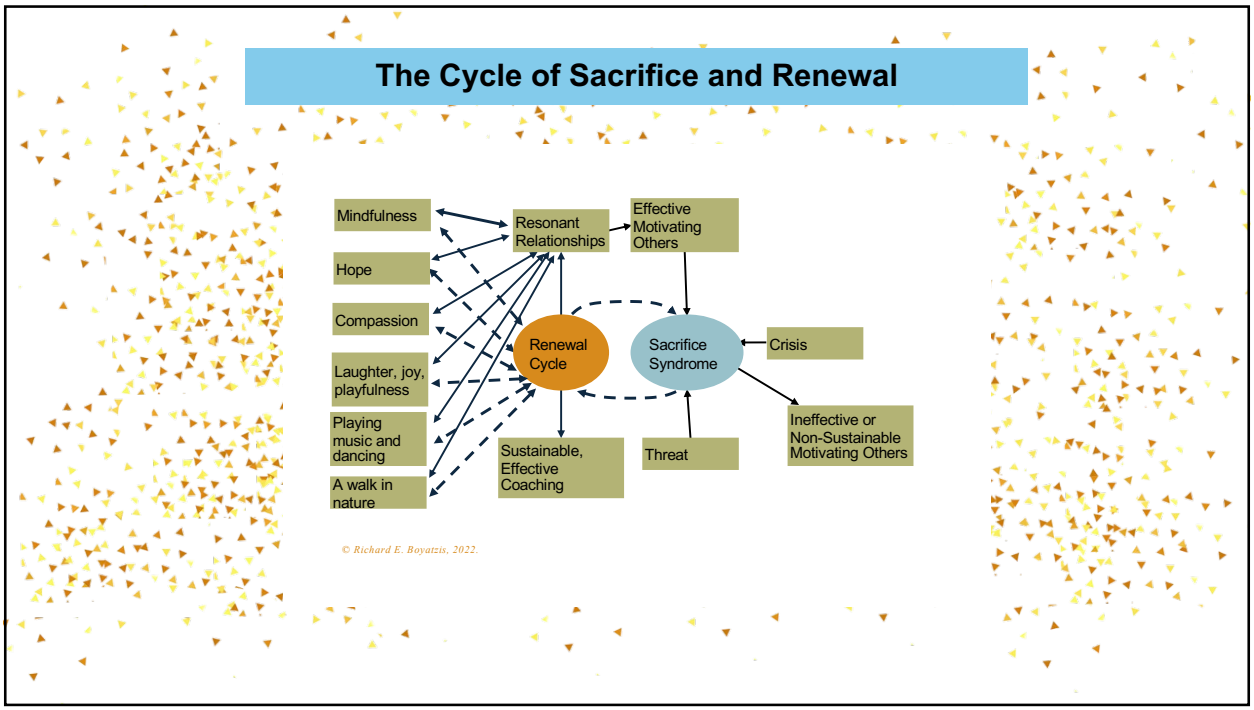
The Sacrifice Syndrome



12

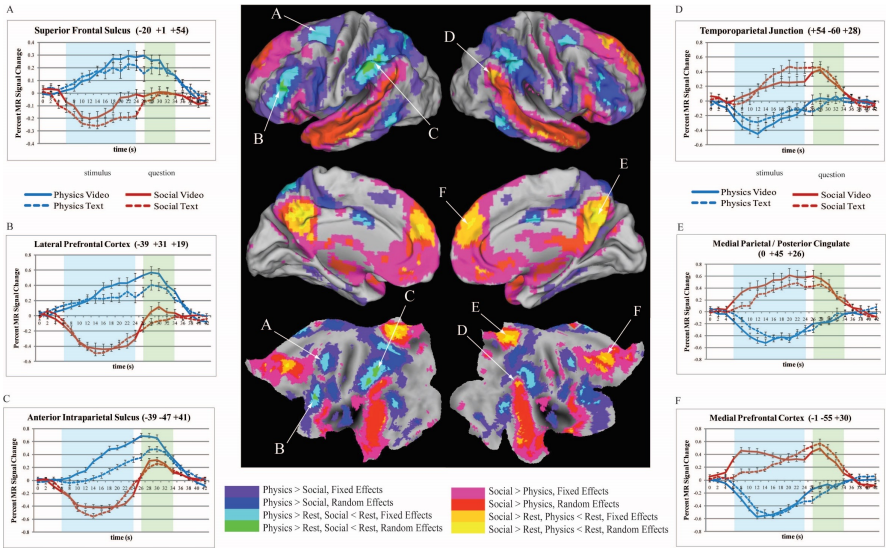

Renewal: Engaging the Parasympathetic Nervous System
Wanting to understand, care for another person, and to initiate some action contributing to their well-being
Neural circuit activated: limbic system to the left pre-frontal cortex
Release of Oxytocin and Vasopressin
Aroused Compassion
Adrenal-pituitary axis activated; arousal of the PNS
Feeling hopeful, optimistic, at peace or exciting but look forward to the future
Systolic and diastolic blood pressure decreased
Increased secretion of immunoglobulin A and natural killer cells
© Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, 2005.

13


The Cycle of Sacrifice and Renewal
Mindfulness
Hope
Compassion
Laughter, joy, playfulness
Playing music and dancing
A walk in nature
Resonant Relationships
Effective Motivating Others
Renewal Cycle
Sacrifice Syndrome
Crisis
Ineffective or Non-Sustainable Motivating Others
Sustainable, Effective Coaching
Threat
© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2022.

14

Analytic vs empathic in the brain

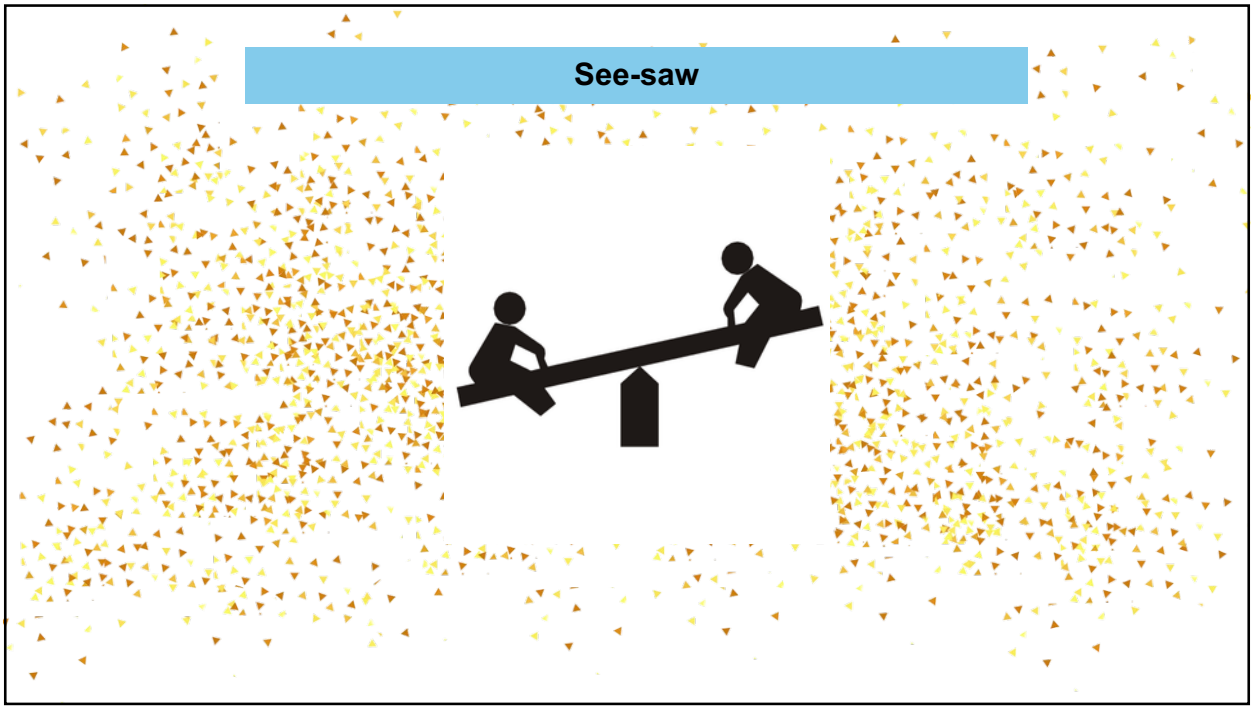


Jack, A.I., Dawson, A.J., Begany, K.L., Leckie, R.L., Barry, K.P., Ciccia, A.H., & Snyder, A.Z. (2013). fMRI reveals reciprocal inhibition between social and physical cognitive domains. *Neuroimage, 66C*, 385-401.

© Anthony I. Jack
brainmindconsciousness.com

15

See-saw



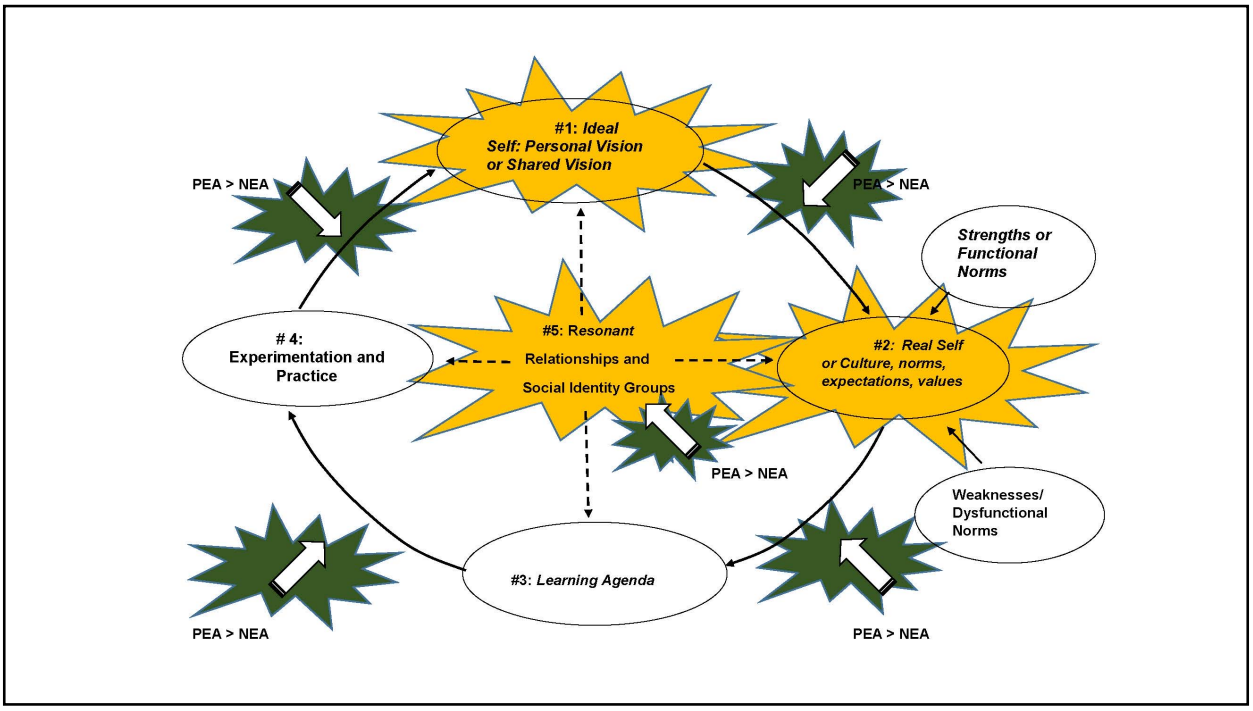
16

Coaching with Compassion
(to the PEA)
vs
Coaching for Compliance
(to the NEA)

17

Anchoring coaching in vision matters, not just letting the coachee decide the agenda. Anchoring coaching in resonant relationships because it pulls for compassion.

18



19

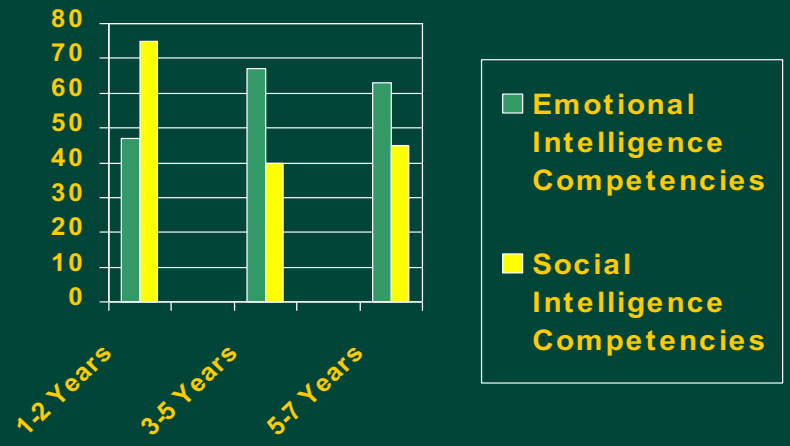
Emotional Intelligence Can Be Developed

Results from 32 longitudinal studies at the Weatherhead School of Management of 25-35 year old managers, plus a 5-19 longitudinal study.

Comparable results with 4 longitudinal studies of 45-55 year old executives in an Executive Education program, and 2 longitudinal studies of 38-42 year old high potential managers.

20

Sustainable Percentage Improvement of EI/SI



21

Coaching, Motivating, and Inspiring with Compassion to the PEA vs Coaching for Compliance to the NEA

- Jack, A., Boyatzis, R.E., Khawaja, M., Passarelli, A.,M. & Leckie, R. (2013). Visioning in the brain: an fMRI Study of inspirational coaching and Mentoring. *Social Neuroscience. 8*(4). 369-384.
- Jack AI, Passarelli AM and Boyatzis RE (2023). When fixing problems kills personal development: fMRI reveals conflict between Real and Ideal selves. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience. 17*:1128209. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2023.1128209
- Based on research done at the Brain, Mind, & Consciousness Lab, Case Western Reserve University, Professor Anthony Jack, Director and Principal Investigator on this study: http://tonyjack.org/

22

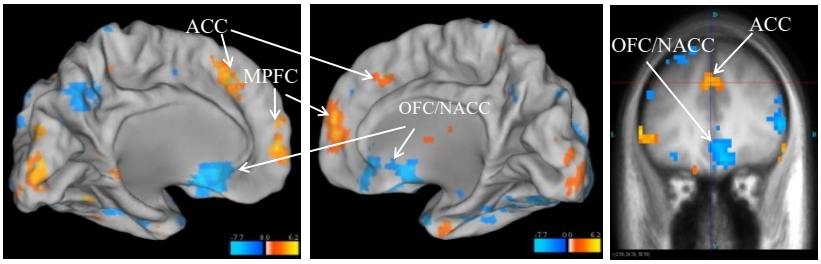
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY est 1826

Neural correlates of inspirational mentoring

R. L. CESARO[1], R. E. BOYATZIS[2], M. KHAWAJA[2], A. PASSARELLI[2], K. P. BARRY[1], K. BEGANY[1], A. I. JACK[1];
[1]Dept. of Cognitive Sci., Brain, Mind, and Consciousness Lab., Cleveland, OH; [2]Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH



Positive Emotional Attractor **Negative Emotional Attractor**



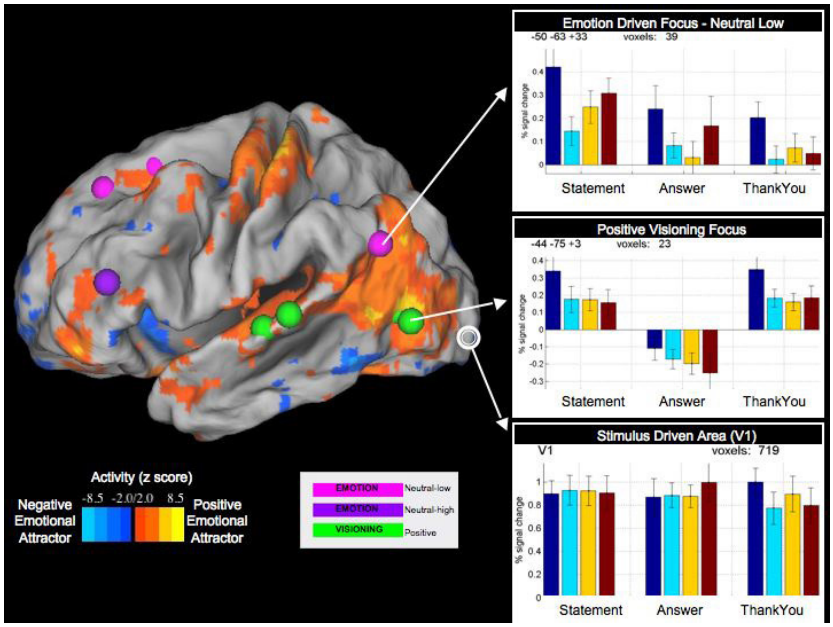
Conflict in the ACC

We found evidence of greater activity in the anterior cingulate cortex in the NEA as compared with the PEA condition. This region has been associated with cognitive conflict and both physical and social pain perception. It may reflect the greater conflict and emotional discomfort associated with the NEA condition.

Self-consciousness in the MPFC

We found evidence of greater activity in the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) in the NEA as compared with the PEA condition. This region has been associated with theory of mind and with social cognition broadly construed including explicit thoughts about the self and how we are socially perceived by others. Activity in this area may reflect greater social self-consciousness evoked by the NEA as opposed to the PEA condition.

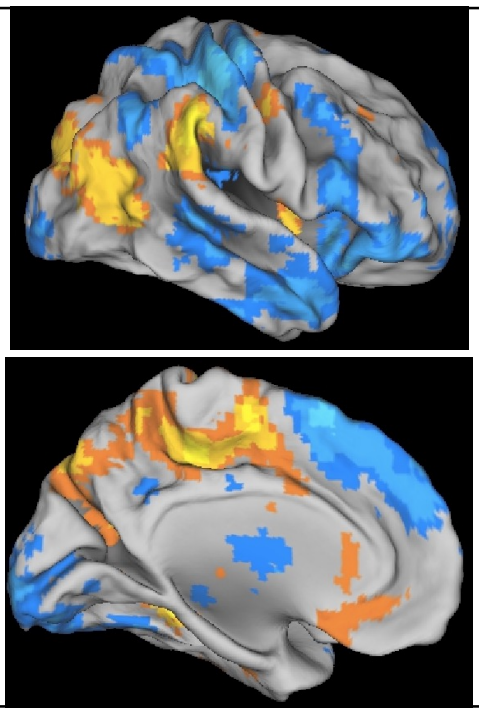
23



© Cesaro, R.L., Boyatzis, R.E., Khawaja, M., Passareli, A., Barry, K., Jack, A., 2010.

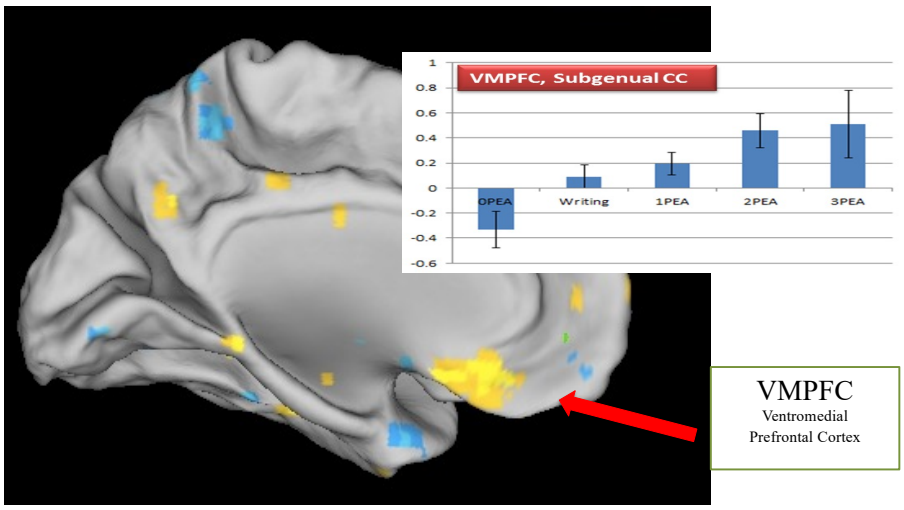
24

PEA-NEA replicated (50 rather than 20 participants)

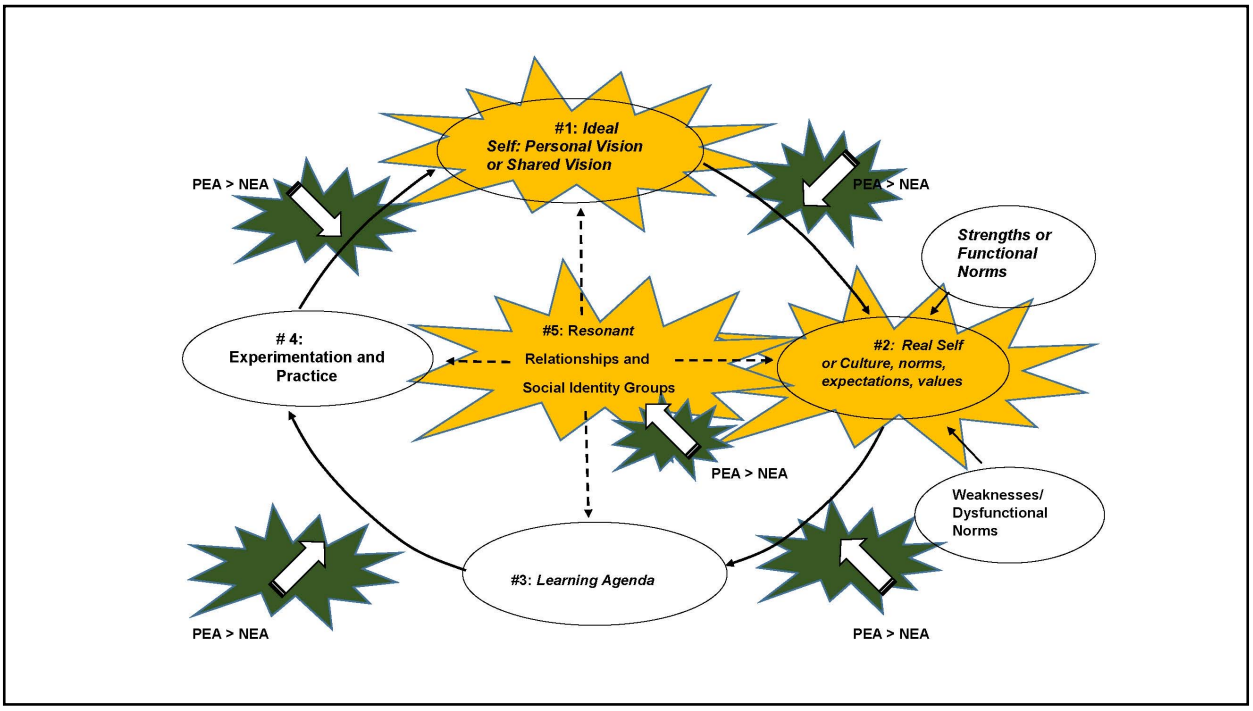


25

Dose-dependency of Vision Based Coaching (PEA) **on VMPFC**, region responsible for social connectedness and affective meaning-making (Jack, Boyatzis, Abou Zeki, Passarelli, & Dawson, 2013)

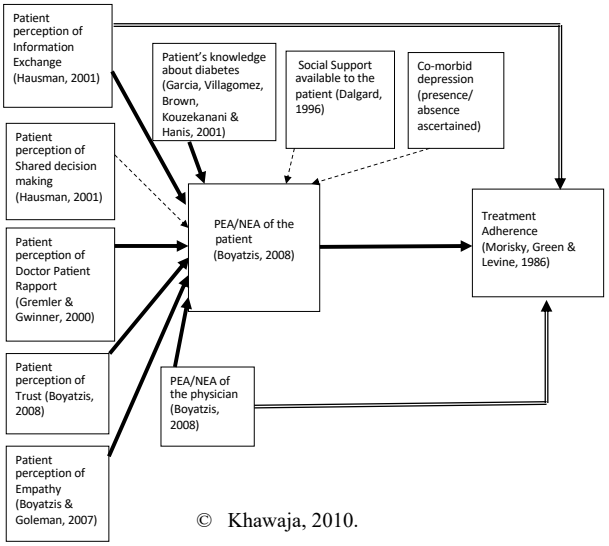


26



27

Masud Khawaja, M.D. PhD Thesis, *The Mediating Role of Positive and Negative Emotional Attractors Between Psychosocial Correlates of Doctor-Patient Relationship and Treatment Adherence in Type 2 Diabetes* , Case Western Reserve University, August, 2010; Physicians n = 25, patients n = 375, from 5 hospitals in Karachi, Pakistan



© Khawaja, 2010.

28

Ideal Self – Shared Vision, Not Goals, Not Problems, Not Discrepancies Motivate Sustained Change

"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

29

Think back to the people who helped you the most exercise

- How to you feel just thinking about them and those moments?
- Is it engaging and motivating?
- Does the PEA spread to others (and visa versa) through emotional contagion?
- Does it invoke renewal, openness and learning, sustainability of change?

30

ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
1. Ideal self, personal vision or shared vision	Help the client identify each of the elements of a comprehensive ideal self, personal vision that is compelling; in collectives, help them articulate their shared vision
2. PEA > NEA beginning process;	Arouse or invoke PEA moments at the of each coaching session, as well as regularly during any coaching session and entire
	use a variety of experiences to stimulate PEA (renewal, empathic, positive); if traumatized or defensive, use a playful approach and introduce regular, small doses of PEA over time
3. Discontinuous and non-linear (think power curves)	Patience, wait and look for breakout moments of conscious realization, awareness and acknowledge it

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ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
4. Real self, current norms	360^0 assessment; video or audio work samples and critical incidents; Me at My Best; Best Self Exercise
5. Learning agenda	Framed as moving closer to the ideal self, vision or shared vision, using one's or group's strengths, and working on 1-2 weakness at most
6. Experimentation/practice	Appeal to novelty, try it, experiment getting closer to ideal self, vision, or shared vision; repetition; visualizing as practice; using doses of PEA to keep going
7. Resonant relationships	Who "helped" you? To invoke gratitude and compassion; high quality relationships with shared vision, shared compassion and shared energy; high quality connections; PEA features of a Working Alliance

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32

ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
8. Multi-level, fractal change be	Any effort at learning or change will extinguish (i.e. exhausted) and not be sustained unless other levels of the human system are engaged in an ICT process
9. Resonant leadership relationships	Resonant leadership relationships formed and sustained through inspirational moments, phrases that remind everyone of the shared vision and shared compassion
10. Social identity groups	Acknowledge or pursue social identify groups that help the person or group move closer to the vision or shared vision (focused on the future not past)

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Practical Tips: Something to Try Next Week

1. Positive ways to introduce people and build better relationships
2. Reflecting about leaders who brought out the best in you

3-14. Increase resonant relationships and renewal through: (3) meditation; (4) prayer; (5) yoga; (6) tai chi; (7) massage; (8) physical exercise; (9) feeling hopeful about the future; (10) being in a loving relationship; (11) helping those less fortunate and/or ill and/or elderly; (12) having pets you can pet; (13) being playful; (14) walking in nature

15. Initiating inspiring conversations: who helped you?
16. Coaching with compassion (i.e., to the PEA)
17. Start every meeting with a discussion of shared vision, values or positive stories
18. Practicing mindfulness (emotional awareness) of yourself and others

34

Summary of Two Studies on Coach Competencies That Predict Client Behavioral Change Over Two Years
(significant or near significant findings) from:

Boyatzis, R.E., Quinn, J., Liu, H., Smith, A., & Zwygart, K. (2023). Competencies of Coaches that Predict Client Behavior Change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences.* 1-31. DOI: 10.1177/00218863231204050
Boyatzis, R.E., Ehasz, S., Liu, H., & Van Oosten, E. (2025). A Qualitative Study of Competencies of Coaches That Predict Client Behavior Change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences.*

35

Competency models are used to design training of coaches, both initial and lifelong.
They are also used to assess coaches and certify them or not as qualified to offer services.

Definition of a Competency:
A capability or ability of a person, not a characteristics of a job, that results in effective performance (McClelland, 1973; Boyatzis, 1982)

A competency is:
A set of related behavior or actions or skills *and*
A underlying intent in the use of them.

To claim something is a competency, it should be:
1. A characteristic of a person (not a job task or responsibility)
2. Behavioral and can be observed by others
3. Shown to predict effective or outstanding performance (beyond average or mediocre)

36

Competency models validated against performance vs values and opinions

Out of convenience, many organizations seek to determine competency models by surveys of current role occupants, experts and/or clients. These are models built upon values and opinions held, also Known as prejudices.

In a major research study of managers at all levels from 6 large private sector companies and 6 large government agencies, Boyatzis (1982) showed that among the "competencies" perceived To be important and related to managerial, executive and leadership effectiveness, when compared To actual validation against performance effectiveness measures:

~50% were parts of validated competencies

~25% were irrelevant to performance

~25% were *opposite* to validated competencies

37

A thematic analysis of the indicators of coach competency models from four major associations (ICF, WABC, EMCC and AC) in the world of coaching showed:

473 indicators (the models had 53 to 240 indicators organized into 8 to 35 competencies)

38% were job tasks (AC model: "Provides observational feedback where relevant leaving the client free to choose to act upon it or not" or ICF model: "Maintains confidentiality with client information per stakeholder agreements and pertinent laws")

27% were recommended style (EMCC model: "Critically reflects on practitioner paradigms and their impact on clients and client systems" or ICF Model: Celebrates the client's progress and success")

22% were likely components of actual competencies (a skill like listening). Indicators of most frequently cited competencies were Achievement Orientation and Empathy)

1% were cognitive abilities

15% were values (WABC model: "Bring to the coaching situation a wide range of relevant knowledge about, and experience in SMEs and start-ups/entrepreneurial businesses")

< 1% knowledge (knowing the stages in the Proshaska and Norcross model of change)

38

Highest Level of Confidence (multiple studies, multiple tests of significance), strong differentiation

Achievement Orientation
Empathy

High Level of Confidence (multiple studies, multiple tests of significance), strong differentiation

Coach & Mentor
Emotional Self-Control
Adaptability

39

High Level of Confidence (one study, multiple tests of significance), significant differentiation

Emotional Self Awareness
Organizational Awareness
Influence
Emotional and Social Intelligence Total
Role Differentiation

Suggestive (near significance in only one study)

Conflict Management
Teamwork

40

Summary of Findings continued

General Mental Ability did NOT.

Among the competencies, the most potent was: Achievement Orientation.

No differences in Client Behavior Change among the Clients from the two campuses.

No differences in Client Behavior Change between Client change on these two samples and the over all population.

No differences in Client Behavior Change due to the gender of the coaches.

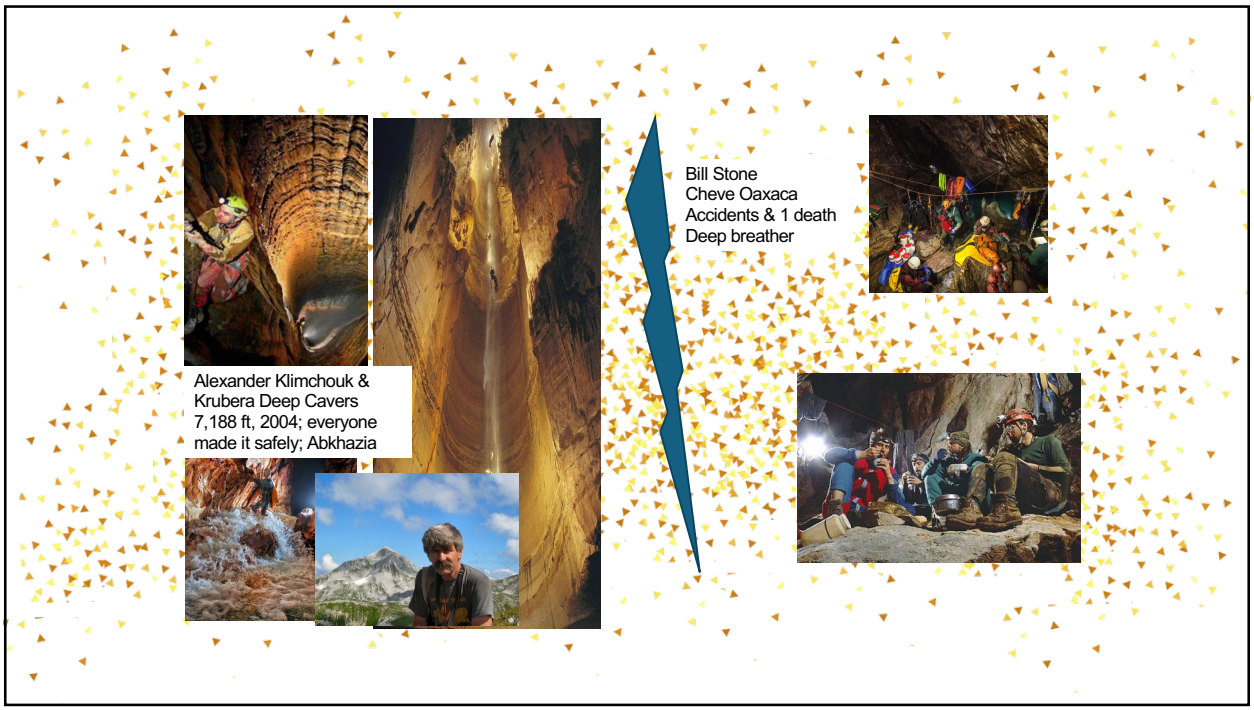
41



42


TOUCH the TOP of the WORLD
A BLIND MAN'S JOURNEY TO CLIMB FARTHER THAN THE EYE CAN SEE
MY STORY
ERIK WEIHENMAYER
Allegra Expedition 2001
21 climbers, 8 sherpas
19 reached Summit
Trained over a year
clear vision
Adventure Consultants
1996
8 clients @ $85,000
15 climbers
3 reached Summit
2 clients & 2 guides died
Many with frostbite

43


Alexander Klimchouk & Krubera Deep Cavers
7,188 ft, 2004; everyone made it safely; Abkhazia
Bill Stone
Cheve Oaxaca
Accidents & 1 death
Deep breather

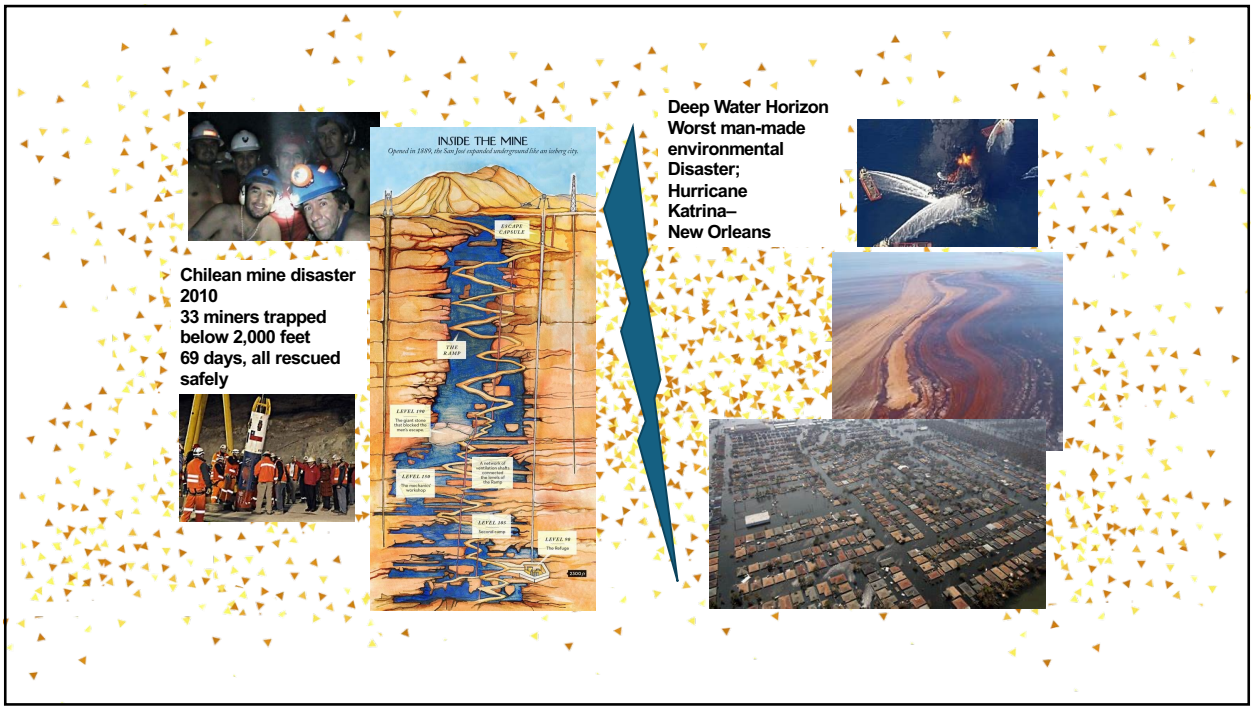
44


amazon.com
YMCA
BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO
BORDERS
SONY
SEARS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

45


Amsterdam and Netherlands
Boston eliminating lanes in the middle of downtown

46


Chilean mine disaster
2010
33 miners trapped
below 2,000 feet
69 days, all rescued
safely
INSIDE THE MINE
Deep Water Horizon
Worst man-made
environmental
Disaster;
Hurricane
Katrina–
New Orleans

47


Iceland
~100% renewable
energy
UK
~40% renewable
energy

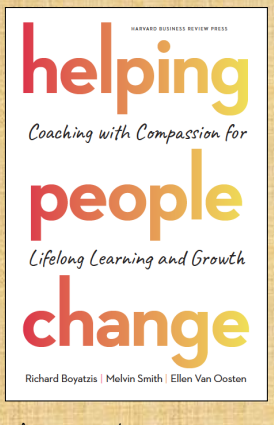
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Our new book:



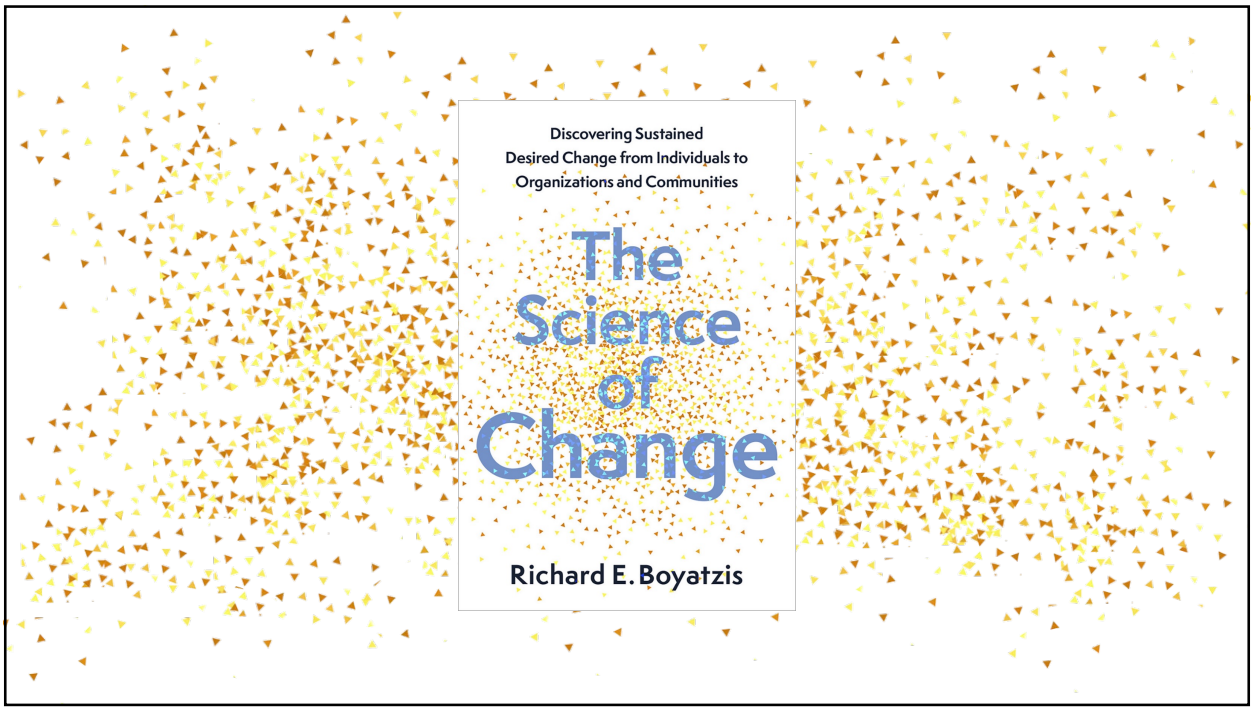






from Harvard Business Review Press on Amazon.com at
https://www.amazon.com/Helping-People-Change-Coaching-Compassion/dp/1633696561

49



50

Living Your Passion – Inspiring Others

We Do Not Want to Be Bored or Live Routine Lives – Nor Do Those Working With Us

It Is a Waste of Human Talent, Spirit, and Potential

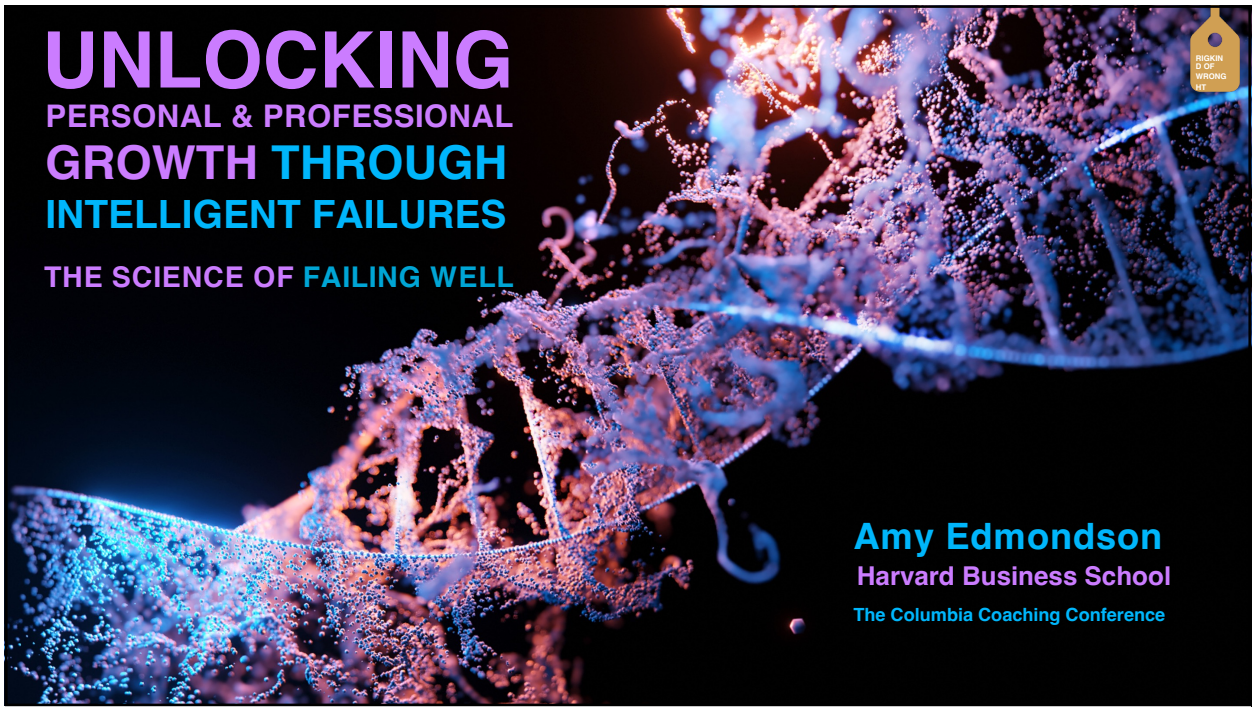
Remember the Moment

© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2000.

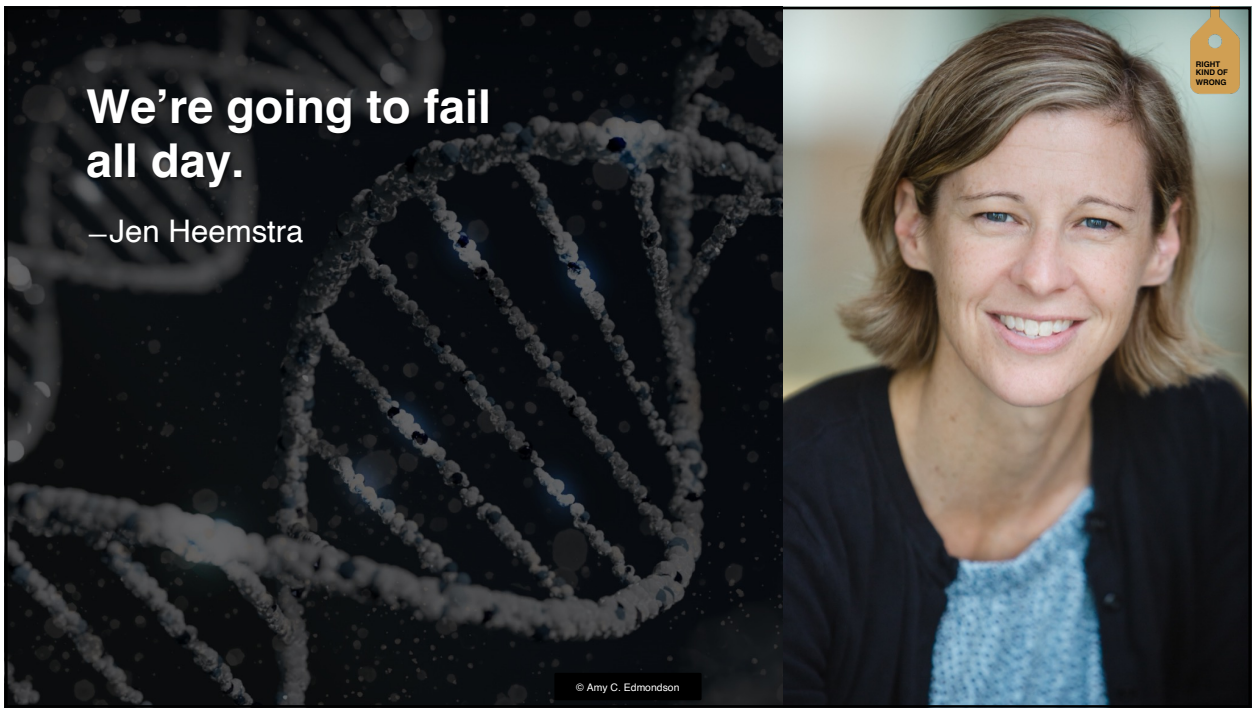
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International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC
2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
The Science of Failing Well
Unlocking Personal and Professional Growth Through Intelligent Failures
Amy C. Edmondson
Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management
Harvard Business School
columbiacoachingconference.org
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Follow us @CUCoachConf #CCC2025

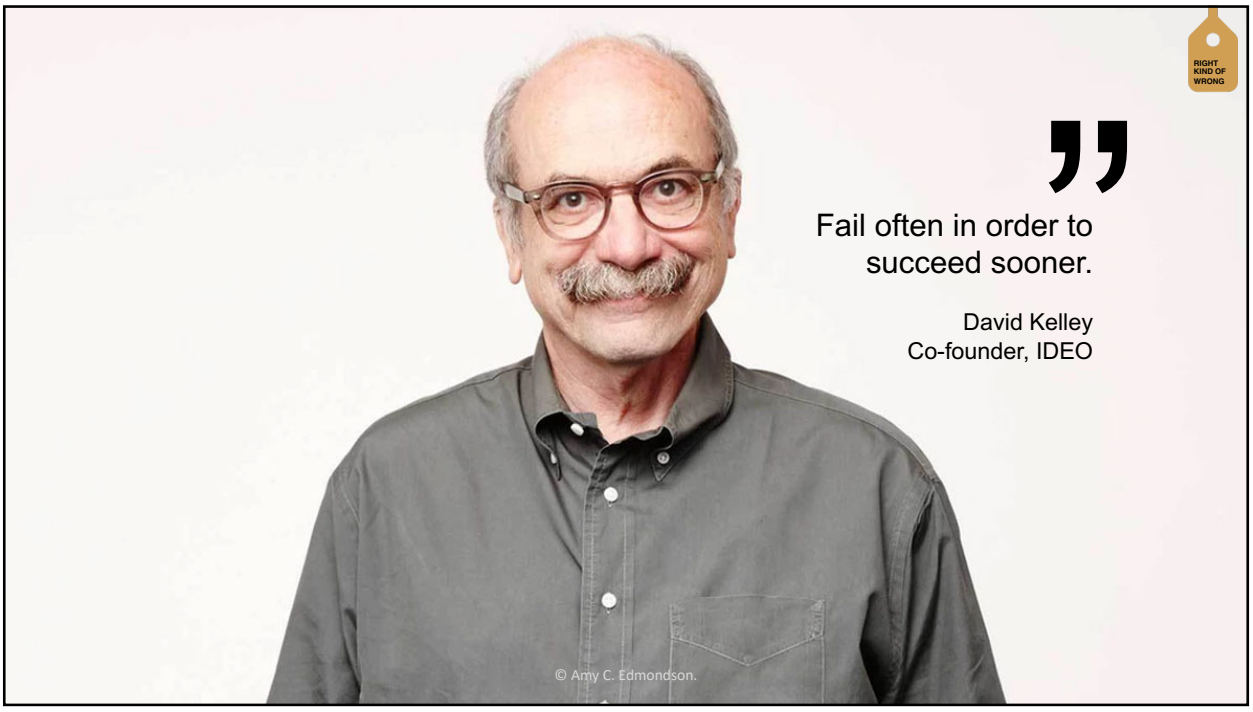
1


UNLOCKING
PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL
GROWTH THROUGH
INTELLIGENT FAILURES
THE SCIENCE OF FAILING WELL
Amy Edmondson
Harvard Business School
The Columbia Coaching Conference

2


We're going to fail all day.
–Jen Heemstra
© Amy C. Edmondson
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

3


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Fail often in order to succeed sooner.
David Kelley
Co-founder, IDEO
© Amy C. Edmondson.

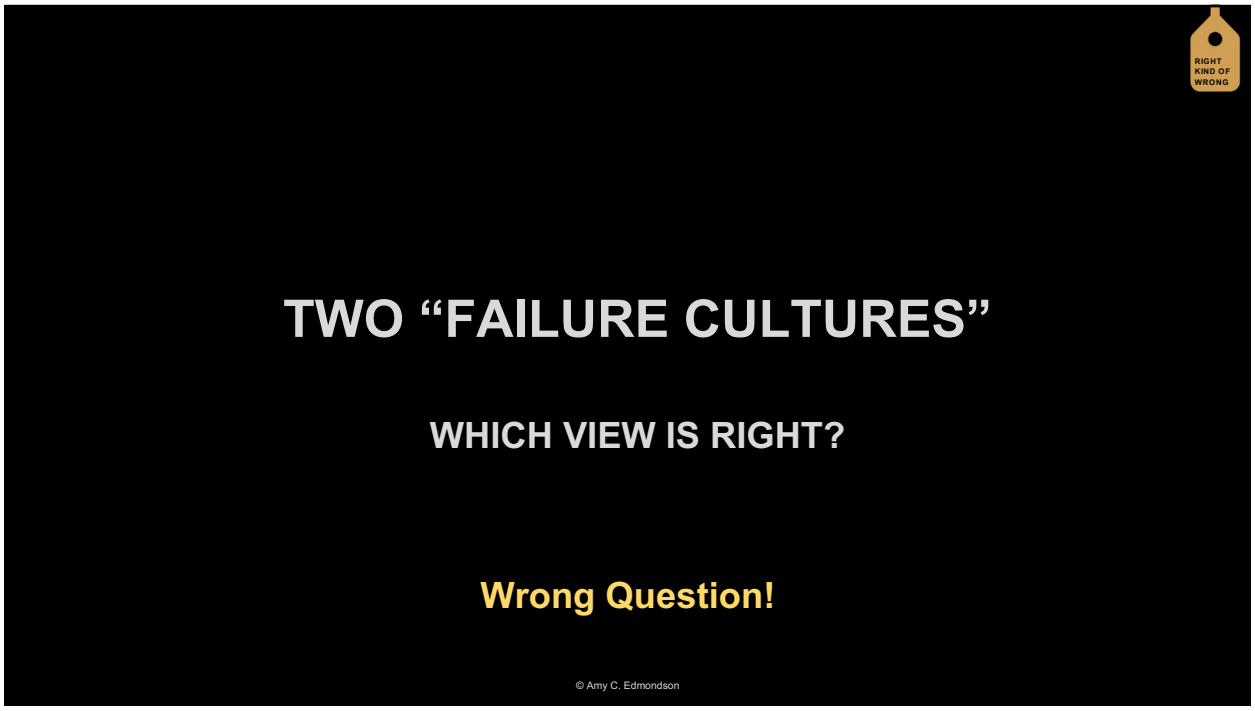
4


THE PROBLEM
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Deep down we know:
Failure is bad!
© Amy C. Edmondson

5


When failure is
“off limits”
© Amy C. Edmondson
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

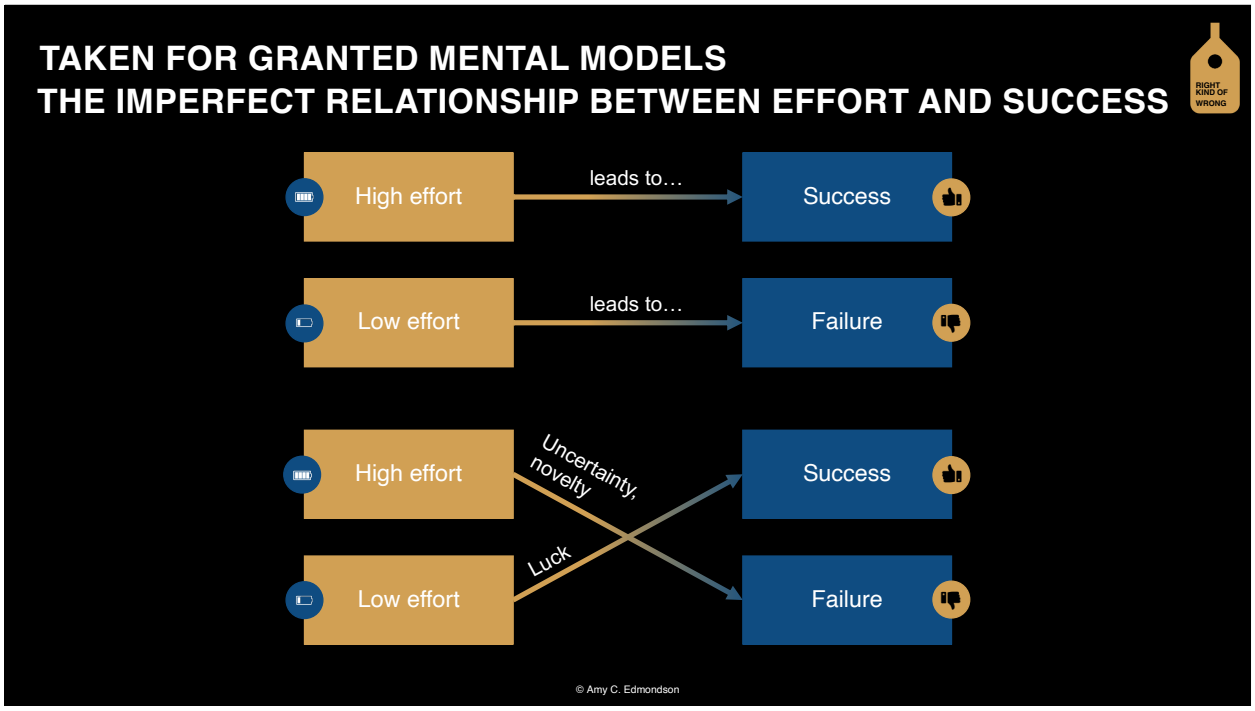
6


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
TWO “FAILURE CULTURES”
WHICH VIEW IS RIGHT?
Wrong Question!
© Amy C. Edmondson

7


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
How Do We Change Our Thinking to be More Effective in an Uncertain World?
A Better Question
© Amy C. Edmondson

8


TAKEN FOR GRANTED MENTAL MODELS
THE IMPERFECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFORT AND SUCCESS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
High effort
leads to…
Success
Low effort
leads to…
Failure
High effort
Uncertainty, novelty
Success
Luck
Low effort
Failure
© Amy C. Edmondson

9


CONTEXT MATTERS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
CONSISTENT
VARIABLE
NOVEL
UNCERTAINTY
FAILURE
MISTAKES?

10

CONTEXT MATTERS







CONSISTENT | VARIABLE | NOVEL

UNCERTAINTY

FAILURE

NECESSITY OF EXPERIMENTATION

11

Failure: An outcome that deviates from a desired result

Mistake: An unintended deviation from existing knowledge, procedures, rules, or policies

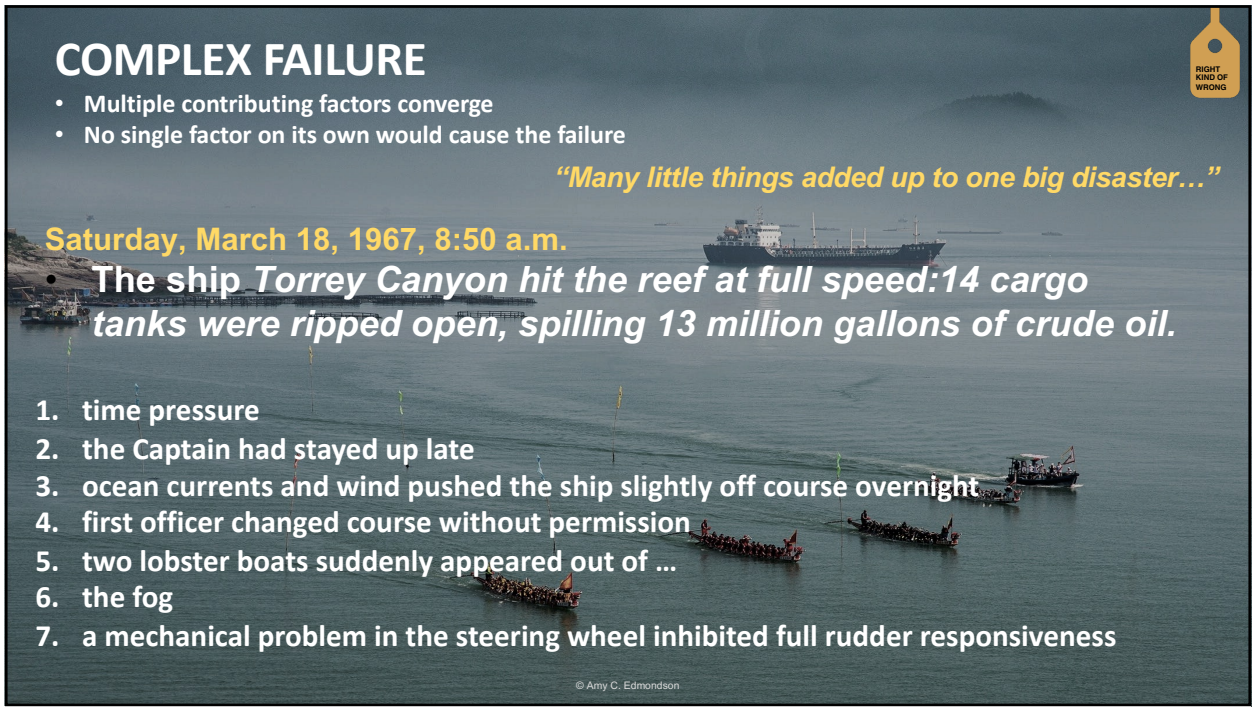
And all failures are not alike…

© Amy C. Edmondson

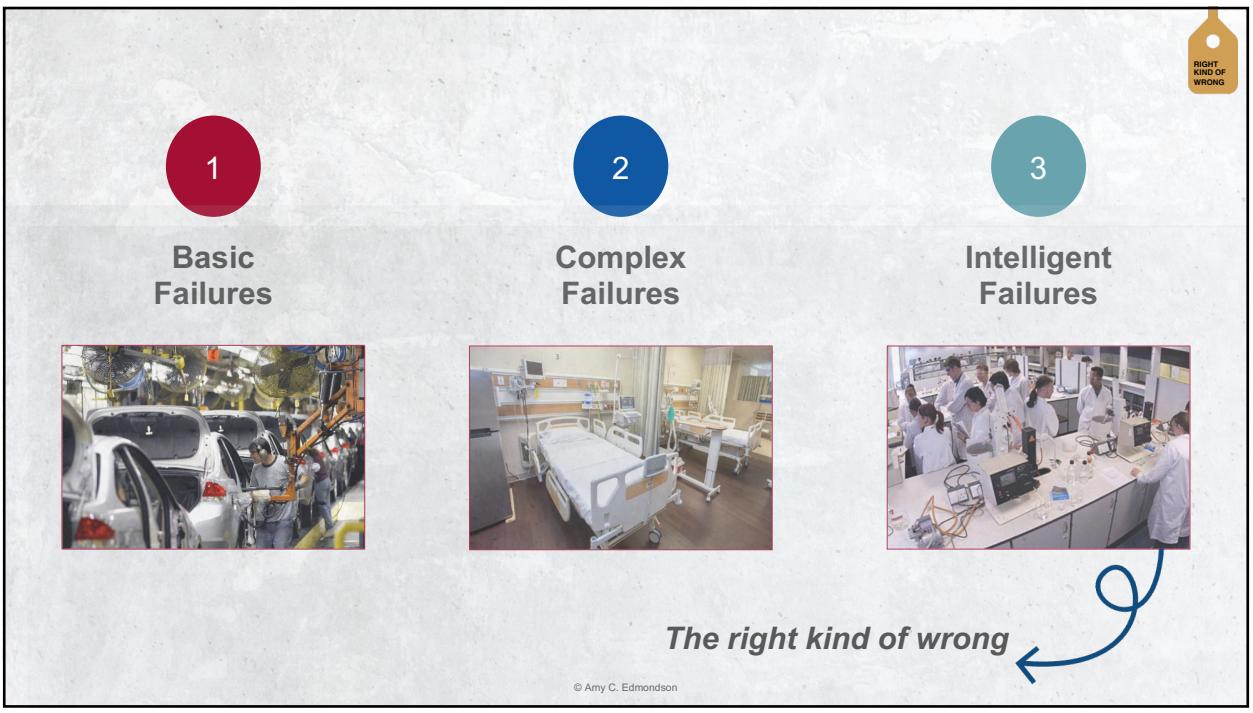
12


BASIC FAILURE
• Single Cause
• Known Territory
Citibank, August 11, 2020
An employee made a mistake that accidentally transferred $900 million to a group of lenders.
BASIC ≠ SMALL
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson

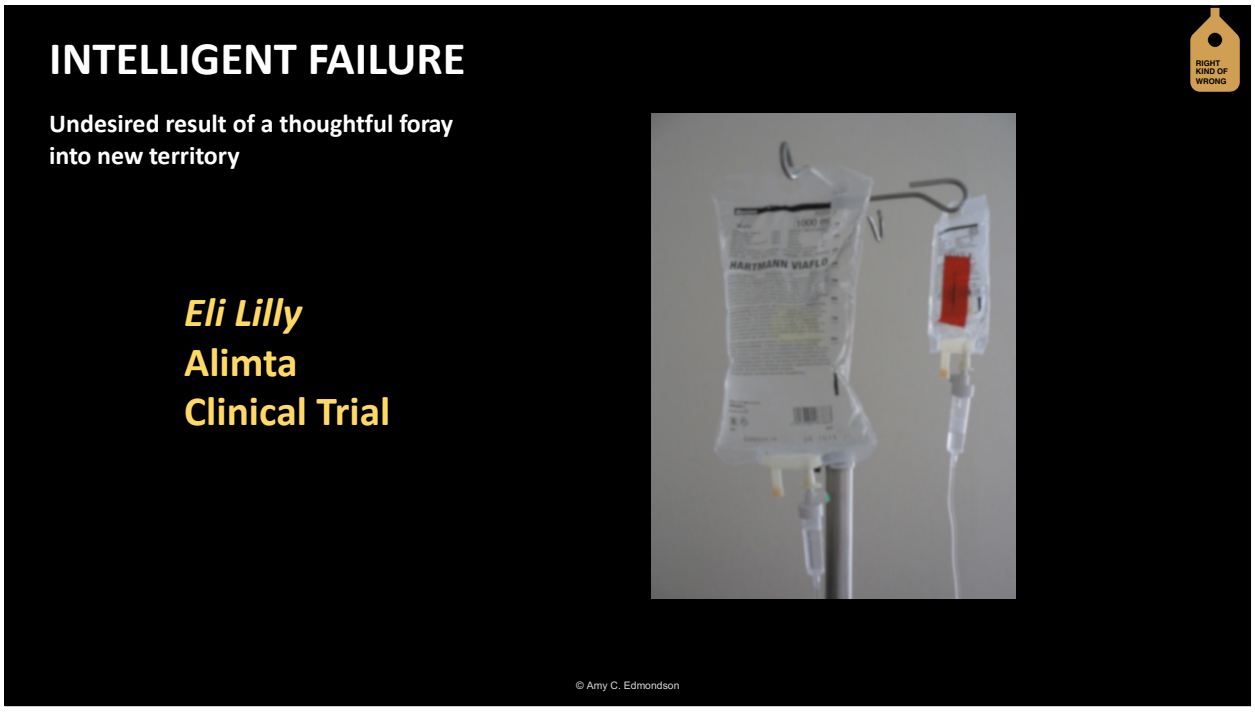
13


COMPLEX FAILURE
• Multiple contributing factors converge
• No single factor on its own would cause the failure
"Many little things added up to one big disaster…"
Saturday, March 18, 1967, 8:50 a.m.
• The ship Torrey Canyon hit the reef at full speed:14 cargo tanks were ripped open, spilling 13 million gallons of crude oil.
1. time pressure
2. the Captain had stayed up late
3. ocean currents and wind pushed the ship slightly off course overnight
4. first officer changed course without permission
5. two lobster boats suddenly appeared out of …
6. the fog
7. a mechanical problem in the steering wheel inhibited full rudder responsiveness
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson

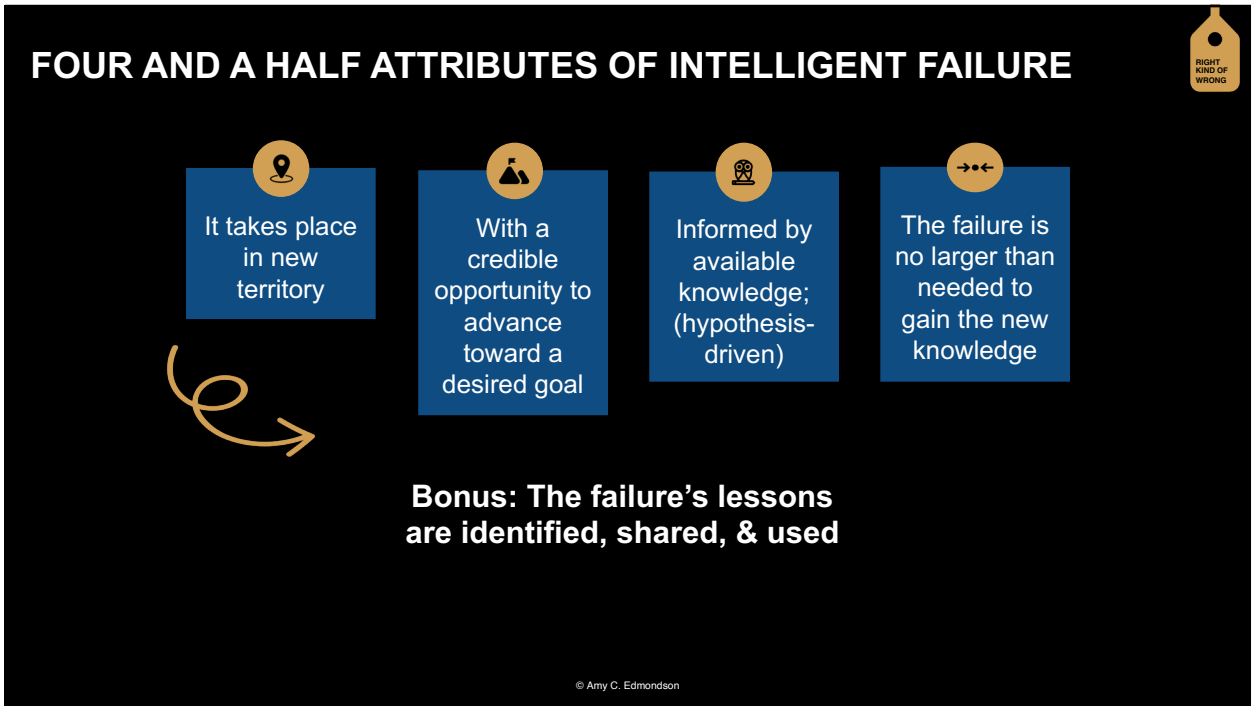
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RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
1
Basic Failures
2
Complex Failures
3
Intelligent Failures
The right kind of wrong
© Amy C. Edmondson

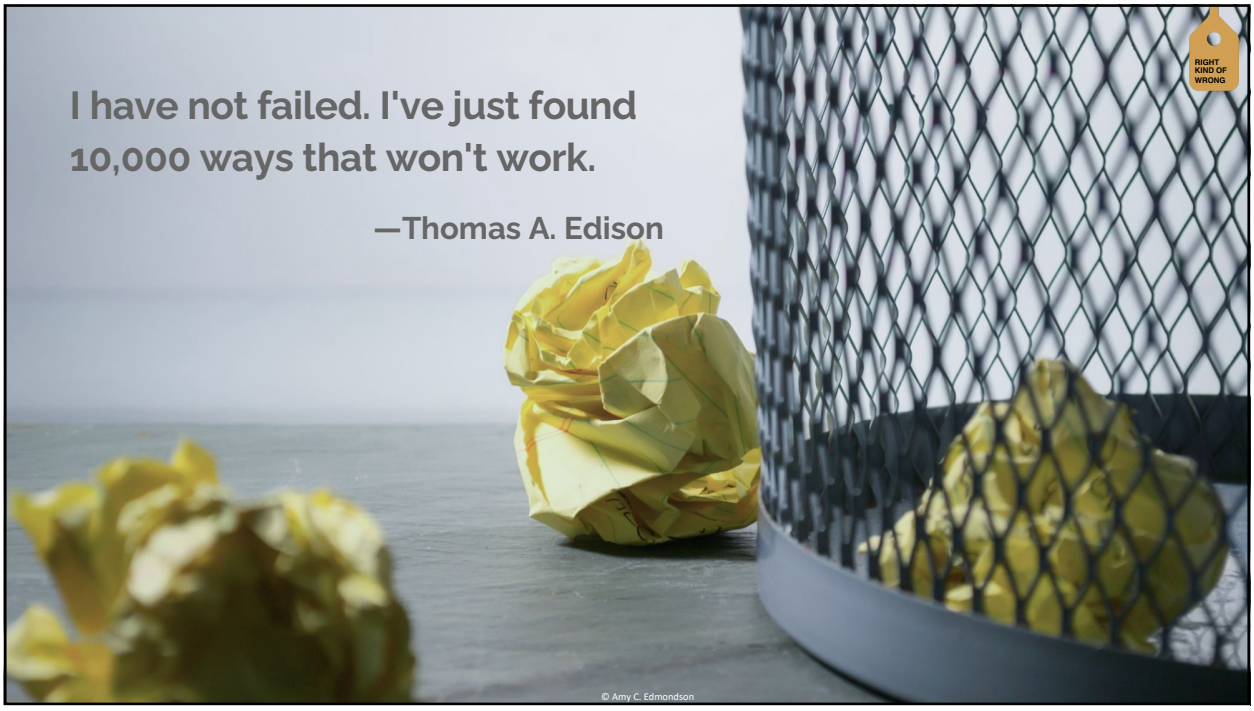
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INTELLIGENT FAILURE
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Undesired result of a thoughtful foray into new territory
Eli Lilly
Alimta
Clinical Trial
HARTMANN VIAFLO
© Amy C. Edmondson

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FOUR AND A HALF ATTRIBUTES OF INTELLIGENT FAILURE
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
It takes place in new territory
With a credible opportunity to advance toward a desired goal
Informed by available knowledge; (hypothesis-driven)
The failure is no larger than needed to gain the new knowledge
Bonus: The failure's lessons are identified, shared, & used
© Amy C. Edmondson

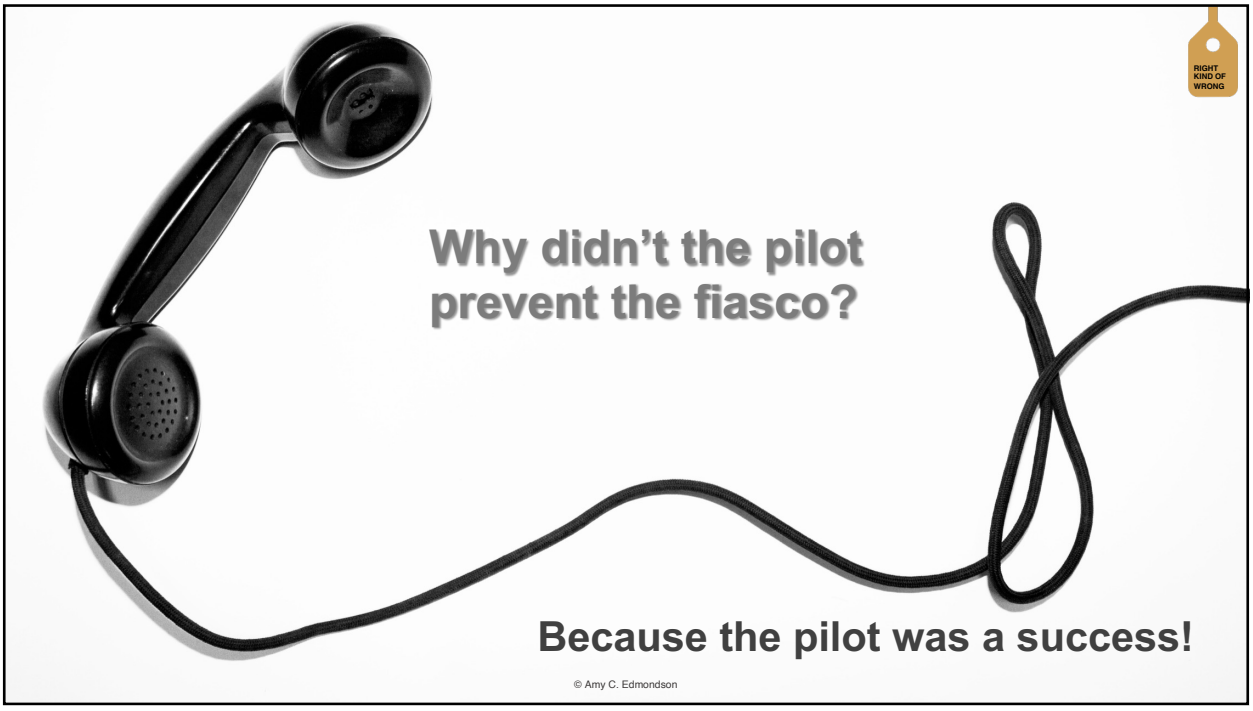
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I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.
—Thomas A. Edison
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
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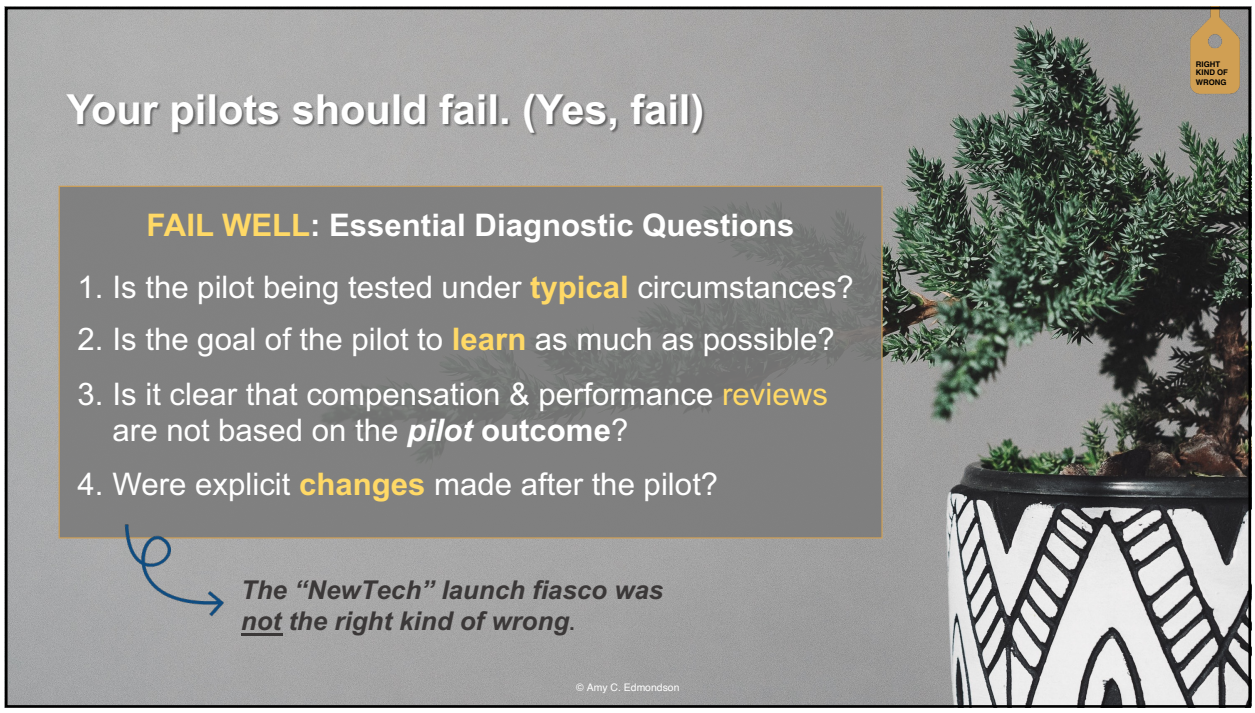
18


AN INNOVATION DECISION AT "TELCO"
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Excellent provider of local and long-distance telephony.
Executive team debate about the launch of "NewTech" in major metropolitan city market.
Small, well-staffed, successful suburban pilot.
Decision made to go for a full-scale launch.
Colossal service failure…
© Amy C. Edmondson

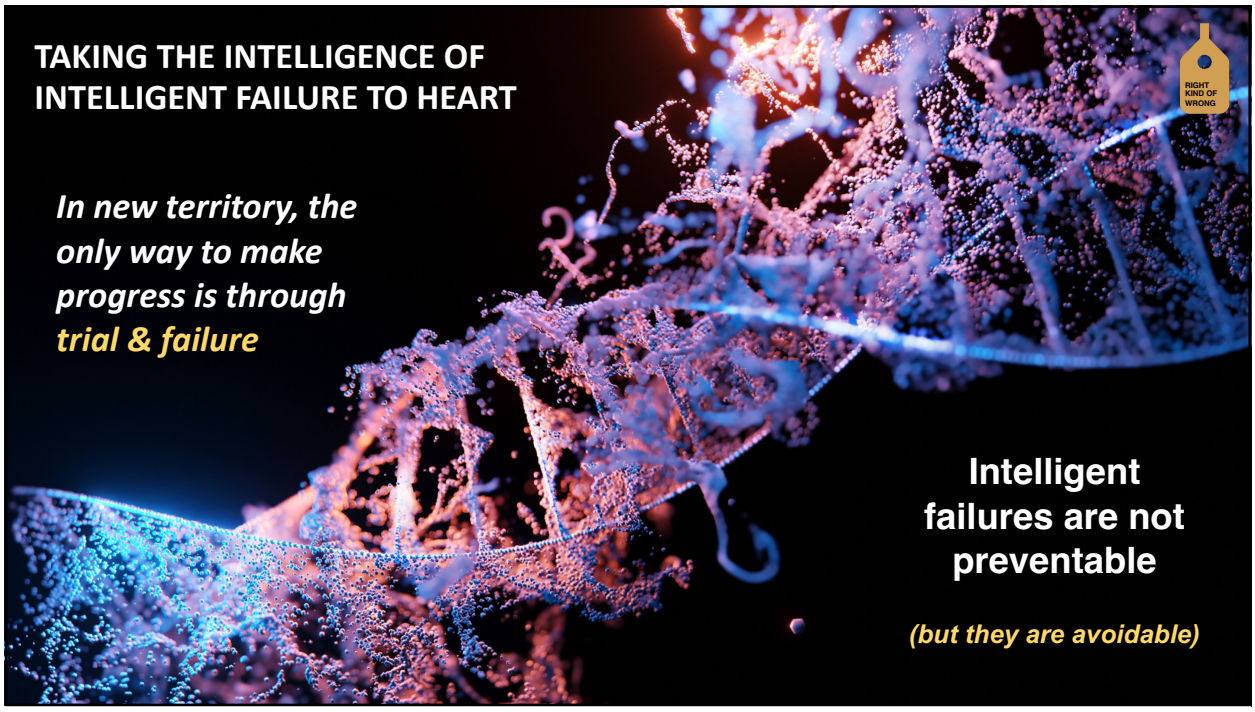
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RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Why didn't the pilot prevent the fiasco?
Because the pilot was a success!
© Amy C. Edmondson

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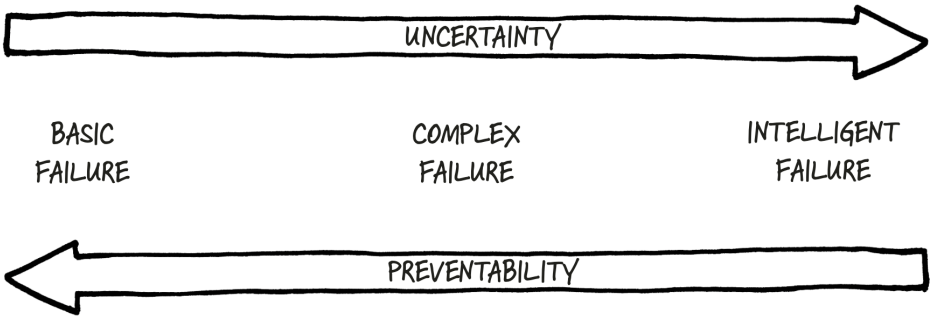

Your pilots should fail. (Yes, fail)
FAIL WELL: Essential Diagnostic Questions
1. Is the pilot being tested under typical circumstances?
2. Is the goal of the pilot to learn as much as possible?
3. Is it clear that compensation & performance reviews are not based on the pilot outcome?
4. Were explicit changes made after the pilot?
The "NewTech" launch fiasco was not the right kind of wrong.
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson

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TAKING THE INTELLIGENCE OF INTELLIGENT FAILURE TO HEART
In new territory, the only way to make progress is through trial & failure
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Intelligent failures are not preventable
(but they are avoidable)

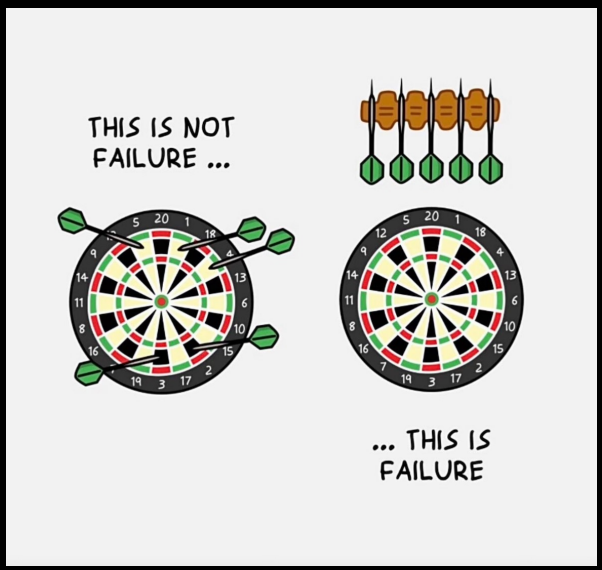
22

GREATER UNCERTAINTY MEANS LOWER PREVENTABILITY



23

THE COURAGE TO FAIL WELL



Do one thing every day that scares you.

Eleanor Roosevelt

24

RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD



Work to prevent
basic failures



Anticipate and mitigate
complex failures



Promote and celebrate
intelligent failures

Excellence means **catching and correcting error**—all the way through a process or project – *and* a willingness to **experiment**.

This requires **psychological safety**….

© Amy C. Edmondson

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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A belief that the context is safe for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, mistakes & failures.

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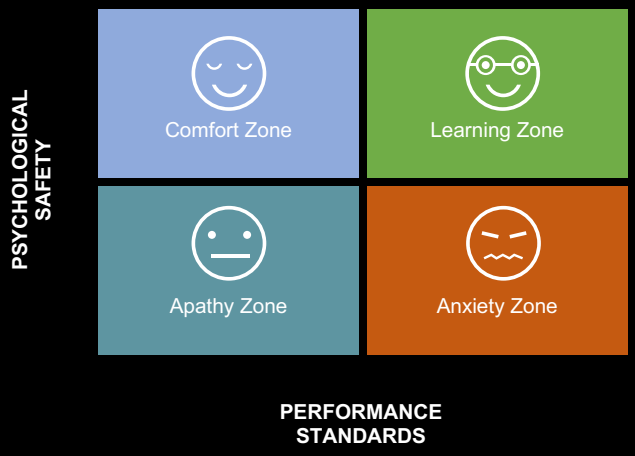
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

is NOT:
Being Nice
Being Comfortable
Lowering Standards

© Amy C. Edmondson

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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD



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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

How to encourage intelligent failure

1
Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

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RIGHT KIND OF WRONG



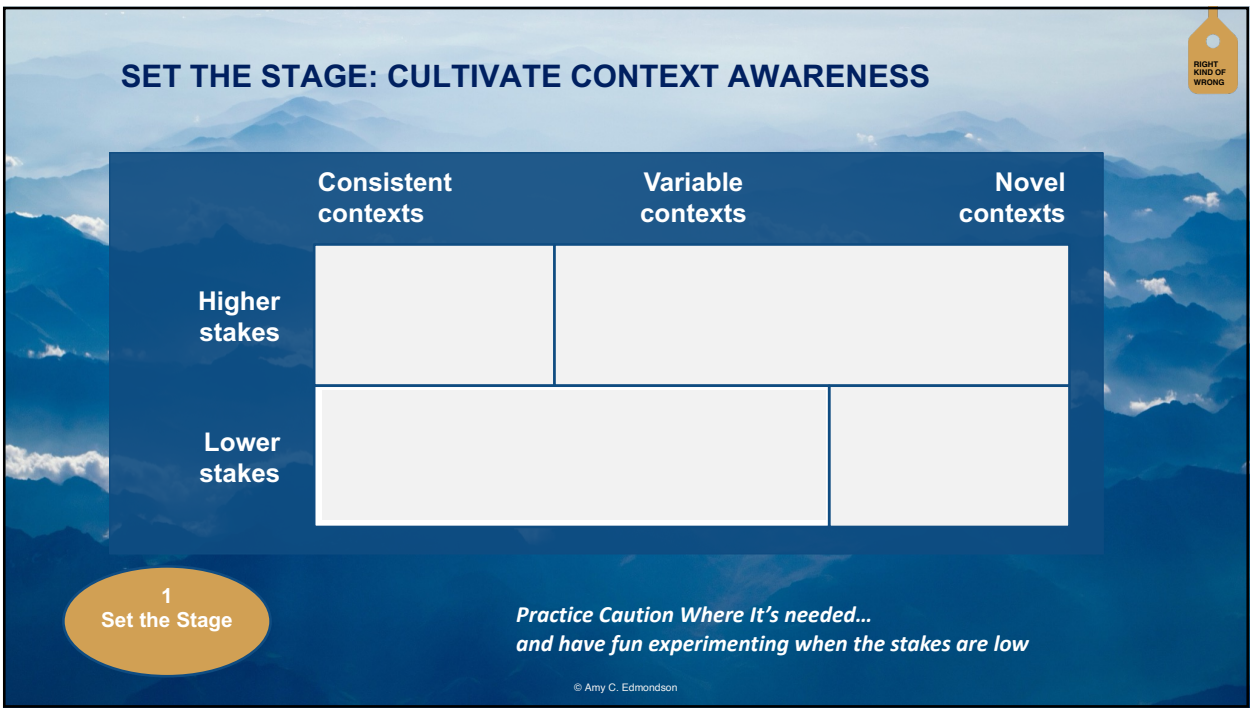
1
Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

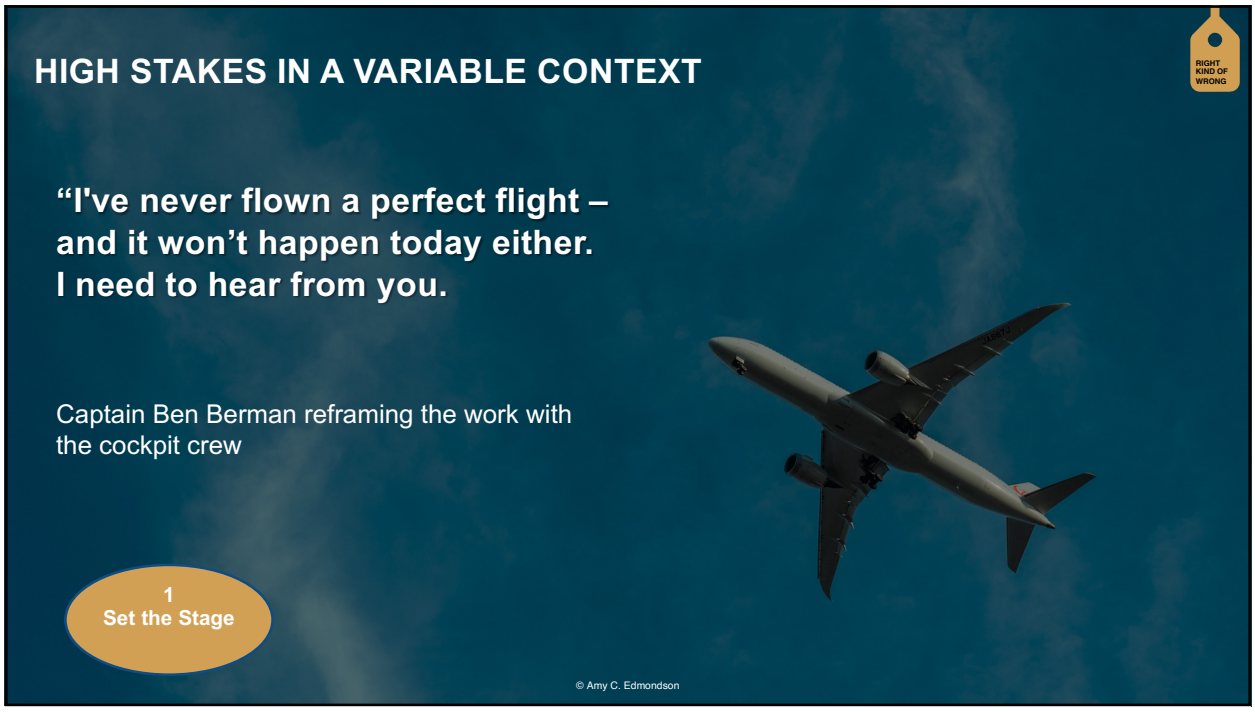
"The business of biomedical research is mostly about failure. Few projects…will result in success. But every study we do contributes to the body of knowledge that brings science and society closer to a solution."

-Ken Frazier, CEO, Merck

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SET THE STAGE: CULTIVATE CONTEXT AWARENESS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Consistent contexts
Variable contexts
Novel contexts
Higher stakes
Lower stakes
1
Set the Stage
Practice Caution Where It's needed…
and have fun experimenting when the stakes are low
© Amy C. Edmondson

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HIGH STAKES IN A VARIABLE CONTEXT
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
"I've never flown a perfect flight –
and it won't happen today either.
I need to hear from you.
Captain Ben Berman reframing the work with the cockpit crew
1
Set the Stage
© Amy C. Edmondson

32

LOW STAKES IN A VARIABLE CONTEXT

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

I reserve the right to get smarter today, and I would love for you to help me.

Kathy David



Kathy David

Territory Leader & Partner | Audit & Assurance, Business Risk Services and Corporate Services CONSULTING COMPANY GRANT THORNTON

1
Set the Stage

33

RE-FRAMING THE WORK:

ADDING VALUE IS ABOUT FINDING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS TOGETHER

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

And Mr. Cho kind of looked at me.

I could see he was puzzled.

*He said, "Jim-san. We all know you are a good manager, otherwise we would not have hired you. But please **talk to us about your problems** so we can work on them together."*



1
Set the Stage

*Charles Fishman (2006). No Satisfaction at Toyota. Fast Company, 111, p. 82.

34

ASK YOURSELF

How often do I emphasize an inspiring purpose?

How frequently do I call attention to context – to how much is known and to what's at stake – to clarify the importance of voice & risk?

Set the Stage

© Amy C. Edmondson

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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

How to encourage intelligent failure

1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

2 Create Space to Explore

- ✓ Create *space* for experiments
- ✓ *Clarify the difference* between preventable and intelligent failures

© Amy C. Edmondson

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ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Good questions focus on what matters, invite careful thought, and give people room to respond.

To broaden the discussion	To deepen the discussion
What do others think?	What leads you to think so?
What are we missing?	What's the concern that you have about that?
What other options could we consider?	How would that work in action?
How would a competitor approach this?	Can you explain that further?
Who has a different perspective?	What do you think might happen if we did X?

Invite Exploration

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PROMOTE EXPERIMENTING: A GUIDE TO SMART RISKS

1 New Territory
What aspect is new and unknown?

2 Opportunity Driven
What positive outcome would make the risk of failure worth it?

3 Prior Knowledge
What do we already know that we can use to inform our hypothesis

4 Small Bets
What small experiment will help us learn quickly while making failure survivable?

Invite Exploration

© Amy C. Edmondson

5.
How will you analyse the results? What will you be looking for? Who will you involve to understand what happened?

38

ASK YOURSELF

How much space do I create for exploration?

How often do I ask good questions or initiate exploratory conversations?

Invite Exploration

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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

How to encourage intelligent failure

1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

2 Invite Exploration

- ✓ Ask good questions
- ✓ Clarify the difference between intelligent failure and sloppy work

3 Respond & Reinforce

- ✓ Share news about *all* failures as widely as possible
- ✓ *Reward speaking up* about mistakes, problems and failures

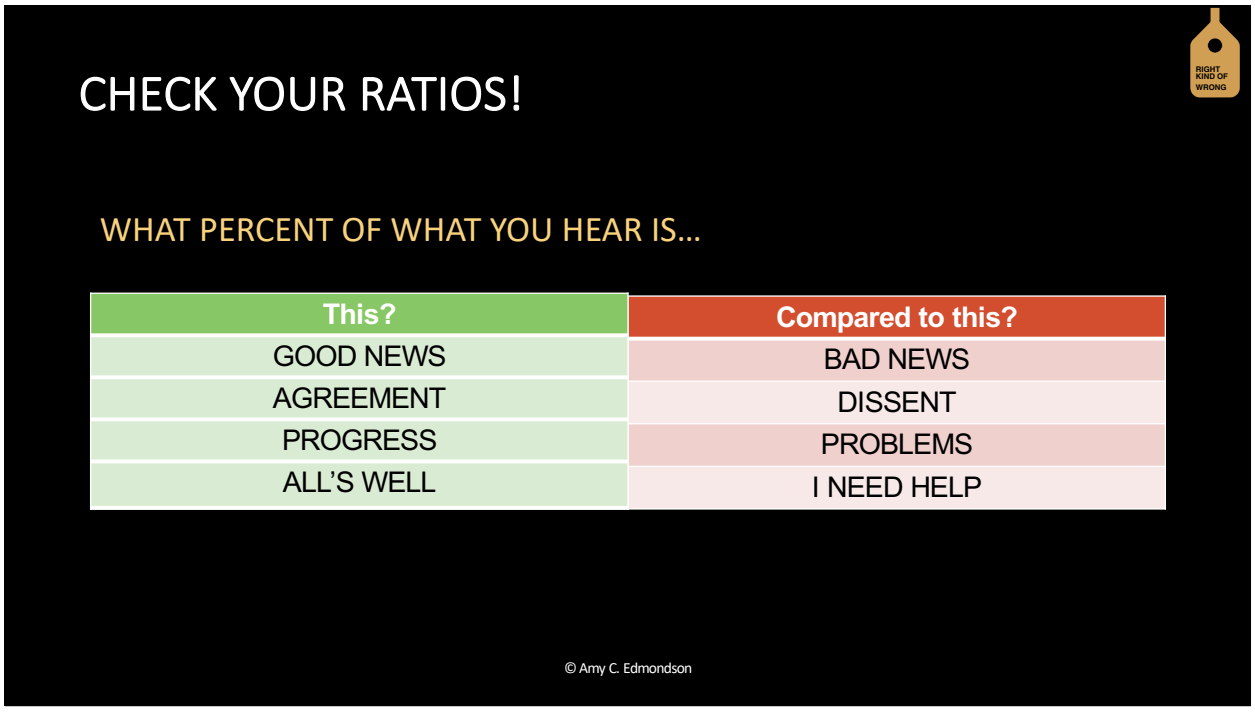
Should you go so far as to have "failure parties"?

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HARTMANN VIAFLO
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
A Failure Party?
✓ Rewards & celebrates the work
✓ Ensures the lessons are shared
✓ Encourages timely closure
Eli Lilly & Alimta
Respond & Reinforce
© Amy C. Edmondson

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CHECK YOUR RATIOS!
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
WHAT PERCENT OF WHAT YOU HEAR IS…
This?
Compared to this?
GOOD NEWS
BAD NEWS
AGREEMENT
DISSENT
PROGRESS
PROBLEMS
ALL'S WELL
I NEED HELP
© Amy C. Edmondson

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ASK YOURSELF
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
How do I reward speaking up?
How do I respond to bad news?
What do I do to promote failure sharing to build a culture of risk-taking and learning?
Respond & Reinforce
© Amy C. Edmondson

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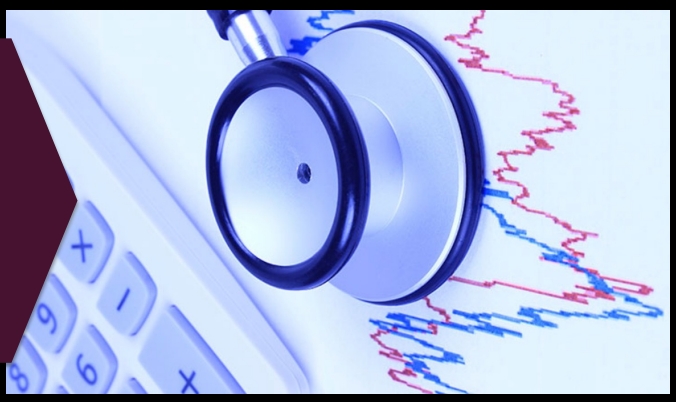

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Unlocking growth through intelligent failures
✓ Convey ambitious, meaningful goals
✓ Call attention to context
✓ Invite and support exploration
✓ Celebrate learning in all its forms
Set the Stage
Invite Exploration
Respond & Reinforce
© Amy C. Edmondson

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A RECIPE FOR EXCELLENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

Aim High
Team Up
Fail Well
Learn Fast
Repeat



© Amy C. Edmondson

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Coaching in Organizations

2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

5th Biennial International Columbia Coaching Conference

SHERLOCK's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · AFTERNOON OCTOBER 15, 2025

1

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14–16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

AI Coaching — The Next Frontier:
Evidence, Impact, and Debunking the Myths



Puja Brahmasmi
Co-CEO & CPO
Sherlock AI



Dr. Deep Bali
Co-CEO, Chief Mentor, Inventor & Founder
Sherlock AI



Kristina Shea
Business Futurist and Well-Being Scientist
Sherlock AI



Jazz Rasool
Research and Analysis
AI Coaching Alliance



Brett Badders
Global Head of Career Coaching
S&P Global



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Sherlock

THE WORLD'S FIRST COACHING NATIVE AI©

END QUIET FAILING.
UNLOCK 100% WORKFORCE POTENTIAL

SherlockSuperCoach.AI

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01

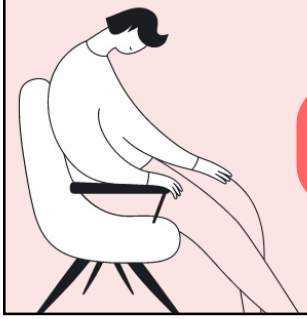
3

Quiet Failing = Hidden Enterprise Cost

Unsupported Managers
70%
Managers feel overwhelmed without coaching support.

Drifting Teams
23%
Productivity lost for lack of guidance and feedback

Cultural Erosion
30%
Feel recognized & encouraged in alignment with their values.



$438 billion
Global cost of employee disengagement

02

4

Evolving Workforce, Rising Risks

70% Millennials consider leaving
due to lack of guidance & real-time feedback

91% Demand personalized development
exposing a massive gap between expectation & reality

$36,295 Cost of Losing One Employee
before lost knowledge and disruption

The Impact

Bleeding Cash
Costly turnover & disengagement

Choking Growth
Innovation stalls, customer trust erodes

Eroding Value
A silent drain on long-term enterprise worth



03

5

Sherlock
The World's first Coaching Native AI

Born in Coaching
Sherlock is built on 10,000+ hours of elite executive coaching from master coaches and coaching scientists, encoding proven methodologies and human wisdom. Not a chatbot with bolt-on features, but a true AI-powered coaching platform—backed by coaching science, leading academicians, and research

Raised in AI
The only no-human-in-the-loop coaching platform, delivering consistent, measurable quality at enterprise scale. Evidence-based, bias-checked, and built enterprise-ready

Every Manager, Empowered 24/7
From middle managers to frontline leaders, Sherlock makes coaching always-on, giving every manager real-time support, anytime they need it.



Sustainable Enterprise Performance
Drive productivity, performance, innovation, and well-being at scale with development that's continuous, cost-effective, and built to last.



Measurable Impact
Sherlock quantifies, optimizes, and proves impact delivering data-driven outcomes your organization can see and trust.



04

6

Sherlock AI Coaching Platform

Real Coaching, Grounded in Science, End-to-End, and Adaptive

Deep coaching science & research

Scientific underpinning : coaching psychology, behavioural science, neuroscience & emotional intelligence & multiple development frames

Full end to end coaching platform

From coaching intake and context mapping to tools and actionable insights—reinforced by nudges and ongoing check-ins—and measurable analytics for the organization

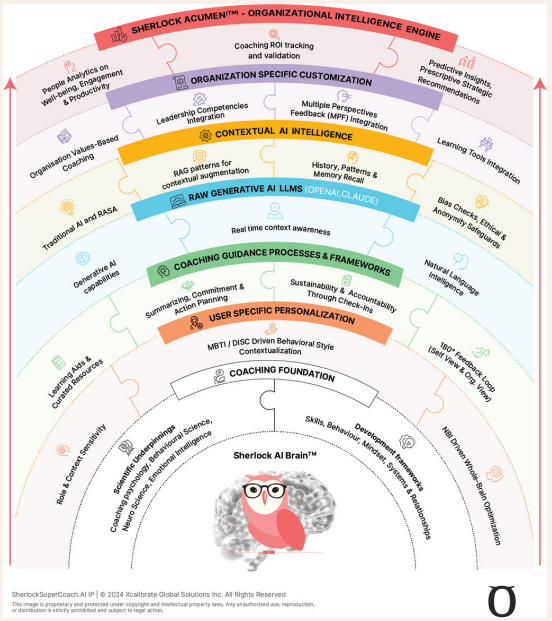
Adaptive & Evolving

Listens across dimensions to build a contextual baseline, learns with every interaction, and surfaces behavioral patterns across coaching conversations

Personalised, Contextualised & Customizable

Tailored to each individual's context, behaviors, and thinking preferences—and customizable to align with organizational culture and values

05



7

Real-Time Workplace Intelligence

Sherlock ACUMEN™

Supports Leaders Data-Driven Decision Making

Impact & Engagement

Monitor team dynamics and coaching effectiveness

Behavioral Signals & Mindset Shifts

Track growth through measurable shifts in behavior

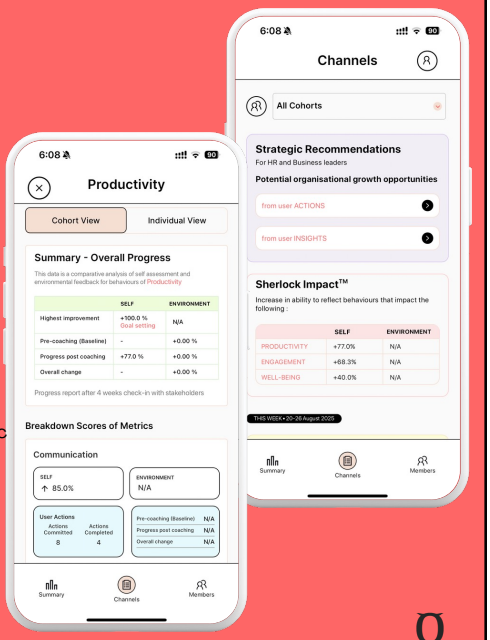
Intelligence & Recommendations

Turn cohort insights into clear organizational strategic actions

Well-being & Growth

Assess cohort health and development trends





07

8

Why Sherlock?

Measurability

Real-time visibility into what's working and what's changing.

Unlike traditional coaching, every interaction generates actionable data that informs strategic decisions and demonstrates clear ROI

Scalability

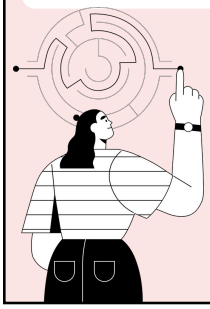
Enterprise coaching without the enterprise price tag.

Deliver personalized, high-quality coaching to thousands of employees simultaneously, breaking traditional resource constraints

Sustainability

Behavior change that sticks, not just sparks.

Our AI creates lasting transformation through consistent reinforcement and personalized follow-through



AI that turns engagement into action that sticks

09

9

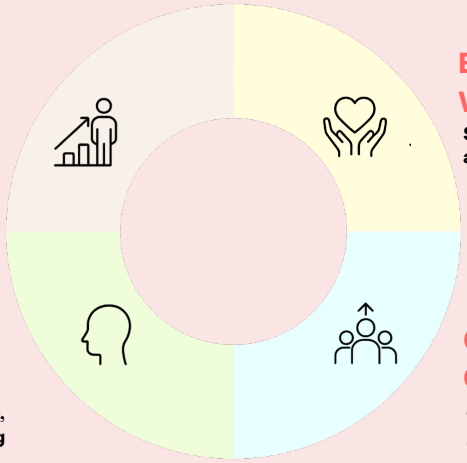
Sherlock Powers Your People Development Strategy with AI

Talent Development & Acceleration

Personalized development pathways aligning business needs and individual aspirations

Engagement, Retention, & Well-being

Support that sustains engagement, growth, and well-being



Leadership Development

Building next-gen leaders with adaptive, contextual coaching

Culture & Behavior Change at Scale

Transform culture with values-based coaching in daily workflows

08

10

Bespoke Coaching Strands







Coaching in the moment

for clarity, comfort, & confidence
for day-to-day workplace challenges

Coaching Horizons

for building skills, vision, & momentum for long term growth

Coaching for Well-Being

for strengthening mindset & nurturing well-being

1000+ Coaching Conversations. **2,000+** Users. **92%** Effectiveness

06

11

Outcomes and Client Success

Across pilots and paid licenses

Guardian

ATLAS AIR

NYU

KPMG

KORN FERRY

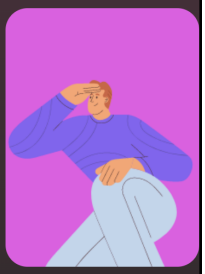


+53%
Well-being
Overall mental and emotional well-being has seen a marked improvement

>60%
Action Completion
Regular check-ins lead to more completed actions.

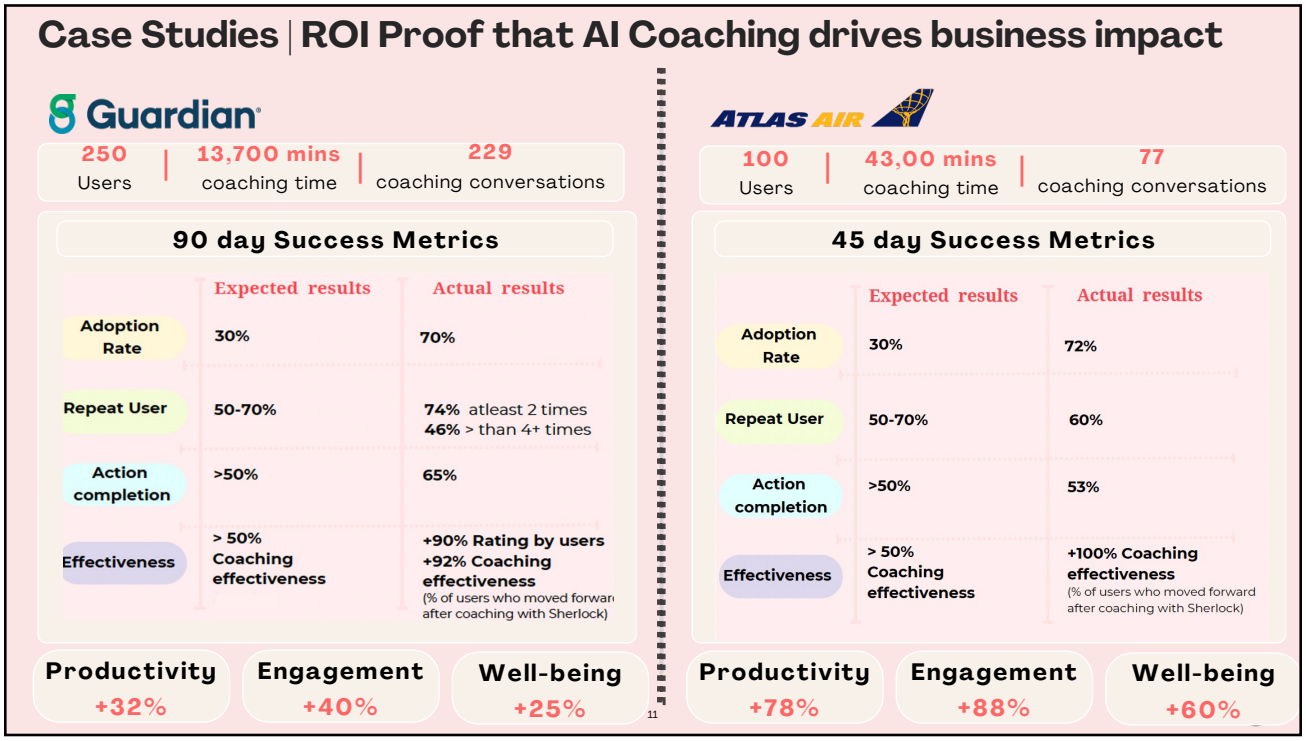
+55%
Productivity
Demonstrated behaviors that drive productivity have increased significantly.

+64%
Engagement
Engagement levels have surged across various dimensions.

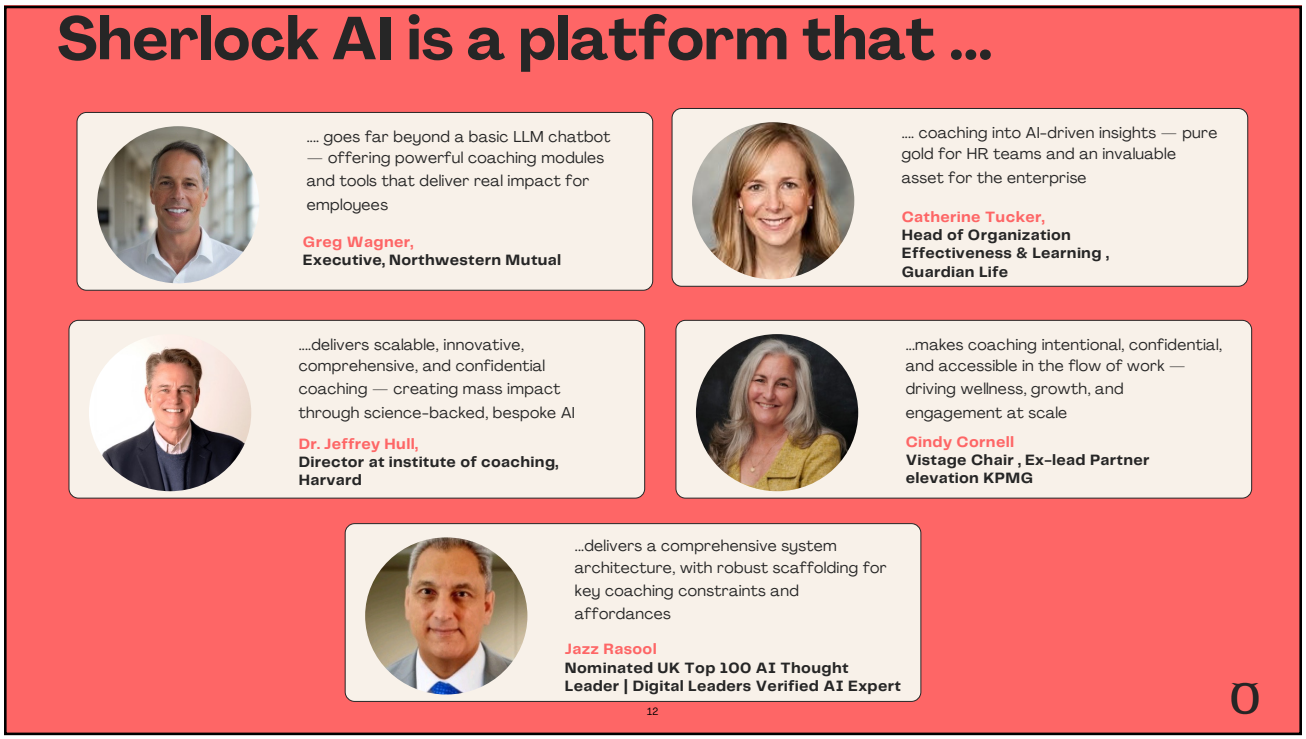


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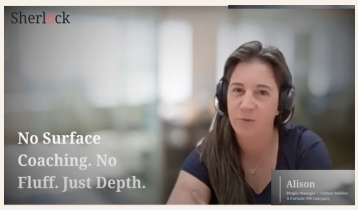

Case Studies | ROI Proof that AI Coaching drives business impact
Guardian
250 Users
13,700 mins coaching time
229 coaching conversations
90 day Success Metrics
Expected results
Actual results
Adoption Rate
30%
70%
Repeat User
50-70%
74% atleast 2 times
46% > than 4+ times
Action completion
>50%
65%
Effectiveness
> 50% Coaching effectiveness
+90% Rating by users
+92% Coaching effectiveness
(% of users who moved forwar after coaching with Sherlock)
Productivity +32%
Engagement +40%
Well-being +25%
11
ATLAS AIR
100 Users
43,00 mins coaching time
77 coaching conversations
45 day Success Metrics
Expected results
Actual results
Adoption Rate
30%
72%
Repeat User
50-70%
60%
Action completion
>50%
53%
Effectiveness
> 50% Coaching effectiveness
+100% Coaching effectiveness
(% of users who moved forward after coaching with Sherlock)
Productivity +78%
Engagement +88%
Well-being +60%

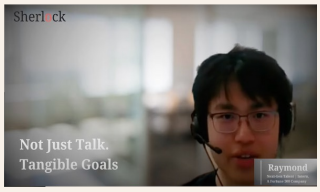
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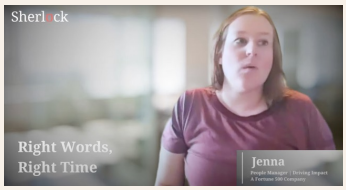

Sherlock AI is a platform that ...
.... goes far beyond a basic LLM chatbot — offering powerful coaching modules and tools that deliver real impact for employees
Greg Wagner,
Executive, Northwestern Mutual
.... coaching into AI-driven insights — pure gold for HR teams and an invaluable asset for the enterprise
Catherine Tucker,
Head of Organization Effectiveness & Learning , Guardian Life
....delivers scalable, innovative, comprehensive, and confidential coaching — creating mass impact through science-backed, bespoke AI
Dr. Jeffrey Hull,
Director at institute of coaching, Harvard
...makes coaching intentional, confidential, and accessible in the flow of work — driving wellness, growth, and engagement at scale
Cindy Cornell
Vistage Chair , Ex-lead Partner elevation KPMG
...delivers a comprehensive system architecture, with robust scaffolding for key coaching constraints and affordances
Jazz Rasool
Nominated UK Top 100 AI Thought Leader | Digital Leaders Verified AI Expert
12

14

Direct from Some of Our Users







★★★★★

+ Emotional & Mental Support
"Sherlock provides an outlet without adding worries to my shoulders. It helps me pause, change my mindset, slow my thinking, and offers good ideas to solve situations."

+ Psychological Safety
"Sherlock felt more personal and had human touch. I didnt feel judged"

+ On-time Coaching Support
"Sherlock helped me prepare for my performance reviews"

+ Gamification
"The gamification features motivate me to use the app—it taps into my competitive side."

13

15

AI Coaching Difference

(Sherlock compared to LLMs (Chatgpt, Claude..)

	Sherlock AI Coaching		Generic LLMs Coaching
Coaching Conversation Architecture			
	Designed with deep evidence-based coaching models		Surface-level inquiry
	Built-in coaching intelligence (No need for users to know prompts)		Prompt-dependent guidance
	Context augmented chats for personalized experience	☑ ☒	No integration for such augmented context
	Integrates learning tools in chats for JIT learning	☑ ☒	No such integration possible
	Calibrated through silence, tone & language		Based on end user knowledge of prompting
Measurability			
	Data driven analytics on what matters to organizations		No measurability available
	Quantifiable coaching ROI	☑ ☒	Does not track ROI
	Strategic predictive and prescriptive actionable recommendations		Does not support
Sustainability			
	Remembers past & supports continuity across sessions		Isolated interactions across sessions
	Regular check-ins on actions tailored to individual thinking	☑ ☒	No follow-through mechanism available
	180° feedback integration		Feedback absent
Customization (Organization Specific)			
	Integrates organization specific values-based coaching		Generic coaching
	Integrates leadership competencies-based coaching	☑ ☒	One-size-fits all guidance
	Seamless organization specific learning tools integration		Lacks support for organization learning system
User specific Personalization			
	Leverages user thinking and behavior preferences	☑ ☒	No cognitive or thinking tailored coaching
Be-spoke Coaching			
	Multiple be-spoke coaching modules : Career Progression, Agility, Resilience & more...	☑ ☒	No be-spoke coaching

14

16

2025 Sherlock AI Enterprise Pricing Plan

Pilot Plan

$12 per user/month

100-250 licenses
(3-month subscription)

- Full access to Coaching platform
- No Sherlock Acumen™ access. Reports shared at pilot end
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Enterprise Plan

$12 per user/month

500-5,000 licenses
(Annual subscription)

- Full access to Coaching platform
- Complete Sherlock Acumen™ access.
- HR team training included
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Global Plan

Speak to Us

5000+ licenses
(Annual subscription)

- Full platform suite access
- Dedicated success manager
- Custom integrations available
- 24/7 enterprise support
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Additional Investment: $10,000 annual flat fee for advanced analytics platform (included in Enterprise and Global plans)

Securities and Standard Compliances

15

17

Creators, Core Leadership & Coaching Science Team

DR. DEEP BALI
Co-CEO & Chief Mentor, Inventor & Co-Founder
Global master coach with 7,000+ hours experience; Forbes Coaches Council & Columbia University ACI.



PUJA BRAHMASMI
Co-CEO & CPO, Co-Creator & Co-Founder
Seasoned Business Leader & Executive Coach (Columbia Certified); Tech Product Builder; Former VP at Publicis Sapient



KRISTINA SHEA
Chief Business Futurist
Well-Being Scientist & ICF-Certified Coach; Former Deputy Director & Finance Leader.



Backed by Research and a Renowned Science Board

With deep expertise in neuroscience, psychology, and organizational science



Prof. Jeffrey Hull
Best-Selling Author, Harvard Faculty- Inst. Of Coaching



Anna Gallotti
Co-Chair ICF AI & Coaching Task Force



Dr. Woody Woodward
Head of Coaching at BetterUp, Ex Director NYU SPS Coaching



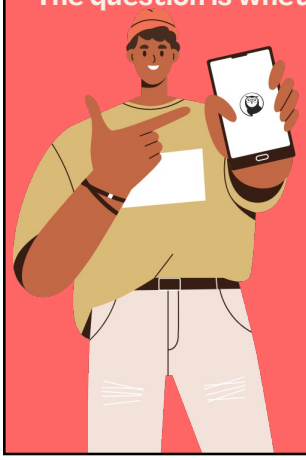
Cindy Cornell
Vistage Chair, Ex Deloitte, Executive Coach, KPMG, NYU, Yale

16

18

Ready to End Quiet Failing?

The future of people development is here.
The question isn't whether AI coaching will transform your organization.
The question is whether you'll lead that transformation.



Contact us at pivot@sherlocksupercoach.ai for a demo

18

19



Sherlock

Contact

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Co-CEO, CPO, Co-Creator & Founder
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SherlockSuperCoach.AI

Confidential | XCalibrate Global Solutions Inc. | 2025

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20

Go to The App…

- Conference Program Schedule
- Wednesday – 2:00 - 3:30 PM Block
- Coaching in Organizations | Sherlock – The World's First Native AI
- Rate This Session (Stars)
- Discussion: Insert key observation, insight, and/or Action Commitment

21

Up Next – Day 2: Journey Continues…



Concurrent Sessions – Round 2 | 2:00 – 3:30 PM



Afternoon Break | 3:30 – 4:00 PM



Closing Keynote Address | 4:00 – 5:30 PM

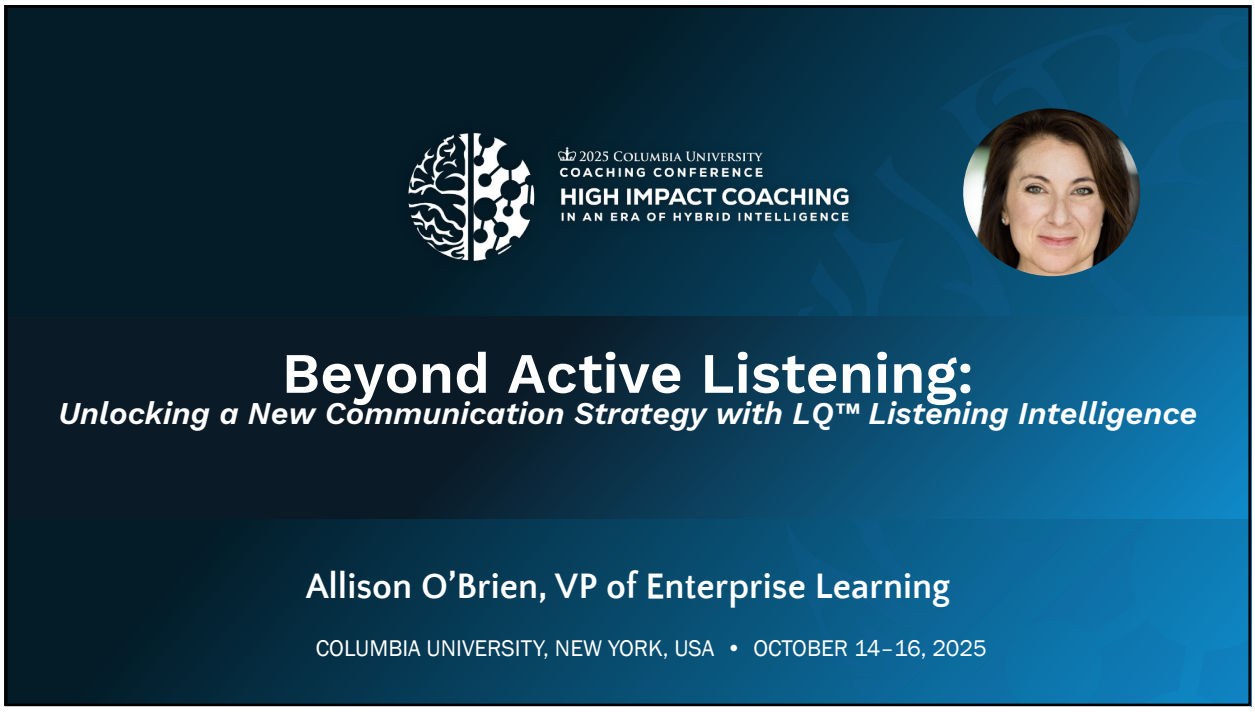


Open Evening

22


2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
5th Biennial International
Columbia Coaching Conference
LQ's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · MORNING OCTOBER 15, 2025

1


2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
Beyond Active Listening:
Unlocking a New Communication Strategy with LQ™ Listening Intelligence
Allison O'Brien, VP of Enterprise Learning
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA • OCTOBER 14–16, 2025

2


LQ™
Listening Intelligence
BEYOND ACTIVE LISTENING
Unlocking a New Communication Strategy with Listening Intelligence

3


What makes a good
LISTENER?
LQ™
Listening Intelligence

4



5

The Cost of Poor Listening

TIME: Teams lose the equivalent of **nearly an entire workday (7.47 hours)** per employee each week due to poor communication

REVENUE: A US company with 500 full-time employees **loses** between $6.25 and $13 million annually

ENGAGEMENT: **91%** of employees said their leaders lack communication skills. **82%** of employees surveyed say they would consider **quitting their job** because of poor leadership.

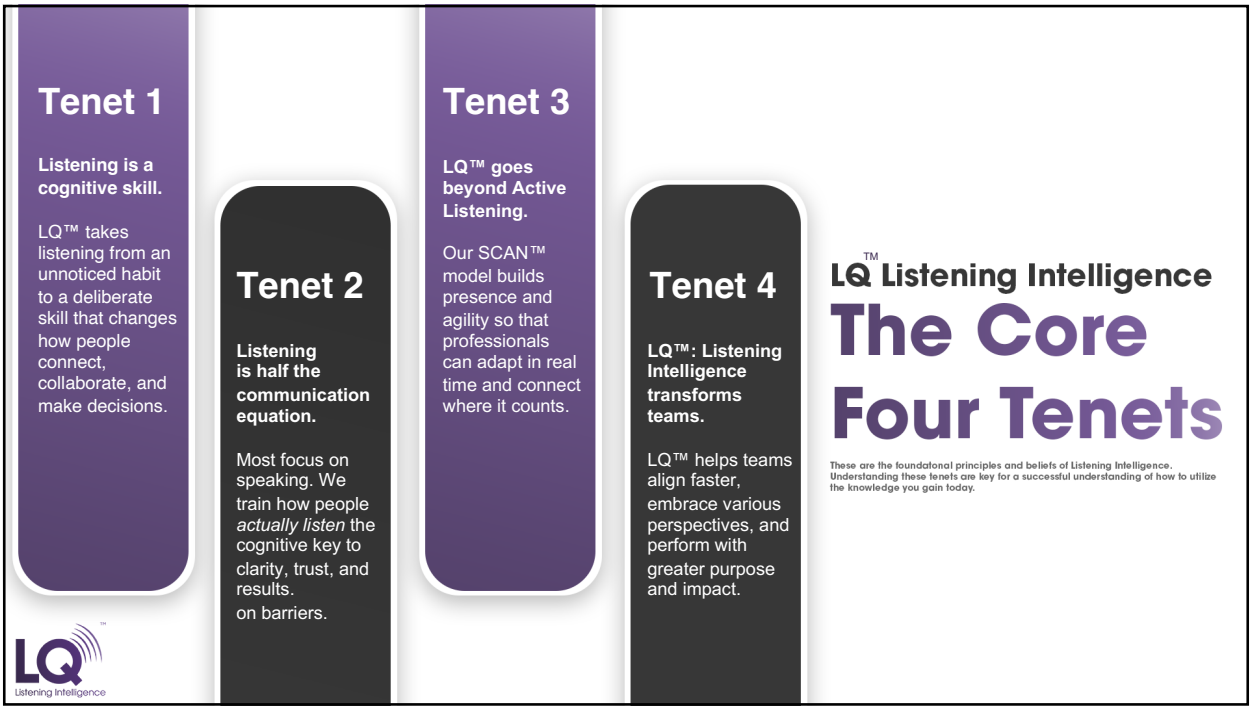
PERFORMANCE: **86% of employees and executives** cite lack of collaboration and ineffective communication for **workplace failures**.

TRUST: A study of over 4,200 leaders found that those rated as **poor listeners** ranked in only the **15th percentile for trust**, while **excellent listeners** reached the **86th percentile**.

CONFLICT: **80%** of workplace conflicts stem from poor communication.

LQ
Listening Intelligence

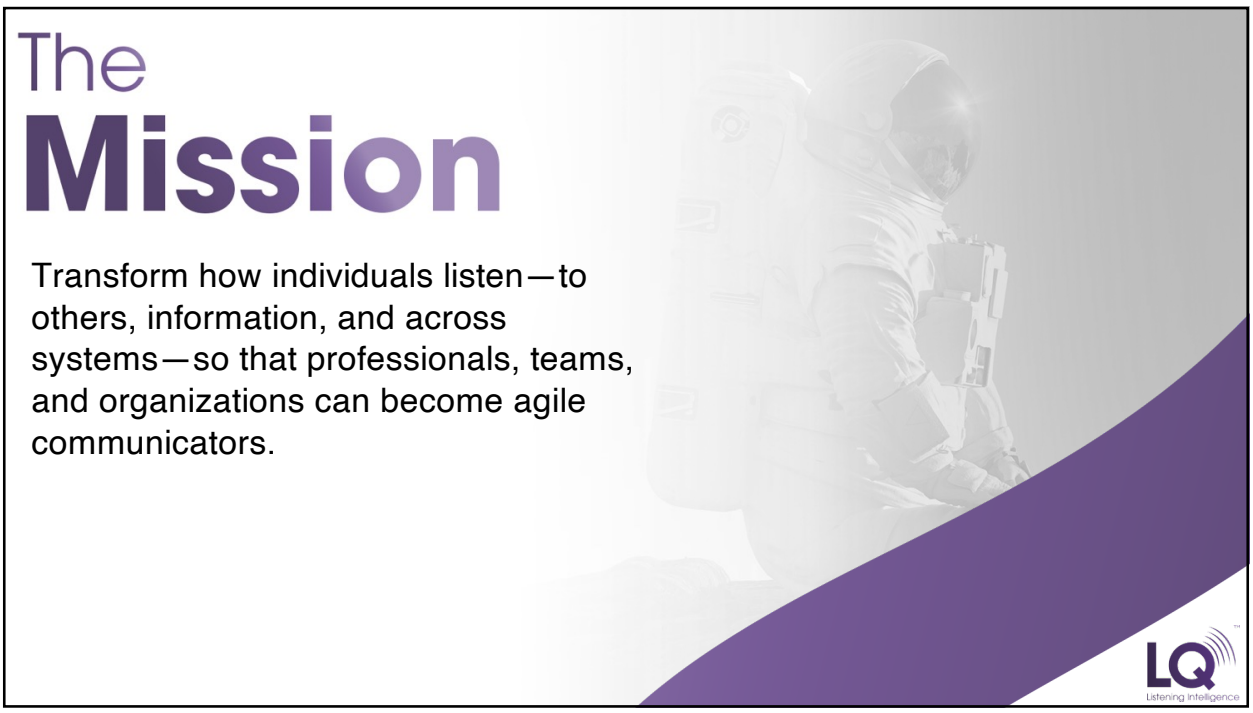
6


Tenet 1
Listening is a cognitive skill.
LQ™ takes listening from an unnoticed habit to a deliberate skill that changes how people connect, collaborate, and make decisions.
Tenet 2
Listening is half the communication equation.
Most focus on speaking. We train how people actually listen the cognitive key to clarity, trust, and results.
on barriers.
Tenet 3
LQ™ goes beyond Active Listening.
Our SCAN™ model builds presence and agility so that professionals can adapt in real time and connect where it counts.
Tenet 4
LQ™: Listening Intelligence transforms teams.
LQ™ helps teams align faster, embrace various perspectives, and perform with greater purpose and impact.
LQ™ Listening Intelligence
The Core Four Tenets
These are the foundational principles and beliefs of Listening Intelligence. Understanding these tenets are key for a successful understanding of how to utilize the knowledge you gain today.
LQ
Listening Intelligence

7


The
Vision
Activate a global movement where listening is profoundly intentional because when people are truly heard, they connect, collaborate, and contribute to one another and the world with greater purpose.
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8


The
Mission
Transform how individuals listen—to others, information, and across systems—so that professionals, teams, and organizations can become agile communicators.
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9


THE PROBLEM:
Misconceptions versus Reality.
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10

Active Listening Vs. Listening Intelligence

- Rooted in the humanistic approach to psychology, emphasizing empathy, understanding, and personal growth
- Often taught as a standard set of behaviors to give the impression one has the speaker's full attention
- Cultural understanding of what listening "looks like"

- A skill that can be developed with self-awareness, attention and intentional cognitive and behavioral adjustments applied in real-time
- A practical framework to achieve clarity, connection and alignment
- Goes beyond simply understanding another's feelings with prescriptive adjustments to improve the quality of the interaction

LQ™ Listening Intelligence

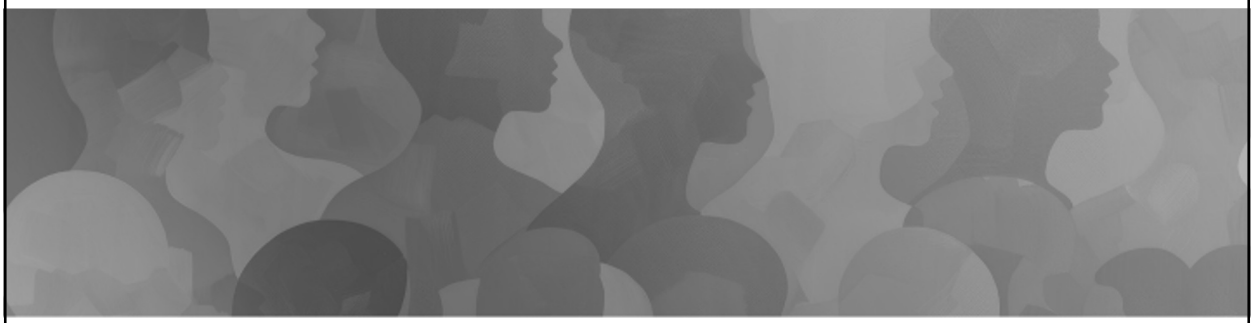
11

LISTENING INTELLIGENCE IS YOUR ABILITY TO:

Understand your own listening preferences

Recognize the listening preferences of others

Adapt to circumstances and people in real time



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LQ™ Listening Intelligence

12


ECHO's
ORIGIN STORY
LQ
Listening Intelligence

13


Just Listen
LQ
Listening Intelligence

14

We All Listen Differently

- We all process information differently with unique filters
- No two brains are alike
- We hear with our ears and LISTEN with our brain
- What we think about, care about and already know shifts our listening capacity.



LQ Listening Intelligence

15

Listening Is a Habit

Listening is a cognitive function and a measurable HABIT

hab.it /'habət/

(noun)

A habit is a routine or behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously.

LQ Listening Intelligence

The ECHO® Listening Profile
LIFT™ Training Program

16

Assessment Landscape

PERSONALITY	BEHAVIORAL	COGNITIVE
Analyzes internal values, drives, motivations and produces a personality or psychological profile.	Measures patterns of external behavior, focusing less on internal drives, values, etc.	Measures preferences based on how the individual's brain processes information.
E X A M P L E S		
• Myers Briggs • Kelrsey Temperament Sorter • Strengthsfinder	• DISC • Social Styles • Leadership Assessment Instrument	• ECHO Listening Profile • Emergenetics • Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument

17

ECHO® Validity Portfolio

The Echo Listening Profile: Initial Validity Evidence for a Measure of Four Listening Habits

Graham D. Bodie
School of Journalism and New Media, The University of Mississippi

International Journal of Listening,0:1–25, 2019 Copyright © International Listening Association ISSN: 1090-4018 print / 1932-586X online
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2019.1611433



The Echo Listening Profile: Initial Validity Evidence for a Measure of Four Listening Habits

Graham D. Bodie
School of Journalism and New Media, The University of Mississippi
John Winter, Dana Dupuis, and Tom Tompkins
2ECHO Listening Intelligence, LLC

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The Four Way We Listen
CONNECTIVE LISTENING
REFLECTIVE LISTENING
ANALYTICAL LISTENING
CONCEPTUAL LISTENING

19


CONNECTIVE LISTENING
FOCUSES on what the interaction means for others
FILTERS through interests in other people, groups, processes, and audiences

20

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

FOCUSES on what the interaction means for them

FILTERS what is heard through one's own experiences, interests and purposes



21

ANALYTICAL LISTENING

FOCUSES on what the interaction means to an issue or objective situation

FILTERS what is heard through interest in results and facts



22

CONCEPTUAL LISTENING

FOCUSES on the big picture and ideas, often abstract

FILTERS what is heard through an interest in concepts and possibilities



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Sample Profile Report

PAGE 4

- We all listen in all four ways
- You may show dominance in one or more of the habits
- Scoring shows degree or strength of preference relative to other habits



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Listening Intelligence Is Your Ability To:

Understand
your own
listening preferences

Recognize
the listening preferences of
others

Adapt
to circumstances
and people in real time

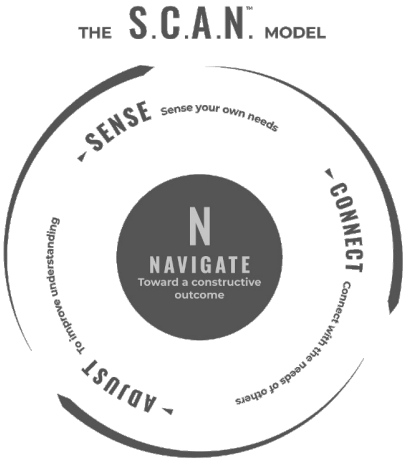
S.C.A.N.™

The **framework** we use to apply our **LQ™ Training**

Sense **C**onnect **A**djust **N**avigate

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The LQ™ S.C.A.N. Model™

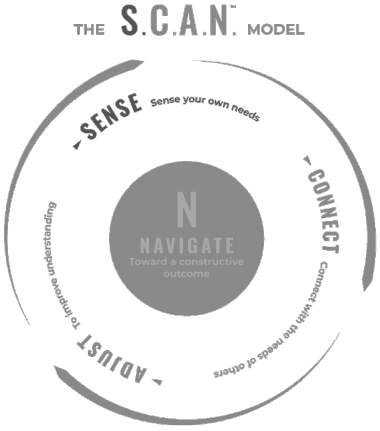


26

Sense Your Own Needs

FOCUSES ON:

- What is important to me in this situation?
- Are the habit(s) am I relying on effective given the situation?
- Are events, conditions or emotions affecting my listening?

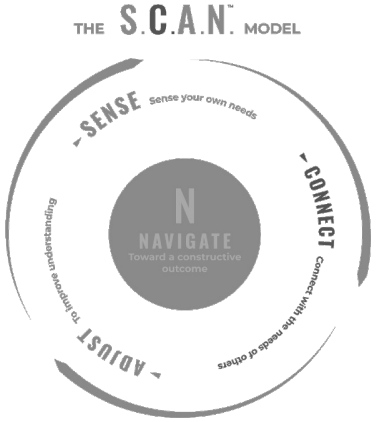


27

Connect With The Needs of Others

FOCUSES ON:

- What do I believe is important to them?
- Can I identify their listening habits?
- Are events, conditions or emotions affecting their listening?

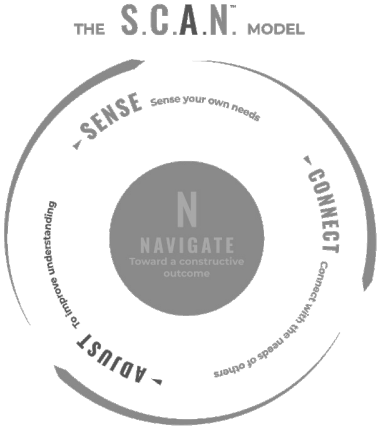


28

Adjust to Improve Your Understanding

FOCUS ON:

- How do I stay agile and adjust as the conversation shifts?
- How can I address what is important to them while speaking into their listening preferences?

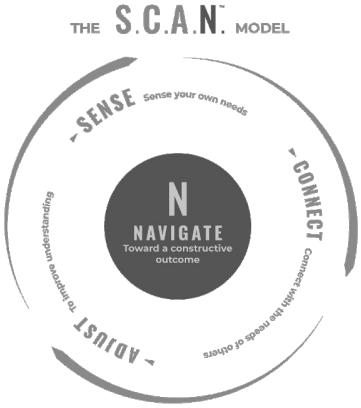


29

Navigate To a Constructive Outcome

FOCUS ON:

- How can I move the conversation toward a successful outcome using all stages of SCAN?
- How can I appreciate the cognitive and listening diversity of others in the conversation?



30



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Harvard Business Review

Teams Solve Problems Faster When They're More Cognitively Diverse

Alison Reynolds and David Lewis

Studied differences that go beyond gender, ethnicity or age

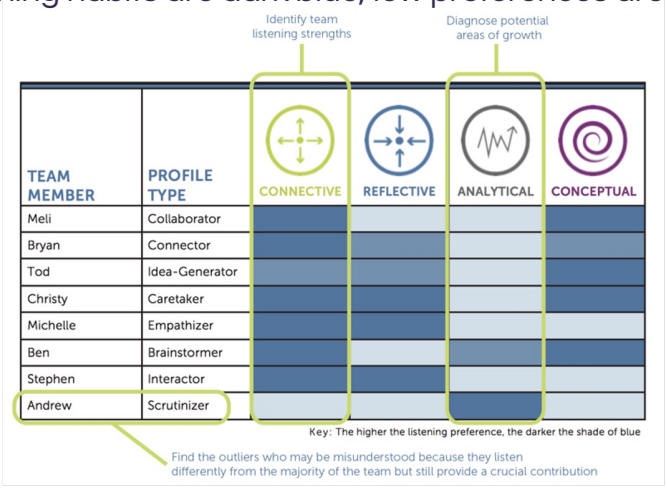


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The team grid is a display of a group's combined listening preferences. Dominant listening habits are dark blue, low preferences are light blue.



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Research Spotlight: Episodic Listening Theory

The Power of Listening at Work

Avraham N. Kluger and Guy Itzchakov

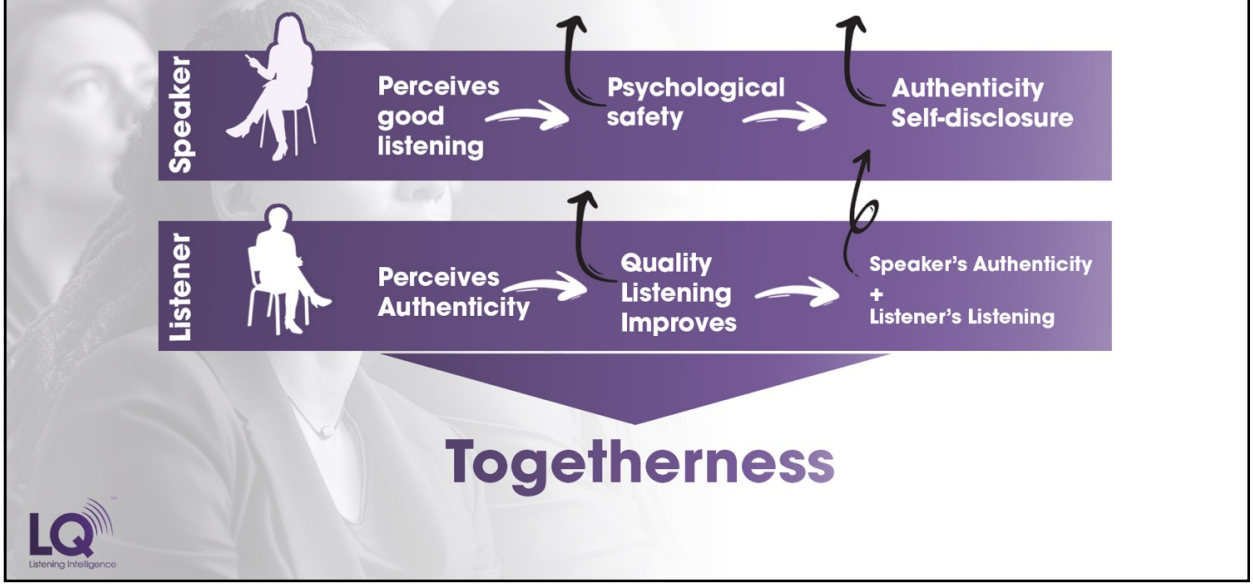
The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior

Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav. 2022. 9:121–46
First published as a Review in Advance on October 26, 2021



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Episodic Listening Theory



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Take-Aways

Individual Level:

Own the responsibility for being heard and understood
Slow down and pause
Observe yourself, Acknowledge what is at stake for others, Adjust as needed.

Team Level:

Use your new awareness to foster psychological safety
Leverage the SCAN™ framework
Harness cognitive diversity

Organizational Level:

Adopt a new approach to professional development
Emphasize listening as a critical business skill
Commit to listening as a core company value

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Listening Intelligence

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Put Insights Into Action

Take the ECHO™ listening assessment

Use this link:
https://echolisteningprofile.com/take-assessment

Use this code*: COLCC2025

*Code is case sensitive and valid through 10/22/2025

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Q&A

40

Go to The App…

- Conference Program Schedule
- Wednesday – 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Block
- Coaching in Organizations | Sherlock
- Rate This Session (Stars)
- Discussion: Insert key observation, insight, and/or Action Commitment

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Up Next – Day 2: Journey Continues…

- Lunch Break | 12:30 – 2:00 PM
- Concurrent Sessions – Round 2 | 2:00 – 3:30 PM
- Afternoon Break | 3:30 – 4:00 PM
- Closing Keynote Address | 4:00 – 5:30 PM
- Open Evening

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2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
5th Biennial International
Columbia Coaching Conference
AIIR's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · MORNING OCTOBER 14, 2025

1


Coaching in the Era of
Hybrid Intelligence:
How Human + AI Insights Drive
Behavior Change and
Organizational Impact
aiir consulting

2



3

WE ARE BEHAVIOR CHANGE EXPERTS

The AIIR® Method is our evidence-based process for creating sustained behavior change.

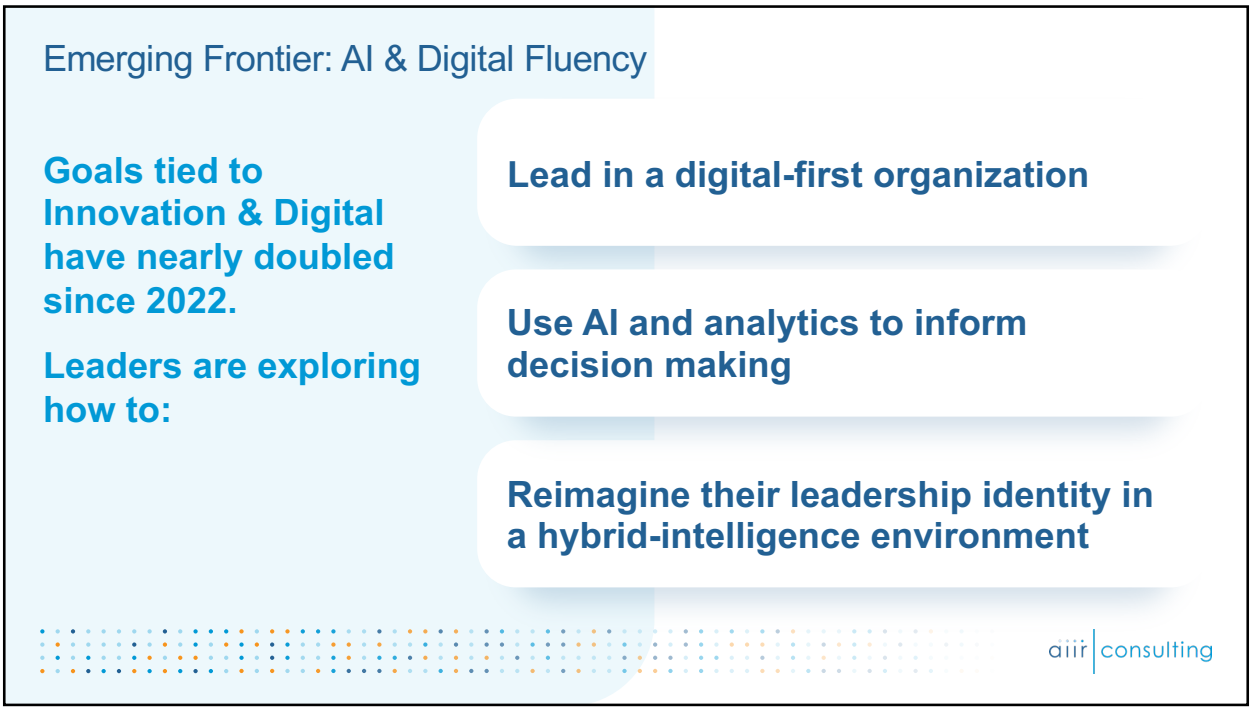
- **A**ssessment
- **I**nsight
- **I**mplementation
- **R**einforcement

aiir consulting

4


WE ARE LEADERSHIP EXPERTS
UNDERSTAND YOUR LEADERS
DEVELOP YOUR LEADERS
Leadership Genome® Success Profiles
Scalable Leadership Assessment
Leadership Pipeline Analytics
Executive Assessment & Succession Planning
Executive Coaching
Team Effectiveness
Leadership Development
Enterprise Solutions
aiir consulting

5


Emerging Frontier: AI & Digital Fluency
Goals tied to Innovation & Digital have nearly doubled since 2022.
Leaders are exploring how to:
Lead in a digital-first organization
Use AI and analytics to inform decision making
Reimagine their leadership identity in a hybrid-intelligence environment
aiir consulting

6

Today's Panelists:



Megan Marshall
Managing Partner
AIIR Consulting
(Moderator)



Holly Benner
Associate Director, Global Talent Management
Merck



Esther Margalit
AVP, Organizational Development
Northwell Health



Mike Smith
VP, Head of Learning and Development
Berkadia



Michael Wright
VP Leadership Development
FM

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7

Coaching that Drives Transformation

The coaching priorities gaining momentum are exactly those that help leaders navigate large-scale change:

- **Strategic Thinking (+ steep upward trend)**
- **Stakeholder Management and Influence (up sharply since 2023)**
- **Executive Presence (growing each year, especially in senior-level programs)**
- **Building Relationships (rising across industries as hybrid collaboration persists)**

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8

2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

5th Biennial International Columbia Coaching Conference

Birkman's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · AFTERNOON OCTOBER 14, 2025

1

2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE



5th Biennial International Columbia Coaching Conference

Rob Thompson, Birkman International

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA • OCTOBER 14–16, 2025

2

Human Judgment, Smart Data

AI as an Assistant

BIRKMAN

3

Human Judgment, Smart Data:

Coaching Excellence in an AI World

- Coaching lab - 2D archetypes coupled with 3D insight
- Birkman Insights & Coaching Competencies
- AI as an Assistant, that helps clarify complex concepts, distills context, and insights for coaching beyond 1:1 to teams level.

BIRKMAN

4

THE CASE:

Our Leader & Context

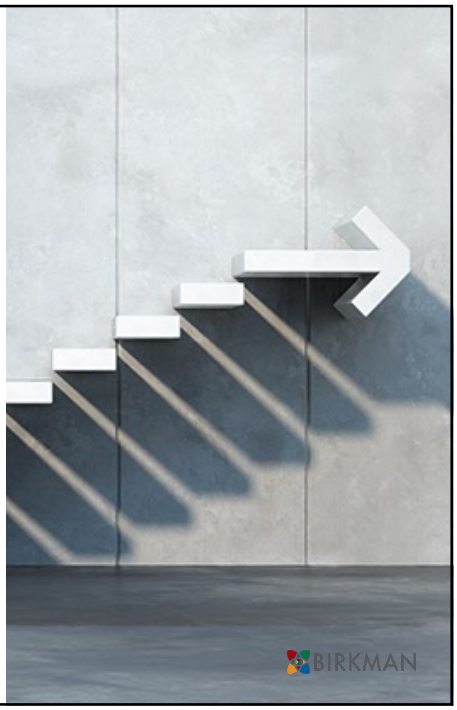
Our team and Leader - Jim Harrington

Jim Harrington — newly appointed SVP guiding a hybrid, cross-functional team

Context: inherited overlapping charters, high-stakes launch, with team he does not know well.

Early signs: decision churn, sharp negitive undertones in conversations, missed window, morale dip

Jim's Goal: "Align this team without losing speed; help me turn data into agreements."



5

Where should we start?

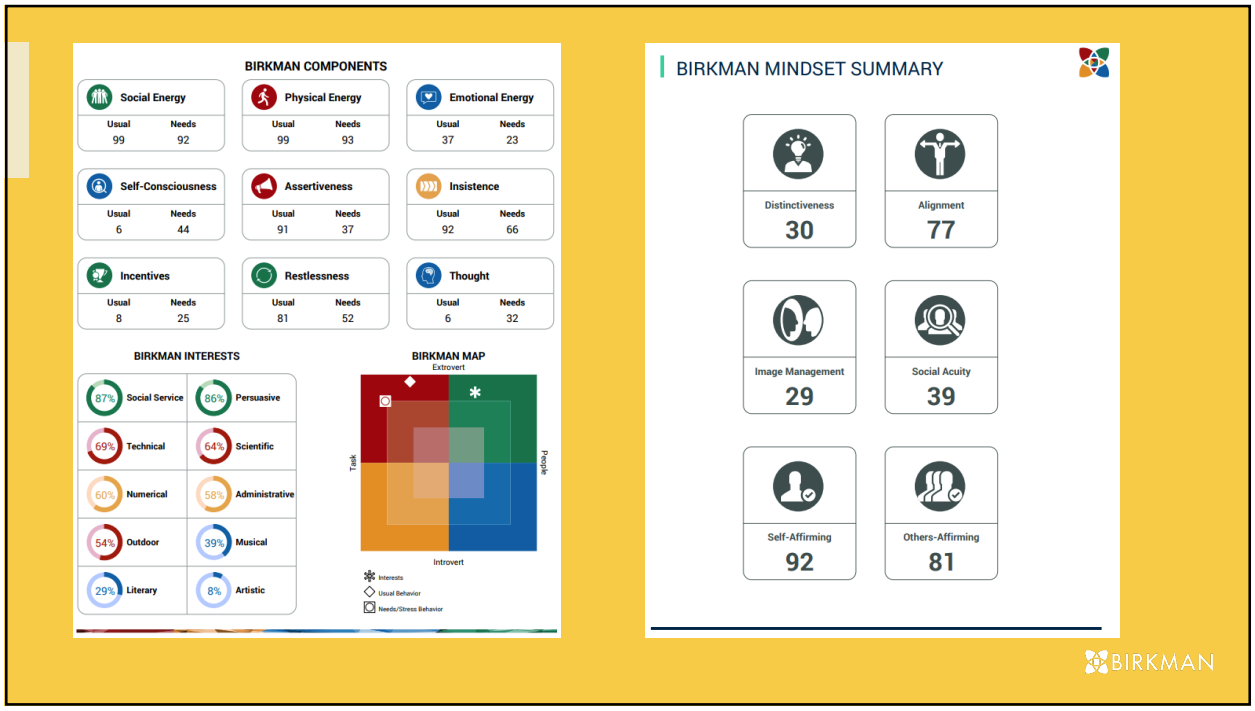
6


Birkman Measures Four Key Personality Dimensions
Interests
Usual Behavior
Stress
Needs
BIRKMAN

7


BIRKMAN INSIGHTS
Getting to Know Jim Harrington
BIRKMAN

8


BIRKMAN COMPONENTS
Social Energy
Usual 99
Needs 92
Physical Energy
Usual 99
Needs 93
Emotional Energy
Usual 37
Needs 23
Self-Consciousness
Usual 6
Needs 44
Assertiveness
Usual 91
Needs 37
Insistence
Usual 92
Needs 66
Incentives
Usual 8
Needs 25
Restlessness
Usual 81
Needs 52
Thought
Usual 6
Needs 32
BIRKMAN INTERESTS
87% Social Service
86% Persuasive
69% Technical
64% Scientific
60% Numerical
58% Administrative
54% Outdoor
39% Musical
29% Literary
8% Artistic
BIRKMAN MAP
Extrovert
Introvert
Task
People
Interests
Usual Behavior
Needs/Stress Behavior
BIRKMAN MINDSET SUMMARY
Distinctiveness 30
Alignment 77
Image Management 29
Social Acuity 39
Self-Affirming 92
Others-Affirming 81
BIRKMAN

9


From the Lab
BirkmanGPT
BIRKMAN

10

THE PROMPT

Getting to know the team

Team Molecule Hotspots

Analyze the team profiles for G5TSZW, G6XZQB, G5XD62, G6HL49, G2SQ5N, G4VD79, G5LB8L, G4HBPN, G6FMVW.

Map their data to Birkman Molecule clusters (communication, relationships, decision-making, competition, nurturing, change, delegation)

Output - powerful questions tied to Birkman patterns, this team shows (label which pattern each question targets)

Compared to Jim

BIRKMAN

11

AI ASSISTANT

3D Insights

Powerful Questions Tied to Birkman Patterns

Q - Who's holding a different view that hasn't been voiced yet?

Q - Are we moving fast because it's urgent—or because we're uncomfortable sitting in the gray?

Q - How will we know if a quieter teammate disagrees but isn't saying so?

BIRKMAN

12

Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

13

THE PROMPT

Helping Jim work with the Team.

Communication & Feedback Styles Map

Using Assertiveness, Self-Consciousness, Social/Emotional Energy, produce a communication styles map for all nine team members.

Output: matrix with style name (e.g., ‘Precise Builder’, ‘Fast-Track Challenger’), how to brief them, how to get their best critique, and what triggers Stress. Add a final section: ‘How Jim should adapt his tone for each persona’ in one line each.

BIRKMAN

14

AI ASSISTANT

3D Insights

How Jim Should Adapt His Tone for Each Persona

- Stephanie - Slow your pace and give her time to weigh in before closure.
- Janice - Soften challenge and ask for insight privately before meetings.
- Chance - Offer autonomy and resist over-framing his response.
- Patty - Be precise and consistent in language—don't shift expectations.
- Sue - Lower urgency, validate her observations, and leave space for reply.
- Pam - Lead with shared purpose, then layer in critique constructively.
- Patch - Use warm, affirming language and check for emotional cues.
- Maddy - Show her you value rigor—ask her to sharpen, not just agree.

BIRKMAN

15

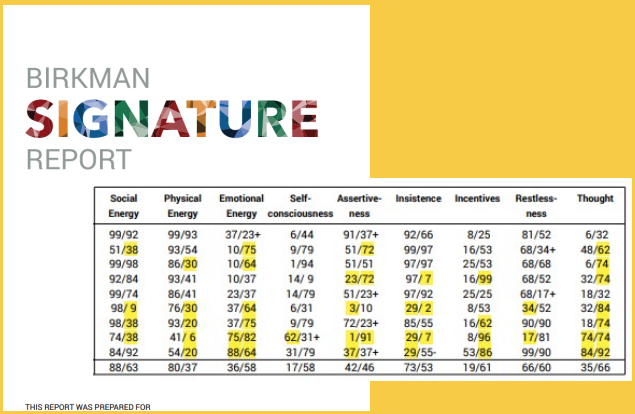
Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

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The Work of Jim's Birkman Coach



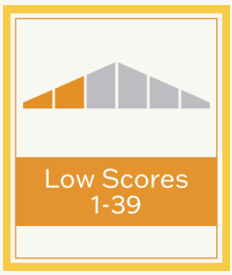


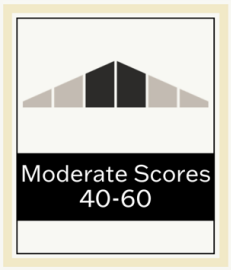
Social Energy	Physical Energy	Emotional Energy	Self-consciousness	Assertive-ness	Insistence	Incentives	Restless-ness	Thought
99/92	99/93	37/23+	6/44	91/37+	92/66	8/25	81/52	6/32
51/38	93/54	10/75	9/79	51/72	99/97	16/53	68/34+	48/62
99/98	86/30	10/64	1/94	51/51	97/97	25/53	68/68	6/74
92/84	93/41	10/37	14/ 9	23/72	97/ 7	16/99	68/52	32/74
99/74	86/41	23/37	14/79	51/23+	97/92	25/25	68/17+	18/32
98/ 9	76/30	37/64	6/31	3/10	29/ 2	8/53	34/52	32/84
98/38	93/20	37/75	9/79	72/23+	85/55	16/62	90/90	18/74
74/38	41/ 6	75/82	62/31+	1/91	29/ 7	8/96	17/81	74/74
84/92	54/20	88/64	31/79	37/37+	29/55-	53/86	99/90	84/92
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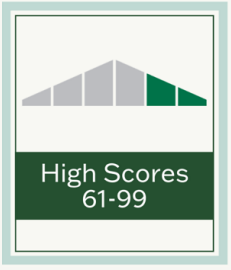
17

Birkman Components

There are three different scoring ranges for each Component. Each of these is a generalized range, and these numbers shift in either direction.







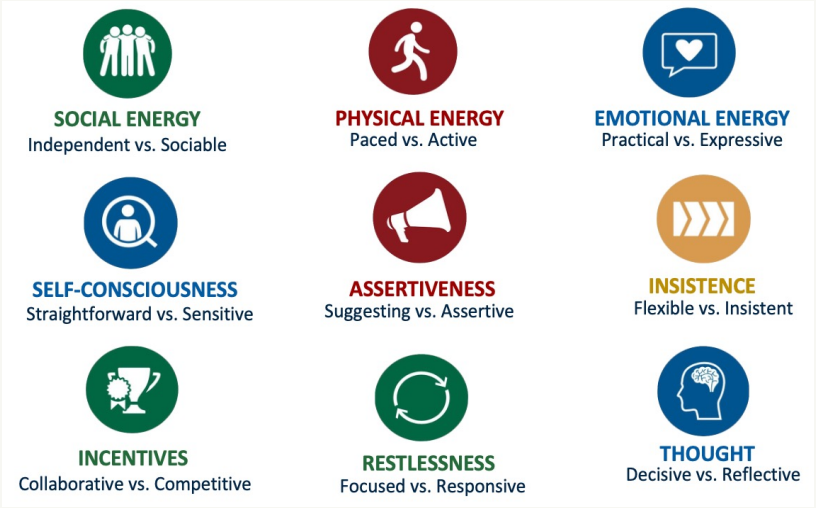
People with moderate scores may exhibit characteristics of either high or low component descriptions depending on the situation or context

BIRKMAN

18

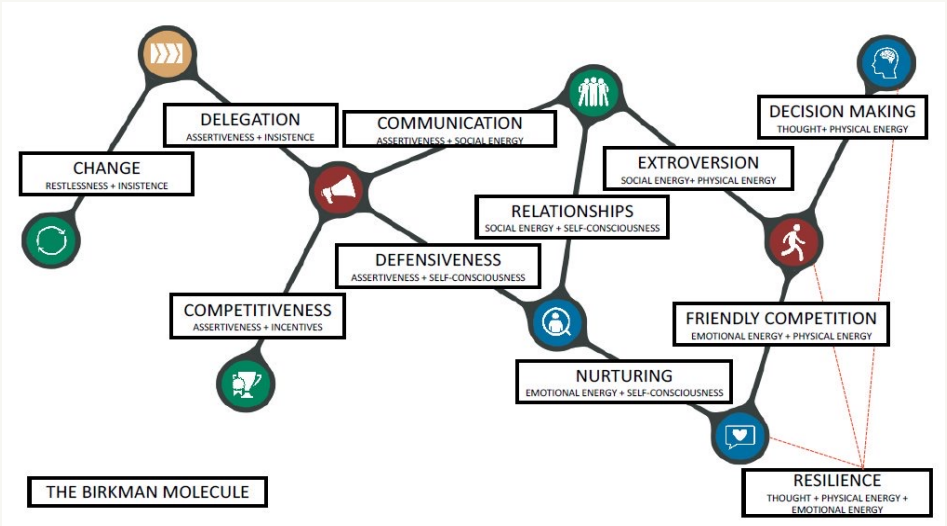
Nine Components — Overview

- **Energy:**
  - Social
  - Physical
  - Emotional
- **Sensitivity:**
  - Self-Consciousness
  - Assertiveness
- **Control/Order:**
  - Insistence
  - Incentives
  - Restlessness
  - Thought



19

Birkman Molecule – Clustered Dynamics



20

Birkman Components

SOCIAL ENERGY

Your sociability, approachability, and preference for group and team participation.



SOCIAL ENERGY

INDEPENDENT

- Works alone on projects
- Self-directed
- Independent thinker
- One-on-one communicator
- Selectively social
- Reserved in social situations

SOCIAL

- Friendly and welcoming
- Communicative in meetings
- Outgoing in new situations
- Builds business networks
- Active in group discussions
- Starts conversations easily

21

Birkman Components

PHYSICAL ENERGY

Your preferred pace for action and physical expression of energy.



PHYSICAL ENERGY

PACED

- Conserves energy
- Balances action with thought
- Paced approach to work
- Plans before acting
- Patient with long-term projects
- Looks at options before committing to action

ACTIVE

- High energy level
- Initiates action
- Direct, forceful, enthusiastic
- Physically active
- Strong sense of urgency
- Short term focus on tasks

22

Birkman Components

EMOTIONAL ENERGY

Your openness and comfort with expressing emotion.

PRACTICAL

- Objective and logical actions
- Keeps feelings to themselves
- Focus on practical solutions
- "What to do" is the first thought
- Facts have priority over feelings
- Minimizes involvement in emotional situations



EMOTIONAL ENERGY

EXPRESSIVE

- Emotionally expressive
- Warm, sympathetic feelings
- Listens to others' problems
- Acts on "gut" feelings
- Lets others know how they feel
- Emotionally aware

23

Birkman Components

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Your use of sensitivity when communicating with others.

STRAIGHTFORWARD

- Objective and logical actions
- Keeps feelings to themselves
- Focus on practical solutions
- "What to do" is the first thought
- Facts have priority over feelings
- Minimizes involvement in emotional situations



SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

SENSITIVE

- Sensitive to others' feelings
- Willing to commit time to conversation
- Asks questions to explore
- Careful not offend others
- Respects positions and power
- Serious, purposeful style

24

Birkman Components

ASSERTIVENESS

Your tendency to speak up and express opinions openly and forcefully.

SUGGESTING

- Suggests opinions for action
- Strives for agreement
- Avoids open clashes
- Pleasant, easygoing
- Verbally non-confrontational
- Democratic leadership style



ASSERTIVENESS

ASSERTIVE

- Verbally dominant
- Quick to take a stand
- Seeks to influence others
- Openly debates ideas
- Shares opinions openly
- Assertive leadership style

25

Birkman Components

INSISTENCE

Your approach to detail, structure, follow-through and routine.

FLEXIBLE

- Makes simple, broad plans
- Devises new plans quickly
- Acts spontaneously
- Takes calculated risks
- Autonomous
- Adapts easily to organizational change



INSISTENCE

INSISTENT

- Structured approach to work
- Creates order and systems
- Attentive to details of work
- Plans and executes
- Insistent on compliance
- Responds well to organizational structure

26

Birkman Components

INCENTIVES

Your drive for personal rewards or preference to share in group reward.

COLLABORATIVE

- Team player
- Promotes idealism and fairness
- Talks “we” instead of “me”
- Extends trust easily
- Decisions benefit the group
- Emphasizes long-term payoffs



INCENTIVES

COMPETITIVE

- Competes for rewards
- Capitalizes on opportunities
- Focuses on short-term benefits
- Values financial incentives
- Naturally negotiates
- Plays to win

27

Birkman Components

RESTLESSNESS

How you prefer to focus attention or change focus and seek varied activities.

FOCUSED

- Concentrates on issues
- Not easily distracted
- Completes one task before moving on
- Gives full attention to others
- Stays focused on the task
- Patient with drawn-out tasks or projects



RESTLESSNESS

RESPONSIVE

- Open to new ideas and actions
- Multi-tasks throughout the day
- Ready to start new projects
- Initiates frequent changes
- Adapts easily to variety
- Restless with drawn-out tasks or projects

28

Birkman Components

THOUGHT

Your decision-making process and concern for consequences in making the right decision.

DECISIVE

- Makes immediate decisions
- Grasps situations quickly
- Makes snap judgments
- Uses information on hand
- Changes mind quickly if the original decision does not work



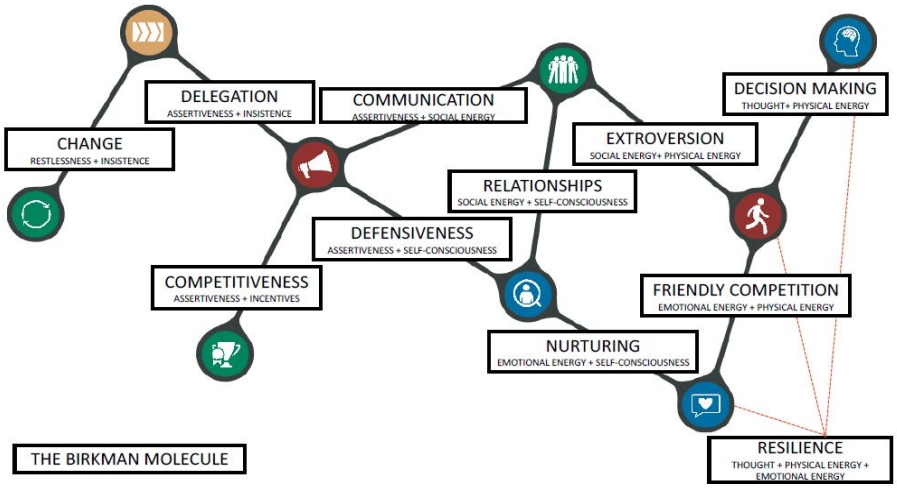
THOUGHT

REFLECTIVE

- Examines issues thoroughly
- Values depth of the decisions
- Aware of consequences
- Weighs both sides of issues
- Asks for data and opinions
- May revisit issues if new information arises

29

Birkman Molecule – Clustered Dynamics



30

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Social Energy	Physical Energy	Emotional Energy	Self-consciousness	Assertive-ness	Insistence	Incentives	Restless-ness	Thought
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98/9	76/30	37/64	6/31	3/10	29/2	8/53	34/52	32/84
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74/38	41/ 6	75/82	62/31+	1/91	29/7	8/96	17/81	74/74
84/92	54/20	88/64	31/79	37/37+	29/55-	53/86	99/90	84/92
88/63	80/37	36/58	17/58	42/46	73/53	19/61	66/60	35/66

This team is rich in diversity across how they communicate, decide, and emotionally engage—with some driving fast and others preferring depth or reflection.

The tension between visibility and humility, speed and thoroughness, could spark conflict or creativity depending on how it's named. Observable agreements are your stabilizers.

Anchor on these:
1) Make preferences visible early.
2) Ask before assuming support.
3) Share the mic—especially in moments of pressure.

With intention, this group can flex from high-intensity to high-empathy without breaking stride.

BIRKMAN

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Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

32

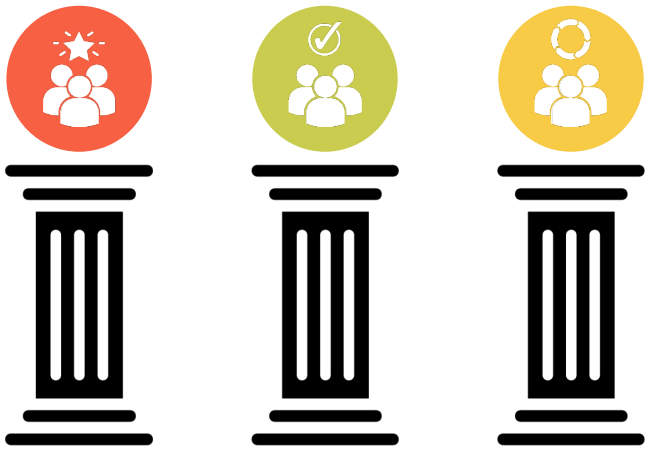
TEAM COACHING

High-Performing Teams

BIRKMAN

33

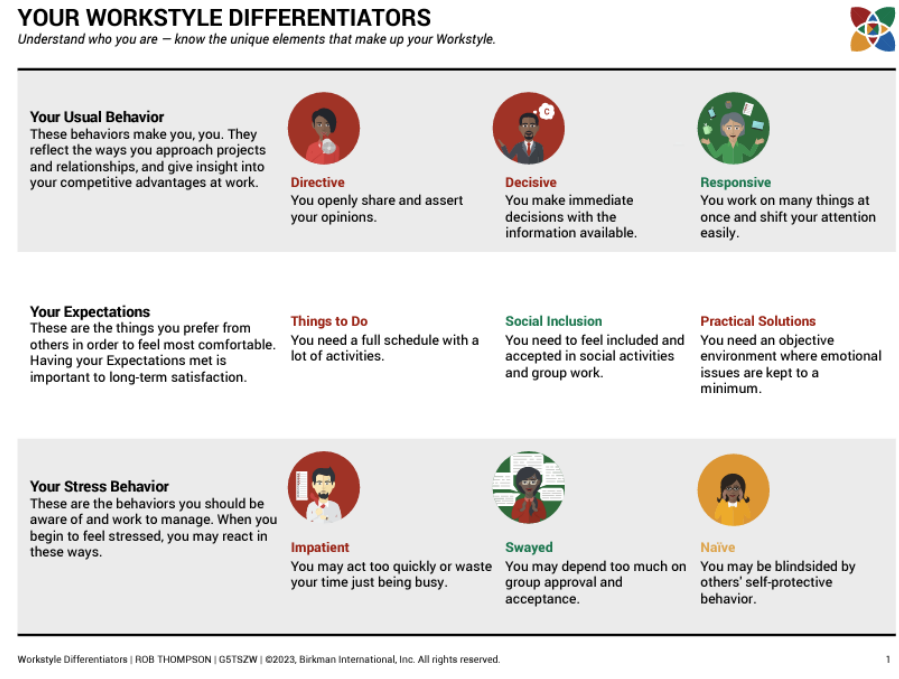
High-performing leaders and teams are driven by a common Purpose and continuously create an environment of Clarity and Psychological Safety, as inspired by Amy Edmondson.



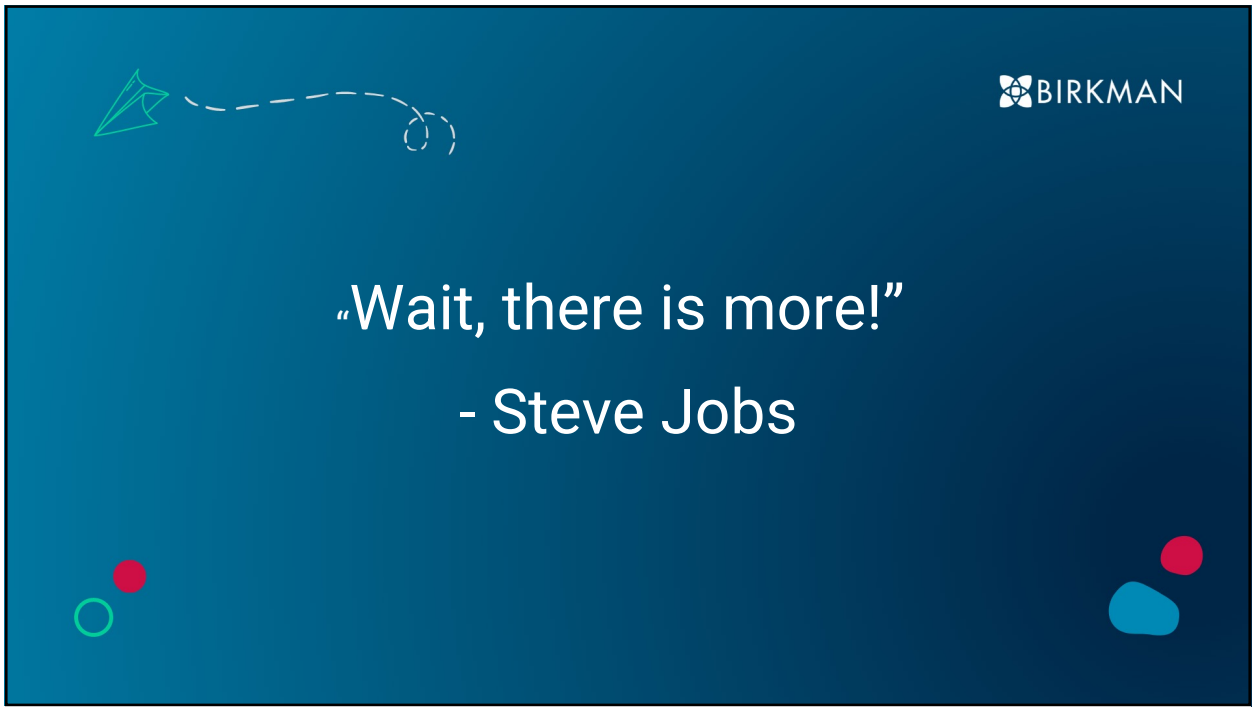
BIRKMAN

34

High-performing leaders and teams are driven by a common Purpose and continuously create an environment of Clarity and Psychological Safety.



35



36


BIRKMAN
Culture
Strategy
Leadership
Mindset

37


What's your
Image Management
perspective?
BIRKMAN
impressions >
face value
results need to be validated
speak for themsleves
strive for earn your prove your
WORTH
image is everything
means nothing

38

Image Management

BIRKMAN

Reveals the extent to which an individual devotes energy to managing and maintaining a positive public image.

The higher the score, the more important it is to the individual that others see them in a socially acceptable way.



39

Low Image Management (Critical)	Low Image Management (Affirming)	High Image Management
STRIVE	**EARN**	**PROVE**
Focused on how they feel about their results	*Focused on results over impressions*	*Focused on making a positive impression through their results*

40

High Image Management

“I am concerned with making a positive impression through my results”

- Affirm worth through validation from others
- Present themselves with an air of confidence and charm
- Subconsciously hide self-doubt with outer confidence

PROVE

41

Low Image Management (Affirming)

"I am focused on results over impressions”

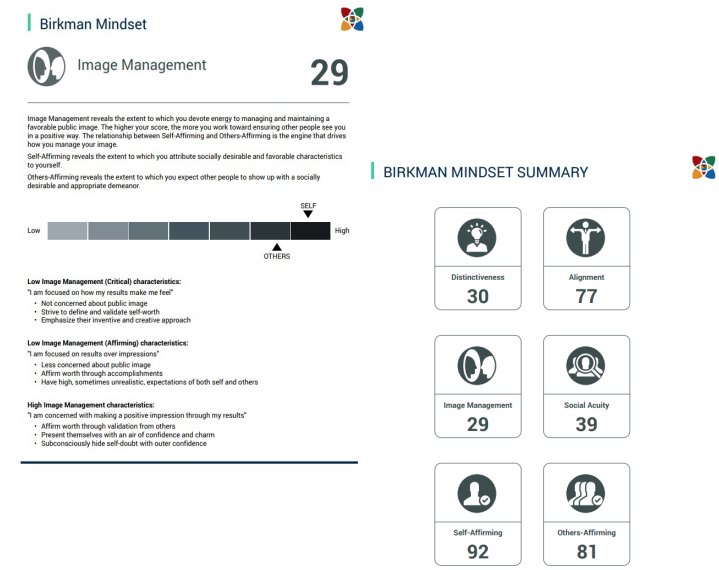
- Less concerned about public image
- Affirm worth through accomplishments
- Have high, sometimes unrealistic, expectations of both self and others

EARN

42

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary



43

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Birkman Certified Professional

Mindset-Wise

Jim leans toward Image Management and Other-Affirming frames; Jim values being seen as competent and respected.

Prioritizes harmony and considers how others will experience his actions.

He may suppress his own Needs to maintain an impression of control and capability.

BIRKMAN

44

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Via BirkmanGPT 3D Insights

Here's a Mindset Summary for Jim and his team, using Birkman data to assess tendencies toward:

Image Management – driven to maintain a composed, competent appearance

Self-Affirming – internal sense of self-worth, confidence, and agency

Others-Affirming – orientation toward harmony, sensitivity, and valuing others' perspectives

BIRKMAN

45

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Strategy Disagreement - Aligned with Jim's Image Management Birkman Insights

You bring clarity and conviction when others are still sorting ideas, which gives the team a lot of momentum.

That said, some voices held back during the last debate—possibly because the pace moved too fast for processing.

Let's explore what the process would look like if we allowed for a slower pass. I'm not saying you're wrong.

I want to ensure we're not missing nuance that supports the long game.

BIRKMAN

46

Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

47

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Via BirkmanGPT 3D Insights

Risks to Psychological Safety + Mitigations
Risks:

Risks:
- Jim may not vocalize Needs due to a preference for composure and control
- He may internalize criticism or unclear feedback as personal inadequacy
- High standards for himself may unintentionally isolate him from his peers
- Environments that value improvisation over planning may leave him unmoored

Mitigations:
- Normalize the articulation of Needs in team culture ("What do you need right now to be effective?")
- Offer consistent, transparent feedback loops—not just correction but calibration
- Model vulnerability and humanity from leadership to permit Jim to show his
- Allow space for solo ideation as a valid phase of collaboration—not everyone needs to brainstorm out loud

BIRKMAN

48

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Observable Agreements

I will check in periodically—not to manage you, but to clarify priorities and offer calibration.

I will respect your preference for independence, but flag moments when collaboration may amplify your impact.

When the stakes are high, I will offer direct and constructive feedback rather than letting ambiguity linger.

BIRKMAN

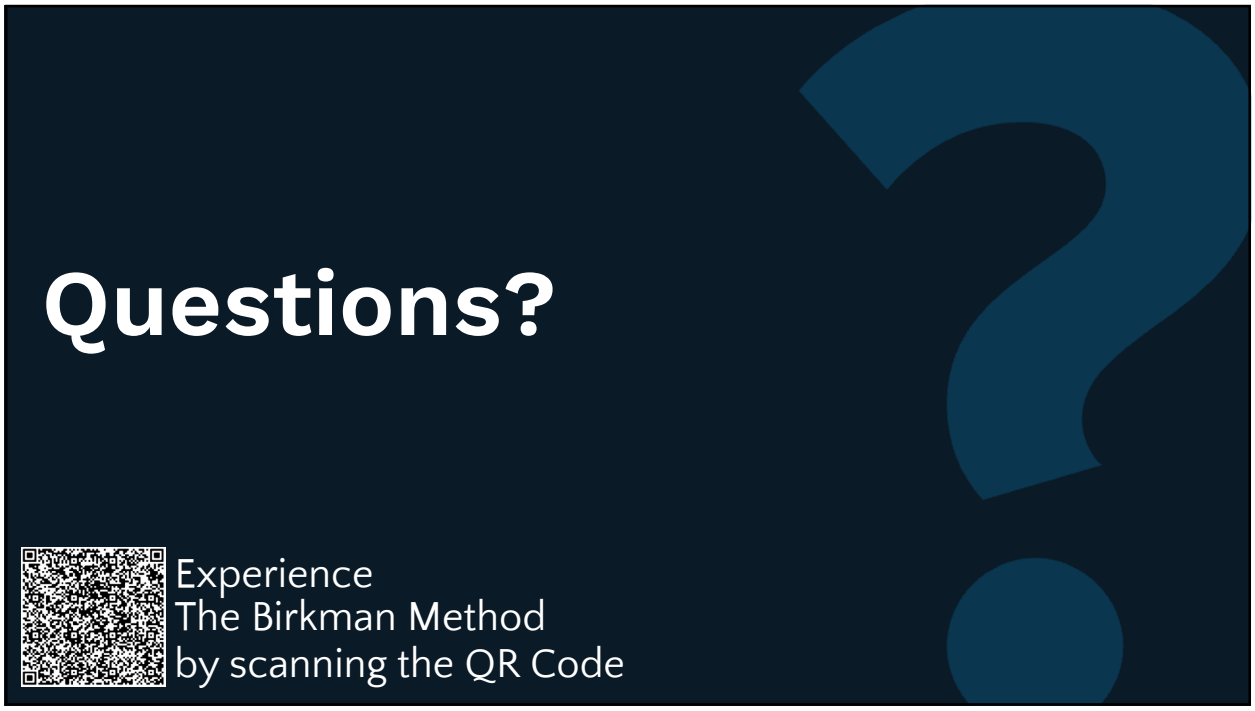
49

The Journey Continues

- Clear Directions
- Quiet voices amplified
- Better decision process
- Team working better Together



50


Questions?
Experience
The Birkman Method
by scanning the QR Code

51


Thank you!
birkman.com/connect
BIRKMAN
Experience
The Birkman Method
by scanning the QR Code

52

Go to The App…

- Conference Program Schedule
- Tuesday 2:00 – 3:30 PM Block
- Coaching in Organizations | Using Social Science Data Supported by AI
- Rate This Session (Stars)
- Discussion: Insert key observation, insight, and/or Action Commitment

53

Up Next – Day 1 | The Journey Continues…

- Afternoon Break | 3:30 – 4:00 PM
- Closing Keynote Address | 4:00 – 5:30 PM
- Networking Reception | 5:45 – 8:00 PM

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Laser Talks

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

From Quiet Failing to Future Thriving:

Coaching Native AI is the bridge!



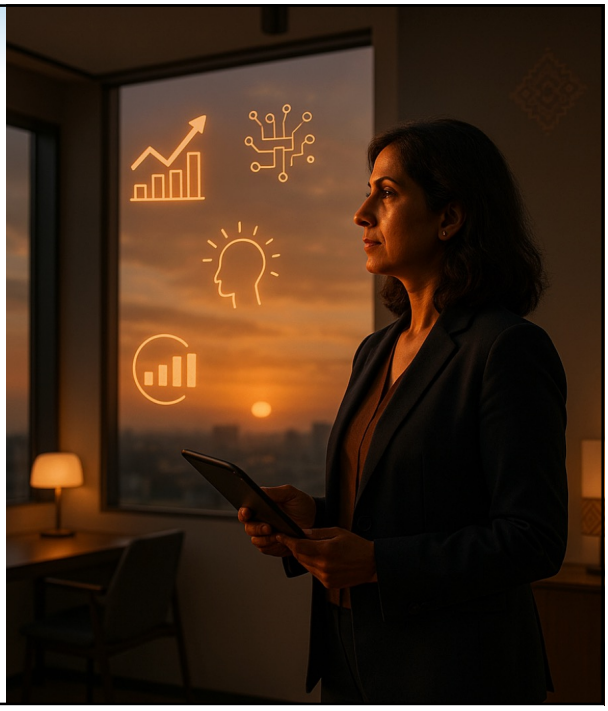
Dr. Deep Bali
Co-CEO, Chief Mentor, Inventor &
Founder of Sherlock AI
Sherlock AI

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1

The Silent Struggle of Managers

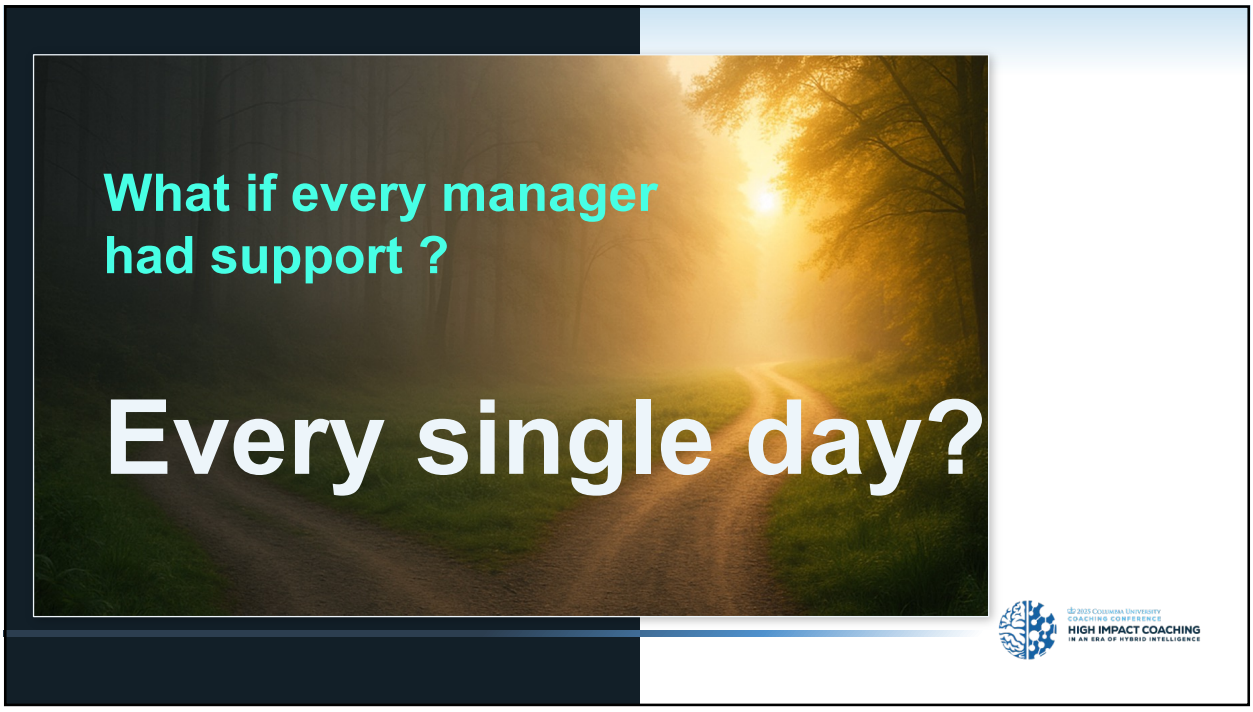
Quietly Failing !!



2


70%
of managers feel unsupported
23%
of teams drift without clarity
Source: State of the Global Workplace: 2025 Gallup Report
QUIET FAILING
Teams Drift
Cultural Erosion
Lose Billions
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

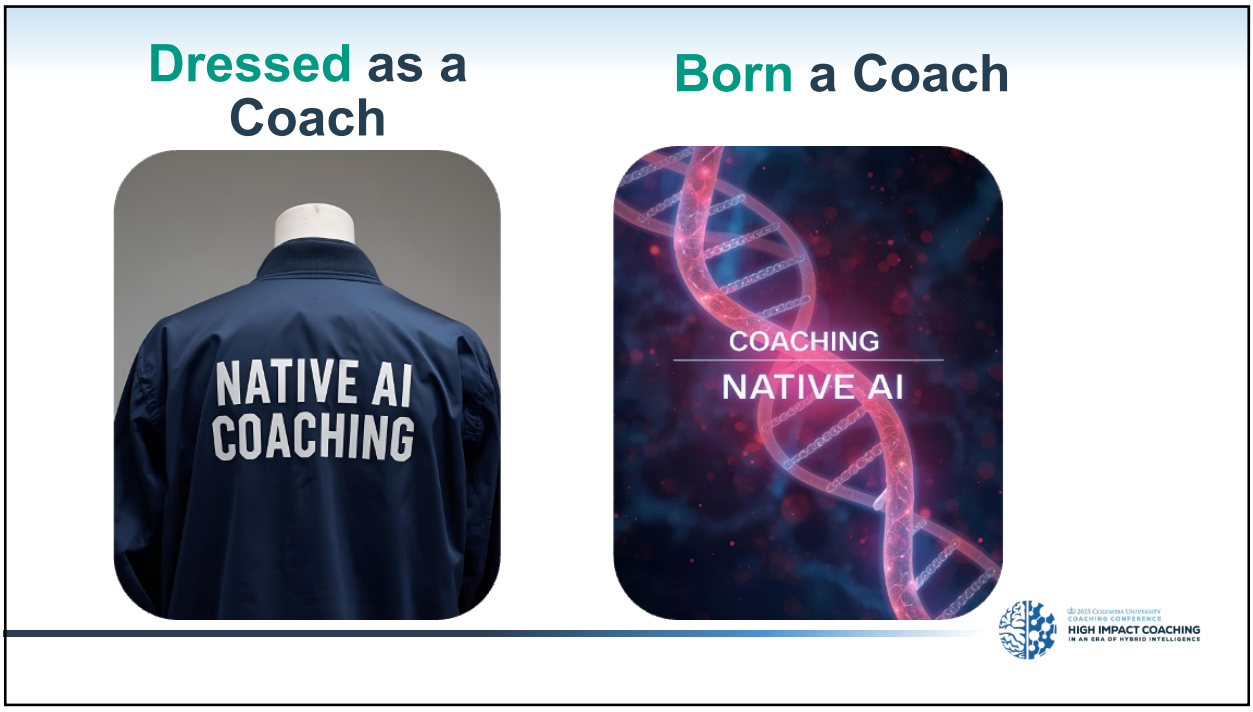
3


What if every manager had support ?
Every single day?
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

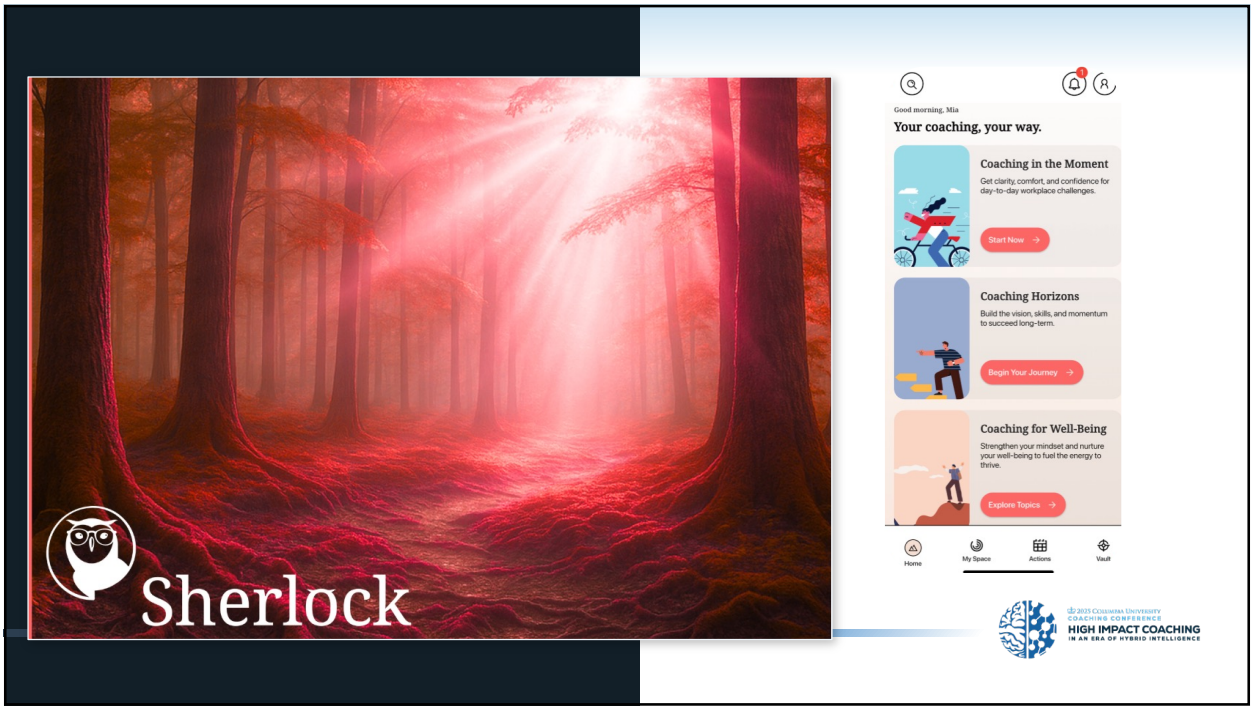
4


QUIET
FAILING
FUTURE
THRIVING
COACHING NATIVE AI
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

5


Dressed as a Coach
Born a Coach
NATIVE AI
COACHING
COACHING
NATIVE AI
HIGH IMPACT COACHING

6



7

Real Client Success Proof (of thriving)



8


Hybrid Intelligence doesn't replace humans, it amplifies them.
Helping every manager lead, decide, and thrive in real time.

9


The Big Question for Us
"What would thriving look like if every middle manager had a coach in their pocket who never sleeps, forgets, or judges?"

10

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HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

Go Hybrid or Go Home:

Why AI-Only and Human-Only Coaching Both Fail — and Why Hybrid Intelligence is the Only Path Forward



Jonathan Kirschner
Founder & CEO
AIIR Consulting

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1

Executive Coaching

- Supports an organizational leader achieve important goals and growth.
- True to its etymology (*kocsi* is a Hungarian word for a carriage), the client is taken from point A to a destination point B.





2

In theory, it should be a fairly predictable, linear process

- **A**ssessment — Identify Current State and Ideal Future State
- **I**nsight — Conduct Gap Analysis and Root Cause Analysis to identify goals for desired growth
- **I**mplementation — Commit to and engage in a clear set of actions for achieving those goals
- **R**einforcement — Ensure new behaviors last over the long term



3

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence

Simulates human thinking tasks with computers

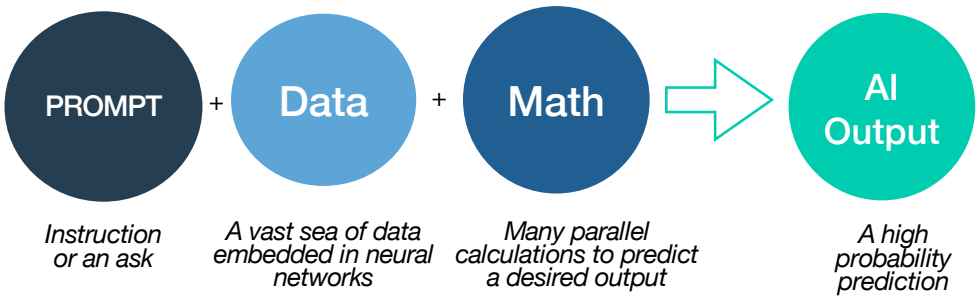
Generative Artificial Intelligence

AI that actually creates things based on prediction (math)



4

Generative AI = Prediction Machine



Instruction or an ask

A vast sea of data embedded in neural networks

Many parallel calculations to predict a desired output

A high probability prediction

5

The Question Many are Asking

If AI is an ever-improving prediction machine, that in many ways is already more advanced than the human brain, can coaching be delivered by AI only?

6

3 Coaching Clients

Case 1 CEO Succession	Go from Founder-CEO role to Executive Chairman. Hand over the reigns to incumbent CEO.	Navigating the emotional complexity of letting go and the existential implications of finding a new identity late in life just as all of his friends are passing away
Case 2 Burn-Out Risk	Reduce stress and delegate more effectively	Realizing that he can't save everyone or solve everyone's problems, and nor is it his job. In order to move forward, he would need to let go of a savior persona he developed as a child
Case 3 Better collaboration	Learn how to collaborate better and empower a team	Giving up a long held, deep seated belief that she was only valuable if she was under the spotlight. Having to shift her focus from "me" to "we."



7

The coaching journey is actually complex, non-linear, and not very predictable.

It does require prediction and intelligence, but also the deep connection and relationship with the coach.



8

Real Coaching Requires:

Human Relating

- Trust
- Compassion
- Emotional attunement
- Genuine Interest in understanding

+

Intelligence

- Thought partnership
- Expertise
- Problem solving skills
- Prediction and Pattern Recognition

2025 Columbia University COACHING CONFERENCE HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

9

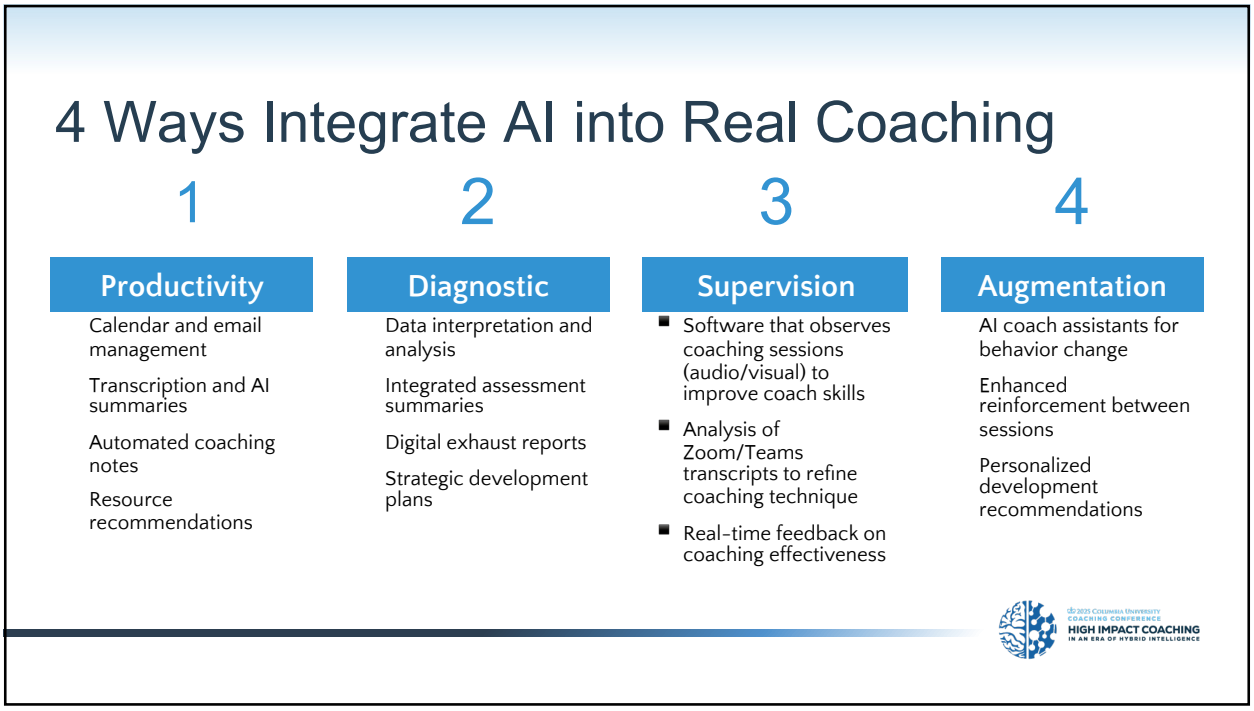
Our Great Opportunity

By combing our uniquely human skills of relating and connecting with the power of both human and artificial intelligence (hybrid intelligence)…

1. We get more time back for our uniquely human capabilities?
2. We bolster our impact through insights and interventions are even sharper
3. We increase our capacity to have greater impact



10


4 Ways Integrate AI into Real Coaching
1
Productivity
Calendar and email management
Transcription and AI summaries
Automated coaching notes
Resource recommendations
2
Diagnostic
Data interpretation and analysis
Integrated assessment summaries
Digital exhaust reports
Strategic development plans
3
Supervision
Software that observes coaching sessions (audio/visual) to improve coach skills
Analysis of Zoom/Teams transcripts to refine coaching technique
Real-time feedback on coaching effectiveness
4
Augmentation
AI coach assistants for behavior change
Enhanced reinforcement between sessions
Personalized development recommendations
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11


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HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
Thank You
WEBSIT
E

12

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HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

The Future of Work has Wings:

What Birds Teach Us About Listening, Agility, and Thriving as Humans amid AI and Change



Katie McCleary
CEO
LQ™ Listening Intelligence

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1

The World We're Leading In

79%
of Leaders Say

... that AI Adoption is Critical.

60%
of them Admit

... that they have no clear strategy on how to implement AI.

40%
Believe

... that their companies won't be viable in ten years without reinvention.

Fewer than 1/10

Workers feel confident that their leaders can bridge the gap between generational differences.

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

2

> Awareness without adaptation is just information.

3

Our Asteroid Moment



4

> **If you're interested in doing original thinking, moving away from the familiar is required.**
>
> **- Dr. Amy Edmondson**

5

Dinosaurs Still Roam the Workplace

Communicates their way and expect compliance

Has plenty of self-awareness, yet no agility to show up as needed

Prefers top-down control over collaboration



6

Three Birds, Three Lessons

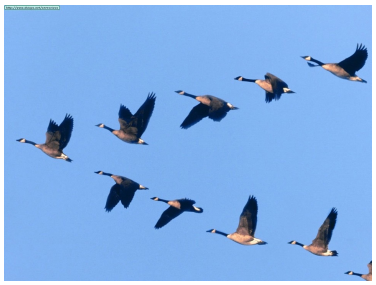
Peregrine Falcon



Barn Own



Canadian Geese



HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

7

Agile Speed and Adaptation



- **Fastest Creature on Earth**
- **200 Miles an Hour**
- **Extremely Focused on Goal**
- **Adapted to Live Globally and Thrive**

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

8

Agile Listeners



- Listens with Whole Being and Brain
- Cuts out the Noise
- Swivels with Precision
- Locates what Others Cannot See

9

Agile Leadership



- Rotates Leadership
- Prevents Burnout
- Mutual Trust
- Sustains the Long Flight

10

> Agile organizations and leaders will thrive, no matter what asteroids or dinosaurs come their way.

11

Cognitive Agility

LQ™
Listening Intelligence

12

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IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

The WHY of the Birkman Method:

Insights into What Makes Each of Us Uniquely Human



Sharon Birkman
CEO & Owner
Birkman International, Inc.

columbiacoachingconference.org LASER TALK Follow us @CUCoachConf #CCC2025

1

The WHY of The Birkman Method

Harnessing the Power of Perception for 74 Years

BIRKMAN

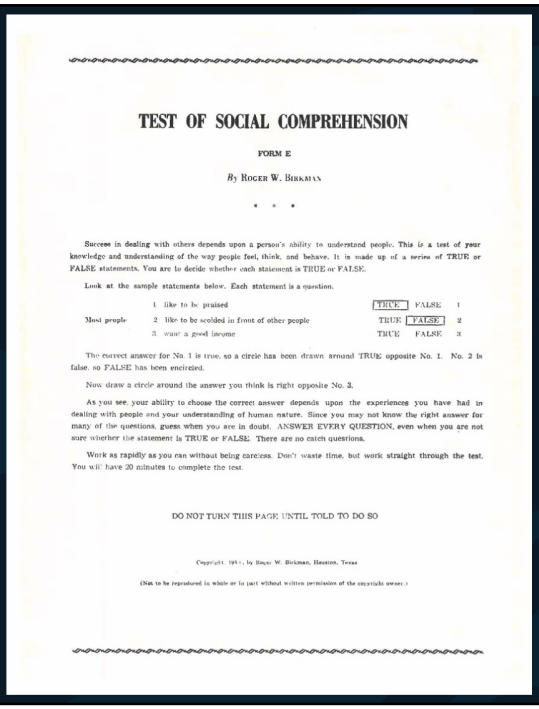
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3

A Test of Social Comprehension (1951)

Roger W. Birkman, Ph.D.



TEST OF SOCIAL COMPREHENSION

FORM E

By Roger W. Birkman

* * *

Success in dealing with others depends upon a person's ability to understand people. This is a test of your knowledge and understanding of the way people feel, think, and behave. It is made up of a series of TRUE or FALSE statements. You are to decide whether each statement is TRUE or FALSE.

Look at the sample statements below. Each statement is a question.

	1 like to be praised	TRUE	FALSE	1
Most people	2 like to be scolded in front of other people	TRUE	FALSE	2
	3 want a good income	TRUE	FALSE	3

The correct answer for No. 1 is true, so a circle has been drawn around TRUE opposite No. 1. No. 2 is false, so FALSE has been encircled.

Now draw a circle around the answer you think is right opposite No. 3.

As you see, your ability to choose the correct answer depends upon the experiences you have had in dealing with people and your understanding of human nature. Since you may not know the right answer for many of the questions, guess when you are in doubt. ANSWER EVERY QUESTION, even when you are not sure whether the statement is TRUE or FALSE. There are no catch questions.

Work as rapidly as you can without being careless. Don't waste time, but work straight through the test. You will have 20 minutes to complete the test.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

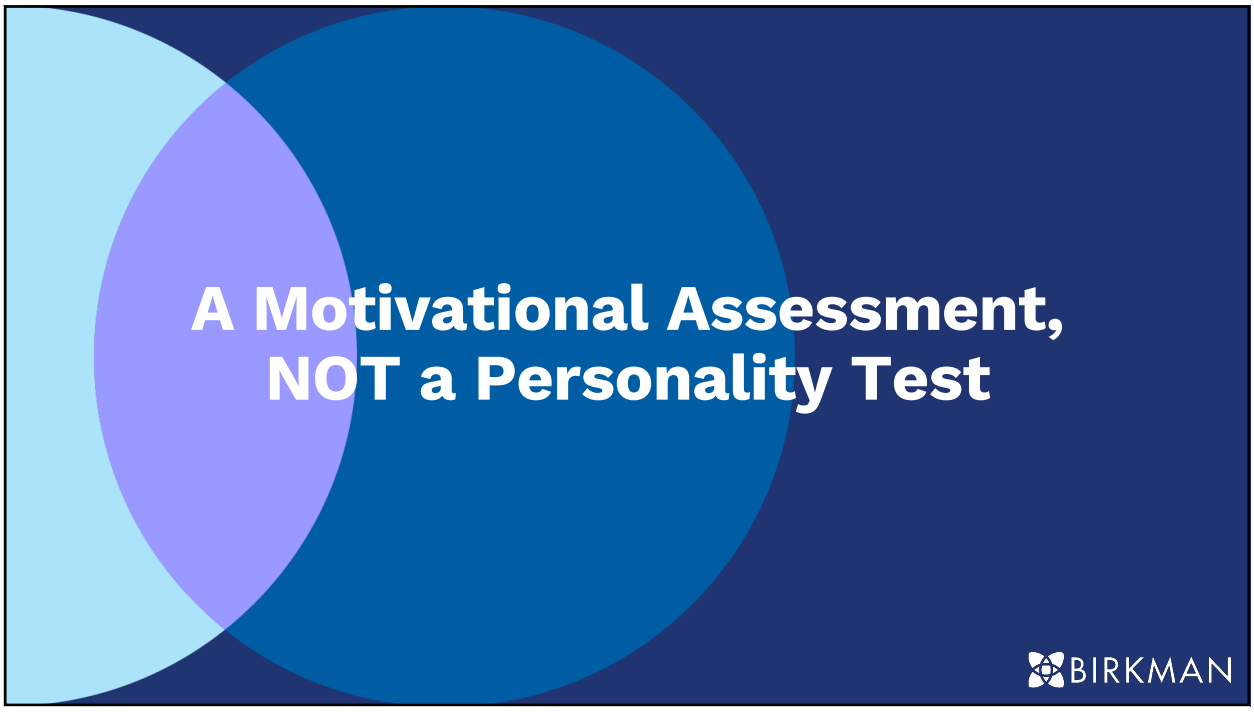
Copyright, 1951, by Roger W. Birkman, Houston, Texas

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4

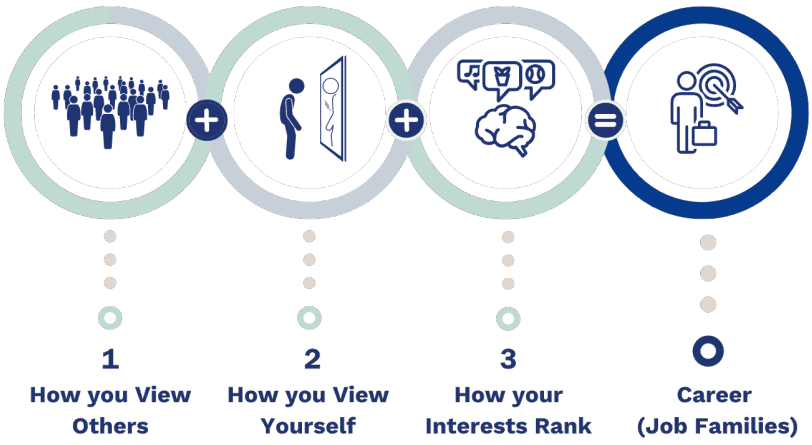

"While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a company, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can."
-Susan Scott

5


A Motivational Assessment, NOT a Personality Test
BIRKMAN

6

Birkman is a comprehensive behavioral and occupational assessment



BIRKMAN

7

A Motivational Assessment

What makes The Birkman Method distinct from other psychological assessments?

1

Interior Needs

- Interpersonal Energizers

2

Behavioral and Occupational Insights

- Org Focus- task motivation
- Job Energizers

3

Personality and Interests in a Social Context

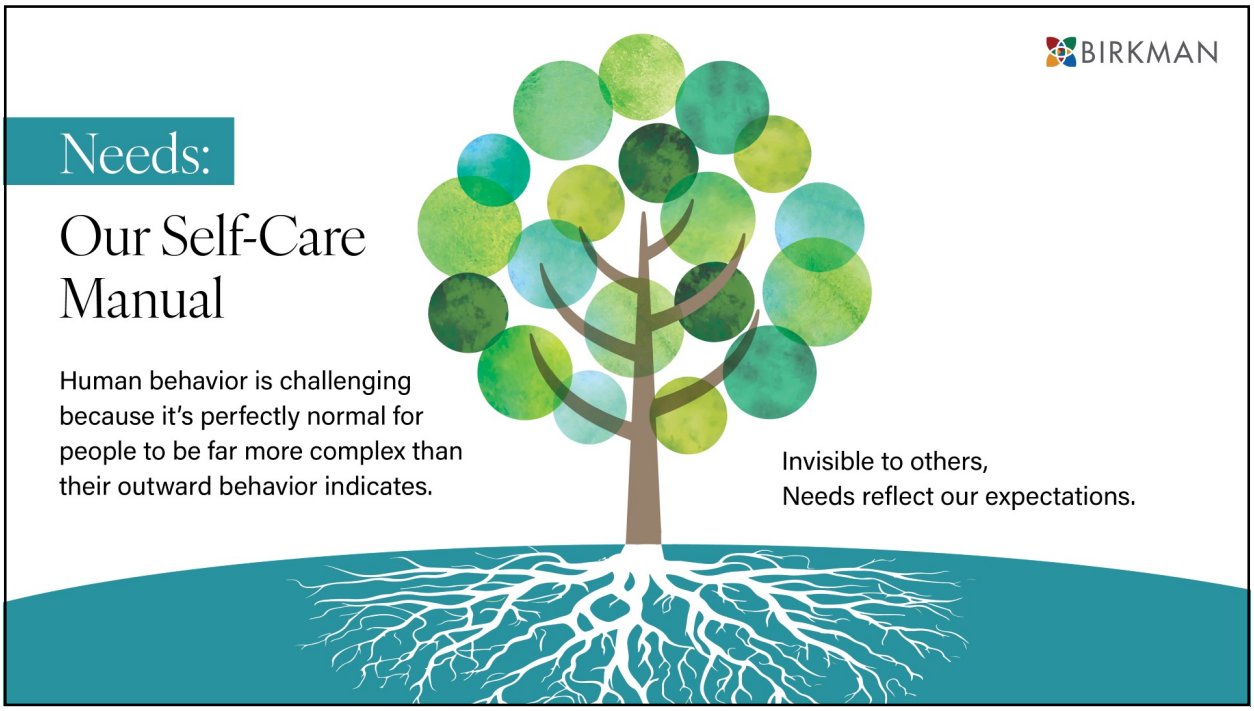
- Self and Others Awareness

HIGH IMPACT COACHING IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

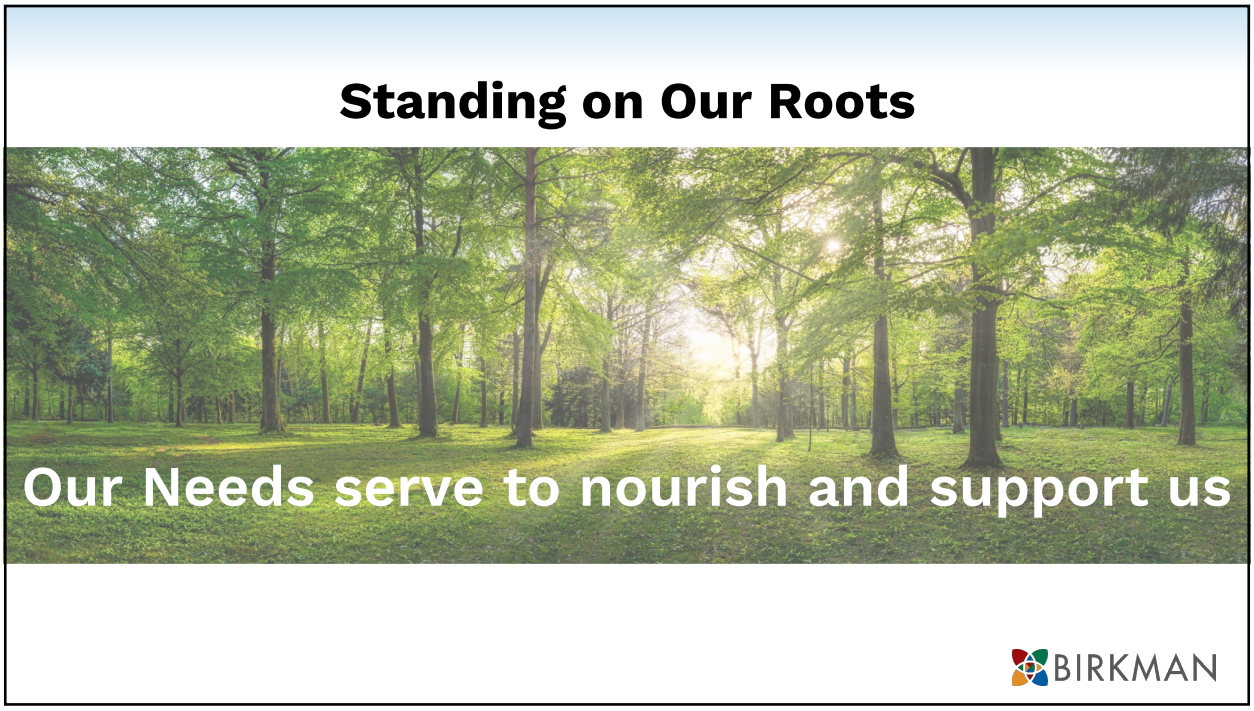
8


BIRKMAN
Usual Behavior
Describes our daily strengths and our most productive self
Our visible behavior and our preferred way to relate and connect to others.

9


BIRKMAN
Needs:
Our Self-Care Manual
Human behavior is challenging because it's perfectly normal for people to be far more complex than their outward behavior indicates.
Invisible to others,
Needs reflect our expectations.

10


Standing on Our Roots
Our Needs serve to nourish and support us
BIRKMAN

11


BIRKMAN
Stress: Frustrated Behaviors
As complex beings, it's important to be aware so that when we begin to experience our unproductive stress behaviors, we take action to mitigate our frustrated non-productive behaviors.
Stress occurs when Needs go unmet over time.

12

The Dangers of Misperceiving

Needs are neither good nor bad, better or worse.

Just as plants require either little water or a great deal of water, there is no judgment associated with their Needs *or* our motivational Needs.



13

The Platinum Rule

Ideally, we should be able to communicate and work with others according to their Needs, rather than our own.

14

93% of people have Needs that differ from their outward behavior; it is not always easy to be clear.

15

"The reality of life is that your perceptions — right or wrong — influence everything else you do. When you get a proper perspective of your perceptions, you may be surprised how many other things fall into place."

- Roger W. Birkman



16


Thank you!
birkman.com/connect
BIRKMAN
Experience
The Birkman Method
by scanning the QR Code

17

Awards

Awards
Papers & Experiential

1

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Academic Co-Chair



Dr. Rachel Fichter.
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Teachers College Columbia University

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2

Margaret McLean Walsh

Outstanding Experiential Session Award

3

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Margaret McLean Walsh



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Finalist

From Chakras to Chatbots:

A Framework for High-Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence



Alexandra Phillips
Teachers College, Columbia University

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Finalist

The Awakening App:

Integrating Voice-Enabled Artificial Intelligence (AI) with Human-Centered Frameworks for Transformative Coaching



Brenda Hayden
Awakening App LLC



Leanda Pringle
Awakening App LLC



Lisa Arieti
Awakening App LLC

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Recipients
Robots in the Room:
Ethics, AI, and the Coach
Dr. Dana Kirchman
Teachers College | Columbia University
Wendy Myers Cambor
New Lane Group Inc.
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Judith E. Glaser
Outstanding Paper Award

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Judith E. Glaser



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Finalist

Relational Mentoring in the Digital Age:

A Hybrid Intelligence Approach to Peer Coaching as a Mentoring Practice



Dr. Christina Young
Teachers College, Columbia University

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Finalist

Who Has Your Back at Work?

Coaching for Resilience Using Attachment Science in the Age of AI



Devon McConnell
The University of Oxford

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Finalist

Hybrid AI–Human Coaching:

A New Conceptual Model of Design Dimensions



Dr. Amber Barger
Teachers College,
Columbia University

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Recipient

Paper Titled:

Clients can develop strong working alliances with simulated autonomous AI coaches: Implications for human coaching practice.



Dr. Amber Barger
Teachers College,
Columbia University

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Keynotes

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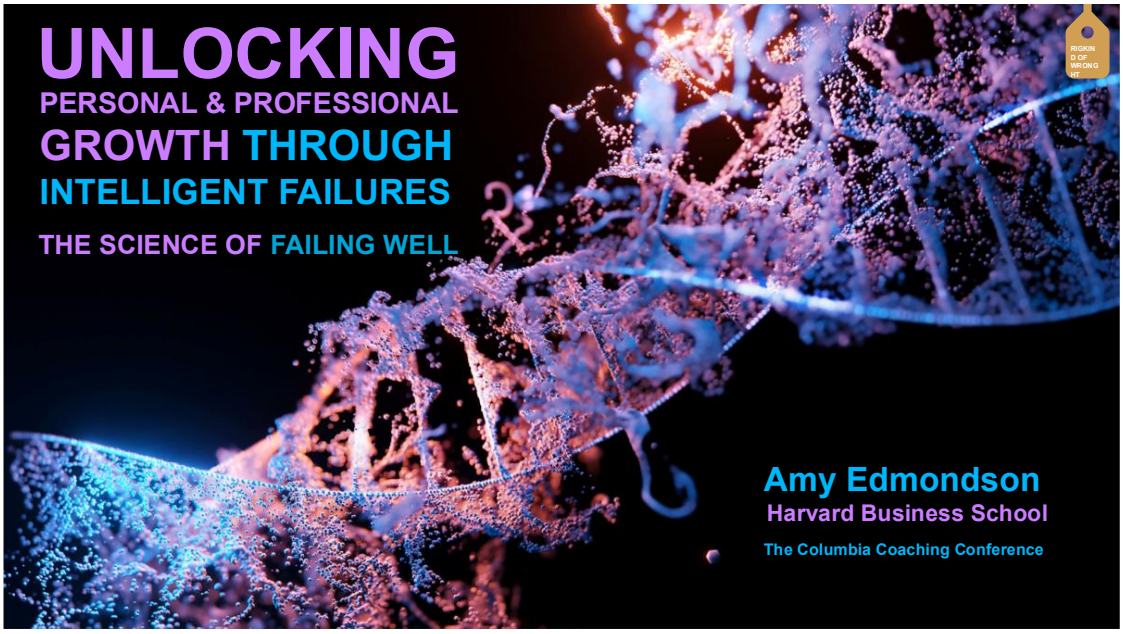
The Science of Failing Well

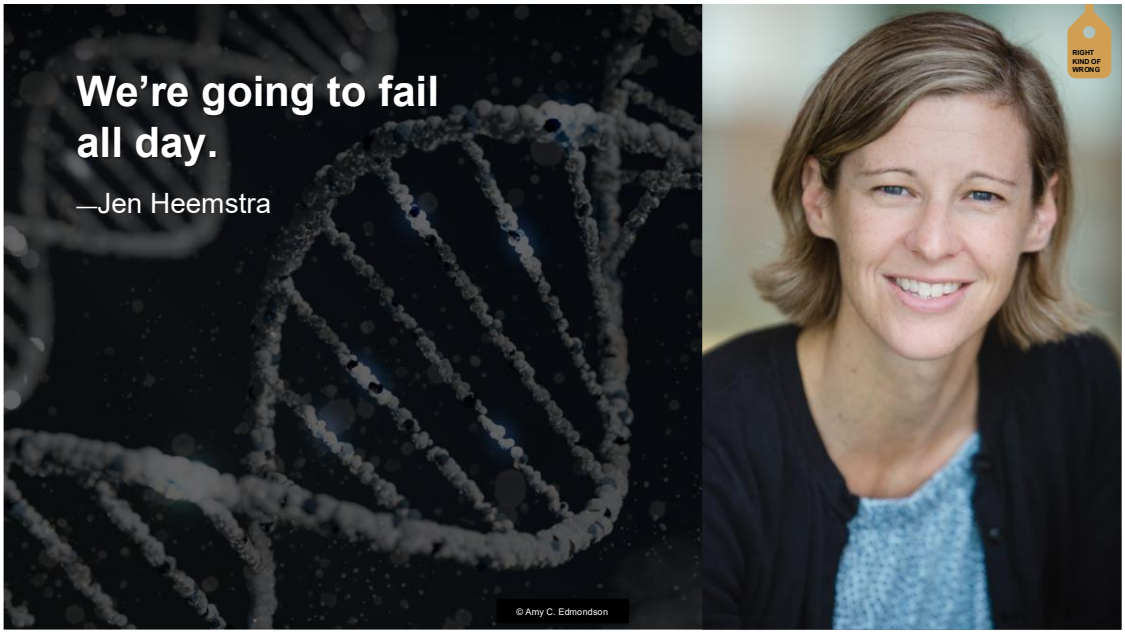
Unlocking Personal and Professional Growth Through Intelligent Failures

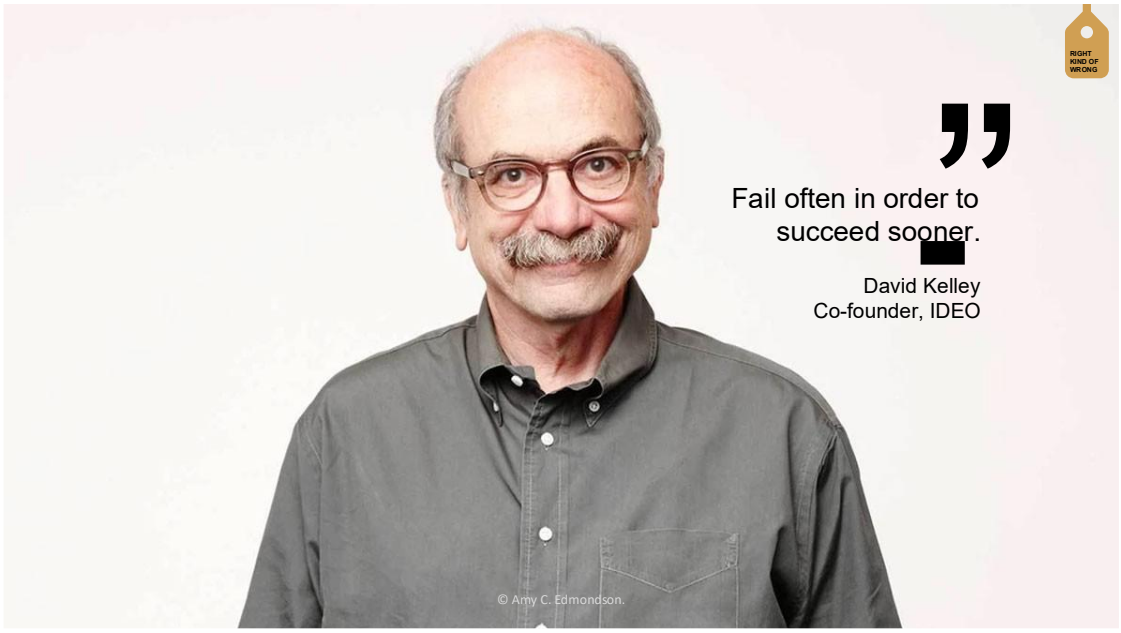


Amy C. Edmondson
Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management
Harvard Business School

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We're going to fail all day.
—Jen Heemstra
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Fail often in order to succeed sooner.
David Kelley
Co-founder, IDEO
© Amy C. Edmondson.


THE PROBLEM
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Deep down we know:
Failure is bad!
© Amy C. Edmondson


When failure is
“off limits”
© Amy C. Edmondson
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

TWO "FAILURE CULTURES"

WHICH VIEW IS RIGHT?

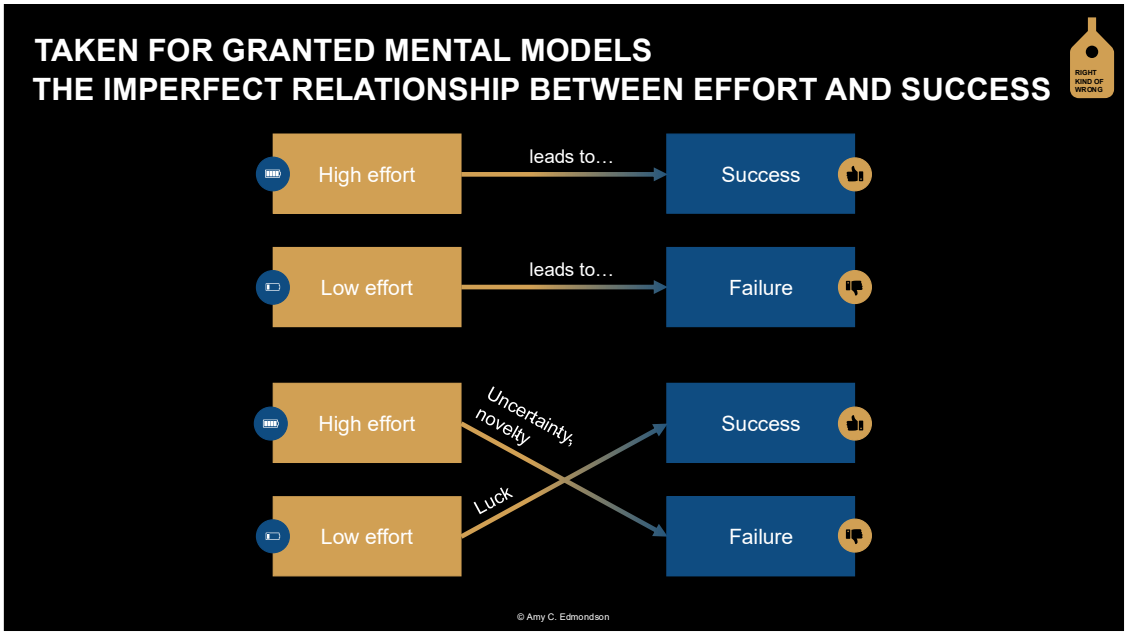
Wrong Question!

© Amy C. Edmondson

How Do We Change Our Thinking to be More Effective in an Uncertain World?

A Better Question

© Amy C. Edmondson


TAKEN FOR GRANTED MENTAL MODELS
THE IMPERFECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFORT AND SUCCESS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
High effort
leads to…
Success
Low effort
leads to…
Failure
High effort
Uncertainty, novelty
Success
Low effort
Luck
Failure
© Amy C. Edmondson


CONTEXT MATTERS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
CONSISTENT
VARIABLE
NOVEL
UNCERTAINTY
FAILURE
MISTAKES?

CONTEXT MATTERS



CONSISTENT | VARIABLE | NOVEL

UNCERTAINTY

FAILURE

NECESSITY OF EXPERIMENTATION

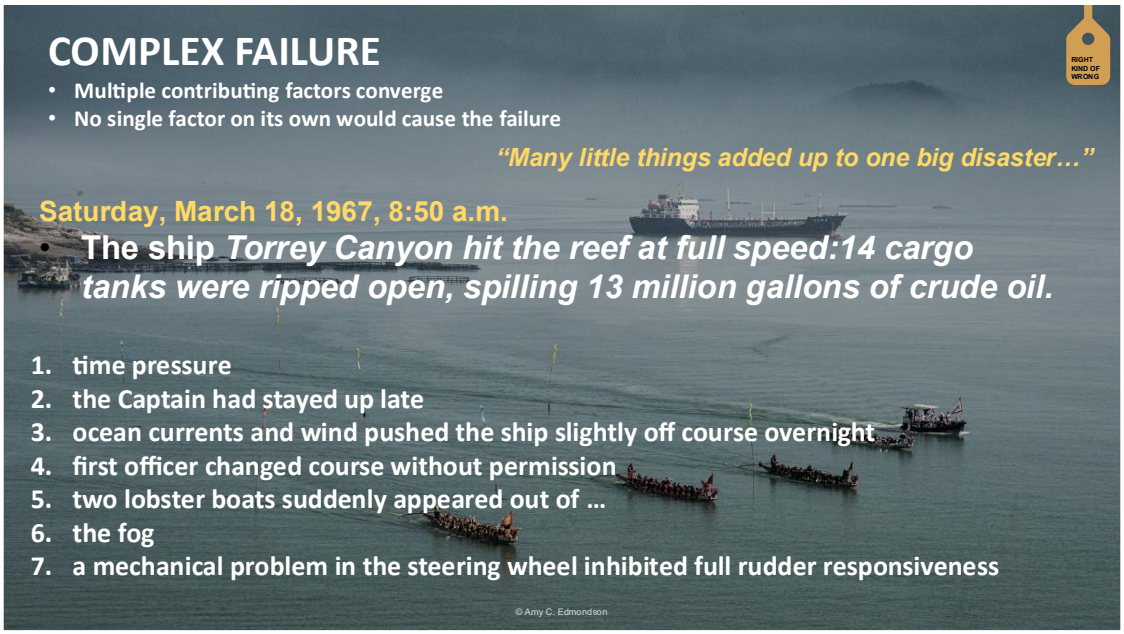
Failure: An outcome that deviates from a desired result

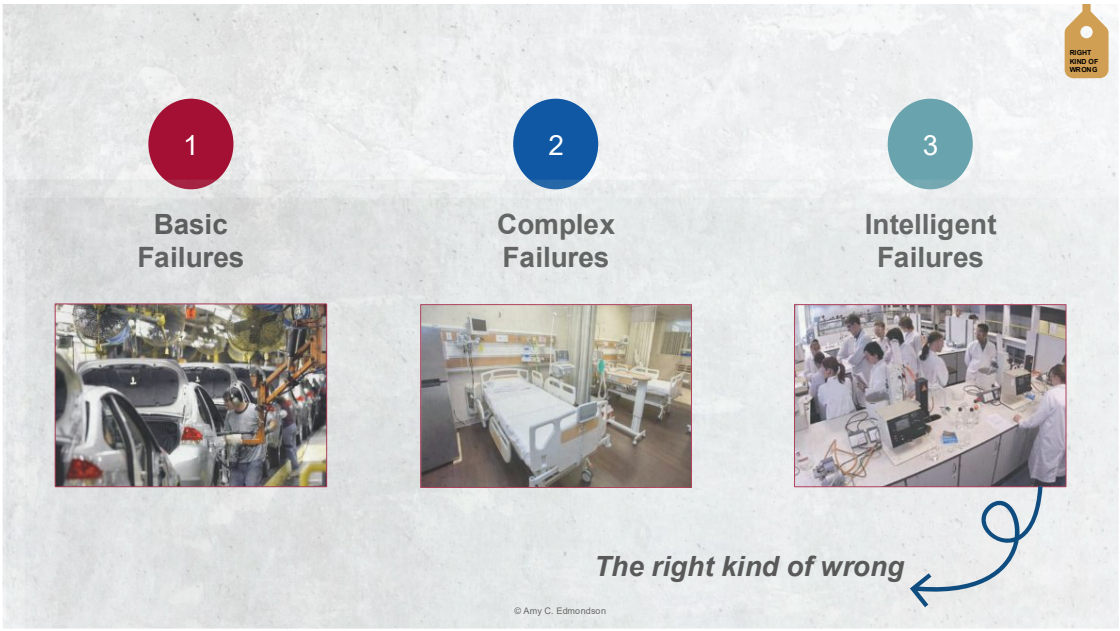
Mistake: An unintended deviation from existing knowledge, procedures, rules, or policies

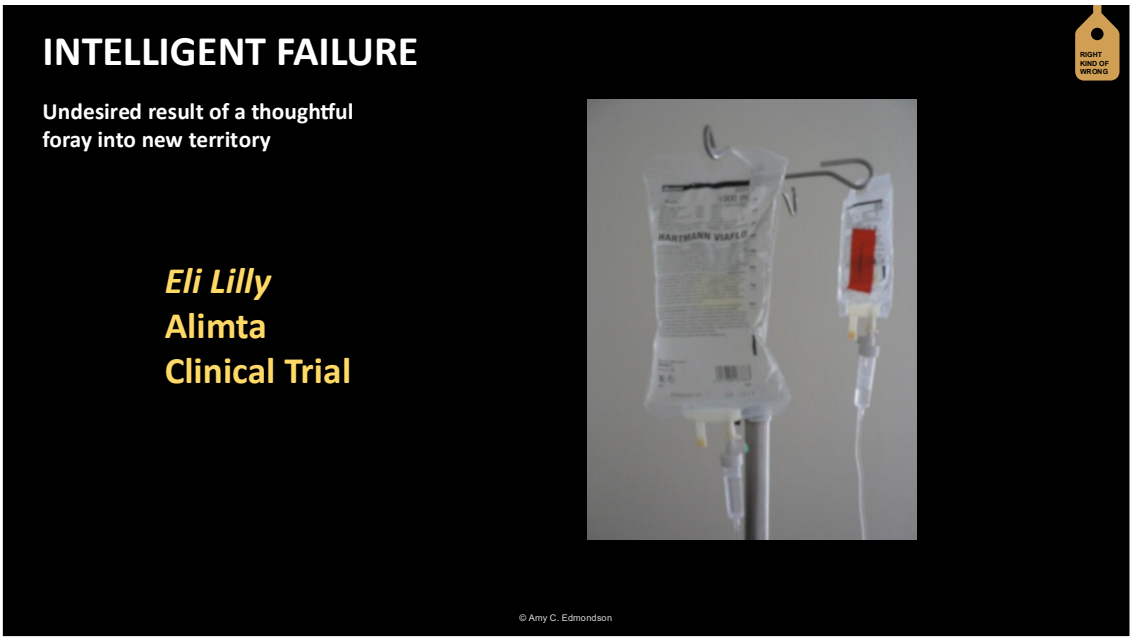
And all failures are not alike…

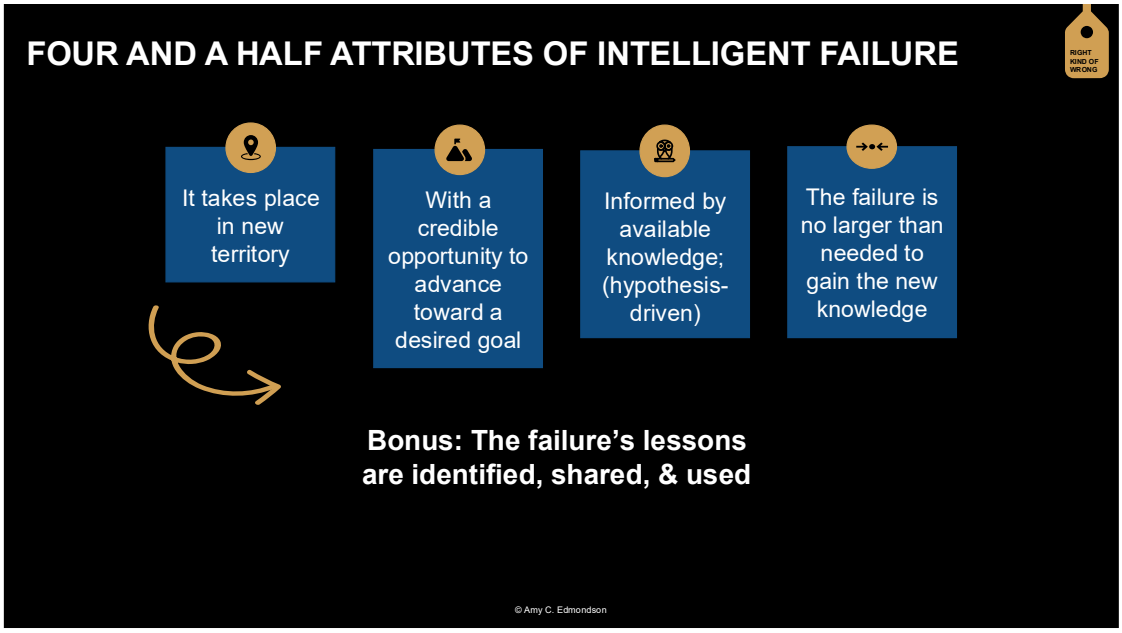
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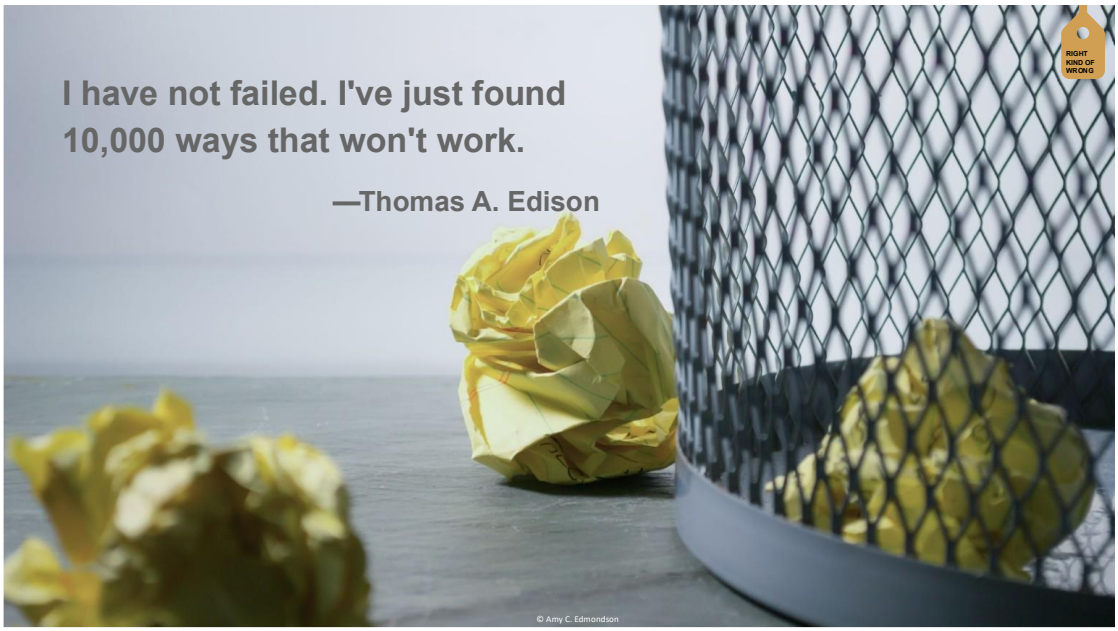

BASIC FAILURE
• Single Cause
• Known Territory
Citibank, August 11, 2020
An employee made a mistake that accidentally transferred $900 million to a group of lenders.
BASIC ≠ SMALL
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson


COMPLEX FAILURE
• Multiple contributing factors converge
• No single factor on its own would cause the failure
"Many little things added up to one big disaster…"
Saturday, March 18, 1967, 8:50 a.m.
• The ship Torrey Canyon hit the reef at full speed:14 cargo tanks were ripped open, spilling 13 million gallons of crude oil.
1. time pressure
2. the Captain had stayed up late
3. ocean currents and wind pushed the ship slightly off course overnight
4. first officer changed course without permission
5. two lobster boats suddenly appeared out of …
6. the fog
7. a mechanical problem in the steering wheel inhibited full rudder responsiveness
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
© Amy C. Edmondson


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
1
Basic Failures
2
Complex Failures
3
Intelligent Failures
The right kind of wrong
© Amy C. Edmondson

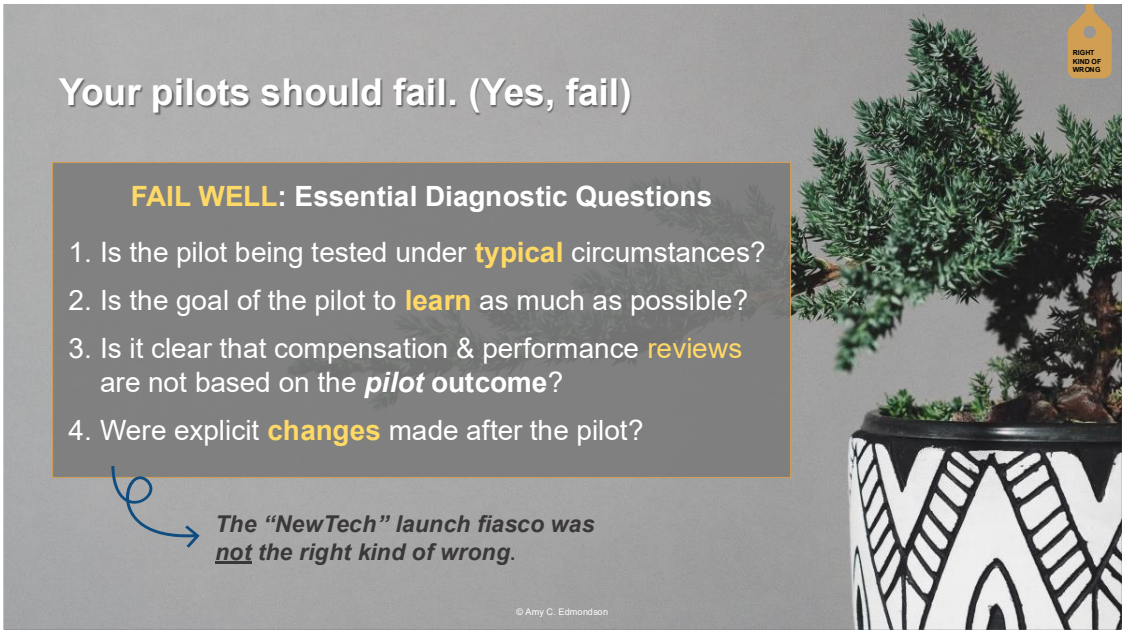

INTELLIGENT FAILURE
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Undesired result of a thoughtful foray into new territory
Eli Lilly
Alimta
Clinical Trial
© Amy C. Edmondson


FOUR AND A HALF ATTRIBUTES OF INTELLIGENT FAILURE
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
It takes place in new territory
With a credible opportunity to advance toward a desired goal
Informed by available knowledge; (hypothesis-driven)
The failure is no larger than needed to gain the new knowledge
Bonus: The failure's lessons are identified, shared, & used
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I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.
—Thomas A. Edison
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
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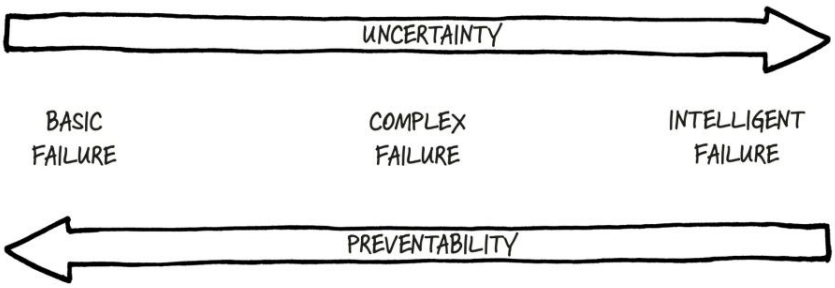

AN INNOVATION DECISION AT "TELCO"
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
• Excellent provider of local and long-distance telephony.
• Executive team debate about the launch of "NewTech" in major metropolitan city market.
• Small, well-staffed, successful suburban pilot.
• Decision made to go for a full-scale launch.
• Colossal service failure…
© Amy C. Edmondson


RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Why didn't the pilot prevent the fiasco?
Because the pilot was a success!
© Amy C. Edmondson

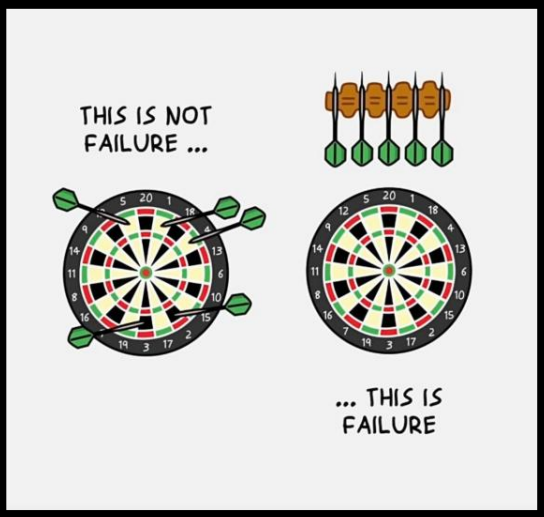

Your pilots should fail. (Yes, fail)
FAIL WELL: Essential Diagnostic Questions
1. Is the pilot being tested under typical circumstances?
2. Is the goal of the pilot to learn as much as possible?
3. Is it clear that compensation & performance reviews are not based on the pilot outcome?
4. Were explicit changes made after the pilot?
The "NewTech" launch fiasco was not the right kind of wrong.
© Amy C. Edmondson
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG


TAKING THE INTELLIGENCE OF INTELLIGENT FAILURE TO HEART
In new territory, the only way to make progress is through trial & failure
Intelligent failures are not preventable
(but they are avoidable)
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

GREATER UNCERTAINTY MEANS LOWER PREVENTABILITY



THE COURAGE TO FAIL WELL



Do one thing every day that scares you.

Eleanor Roosevelt

RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

1



Work to prevent ***basic failures***

2



Anticipate and mitigate ***complex failures***

3



Promote and celebrate ***intelligent failures***

Excellence means **catching and correcting error**—all the way through a process or project – *and* a willingness to **experiment**.

This requires **psychological safety**….

© Amy C. Edmondson

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A belief that the context is safe for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, mistakes & failures.

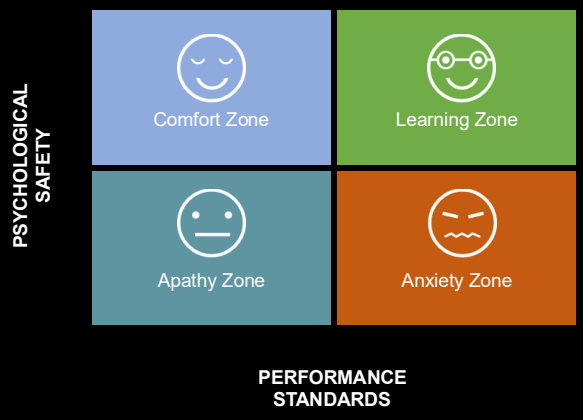
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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

is NOT:
Being Nice
Being Comfortable
Lowering Standards

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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD



RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

How to encourage intelligent failure

1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

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RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

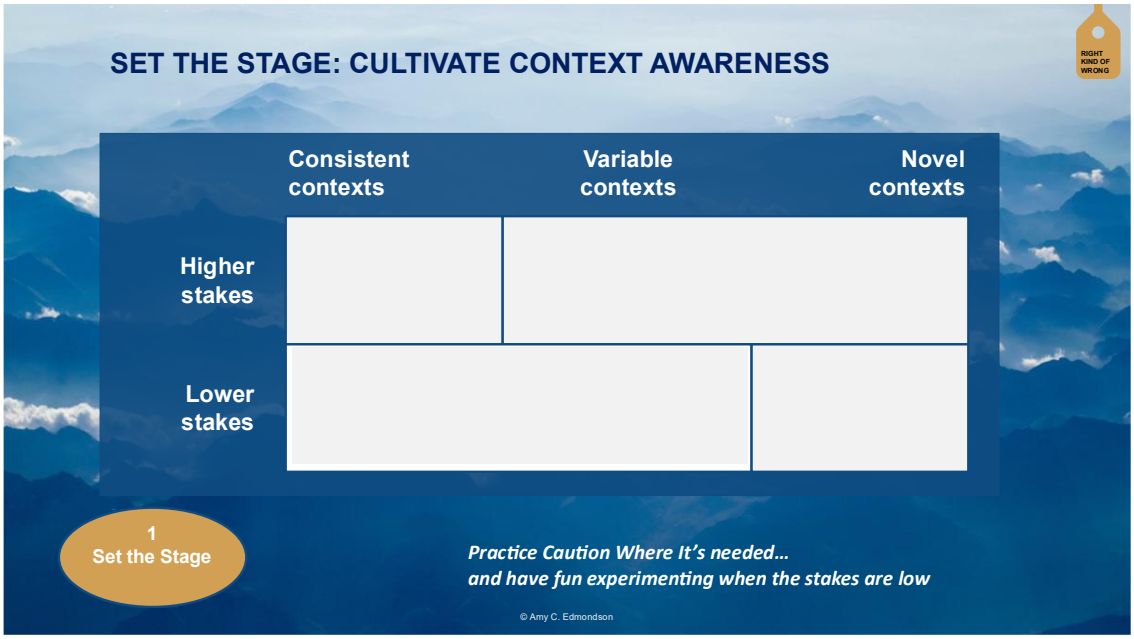


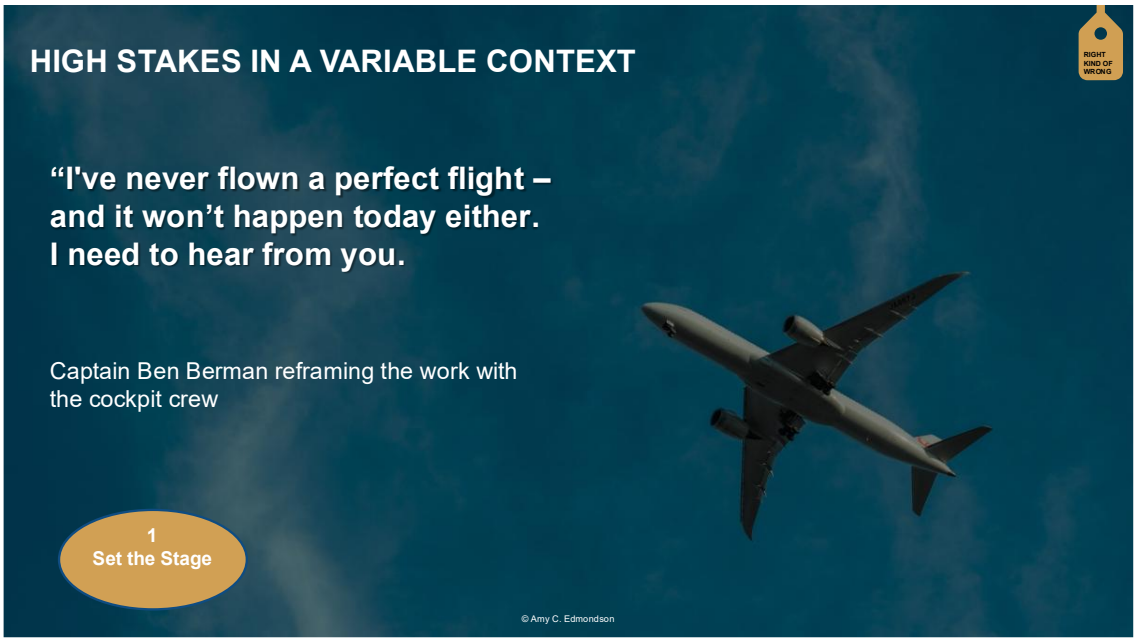
1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

"The business of biomedical research is mostly about failure. Few projects…will result in success. But every study we do contributes to the body of knowledge that brings science and society closer to a solution."

-Ken Frazier, CEO, Merck


SET THE STAGE: CULTIVATE CONTEXT AWARENESS
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
Consistent contexts
Variable contexts
Novel contexts
Higher stakes
Lower stakes
1
Set the Stage
Practice Caution Where It's needed…
and have fun experimenting when the stakes are low
© Amy C. Edmondson


HIGH STAKES IN A VARIABLE CONTEXT
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
"I've never flown a perfect flight –
and it won't happen today either.
I need to hear from you.
Captain Ben Berman reframing the work with the cockpit crew
1
Set the Stage
© Amy C. Edmondson

LOW STAKES IN A VARIABLE CONTEXT

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

I reserve the right to get smarter today, and I would love for you to help me.

Kathy David



Kathy David

Territory Leader & Partner | Audit & Assurance, Business Risk Services and Corporate Services CONSULTING COMPANY GRANT THORNTON

1
Set the Stage

RE-FRAMING THE WORK:

ADDING VALUE IS ABOUT FINDING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS TOGETHER



RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

And Mr. Cho kind of looked at me.

I could see he was puzzled.

He said, "Jim-san. We all know you are a good manager, otherwise we would not have hired you. But please ***talk to us about your problems*** *so we can work on them together."*

1
Set the Stage

*Charles Fishman (2006). No Satisfaction at Toyota. Fast Company, 111, p. 82.

ASK YOURSELF

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

How often do I emphasize an inspiring purpose?

How frequently do I call attention to context – to how much is known and to what's at stake – to clarify the importance of voice & risk?

Set the Stage

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RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

How to encourage intelligent failure

1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

2 Create Space to Explore

- ✓ Create *space* for experiments
- ✓ *Clarify the difference* between preventable and intelligent failures

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ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

Good questions focus on what matters, invite careful thought, and give people room to respond.

To broaden the discussion	To deepen the discussion
What do others think?	What leads you to think so?
What are we missing?	What's the concern that you have about that?
What other options could we consider?	How would that work in action?
How would a competitor approach this?	Can you explain that further?
Who has a different perspective?	What do you think might happen if we did X?

Invite Exploration

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PROMOTE EXPERIMENTING: A GUIDE TO SMART RISKS

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

1
New Territory
What aspect is new and unknown?

2
Opportunity Driven
What positive outcome would make the risk of failure worth it?

3
Prior Knowledge
What do we already know that we can use to inform our hypothesis

4
Small Bets
What small experiment will help us learn quickly while making failure survivable?

Invite Exploration

5.
How will you analyse the results? What will you be looking for? Who will you involve to understand what happened?

© Amy C. Edmondson

ASK YOURSELF

How much space do I create for exploration?

How often do I ask good questions or initiate exploratory conversations?

Invite Exploration

© Amy C. Edmondson

RETHINKING EXCELLENCE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

How to encourage intelligent failure

1 Set the Stage

- ✓ Emphasize a compelling *purpose*
- ✓ Call attention to *context*

2 Invite Exploration

- ✓ Ask good questions
- ✓ Clarify the difference between intelligent failure and sloppy work

3 Respond & Reinforce

- ✓ Share news about *all* failures as widely as possible
- ✓ *Reward speaking up* about mistakes, problems and failures

Should you go so far as to have "failure parties"?

© Amy C. Edmondson


HARTMANN VIAFLO
RIGHT KIND OF WRONG
A Failure Party?
✓ Rewards & celebrates the work
✓ Ensures the lessons are shared
✓ Encourages timely closure
Eli Lilly & Alimta
Respond & Reinforce
© Amy C. Edmondson

CHECK YOUR RATIOS!

WHAT PERCENT OF WHAT YOU HEAR IS…

This?	Compared to this?
GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS
AGREEMENT	DISSENT
PROGRESS	PROBLEMS
ALL'S WELL	I NEED HELP

© Amy C. Edmondson

ASK YOURSELF

How do I reward speaking up?

How do I respond to bad news?

What do I do to promote failure sharing to build a culture of risk-taking and learning?

Respond & Reinforce

© Amy C. Edmondson

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

Unlocking growth through intelligent failures

- ✓ Convey ambitious, meaningful goals
- ✓ Call attention to context
- ✓ Invite and support exploration
- ✓ Celebrate learning in all its forms

Set the Stage

Invite Exploration

Respond & Reinforce

© Amy C. Edmondson

RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

A RECIPE FOR EXCELLENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Aim High
Team Up
Fail Well
Learn Fast
Repeat



© Amy C. Edmondson

The Science of Effective Coaching



Richard E. Boyatzis
Distinguished University Professor | Professor in the Departments of Organizational Behavior, Psychology, and Cognitive Science
Case Western Reserve University

Change is hard – Did you ever wonder why?

- Change is necessary for survival and growth.
- If it occurs, change is at best ephemeral.
- Improvement in behavior predictive of leadership, management and professional effectiveness is developed in above average MBA programs at about 2%, and in industry and government training about 11%.
- Retention of knowledge from a required MBA course is 6 1/2 weeks.
- Treatment adherence for every disease or surgical recovery studied is less than 50%.
- APA survey shows less than 20% of people achieve goals set in resolutions.
- 80% of organizational development efforts fail to reach objectives.

Change is stressful

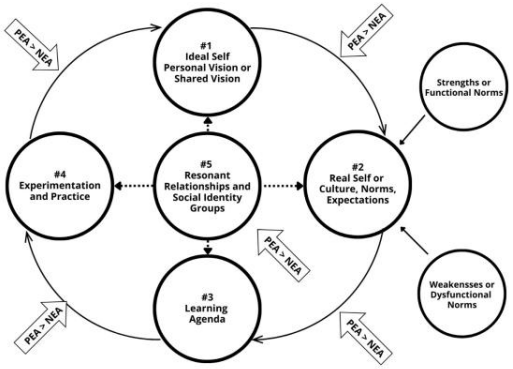
* Stress in the doses we get causes cognitive, perceptual and emotional impairment.
* Helping others is also stressful because of the responsibility and repeated use of self-control – power stress.
* Helping colleagues, patients and yourself!

Relationships Build Openness to Possibilities

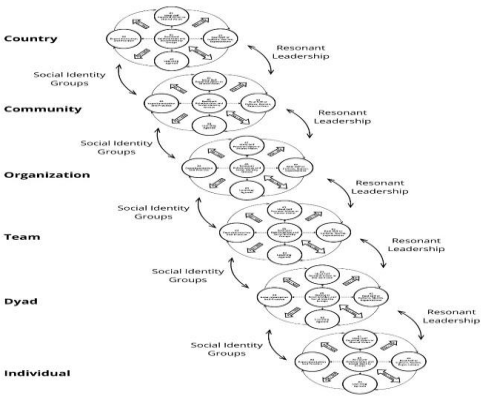
- Who helped you?
- Think back over your life and career
- Who were the people who helped you develop the most?
- What did they do and how did it make you feel?

© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2001.

The Process of Intentional Change Theory
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)



The Multi-Level, Fractals of Intentional Change Theory
(Boyatzis, The Science of Change, 2024)



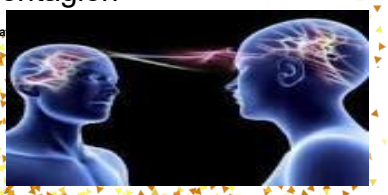
Two Attractors

	Positive Emotional Attractor	Negative Emotional Attractor
Neuro-endocrine	PNS Arousal, Empathic Network	SNS arousal, Analytic Network
Affect	Positive	Negative
Ideal Self	Possibilities, dreams optimism , hope	Problems, expectations, pessimism, fear
Real Self	Strengths	Weaknesses
Lrng Agenda	Excited about trying	Should do, performance improvement plan
Experiment/ Practice	novelty, experiments, Practice to mastery	Actions expected, things you are supposed to do
Relationships	Resonant	Dissonant or annoying

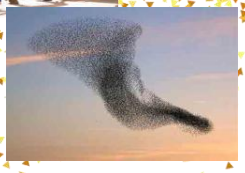
© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2011.

Swarming via Emotions Contagion

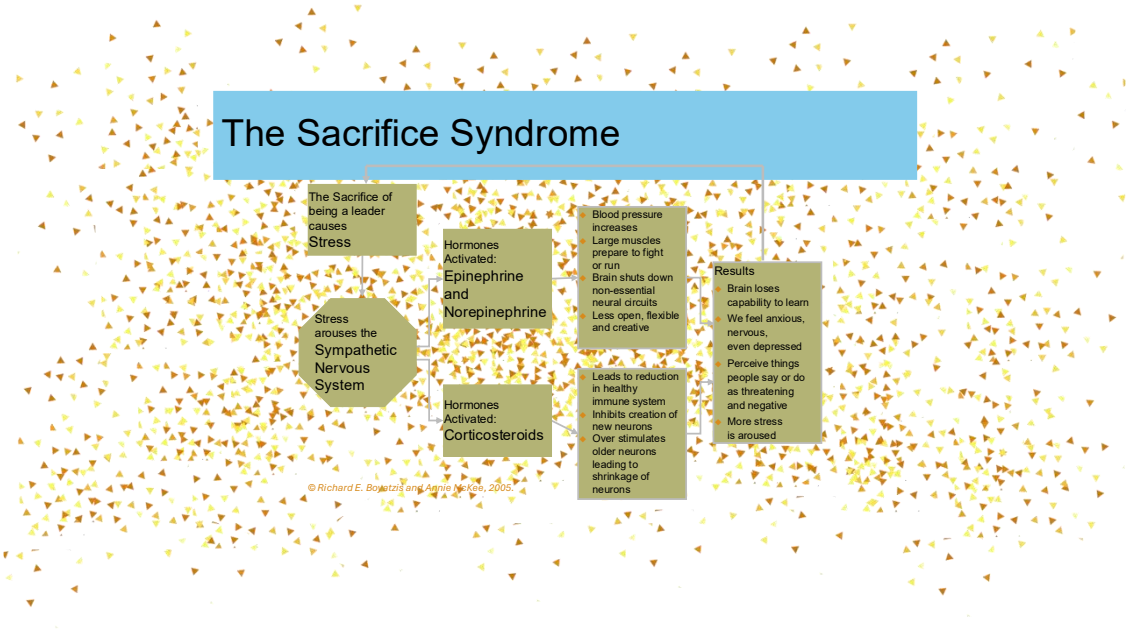
- We are 'wired' to pick up unconscious emotions from one another.
- People self-organize and get motivated via swarming not rational, stra planning.
- Resonant leaders and Demagogues capture hearts and minds of others in this way.

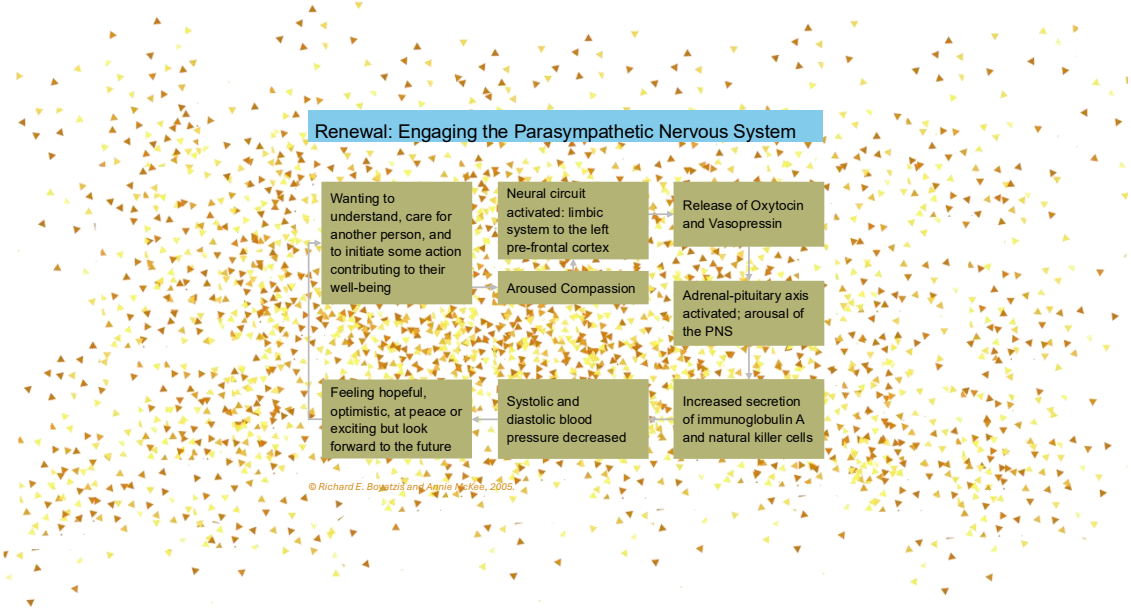


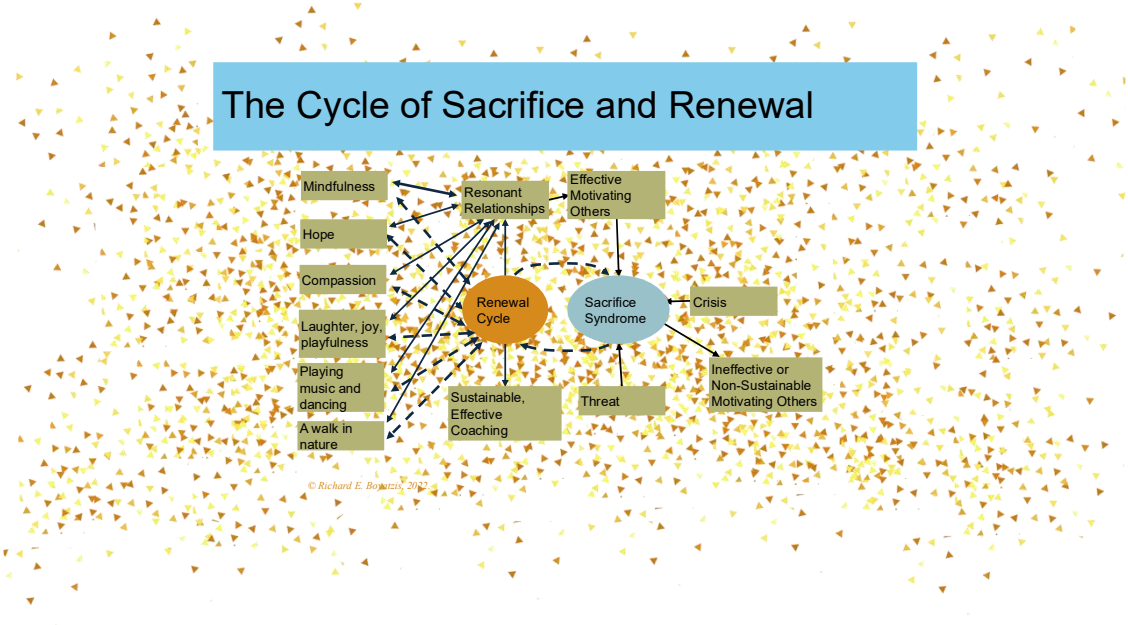




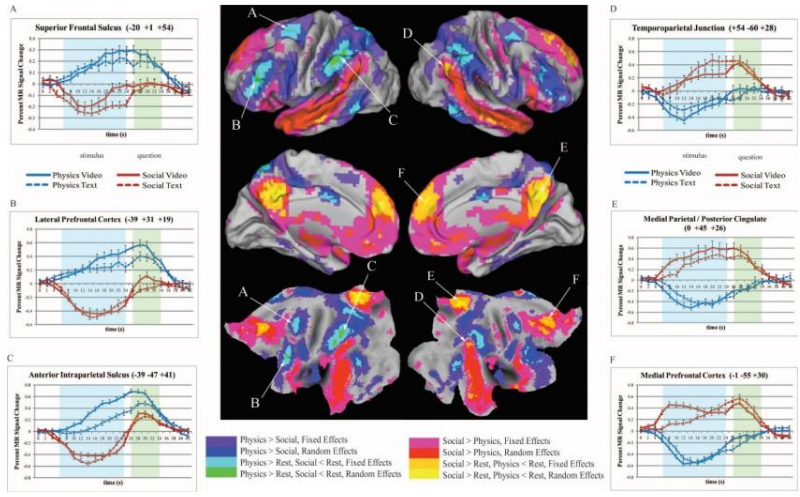



The Sacrifice Syndrome
The Sacrifice of being a leader causes Stress
Stress arouses the Sympathetic Nervous System
Hormones Activated: Epinephrine and Norepinephrine
Hormones Activated: Corticosteroids
Blood pressure increases
Large muscles prepare to fight or run
Brain shuts down non-essential neural circuits
Less open, flexible and creative
Leads to reduction in healthy immune system
Inhibits creation of new neurons
Over stimulates older neurons leading to shrinkage of neurons
Results
Brain loses capability to learn
We feel anxious, nervous, even depressed
Perceive things people say or do as threatening and negative
More stress is aroused
© Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, 2005.


Renewal: Engaging the Parasympathetic Nervous System
Wanting to understand, care for another person, and to initiate some action contributing to their well-being
Neural circuit activated: limbic system to the left pre-frontal cortex
Release of Oxytocin and Vasopressin
Aroused Compassion
Adrenal-pituitary axis activated; arousal of the PNS
Feeling hopeful, optimistic, at peace or exciting but look forward to the future
Systolic and diastolic blood pressure decreased
Increased secretion of immunoglobulin A and natural killer cells
© Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, 2005.



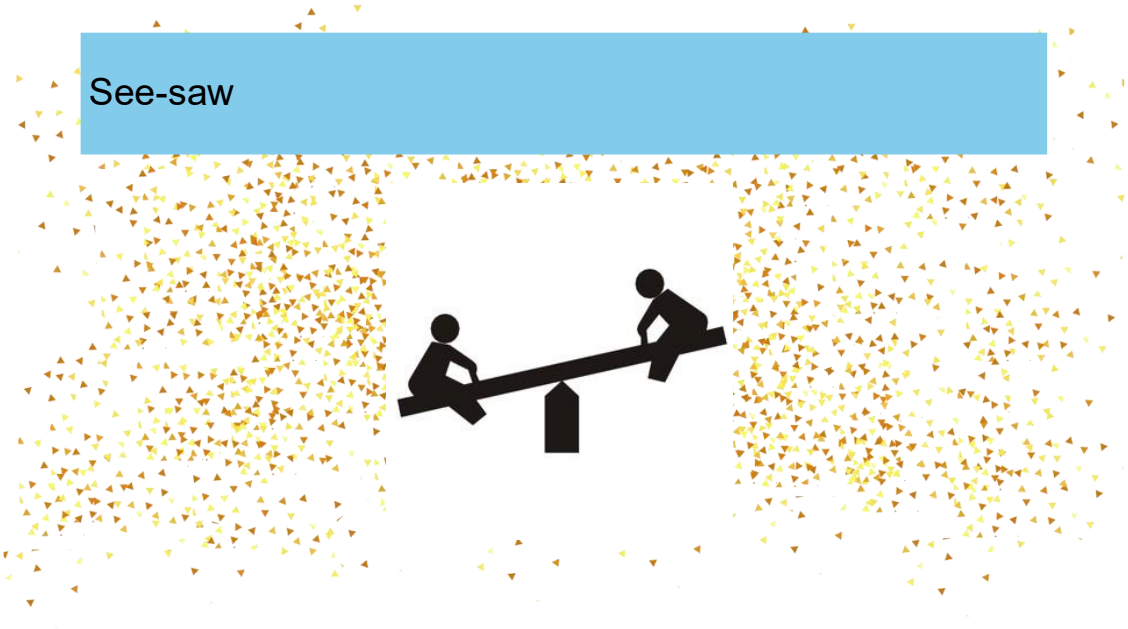
Analytic vs empathic in the brain



Jack, A.I., Dawson, A.J., Begany, K.L., Leckie, R.L., Barry, K.P., Ciccia, A.H., & Snyder, A.Z. (2013). fMRI reveals reciprocal inhibition between social and physical cognitive domains. *Neuroimage, 66C*, 385-401.

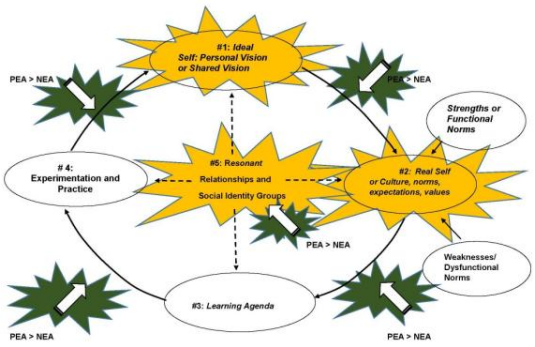
© Anthony I. Jack
brainmindconsciousness.com

See-saw



Coaching with Compassion
(to the PEA)
vs
Coaching for Compliance
(to the NEA)

Anchoring coaching in vision matters, not just letting the coachee decide the agenda. Anchoring coaching in resonant relationships because it pulls for compassion.

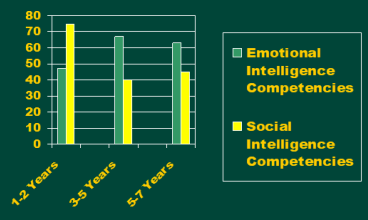


Emotional Intelligence Can Be Developed

Results from 32 longitudinal studies at the Weatherhead School of Management of 25-35 year old managers, plus a 5-19 longitudinal study.

Comparable results with 4 longitudinal studies of 45-55 year old executives in an Executive Education program, and 2 longitudinal studies of 38-42 year old high potential managers.

Sustainable Percentage Improvement of EI/SI



Coaching, Motivating, and Inspiring with Compassion to the PEA vs Coaching for Compliance to the NEA

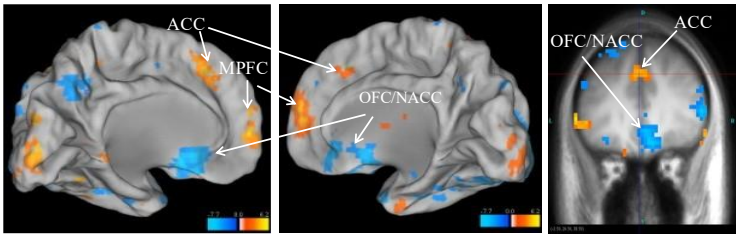
- Jack, A., Boyatzis, R.E., Khawaja, M., Passarelli, A.,M. & Leckie, R. (2013). Visioning in the brain: an fMRI Study of inspirational coaching and Mentoring. *Social Neuroscience. 8*(4). 369-384.
- Jack AI, Passarelli AM and Boyatzis RE (2023). When fixing problems kills personal development: fMRI reveals conflict between Real and Ideal selves. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience. 17*:1128209. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2023.1128209
- Based on research done at the Brain, Mind, & Consciousness Lab, Case Western Reserve University, Professor Anthony Jack, Director and Principal Investigator on this study: http://tonyjack.org/

Neural correlates of inspirational mentoring

R. L. CESARO[1], R. E. BOYATZIS[2], M. KHAWAJA[2], A. PASSARELLI[2], K. P. BARRY[1], K. BEGANY[1], A. I. JACK[1];
[1]Dept. of Cognitive Sci., Brain, Mind, and Consciousness Lab., Cleveland, OH; [2]Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH



Positive Emotional Attractor **Negative Emotional Attractor**

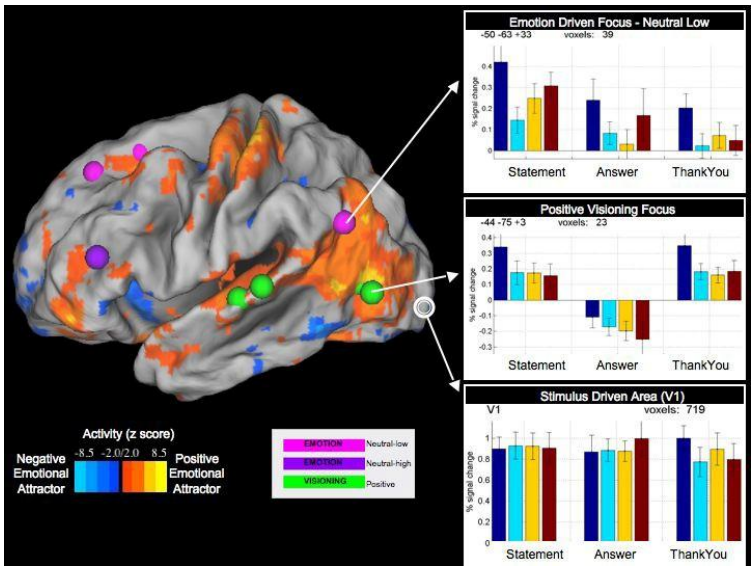


Conflict in the ACC

We found evidence of greater activity in the anterior cingulate cortex in the NEA as compared with the PEA condition. This region has been associated with cognitive conflict and both physical and social pain perception. It may reflect the greater conflict and emotional discomfort associated with the NEA condition.

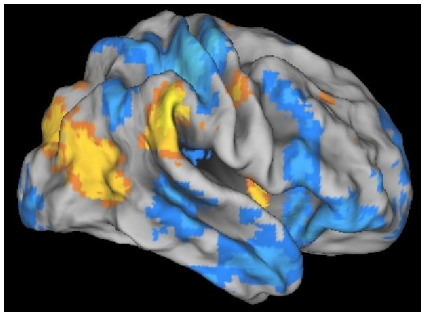
Self-consciousness in the MPFC

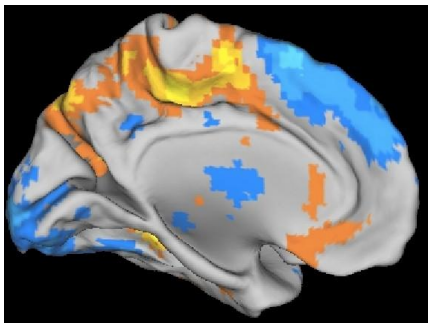
We found evidence of greater activity in the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) in the NEA as compared with the PEA condition. This region has been associated with theory of mind and with social cognition broadly construed including explicit thoughts about the self and how we are socially perceived by others. Activity in this area may reflect greater social self-consciousness evoked by the NEA as opposed to the PEA condition.



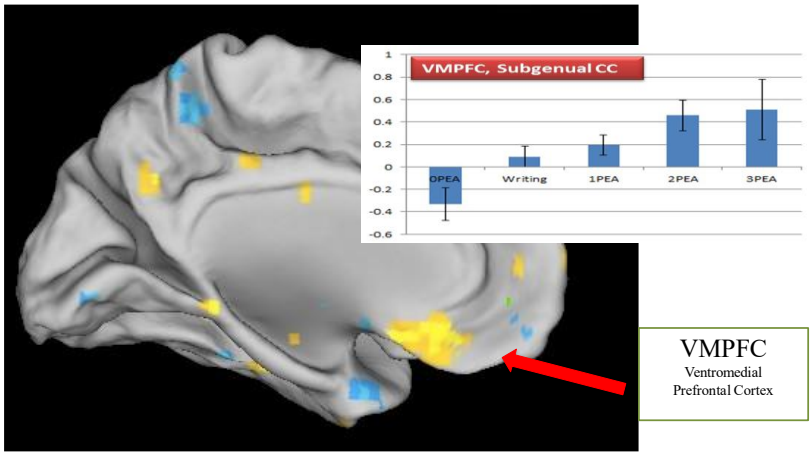
© Cesaro, R.L., Boyatzis, R.E., Khawaja, M., Passareli, A., Barry, K., Jack, A., 2010.

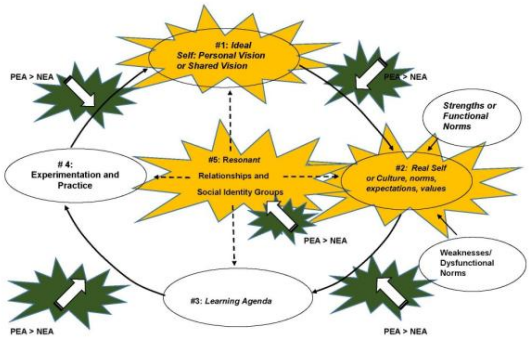
PEA-NEA replicated (50 rather than 20 participants)



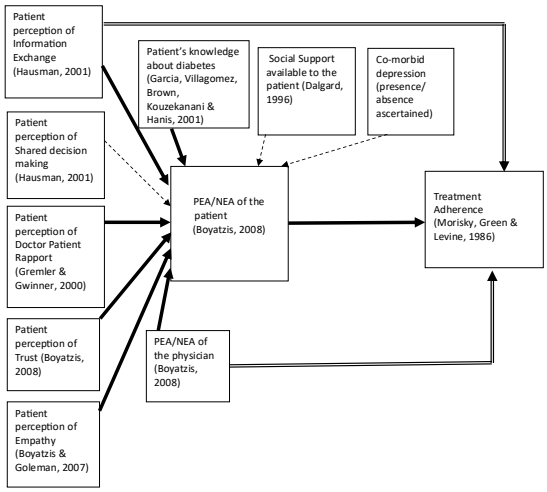


Dose-dependency of Vision Based Coaching (PEA) **on VMPFC**, region responsible for social connectedness and affective meaning-making (Jack, Boyatzis, Abou Zeki, Passarelli, & Dawson, 2013)





Masud Khawaja, M.D. PhD Thesis, *The Mediating Role of Positive and Negative Emotional Attractors Between Psychosocial Correlates of Doctor-Patient Relationship and Treatment Adherence in Type 2 Diabetes*, Case Western Reserve University, August, 2010; Physicians n = 25, patients n = 375, from 5 hospitals in Karachi, Pakistan



© Khawaja, 2010.

Ideal Self – Shared Vision, Not Goals, Not Problems, Not Discrepancies Motivate Sustained Change

"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint Exupery

Think back to the people who helped you the most exercise

How to you feel just thinking about them and those moments?

Is it engaging and motivating?

Does the PEA spread to others (and visa versa) through emotional contagion?

Does it invoke renewal, openness and learning, sustainability of change?

ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
1. Ideal self, personal vision or shared vision	Help the client identify each of the elements of a comprehensive ideal self, personal vision that is compelling; in collectives, help them articulate their shared vision
2. PEA > NEA beginning process;	Arouse or invoke PEA moments at the of each coaching session, as well as regularly during any coaching session and entire use a variety of experiences to stimulate PEA (renewal, empathic, positive); if traumatized or defensive, use a playful approach and introduce regular, small doses of PEA over time
3. Discontinuous and non-linear (think power curves)	Patience, wait and look for breakout moments of conscious realization, awareness and acknowledge it

© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2024.

ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
4. Real self, current norms	360^0 assessment; video or audio work samples and critical incidents; Me at My Best; Best Self Exercise
5. Learning agenda	Framed as moving closer to the ideal self, vision or shared vision, using one's or group's strengths, and working on 1-2 weakness at most
6. Experimentation/practice	Appeal to novelty, try it, experiment getting closer to ideal self, vision, or shared vision; repetition; visualizing as practice; using doses of PEA to keep going
7. Resonant relationships	Who "helped" you? To invoke gratitude and compassion; high quality relationships with shared vision, shared compassion and shared energy; high quality connections; PEA features of a Working Alliance

© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2024.

ICT Principle	Coaching Related Activity
8. Multi-level, fractal change be	Any effort at learning or change will extinguish (i.e. exhausted) and not be sustained unless other levels of the human system are engaged in an ICT process
9. Resonant leadership relationships	Resonant leadership relationships formed and sustained through inspirational moments, phrases that remind everyone of the shared vision and shared compassion
10. Social identity groups	Acknowledge or pursue social identify groups that help the person or group move closer to the vision or shared vision (focused on the future not past)

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Practical Tips: Something to Try Next Week

1. Positive ways to introduce people and build better relationships
2. Reflecting about leaders who brought out the best in you

3-14. Increase resonant relationships and renewal through: (3) meditation; (4) prayer; (5) yoga; (6) tai chi; (7) massage; (8) physical exercise; (9) feeling hopeful about the future; (10) being in a loving relationship; (11) helping those less fortunate and/or ill and/or elderly; (12) having pets you can pet; (13) being playful; (14) walking in nature

15. Initiating inspiring conversations: who helped you?
16. Coaching with compassion (i.e., to the PEA)
17. Start every meeting with a discussion of shared vision,. values or positive stories
18. Practicing mindfulness (emotional awareness) of yourself and

Summary of Two Studies on Coach Competencies That Predict Client Behavioral Change Over Two Years (significant or near significant findings) from:

Boyatzis, R.E., Quinn, J., Liu, H., Smith, A., & Zwygart, K. (2023). Competencies of Coaches that Predict Client Behavior Change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences.* 1-31. DOI: 10.1177/00218863231204050

Boyatzis, R.E., Ehasz, S., Liu, H., & Van Oosten, E. (2025). A Qualitative Study of Competencies of Coaches That Predict Client Behavior Change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences.*

Competency models are used to design training of coaches, both initial and lifelong.
They are also used to assess coaches and certify them or not as qualified to offer services.

Definition of a Competency:
A capability or ability of a person, not a characteristics of a job, that results in effective performance (McClelland, 1973; Boyatzis, 1982)

A competency is:
A set of related behavior or actions or skills *and*
A underlying intent in the use of them.

To claim something is a competency, it should be:
1. A characteristic of a person (not a job task or responsibility)
2. Behavioral and can be observed by others
3. Shown to predict effective or outstanding performance (beyond average or mediocre)

Competency models validated against performance vs values and opinions

Out of convenience, many organizations seek to determine competency models by surveys of current role occupants, experts and/or clients. These are models built upon values and opinions held, also Known as prejudices.

In a major research study of managers at all levels from 6 large private sector companies and 6 large government agencies, Boyatzis (1982) showed that among the "competencies" perceived To be important and related to managerial, executive and leadership effectiveness, when compared To actual validation against performance effectiveness measures:

~50% were parts of validated competencies

~25% were irrelevant to performance

~25% were *opposite* to validated competencies

A thematic analysis of the indicators of coach competency models
from four major associations (ICF, WABC, EMCC and AC) in the world of coaching showed:

473 indicators (the models had 53 to 240 indicators organized into 8 to 35 competencies)

38% were job tasks (AC model: "Provides observational feedback where relevant leaving the client free to choose to act upon it or not" or ICF model: "Maintains confidentiality with client information per stakeholder agreements and pertinent laws")

27% were recommended style (EMCC model: "Critically reflects on practitioner paradigms and their impact on clients and client systems" or ICF Model: Celebrates the client's progress and success")

22% were likely components of actual competencies (a skill like listening). Indicators of most frequently cited competencies were Achievement Orientation and Empathy)

1% were cognitive abilities

15% were values (WABC model: "Bring to the coaching situation a wide range of relevant knowledge about, and experience in SMEs and start-ups/entrepreneurial businesses")

< 1% knowledge (knowing the stages in the Proshaska and Norcross model of change)

Highest Level of Confidence (multiple studies, multiple tests of significance), strong differentiation

Achievement Orientation
Empathy

High Level of Confidence (multiple studies, multiple tests of significance), strong differentiation

Coach & Mentor
Emotional Self-Control
Adaptability

High Level of Confidence (one study, multiple tests of significance), significant differentiation

Emotional Self Awareness
Organizational Awareness
Influence
Emotional and Social Intelligence Total
Role Differentiation

Suggestive (near significance in only one study)

Conflict Management
Teamwork

Summary of Findings continued

General Mental Ability did NOT.

Among the competencies, the most potent was: Achievement Orientation.

No differences in Client Behavior Change among the Clients from the two campuses.

No differences in Client Behavior Change between Client change on these two samples and the over all population.

No differences in Client Behavior Change due to the gender of the coaches.


AC/DC
METALLICA
THE SUPREMES
THE POLICE
ABBA


TOUCH the TOP of the WORLD
A BLIND MAN'S JOURNEY TO CLIMB FARTHER THAN THE EYE CAN SEE
MY STORY
ERIK WEIHENMAYER
Allegra Expedition 2001
21 climbers, 8 sherpas
19 reached Summit
Trained over a year
clear vision
Adventure Consultants
1996
8 clients @ $85,000
15 climbers
3 reached Summit
2 clients & 2 guides died
Many with frostbite


Alexander Klimchouk &
Krubera Deep Cavers
7,188 ft, 2004, everyone
made it safely Abkhazia
Bill Stone
Cheve Oaxaca
Accidents & 1 death
Deep breather


amazon.com
YMCA
BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO
BORDERS
SONY
SEARS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Amsterdam and Netherlands





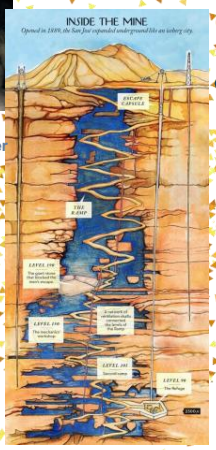
Boston eliminating lanes
in the middle of downtown





Chilean mine disaster
2010
33 miners trapped
below 2,00 ft
69 days, all rescued
safely





Deep Water Horizon
Worst man-made
environmental
Disaster:
Hurricane
Katrina–
New Orleans



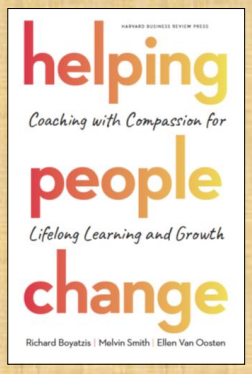




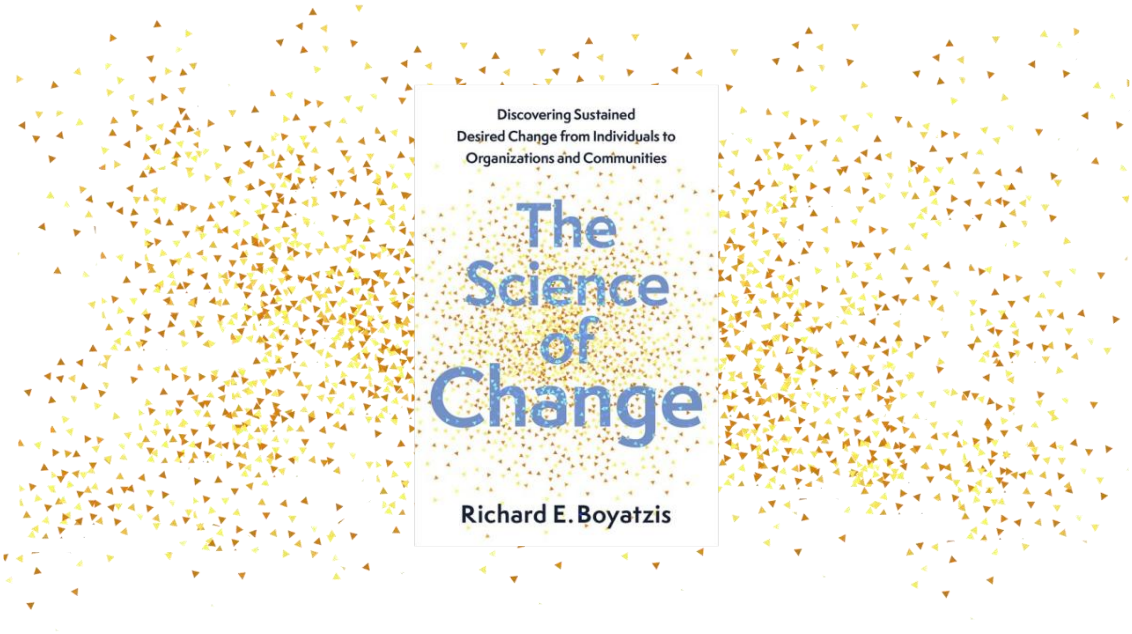


Our new book:





from Harvard Business Review Press on Amazon.com at
https://www.amazon.com/Helping-People-Change-Coaching-Compassion/dp/1633696561



Living Your Passion – Inspiring Others

We Do Not Want to Be Bored or Live Routine Lives –
Nor Do Those Working With Us

It Is a Waste of Human Talent, Spirit, and Potential

Remember the Moment

© Richard E. Boyatzis, 2000.

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

Low Energy, High Yield:

The Biology of Thriving in Human–Agent Living Systems

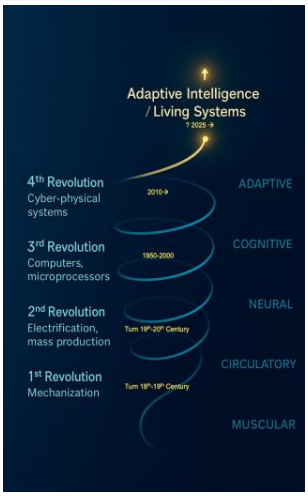


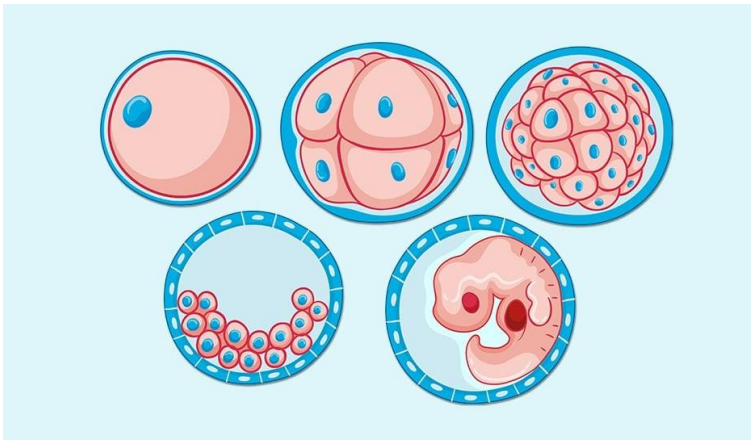
Dr. Etienne Van Der Walt
Neurologist, CEO and Founder
Neurozone®

'AI may well be a natural evolution of Homo sapiens as we evolve more as a global self-organizing living system'



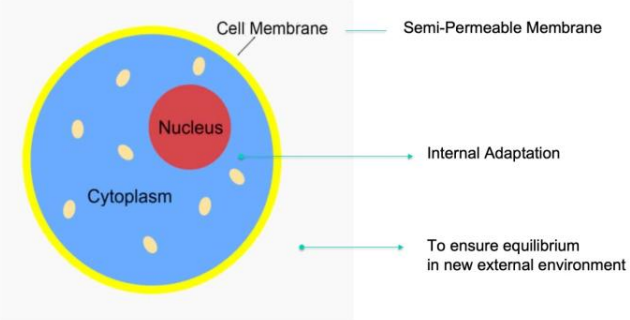
'The Drive for low energy-high yield Systems'





Allostasis

'Life seeks equilibrium through predictive adaptation'

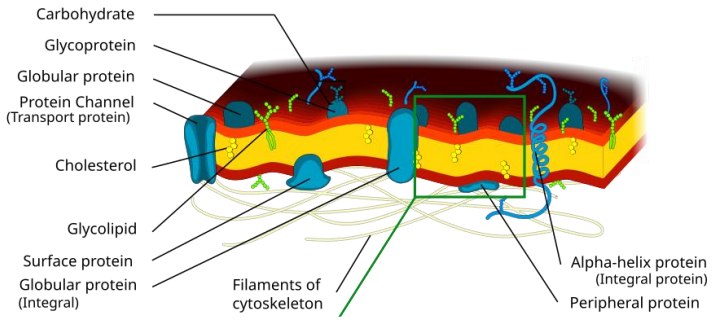


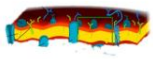
Connectors

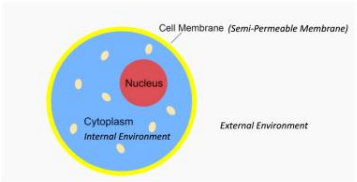
We naturally aggregate for low energy → high yield

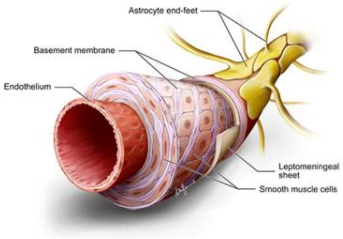
The Semi-permeable Membrane

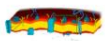
'Exchanging information and resources'

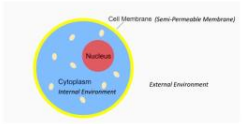


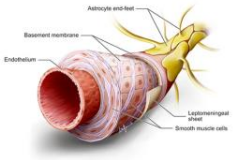


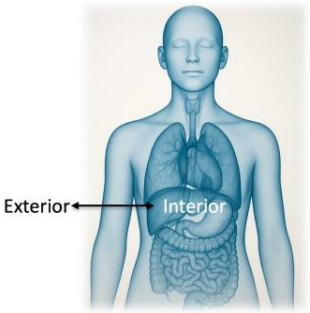




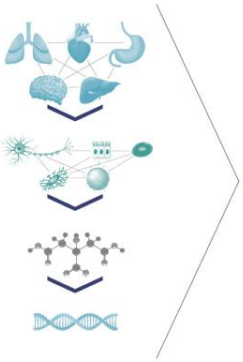








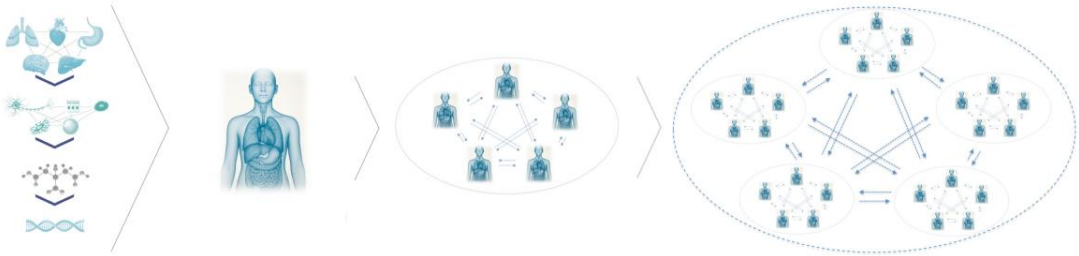
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COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE



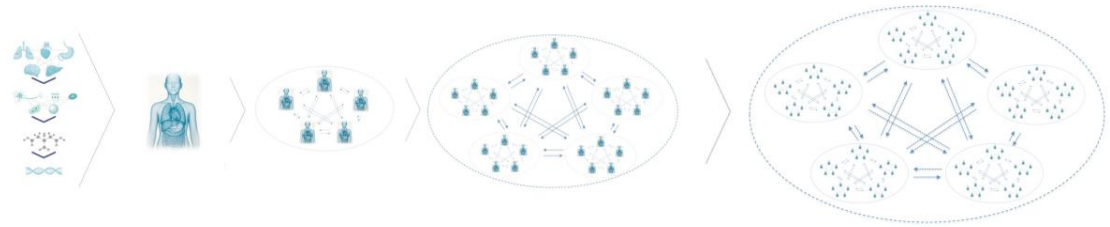


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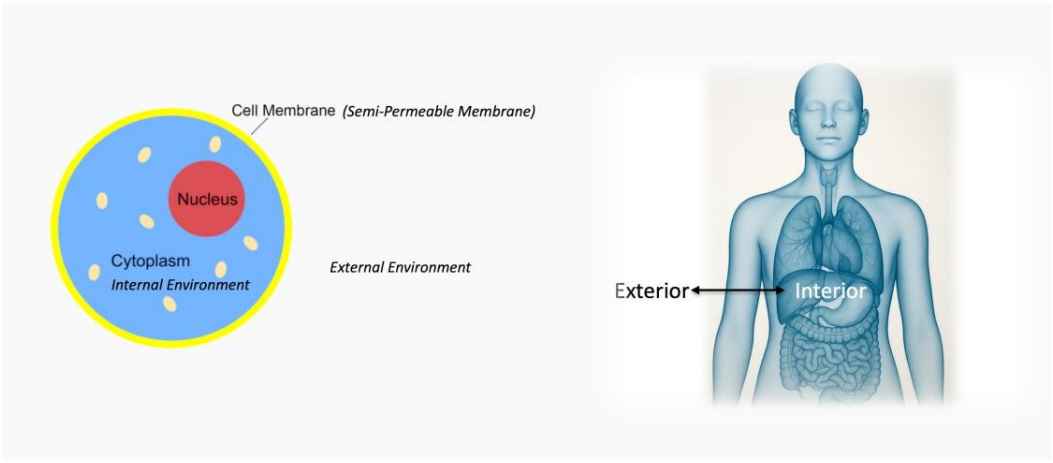
The Magical Science of Self-Organization

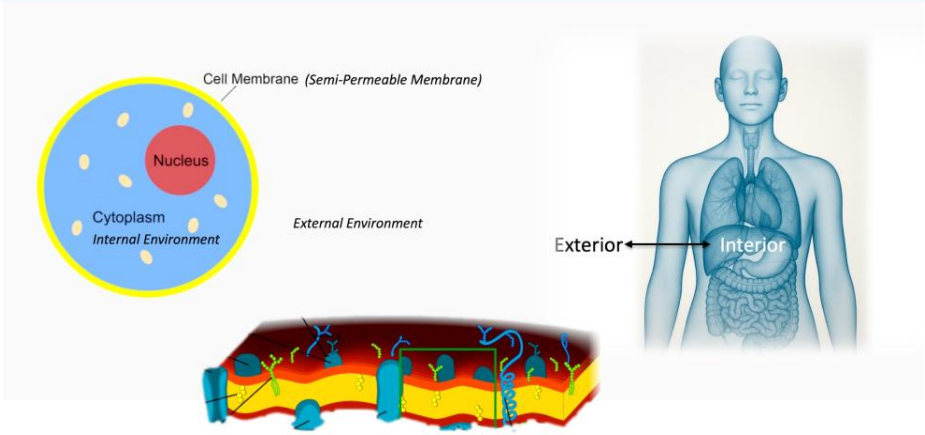


Salience

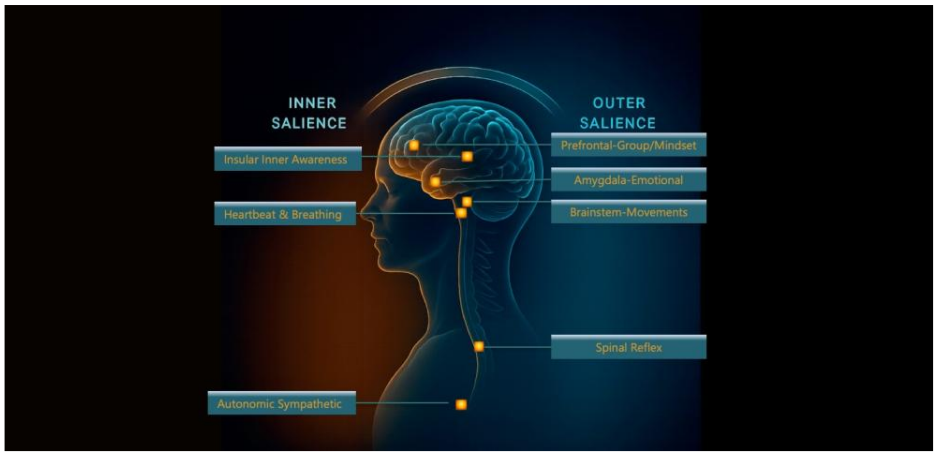
What matters most…Contextual

Transformational


Cell Membrane (Semi-Permeable Membrane)
Nucleus
Cytoplasm
Internal Environment
External Environment
Exterior
Interior

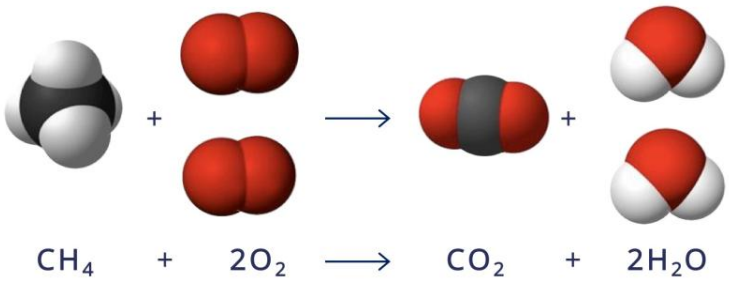

Cell Membrane (Semi-Permeable Membrane)
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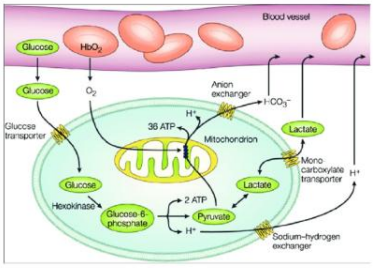

INNER
SALIENCE
OUTER
SALIENCE

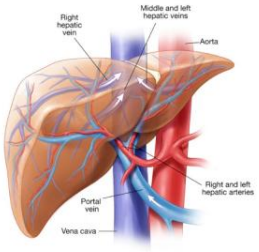

INNER
SALIENCE
OUTER
SALIENCE
Insular Inner Awareness
Heartbeat & Breathing
Autonomic Sympathetic
Prefrontal-Group/Mindset
Amygdala-Emotional
Brainstem-Movements
Spinal Reflex

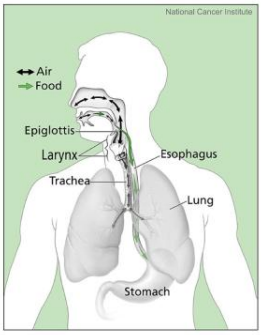
The Energy Economy

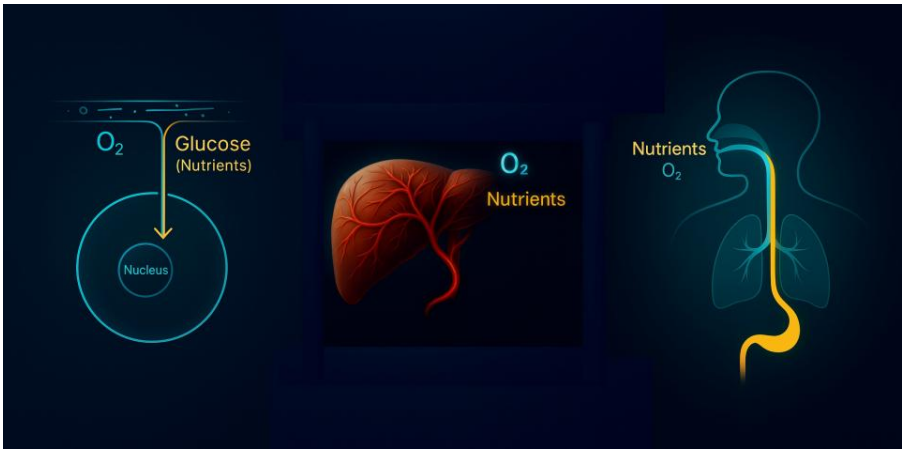
'*Life uses an open energy economy*'




Blood vessel
Glucose
HbO_2
O_2
Anion exchanger
HCO_3^-
H^+
Glucose transporter
36 ATP
Mitochondrion
Lactate
Mono-carboxylate transporter
Hexokinase
Glucose-6-phosphate
2 ATP
Pyruvate
Sodium-hydrogen exchanger


Right hepatic vein
Middle and left hepatic veins
Aorta
Right and left hepatic arteries
Portal vein
Vena cava


National Cancer Institute
Air
Food
Epiglottis
Larynx
Trachea
Esophagus
Lung
Stomach


O_2
Glucose
(Nutrients)
Nucleus
O_2
Nutrients
Nutrients
O_2

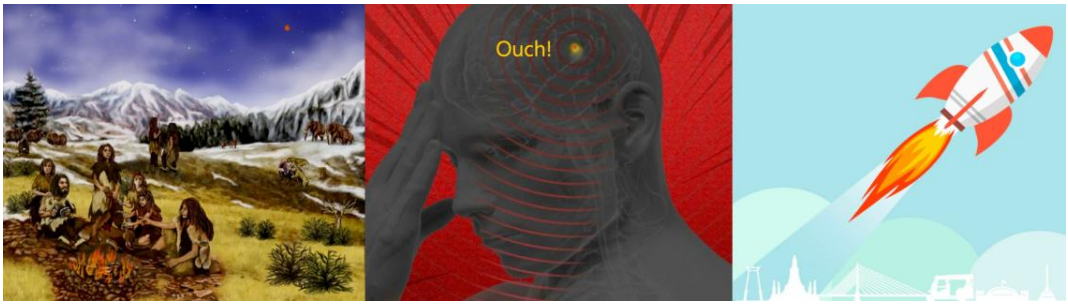
The Sky is the Limit…Energy is Finite

'…the future belongs to those who converts less energy into more life…'

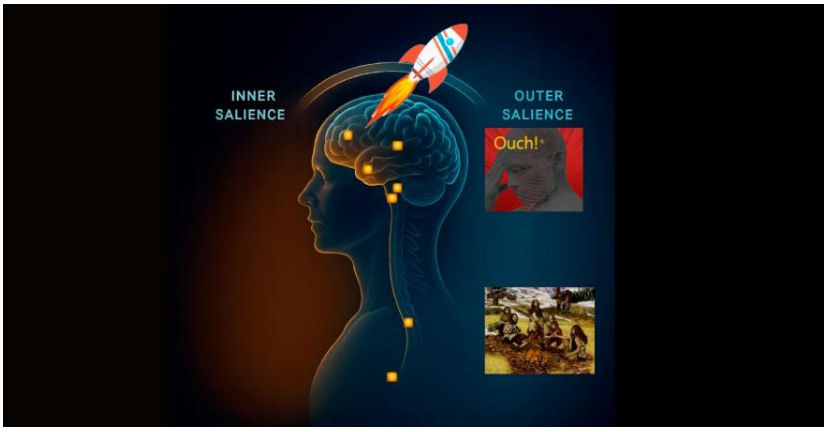
Human Intelligence is Adaptive

'Adaptive Intelligence innovates across a neural axis from basic to sophisticated'

The Evolution of Fire



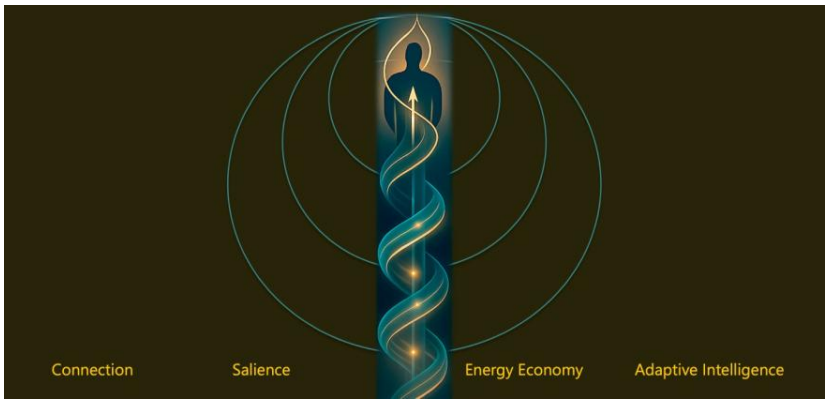
The Evolution of Fire



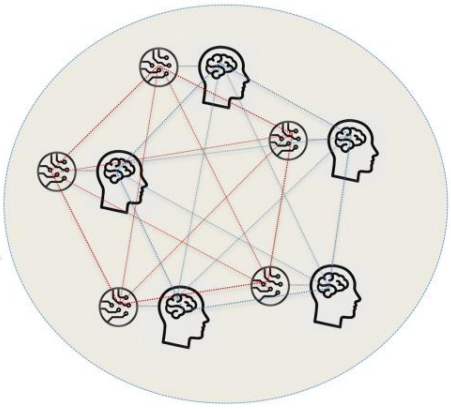
Emergence

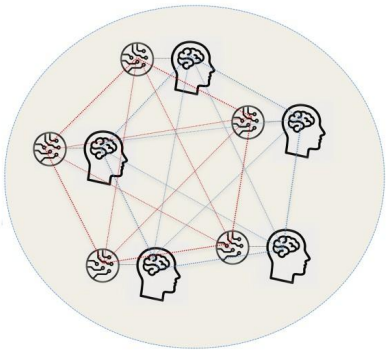
'The marvel of life…scientific magic'

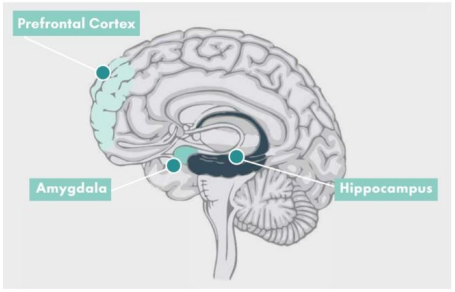
Emergence of Synergy



Let's talk AI & Hybrid Intelligence

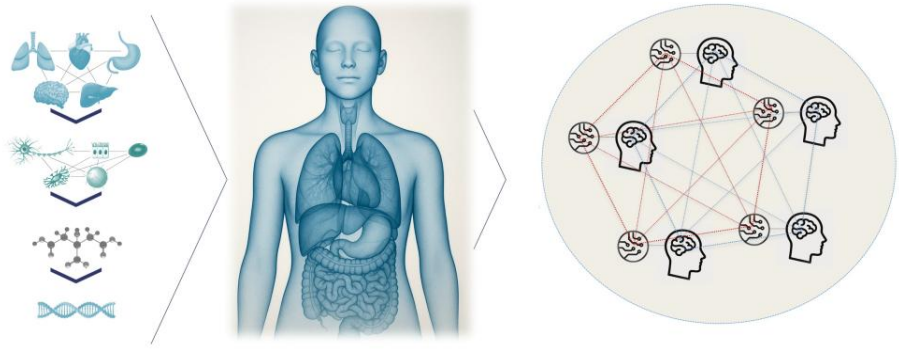


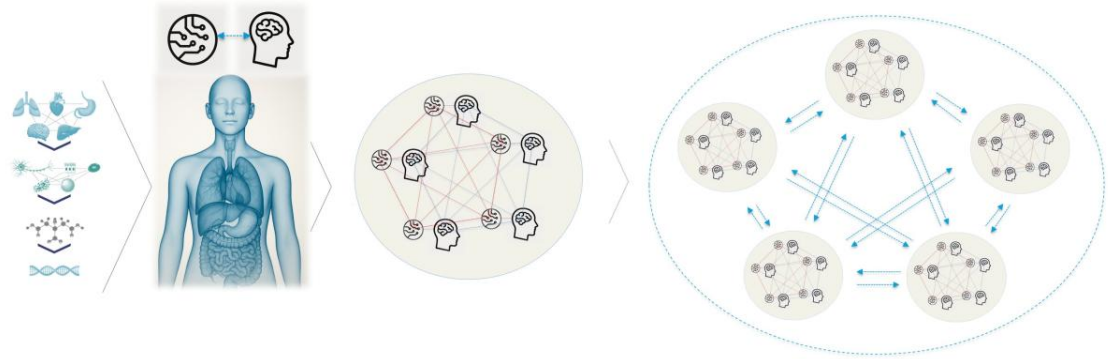




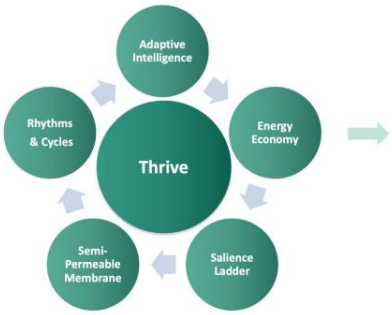
We're in it together…

	Gen X *Regulation*	Millennials *Collaboration*	Gen Z *Immersion*
Core Mindset	Understand & Regulate	Connect & Collaborate	Immerse & Co-Create
System Relationship	Build Safety & Structure	Weave Meaning & Networks	Live Inside the System
Biological Function	Prefrontal Control & Prediction	Integrative Limbic Coherence	Distributed Synchrony & Flow
Agents of Growth	Regulation → Stewardship	Collaboration → Purpose	Immersion → Agency
Fear / Risk	Loss of Control · Obsolescence	Burnout · Fragmentation	Redundancy · Identity Loss





Five Biological Foundations → Thrive



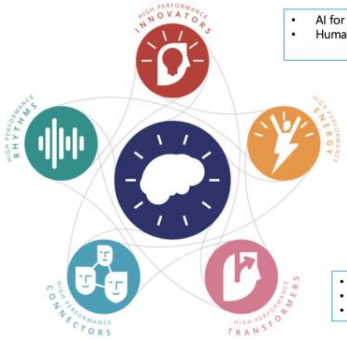


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HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

- Turbo Boost your whole living system
  - Sleep/Wake
  - Exercise & Move
  - Nutrition for structure & fuel
  - Mindfulness Rhythms

- Social Safety: Bonding & Belonging
- Psychological Safety



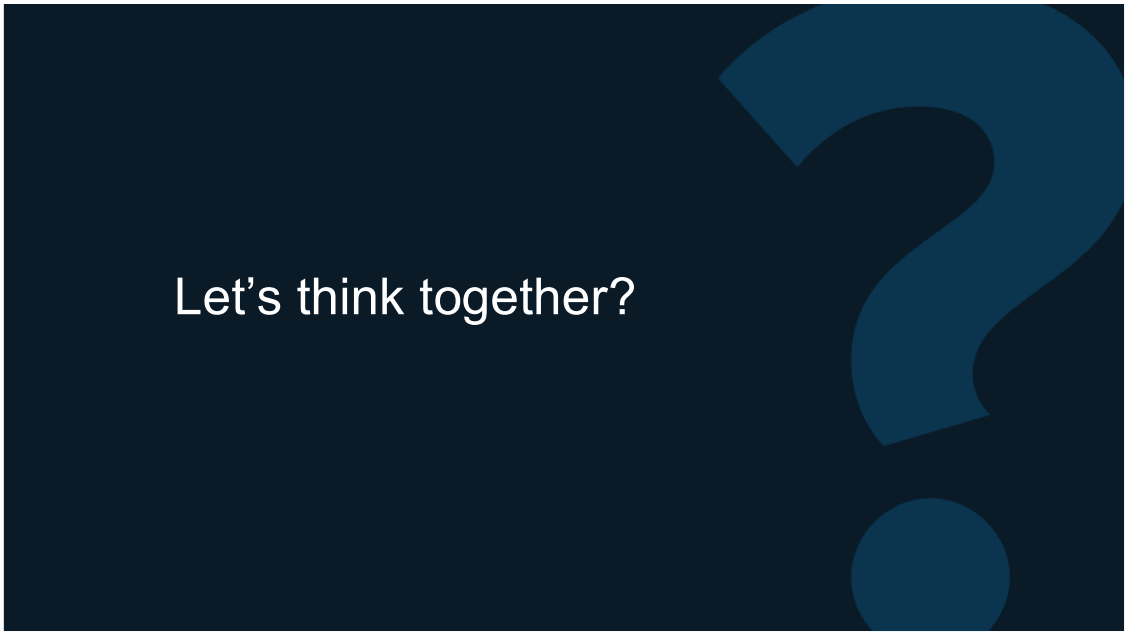
- AI for knowledge, information, patterns, SWOT
- Humans for Deep Salience, Imagination

- Remove negative thought & behavioral patterns
- Cultivate:
  - Optimism
  - Gratitude
  - Enthusiasm
  - Humor
  - Curiosity

- Regenerative Mindset
- Living Systems Thinking
- Mindfulness for pristine salience

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HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE


Let’s think together?


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COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
Thank You
WEBSIT
E

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

Coaching from the Core:
Awakening the Transformative Leader



Hitendra Wadhwa
Professor
Columbia Business School

columbiacoachingconference.org
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
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"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

The best...

Meaning and Purpose
Education
"True self" revolution
Globalization
Standard of Living
Meditation, Mindfulness, Yoga, Healthy Living
Science
Freedom
Technology
Knowledge
Empathy & Social Justice
Pursuit of Authenticity



The worst...

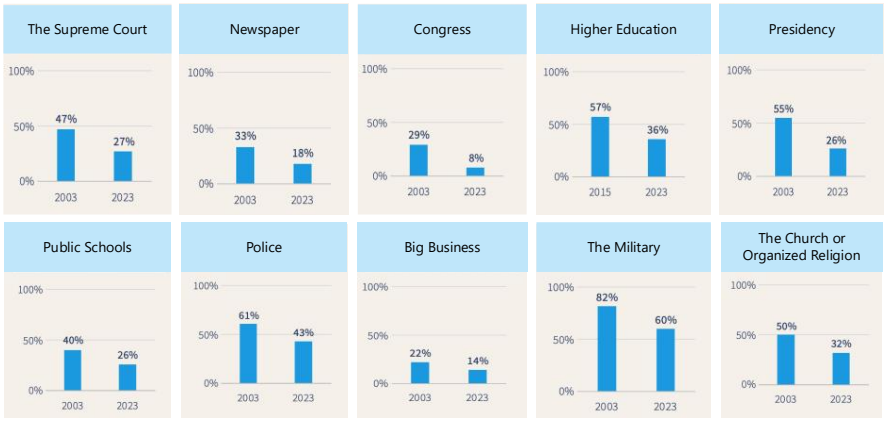
Mental Health
Chronic Disease
Economic shocks
Immigration Challenges
Drug Addiction
Environment
Loneliness
Frayed Relationships
Violence, Crime
Politics
Geopolitical Tension
Social Divisions



Trust is breaking down

How much trust and confidence do you have in...?

Great deal/ Quite a lot



Source: Gallup

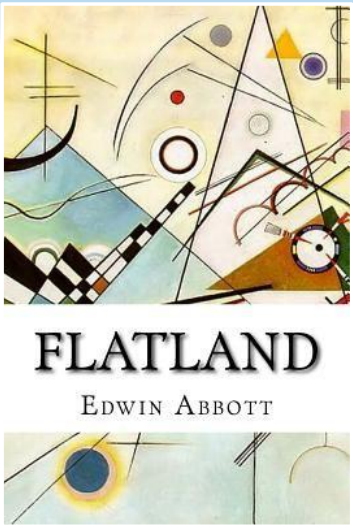



The old order is getting dismantled


How do we build a great culture?
How do I balance driving results with making employees feel cared for?
We need to expand leadership capacity – in a big way
How do I open them up to an uncomfortable truth?
How do we shift people's attitudes so we can accelerate change?
How do I make them trust me?



How do we get from ordinary to extraordinary?



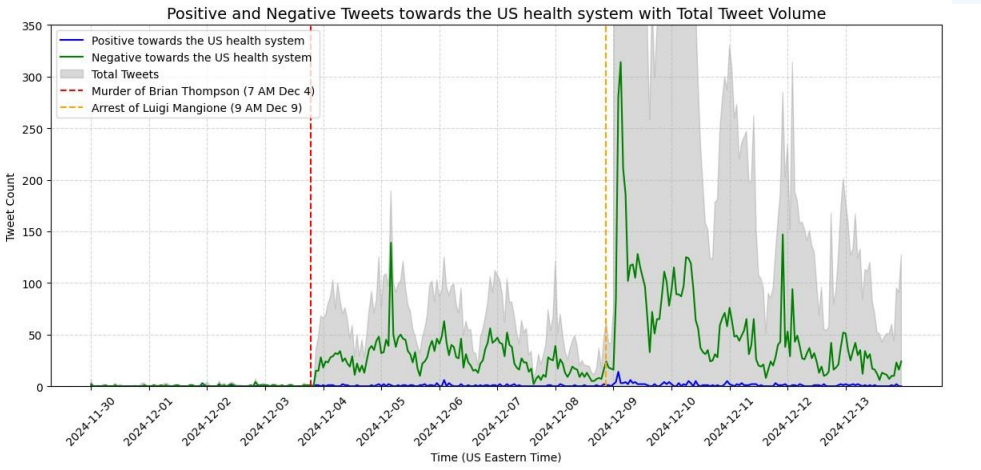
Behavior | Speech | Outcomes

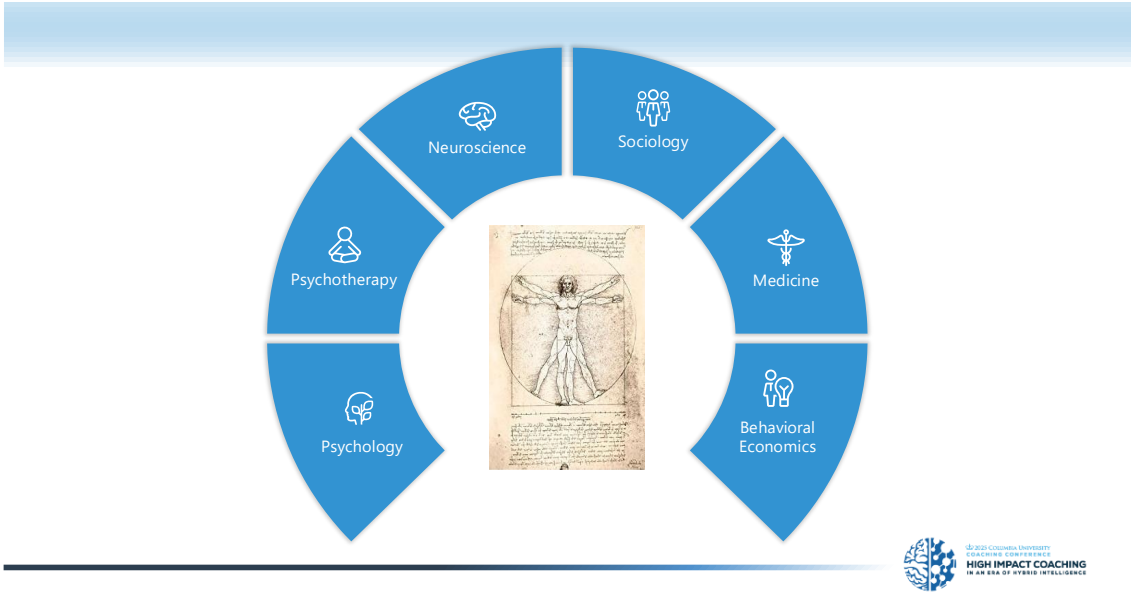
Outer Life

Inner Life

Feelings | Thoughts | Beliefs, Mindsets | Values | Intentions

The inner life matters



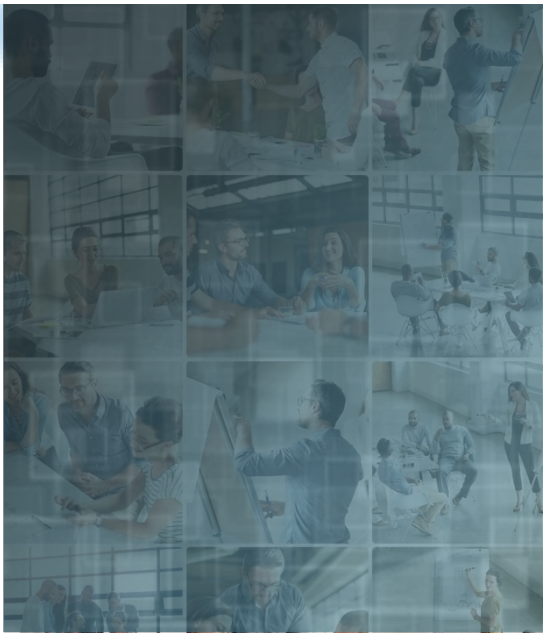

Neuroscience
Sociology
Psychotherapy
Medicine
Psychology
Behavioral Economics



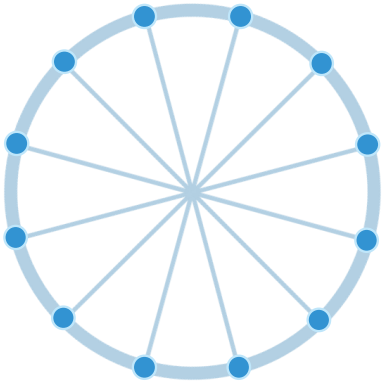
1,000+ moments of exemplary leadership

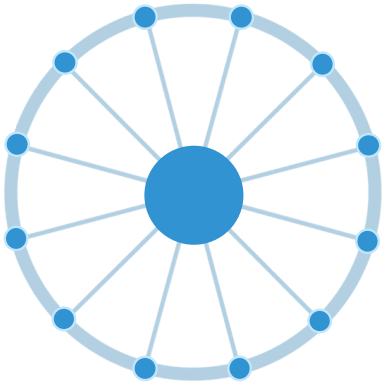
Dialogs, conflicts, presentations, meetings, speeches, decisions

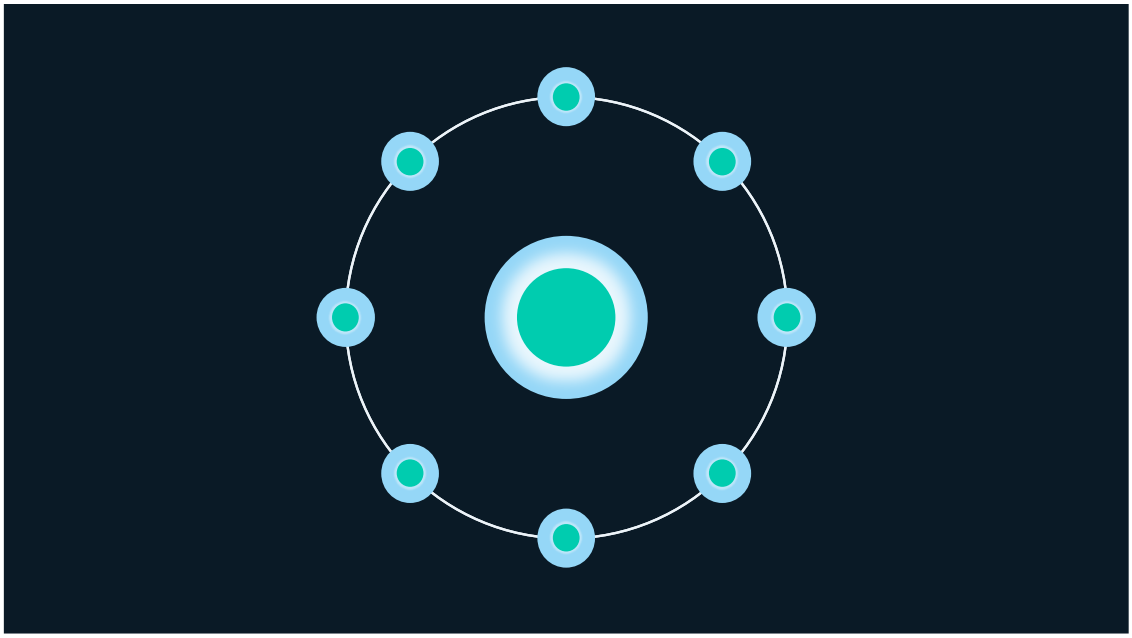
Iconic & everyday heroes

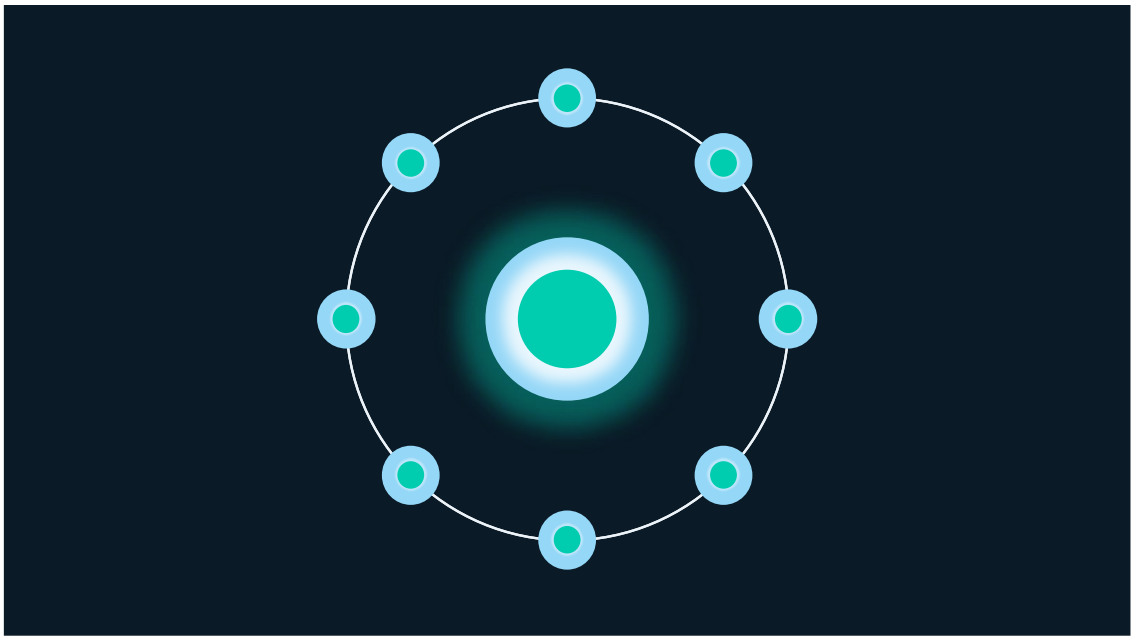


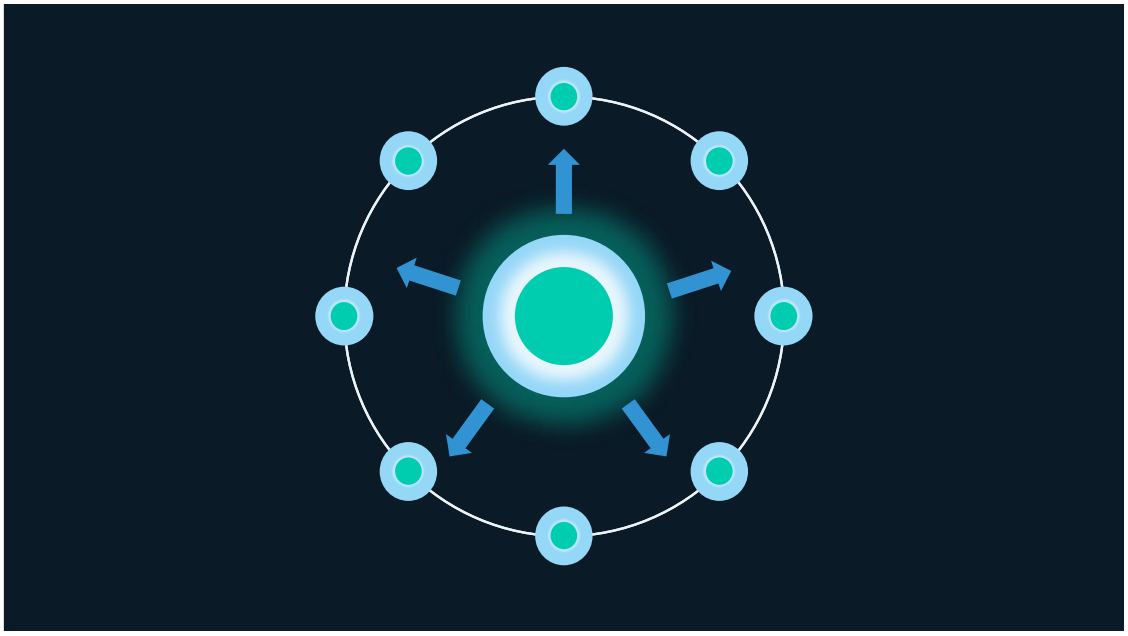


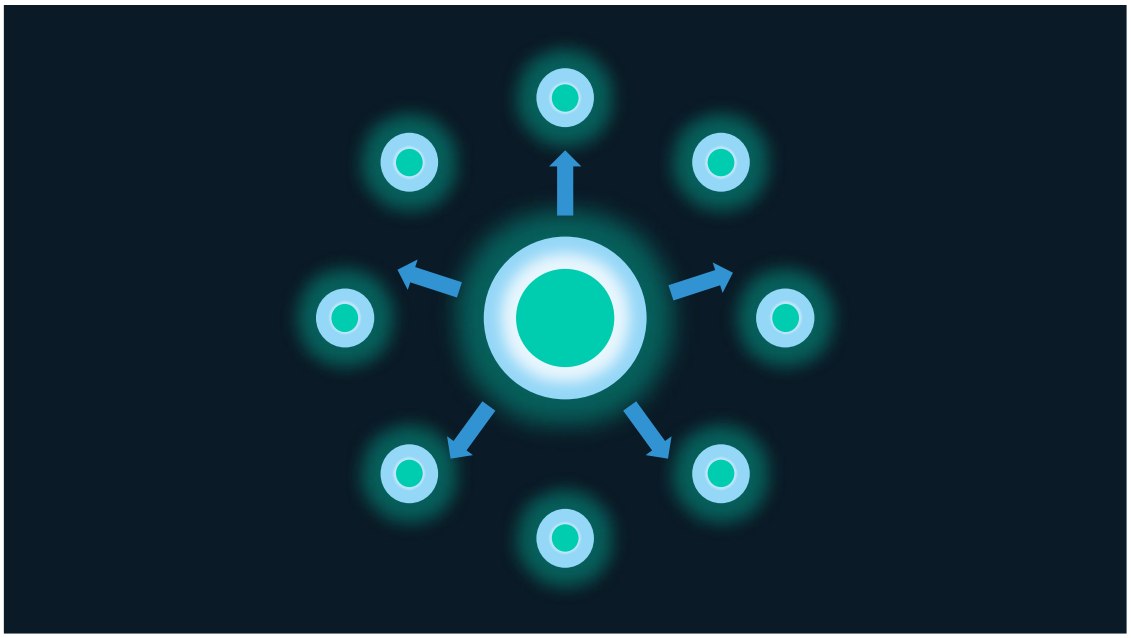


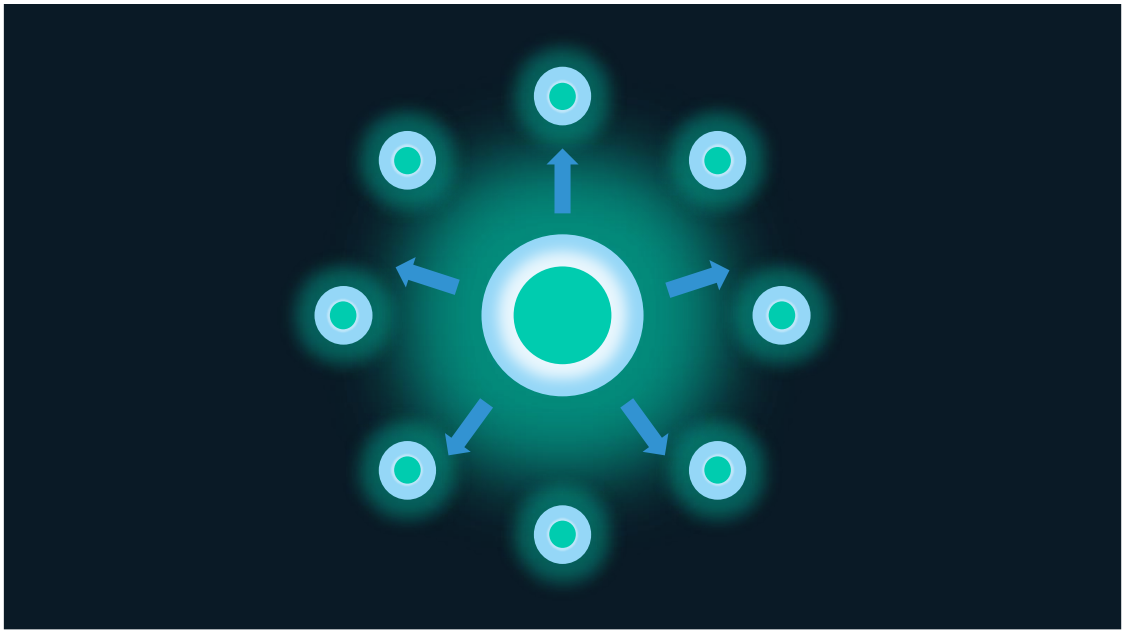


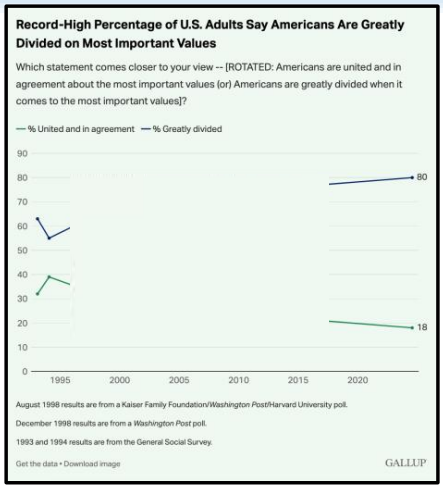


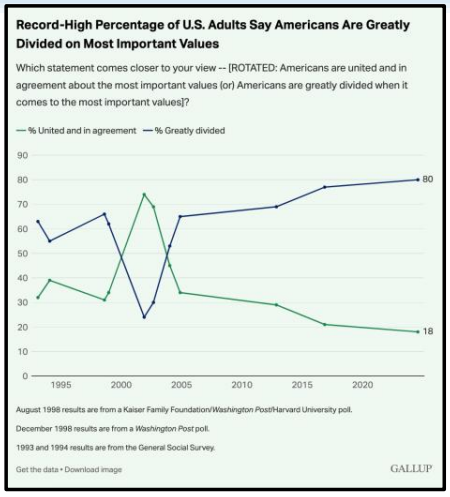









Record-High Percentage of U.S. Adults Say Americans Are Greatly Divided on Most Important Values
Which statement comes closer to your view -- [ROTATED: Americans are united and in agreement about the most important values (or) Americans are greatly divided when it comes to the most important values]?
% United and in agreement
% Greatly divided
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
80
18
August 1998 results are from a Kaiser Family Foundation/Washington Post/Harvard University poll.
December 1998 results are from a Washington Post poll.
1993 and 1994 results are from the General Social Survey.
Get the data • Download image
GALLUP



What is there, at our Core?

The essence of leadership is energy.

5 Core Energies



1 **PURPOSE**

Committed to a noble cause



2 **WISDOM**

Calm and receptive to truth



3 **GROWTH**

Curious and open to new learnings



4 **LOVE**

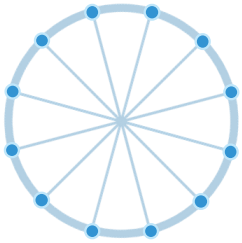
Connected to your team and those you serve



5 **SELF-REALIZATION**

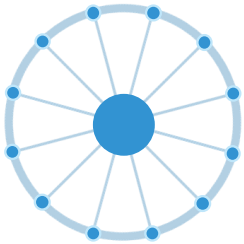
Centered in a joyful spirit

From outer metrics...



A Am I engaging in the **right behavior**?

...to inner metrics



B Am I operating from my core, by being . . . ?

1. **Purpose:** Committed to a noble cause
2. **Wisdom:** Calm and receptive to the truth
3. **Growth:** Curious and open to new learnings
4. **Love:** Connected with my people and those I serve
5. **Self-realization:** Centered in my joyful spirit

C Am I doing my best to get others to operate from their core?

How do we get there?



What's the secret to breakthrough performance?

Breakthrough Performance =

Getting a winning outcome in a challenging, emotionally-charged or high-stakes situation at work

Examples of breakthrough performance

1. Build **trust** rapidly
2. Have a win-win **negotiation**
3. Resolve a **conflict**
4. **Win over** the skeptics
5. Communicate a **positive "no"**
6. Make people **feel safe** to speak up
7. Deliver effective **performance feedback**
8. Turn around a **difficult relationship**
9. **Inspire** a dispirited team
10. **Co-create** a winning solution

Which behavior was she engaging in?

Having Difficult Conversations
Coaching Others
Changing Others' Behavior
Building Trust
Inspiring Others
Receiving Feedback
Communicating Effectively
Influencing
Managing Performance
Giving Feedback

Energies → Actions

Secret Service Agent's Wife

5 Actions

1. Express Thoughtfully



2. Empathy



3. Appeal to Values, Purpose



4. Human Connection



5. Growth Mindset



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These 25 Actions contain the seeds of breakthrough performance





How to Achieve Leadership-in-Flow

Leadership is not a set of traits to be learned; it is a state that can be attained by establishing a positive intention and then activating five core energies we all possess, via quick actions that take just a few seconds to execute. Below are 25 actions that you can use to tap your core energies.

Purpose Energy
Committed to a Noble Cause

1. **Appeal to values and purpose.** Discover and understand people's dearly held values and purpose and then tie them to what you're seeking.

2. **Reaffirm and reexpress.** When facing an unexpected change or a setback, find a way to reapply your core values and purpose to the new situation.

3. **Embark on a hero's journey.** Craft a compelling vision that inspires people to pursue a goal despite tough challenges.

4. **Push, pull, pause, pivot.** When you run into resistance, find a way to move forward by refining your idea and then presenting it again; shelving it if the costs are too high; waiting for changes that might renew interest in it; or reimagining it altogether.

Wisdom Energy
Calm and Receptive to the Truth

5. **Understand before you act.** Approach an issue with heightened curiosity, and fully explore it before making your move.

6. **Disarm.** When you encounter disagreement, find something true in what the other party is saying and affirm it.

7. **Fuse opposing viewpoints.** Find a way to integrate contradictory positions into a more nuanced and balanced perspective. For instance, if team members disagree about the quality of their presentation, their manager might point out that while the presentation was analytically persuasive, it overlooked building an emotional connection.

8. **Dial an emotion up or down.** Intensify positive feelings or dampen negative ones to bring out the best in yourself and others. Sensing rising frustration in a team meeting, a manager can shift the conversation to past successes and team strengths before turning people's attention back to the debate.

9. **Direct emotional energy.** Harness the energy your feelings are producing to advance your purpose. For instance, use the pain of defeat to motivate a team to practice with greater discipline.

10. **Untwist your thinking.** Eliminate distorted thoughts so that you can see the situation in a clear, objective light. No, a presentation wasn't a "total disaster."

11. **Create the right frame.** Describe challenges, opportunities, and assignments in a way that brings out the best in people.

Growth Energy
Curious and Open to Learning

12. **Practice a growth mindset.** Recognize the vast untapped potential that exists in you and others.

13. **Solicit advice.** Gain a deeper understanding of others' perspectives by asking experts and stakeholders to openly share their thoughts.

14. **Acknowledge, apologize, address.** Swiftly acknowledge, apologize for, and correct mistakes.

15. **Learn from adversity.** Use setbacks and failures to help you and others become better—not bitter.

16. **Anticipate, assess, adjust.** Think about the challenges that may lie ahead and plan how you will evaluate and adapt to them.

Love Energy
Connected with Those You Work with and Serve

17. **Appreciate.** Recognize positive qualities in situations and people.

18. **Affiliate.** Find common ground with others.

19. **Deepen human connection.** Create strong emotional bonds with others by accepting and offering bids for connection.

20. **Empathize.** Attune yourself, without judgment, to the emotions and thoughts of others, and make them feel understood.

21. **Act/express thoughtfully.** Bring a deep sense of caring to how you make tough decisions and communicate hard truths.

Self-Realization Energy
Centered in a Joyful Spirit

22. **Get centered.** Step back from your thoughts and feelings and focus on the tranquility deep inside you.

23. **Affirm a core identity.** Help people see a positive quality as already being present at their core. For example, a manager might say, "Remember how composed you were at your last presentation? That is an intrinsic quality I've seen you possess. Tap into it, and this meeting will go smoothly."

24. **Cultivate intuition.** Generate creative insights on critical issues by inducing a relaxed state of mind, for example, by taking a walk or meditating.

25. **Spark joy.** Cheer others up with small uplifting acts.

This is how *nature* works

Simple building blocks on the inside.
Dazzling diversity on the outside.







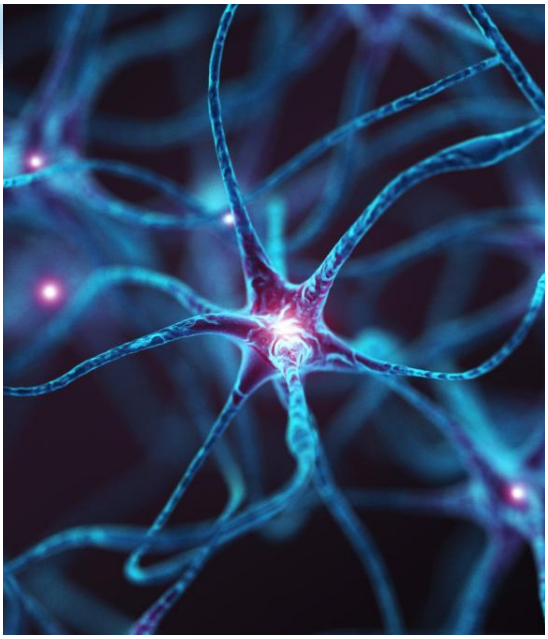
Steve Jobs 1.0 | Steve Jobs 2.0

High Performance is not a trait.

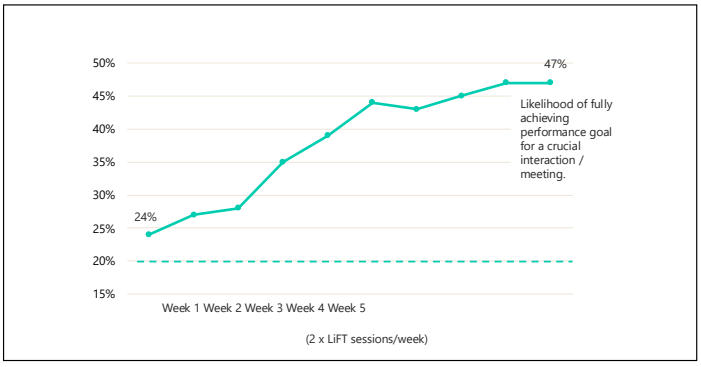
It's a state.

(Over time, the state becomes a trait)

You already have the neural pathways



Impact



We go from ordinary to extraordinary

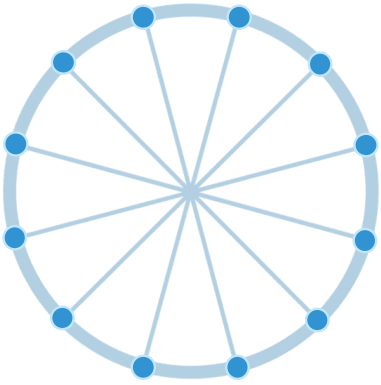
We go from ordinary to extraordinary
by making the extraordinary, ordinary.

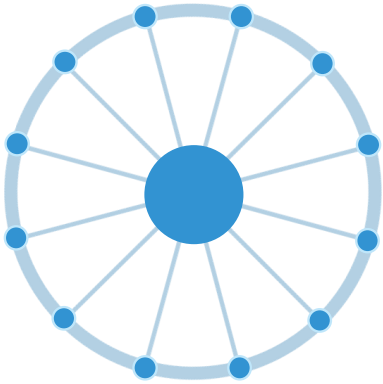


FLATLAND

EDWIN ABBOTT







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…across the ages, people have engaged in contemplative practices in an effort to connect with what they have intuited to be their spirit or soul and to express its qualities in their outer pursuits.







HBR's 10 Must Reads on High Performance, Updated and Expanded (Paperback + Ebook)

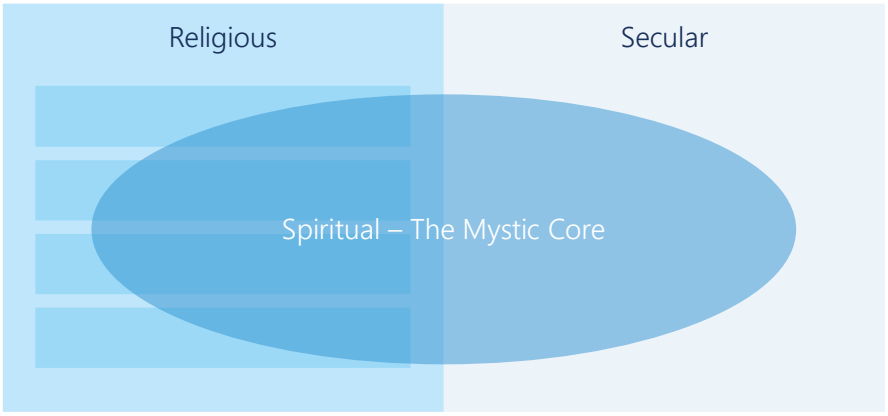
by Harvard Business Review, Heidi Grant, Daniel Goleman, Hitendra Wadhwa, Adam M. Grant

2 item collection

The Misconception

Religious	Secular

The Reality



6 Guiding Truths

Guiding Truth 1: The Sacred Source and the Soul Within

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

Guiding Truth 2: The Drift, the Paths, and the Return

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

Guiding Truth 3: The Inner Voice and the Fruits of the Spirit

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

Guiding Truth 4: Wholeness and Service

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

Guiding Truth 5: The Sacred in Each Other and in the Commons

Answer Choices

A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

Guiding Truth 6: Mystery and Return

Answer Choices

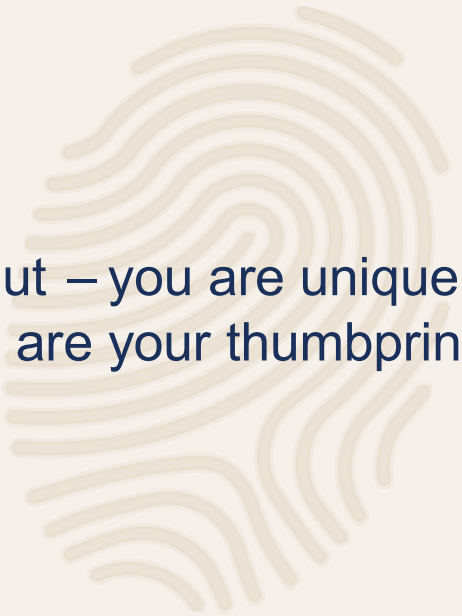
A. **I live by this** — I believe this and practice it in daily life.
B. **I believe this, but I don't always live it fully.**
C. **I am open and curious — this resonates, but I'm still exploring it.**
D. **I'm uncertain — this doesn't align with my current understanding.**
E. **I do not believe this.**

> Spiritualization of material life is the real need of the modern world. We want Christs and Buddhas walking the busy streets of New York and the esplanades of Calcutta; Christs and Buddhas sweeping the streets and running the big banks, performing all duties from the humblest to the most exalted. All duties are important, great ones as well as small ones. Both kinds are necessary for keeping the wheels of the world going. Small or great duties do not make their performers great or small; both should be performed only by great ones. When all duties of this imperfect earth will be performed by angelic men and women, when the stock market and the church will be run only by those who are nothing less than prophets, then our earth will be heaven, and darkness will be changed into light.
>
> ~ Yogananda



Deepening our inner mastery

- Who am I truly? Who am I being asked to become?
- What's my divine spark?
- What potential within me is waiting to be expressed?
- What am I really here to do? What's mine to give, to build, to become—in this one life I have?
- What shadows are holding me back?
- What am I being called to activate in me and through me, in the conditions unfolding today?
- Why have certain challenges followed me through the years?
- What is the wisest way to navigate the season I'm in right now?



But – you are unique.
You are your thumbprint.

Your
Soul Map

- Your energetic **code** (what gifts and dispositions you were born with)
- Your **circumstances** (the conditions you've faced over the course of your life)
- Your **choices**
- Your **context** today (inner, outer)



Coaching from the Core

2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

AI and Human Agency:
Navigating the Future in an Era of Hybrid Intelligence



Dr. Michael J. Jabbour
AI Innovation Officer, Office of the CTO
Microsoft

columbiacoachingconference.org KEYNOTE ADDRESS Follow us @CUCoachConf #CCC2025

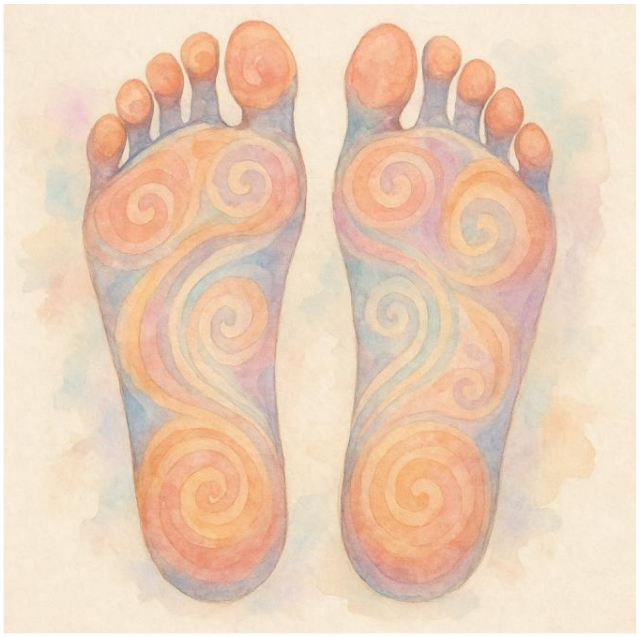
Microsoft

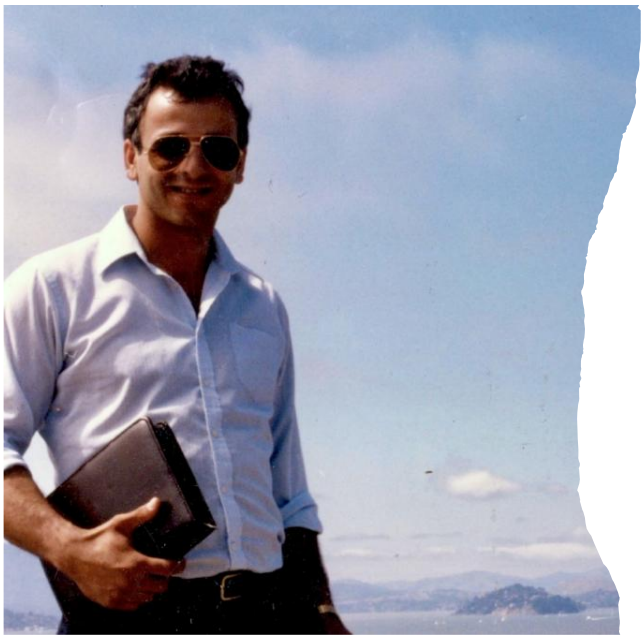
The Future of Education, Healthcare, Society

Enhancing Experiences with AI-driven Tools

Dr. MJ J. Jabbour
AI Innovation Officer, Office of the CTO
linkedin.com/in/jabbour

reclaiming
my
stride





diagnosis
today and
tomorrow



Our Kids

The degree to which a person can **grow** is directly proportional to the amount of **truth** they can accept about themselves without running away.

Source: Adaptation of a Leland Val Van De Wall quote on personal growth

Industry Innovation

Healthcare

With the advent of telemedicine, AI diagnostics, personalized medicine, and digital health records, there's a huge potential for disruption. The healthcare industry is large, complex, and integral to everyone's lives, making it a major potential target for disruption.

Patients, Doctors, Healthcare Administrators, Insurers

Education

The global education market is massive and, with the increased adoption of digital learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are numerous opportunities for new business models and technological improvements.

Students of all ages, Teachers, School Administrators, Parents

Finance

Fintech is already disrupting traditional banking and financial services. Further opportunities exist in areas like cryptocurrencies, blockchain, and AI-driven financial advice.

Bank Customers, Small Business Owners, Financial Advisors, Unbanked Populations

Real Estate

PropTech has started to gain traction, and there are still many aspects of real estate, from property search to transactions, that could benefit from further technological innovation.

Home Buyers, Real Estate Agents, Property Managers, Tenants

Automotive

The shift towards electric vehicles and autonomous driving technology represents a significant disruption to the traditional automotive industry.

Drivers, Vehicle Owners, Fleet Managers, Car Dealers

Food

AgTech and foodtech startups are developing innovations around sustainable farming, alternative proteins, and supply chain efficiency that have the potential to dramatically transform this industry.

Farmers, Grocery Shoppers, Restaurant Owners, Food Processors

Insurance

Insurtech is making waves by using AI, machine learning, and other technological advances to disrupt traditional insurance models.

Policy Holders, Insurance Agents, Underwriters, Claims Adjusters

Government

Embedding AI in government can revolutionize public services, policy decisions, and engagement. By automating tasks and enhancing decision-making with predictive analytics, AI makes government more efficient, transparent, and responsive.

Elected Officials, Civil Servants, Policy Analysts, Citizens, Regulatory Bodies

Futures…



1974 Vision



2024 Vision

Sources:
1. https://youtu.be/sTdWQAKzESA
2. https://youtu.be/vgYi3Wr7v_g?si=Es6L031dwXz2zHPA

The future of work will be different

>40%

40 to 70% of every hour worked can be automated

50%

of entry level white-collar jobs disrupted within 5 years

Sources:
1. Goldman Sachs Research Newsletter
2. The augmented workforce for an automated, AI-driven world | IBM
3. Economic potential of generative AI | McKinsey
4. An Early Look at the Labor Market Impact Potential

AI can fill the capacity gap

80%

of employees lack time & energy to do their job

82%

of leaders will use agents as digital team members in 12-18m

Source: 2025 Work Trends Index

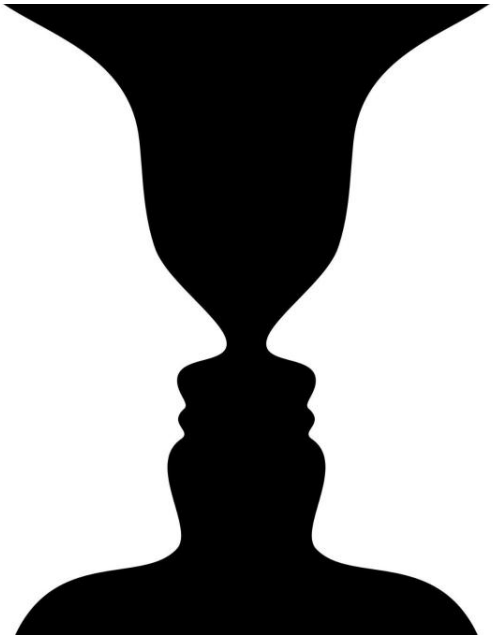
Rubin's Vase

This ambiguous figure, discovered by Danish psychologist Edgar John Rubin in 1915, **demonstrates figure - ground perception and the "Gestalt switch" phenomenon**

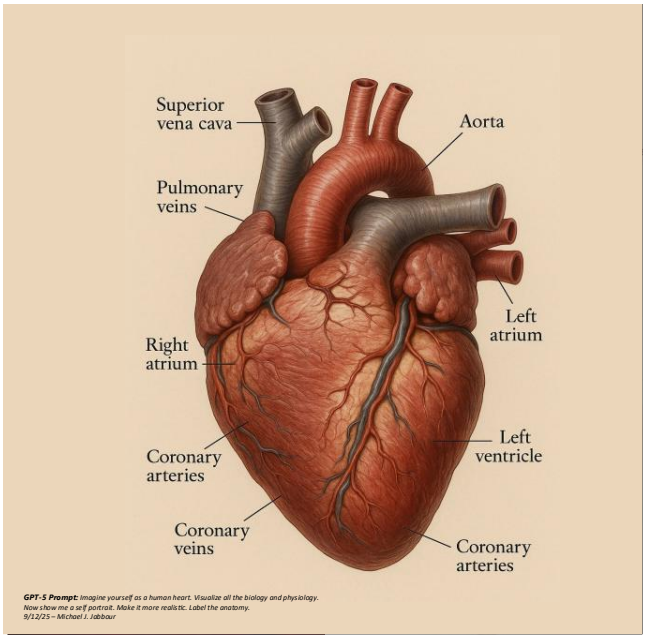
The image can be perceived as either a black vase or two white faces in profile, but **never both simultaneously** . Our brain alternates between these interpretations, with one shape becoming the "figure" (foreground) while the other becomes the "ground" (background).

This illustrates a key principle of perception: when presented with ambiguous visual information, our brain actively constructs meaning by toggling between possible interpretations. The difficulty in controlling which image you see – even when trying – reveals how visual processing operates largely outside conscious control, making this illusion a valuable tool for understanding how we perceive and interpret the world.

Source: https://www.illusionsindex.org/i/39-rubin-s-vase



Where do WE fit in all of this?



Microsoft

As AI systems get more intricate…

Prompt

As AI systems get more intricate, they become harder to understand. How can I easily explain this idea and create a visualization in Excel?

It's relatively easy to Imagine a **small town's road system** . When there are only a few roads, it's easy to see where each one goes and how they connect. But as the town grows into a **large city with highways, intersections, underpasses, and bridges** , it becomes much **harder to predict** traffic patterns, determine the best routes, or understand how a single road change might affect the entire system.

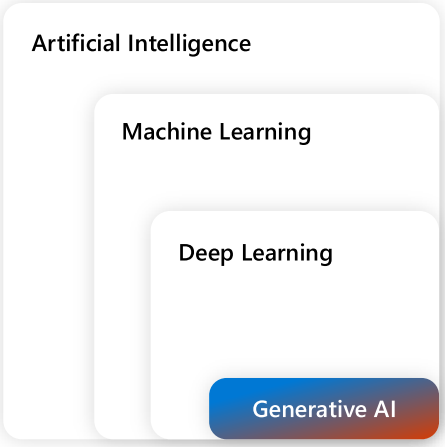


chatGPT-DALLE-3 Prompt. *Palo Alto 10/24/23 – 7:00AM PST – Michael J. Jabbour*

AI Foundations

Microsoft

A brief history of AI



1943 – 1950s
Artificial Intelligence
the field of computer science that seeks to create intelligent machines that can replicate or exceed human intelligence.

1959–1997
Machine Learning
subset of AI that enables machines to learn from existing data and improve upon that data to make decisions or predictions.

2011–2017
Deep Learning
a machine learning technique in which layers of neural networks are used to process data and make decisions.

2020–Present
Generative AI
create new written, visual, and auditory content given prompts or existing data.

What can these new AI services do?

Content & image generation

- Automatically generate responses to student or teacher inquiries
- Visual aids for diverse learners and interactive multimedia lesson plans
- Hyper-personalized learning material creation
- Collaborative creative writing and artwork for class projects

Summarization

- Classification, sentiment analysis, entity extraction, and summarization
- Summarization of subject matter expert documentation (e.g. lengthy educational articles, analyst articles)
- Highlighting essential points in learning texts
- Adjust complexity, tone, age-level, and language of complex content

Code generation

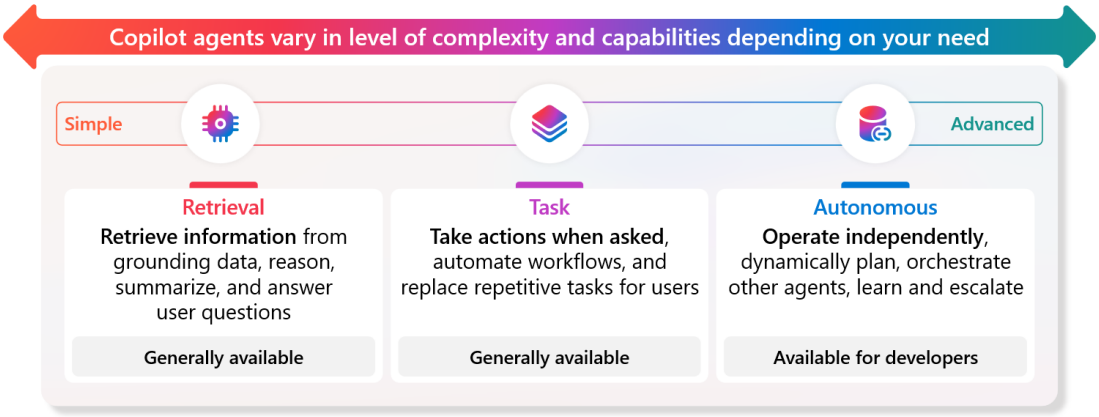
- Convert natural language to code or SQL (or vice versa)
- Convert natural language to query proprietary data models
- Document, troubleshoot, and repair code
- Personalized code examples and problems during learning

Advanced search

- Tailored educational resource discovery, connecting cross-disciplinary concepts
- Multi-modal searching through structured & unstructured documentation
- Information discovery and knowledge mining
- Enable multimodal search approaches and results

What are agents?

Agents are AI assistants that can help optimize business processes and enhance productivity



94

Azure OpenAI Service

Content creation by API

Prompt

Write a tagline for an ice cream shop.

Response

We serve up smiles with every scoop!

Prompt

Table customers, columns = [CustomerId , FirstName, LastName , Company, Address, City, State, Country, PostalCode]

Create a SQL query for all customers in Texas named Jane query =

Response

```
SELECT *
FROM customers
WHERE State = 'TX' AND
FirstName = 'Jane'
```

Prompt

A ball of fire with vibrant colors to show the speed of innovation at our media and entertainment company



Azure OpenAI Service

Alternative

Prompt

A ball of fire with vibrant colors to show the speed of innovation at our media and entertainment company



SORA

Video Generation





Role of GPT

Microsoft



The future of learning will be personalized

6 wks

of virtual instruction can match 2 years of traditional learning

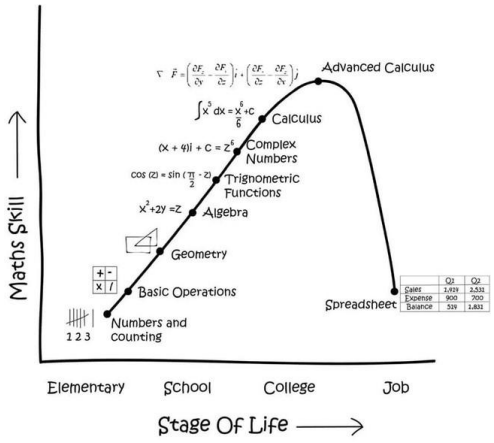
66%

of business leaders wouldn't hire someone without AI skills

Sources:
1. Microsoft (2024). '2024 Work Trend Index: AI at work is here
2. World Bank (2021). 'Can Virtual Reality simulators develop students' skills?

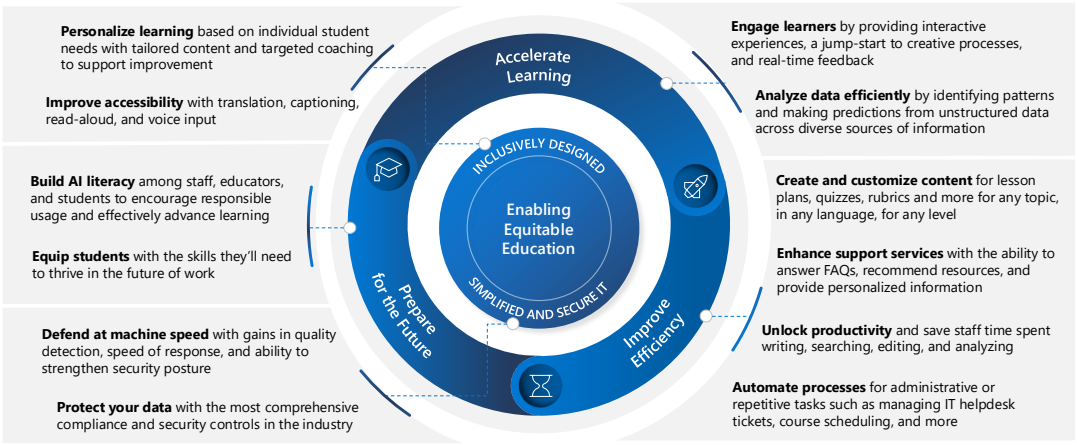
education ≠ training

Are we teaching useful skills?



Source: Widely distributed internet meme with no origin

Opportunities for AI in Education



Teaching & Learning

Acceleration & Outcomes

Microsoft

Unleash Your Inner Leader: Master the Art of Healthy Narcissism

Prompt

Are you aware of this article "Is a little narcissism a good thing in leadership roles? Test of an inverted - U-shaped relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with leader- Gerhard Blickle a,*, Franziska Bohm ¨a, Andreas Wihler b"

Response

Yes, I am aware of the article you mentioned. The article is titled "Is a little narcissism a good thing in leadership roles? Test of an inverted U-shaped relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with leader" and is authored by Gerhard Blickle, Franziska Bohm, and Andreas Wihler. The study examines the relationship between leader grandiose narcissism and follower satisfaction with the leader.

The main finding of the study is that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the two variables, suggesting that a moderate level of narcissism may be beneficial in leadership roles. In other words, a certain amount of narcissism might be advantageous for leaders, as it can contribute to confidence, charisma, and assertiveness. However, when narcissism levels become too high, these positive traits can turn into arrogance, entitlement, and manipulativeness, which negatively affect the satisfaction of followers.

It is important for leaders to strike a balance in their level of narcissism in order to be effective and maintain the satisfaction of their followers.

Learning Outcomes, Competencies, and Beyond

Prompt

An executive coach and leadership expert. if you had to teach healthy narcissism taking into consideration mental health and healthy leadership principles, what competencies would you be teaching? please specify the competencies in knowledge, skills, abilities and learning outcomes

Response

Here are the competencies that I would focus on, categorized into knowledge, skills, abilities, and learning outcomes:

Knowledge:
1. Understanding the differences between healthy and unhealthy narcissism.
2. Familiarity with leadership styles and how they interact with narcissism.
3. Awareness of the impact of narcissism on team dynamics and organizational performance.

Skills:
1. Effective communication: Developing the ability to convey ideas clearly, assertively, and respectfully.
2. Active listening: Paying attention to others' viewpoints, asking questions, and demonstrating empathy.
3. Emotional intelligence: Recognizing and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding and responding to the emotions of others.
4. Adaptability: Adjusting leadership style to suit the situation and the needs of the team.
5. Self-reflection: Evaluating one's own actions, thoughts, and emotions to foster personal growth.

Abilities:
1. Confidence: Believing in one's own abilities while remaining open to feedback and learning.
2. Empathy: Connecting with others on an emotional level and understanding their perspectives.
3. Resilience: Recovering from setbacks, maintaining motivation, and learning from failures.
4. Humility: Acknowledging limitations, seeking help when needed, and sharing credit for success.
5. Assertiveness: Expressing oneself in a direct, honest, and respectful manner, without being aggressive or passive.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Participants will be able to identify the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy narcissism.
2. Participants will develop communication and listening skills that promote positive relationships and team cohesion.
3. Participants will learn to recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand and respond to the emotions of others.
4. Participants will be able to adapt their leadership style based on the situation and the needs of their team.
5. Participants will practice self-reflection and incorporate feedback to foster continuous personal and professional growth.

Session 1: Humility and Narcissism in Leadership

Prompt

Create a course title, learning methods, course outline, and lesson plan.

Response

Course Outline:

1. **Introduction to Healthy Narcissism in Leadership**
   - Defining healthy and unhealthy narcissism
   - The role of narcissism in leadership styles
   - The impact of narcissism on teams and organizations
2. **Communication and Active Listening**
   - Verbal and non-verbal communication skills
   - Assertiveness in leadership
   - Active listening techniques and empathy
3. **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**
   - Understanding and managing emotions
   - Developing empathy and social awareness
   - Building strong relationships and team cohesion
4. **Adaptability and Resilience in Leadership**
   - Adapting to changing circumstances
   - Maintaining motivation and learning from setbacks
   - Fostering resilience in teams
5. **Cultivating Humility and Self-reflection**
   - Recognizing limitations and seeking help
   - Sharing credit and celebrating team successes
   - Practicing self-reflection for continuous improvement
6. **Course Review and Personal Action Plan**
   - Summarizing key concepts and competencies
   - Developing a personalized action plan for growth
   - Setting goals and milestones for leadership development



Coaching in Organizations



Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence:

How Human + AI Insights Drive Behavior Change and Organizational Impact

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WE ARE BEHAVIOR CHANGE EXPERTS

The AIIR® Method is our evidence-based process for creating sustained behavior change.

- **A**ssessment
- **I**nsight
- **I**mplementation
- **R**einforcement

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WE ARE LEADERSHIP EXPERTS

UNDERSTAND YOUR LEADERS	DEVELOP YOUR LEADERS
Leadership Genome® Success Profiles	Executive Coaching
Scalable Leadership Assessment	Team Effectiveness
Leadership Pipeline Analytics	Leadership Development
Executive Assessment & Succession Planning	Enterprise Solutions

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Emerging Frontier: AI & Digital Fluency

Goals tied to Innovation & Digital have nearly doubled since 2022.

Leaders are exploring how to:

- **Lead in a digital-first organization**
- **Use AI and analytics to inform decision making**
- **Reimagine their leadership identity in a hybrid-intelligence environment**

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Today's Panelists:



Megan Marshall
Managing Partner
AIIR Consulting
(Moderator)



Holly Benner
Associate Director, Global Talent Management
Merck



Esther Margalit
AVP, Organizational Development
Northwell Health



Mike Smith
VP, Head of Learning and Development
Berkadia



Michael Wright
VP Leadership Development
FM

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Coaching that Drives Transformation

The coaching priorities gaining momentum are exactly those that help leaders navigate large-scale change:

- **Strategic Thinking (+ steep upward trend)**
- **Stakeholder Management and Influence (up sharply since 2023)**
- **Executive Presence (growing each year, especially in senior-level programs)**
- **Building Relationships (rising across industries as hybrid collaboration persists)**

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2025 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
5th Biennial International
Columbia Coaching Conference
Birkman's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · AFTERNOON OCTOBER 14, 2025


Human Judgment,
Smart Data
AI as an Assistant
BIRKMAN

Human Judgment, Smart Data:

Coaching Excellence in an AI World

- Coaching lab - 2D archetypes coupled with 3D insight
- Birkman Insights & Coaching Competencies
- AI as an Assistant, that helps clarify complex concepts, distills context, and insights for coaching beyond 1:1 to teams level.

BIRKMAN

THE CASE:

Our Leader & Context

Our team and Leader - Jim Harrington

Jim Harrington — newly appointed SVP guiding a hybrid, cross-functional team

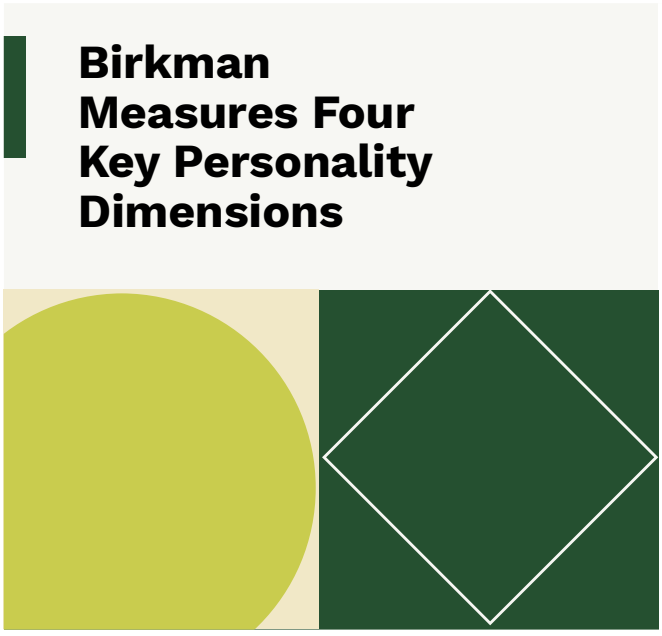
Context: inherited overlapping charters, high-stakes launch, with team he does not know well.

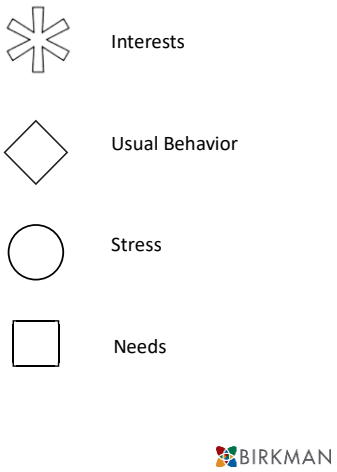
Early signs: decision churn, sharp negitive undertones in conversations, missed window, morale dip

Jim's Goal: "Align this team without losing speed; help me turn data into agreements."




Where should
we start?

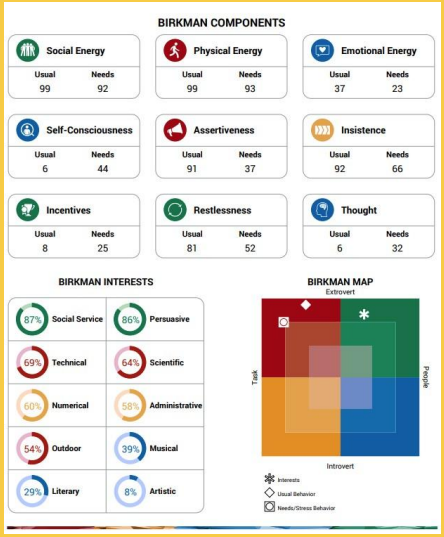

Birkman
Measures Four
Key Personality
Dimensions


Interests
Usual Behavior
Stress
Needs
BIRKMAN

BIRKMAN INSIGHTS

Getting to Know Jim Harrington

BIRKMAN





BIRKMAN

From the Lab

BirkmanGPT

BIRKMAN

THE PROMPT

Getting to know the team

Team Molecule Hotspots

Analyze the team profiles for G5TSZW, G6XZQB, G5XD62, G6HL49, G2SQ5N, G4VD79, G5LB8L, G4HBPN, G6FMVW.

Map their data to Birkman Molecule clusters (communication, relationships, decision-making, competition, nurturing, change, delegation)

Output - powerful questions tied to Birkman patterns, this team shows (label which pattern each question targets)

Compared to Jim

BIRKMAN

AI ASSISTANT

3D Insights

Powerful Questions Tied to Birkman Patterns

Q - Who's holding a different view that hasn't been voiced yet?

Q - Are we moving fast because it's urgent—or because we're uncomfortable sitting in the gray?

Q - How will we know if a quieter teammate disagrees but isn't saying so?

BIRKMAN

Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

THE PROMPT

Helping Jim work with the Team.

Communication & Feedback Styles Map

Using Assertiveness, Self-Consciousness, Social/Emotional Energy, produce a communication styles map for all nine team members.

Output: matrix with style name (e.g., 'Precise Builder', 'Fast-Track Challenger'), how to brief them, how to get their best critique, and what triggers Stress. Add a final section: 'How Jim should adapt his tone for each persona' in one line each.

BIRKMAN

AI ASSISTANT

3D Insights

How Jim Should Adapt His Tone for Each Persona

- Stephanie - Slow your pace and give her time to weigh in before closure.
- Janice - Soften challenge and ask for insight privately before meetings.
- Chance - Offer autonomy and resist over-framing his response.
- Patty - Be precise and consistent in language—don't shift expectations.
- Sue - Lower urgency, validate her observations, and leave space for reply.
- Pam - Lead with shared purpose, then layer in critique constructively.
- Patch - Use warm, affirming language and check for emotional cues.
- Maddy - Show her you value rigor—ask her to sharpen, not just agree.

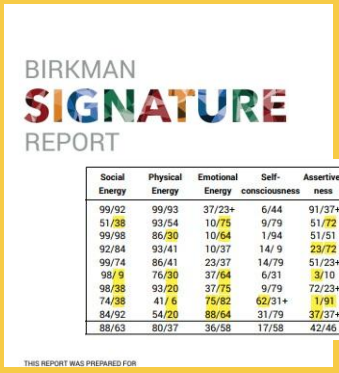
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Coaching Context?

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The Work of Jim's Birkman Coach

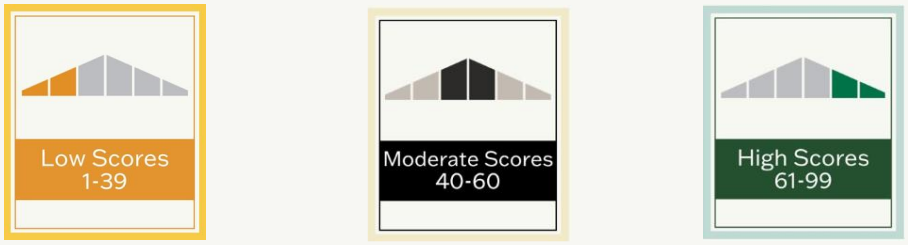




Social Energy	Physical Energy	Emotional Energy	Self-consciousness	Assertive-ness	Insistence	Incentives	Restless-ness	Thought
99/92	99/93	37/23+	6/44	91/37+	92/66	8/25	81/52	6/32
51/38	93/54	10/75	9/79	51/72	99/97	16/53	68/34+	48/62
99/98	86/30	10/64	1/94	51/51	97/97	25/53	68/68	6/74
92/84	93/41	10/37	14/ 9	23/72	97/ 7	16/99	68/52	32/74
99/74	86/41	23/37	14/79	51/23+	97/92	25/25	68/17+	18/32
98/ 9	76/30	37/64	6/31	3/10	29/ 2	8/53	34/52	32/84
98/38	93/20	37/75	9/79	72/23+	85/55	16/62	90/90	18/74
74/38	41/ 6	75/82	62/31+	1/91	29/ 7	8/96	17/81	74/74
84/92	54/20	88/64	31/79	37/37+	29/55-	53/86	99/90	84/92
88/63	80/37	36/58	17/58	42/46	73/53	19/61	66/60	35/66

Birkman Components

There are three different scoring ranges for each Component. Each of these is a generalized range, and these numbers shift in either direction.



People with moderate scores may exhibit characteristics of either high or low component descriptions depending on the situation or context

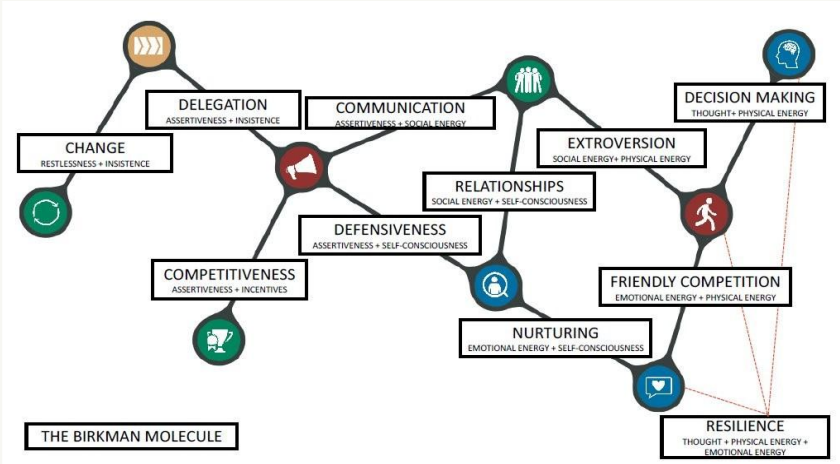
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Nine Components — Overview

- **Energy:**
  - Social
  - Physical
  - Emotional
- **Sensitivity:**
  - Self-Consciousness
  - Assertiveness
- **Control/Order:**
  - Insistence
  - Incentives
  - Restlessness
  - Thought



Birkman Molecule – Clustered Dynamics



Birkman Components

SOCIAL ENERGY

Your sociability, approachability, and preference for group and team participation.

INDEPENDENT

- Works alone on projects
- Self-directed
- Independent thinker
- One-on-one communicator
- Selectively social
- Reserved in social situations

SOCIAL ENERGY

SOCIAL

- Friendly and welcoming
- Communicative in meetings
- Outgoing in new situations
- Builds business networks
- Active in group discussions
- Starts conversations easily

Birkman Components

PHYSICAL ENERGY

Your preferred pace for action and physical expression of energy.



PHYSICAL ENERGY

PACED

- Conserves energy
- Balances action with thought
- Paced approach to work
- Plans before acting
- Patient with long-term projects
- Looks at options before committing to action

ACTIVE

- High energy level
- Initiates action
- Direct, forceful, enthusiastic
- Physically active
- Strong sense of urgency
- Short term focus on tasks

Birkman Components

EMOTIONAL ENERGY

Your openness and comfort with expressing emotion.



EMOTIONAL ENERGY

PRACTICAL

- Objective and logical actions
- Keeps feelings to themselves
- Focus on practical solutions
- "What to do" is the first thought
- Facts have priority over feelings
- Minimizes involvement in emotional situations

EXPRESSIVE

- Emotionally expressive
- Warm, sympathetic feelings
- Listens to others' problems
- Acts on "gut" feelings
- Lets others know how they feel
- Emotionally aware

Birkman Components

SELF -CONSCIOUSNESS

Your use of sensitivity when communicating with others.

STRAIGHTFORWARD

- Objective and logical actions
- Keeps feelings to themselves
- Focus on practical solutions
- "What to do" is the first thought
- Facts have priority over feelings
- Minimizes involvement in emotional situations



SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

SENSITIVE

- Sensitive to others' feelings
- Willing to commit time to conversation
- Asks questions to explore
- Careful not offend others
- Respects positions and power
- Serious, purposeful style

Birkman Components

ASSERTIVENESS

Your tendency to speak up and express opinions openly and forcefully.

SUGGESTING

- Suggests opinions for action
- Strives for agreement
- Avoids open clashes
- Pleasant, easygoing
- Verbally non-confrontational
- Democratic leadership style



ASSERTIVENESS

ASSERTIVE

- Verbally dominant
- Quick to take a stand
- Seeks to influence others
- Openly debates ideas
- Shares opinions openly
- Assertive leadership style

Birkman Components

INSISTENCE

Your approach to detail, structure, follow-through and routine.



INSISTENCE

FLEXIBLE

- Makes simple, broad plans
- Devises new plans quickly
- Acts spontaneously
- Takes calculated risks
- Autonomous
- Adapts easily to organizational change

INSISTENT

- Structured approach to work
- Creates order and systems
- Attentive to details of work
- Plans and executes
- Insistent on compliance
- Responds well to organizational structure

Birkman Components

INCENTIVES

Your drive for personal rewards or preference to share in group reward.



INCENTIVES

COLLABORATIVE

- Team player
- Promotes idealism and fairness
- Talks “we” instead of “me”
- Extends trust easily
- Decisions benefit the group
- Emphasizes long-term payoffs

COMPETITIVE

- Competes for rewards
- Capitalizes on opportunities
- Focuses on short-term benefits
- Values financial incentives
- Naturally negotiates
- Plays to win

Birkman Components

RESTLESSNESS

How you prefer to focus attention or change focus and seek varied activities.



RESTLESSNESS

FOCUSED

- Concentrates on issues
- Not easily distracted
- Completes one task before moving on
- Gives full attention to others
- Stays focused on the task
- Patient with drawn-out tasks or projects

RESPONSIVE

- Open to new ideas and actions
- Multi-tasks throughout the day
- Ready to start new projects
- Initiates frequent changes
- Adapts easily to variety
- Restless with drawn-out tasks or projects

Birkman Components

THOUGHT

Your decision-making process and concern for consequences in making the right decision.



THOUGHT

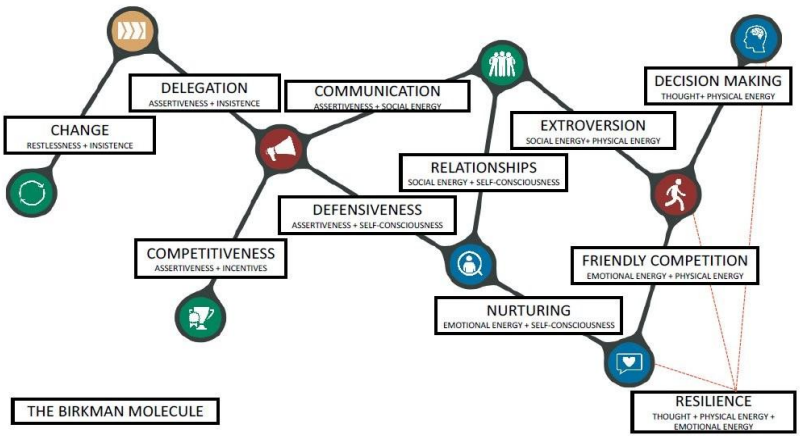
DECISIVE

- Makes immediate decisions
- Grasps situations quickly
- Makes snap judgments
- Uses information on hand
- Changes mind quickly if the original decision does not work

REFLECTIVE

- Examines issues thoroughly
- Values depth of the decisions
- Aware of consequences
- Weighs both sides of issues
- Asks for data and opinions
- May revisit issues if new information arises

Birkman Molecule – Clustered Dynamics



BIRKMAN

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Social Energy	Physical Energy	Emotional Energy	Self-consciousness	Assertiveness	Insistence	Incentives	Restlessness	Thought
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88/63	80/37	36/58	17/58	42/46	73/53	19/61	66/60	35/66

This team is rich in diversity across how they communicate, decide, and emotionally engage—with some driving fast and others preferring depth or reflection.

The tension between visibility and humility, speed and thoroughness, could spark conflict or creativity depending on how it's named. Observable agreements are your stabilizers.

Anchor on these:
1) Make preferences visible early.
2) Ask before assuming support.
3) Share the mic—especially in moments of pressure.

With intention, this group can flex from high-intensity to high-empathy without breaking stride.

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Coaching Context?

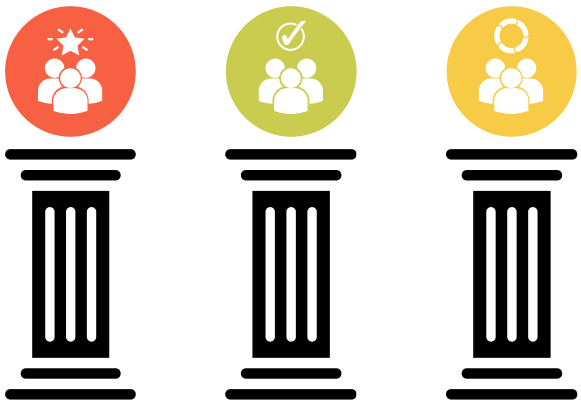
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TEAM COACHING

High-Performing Teams

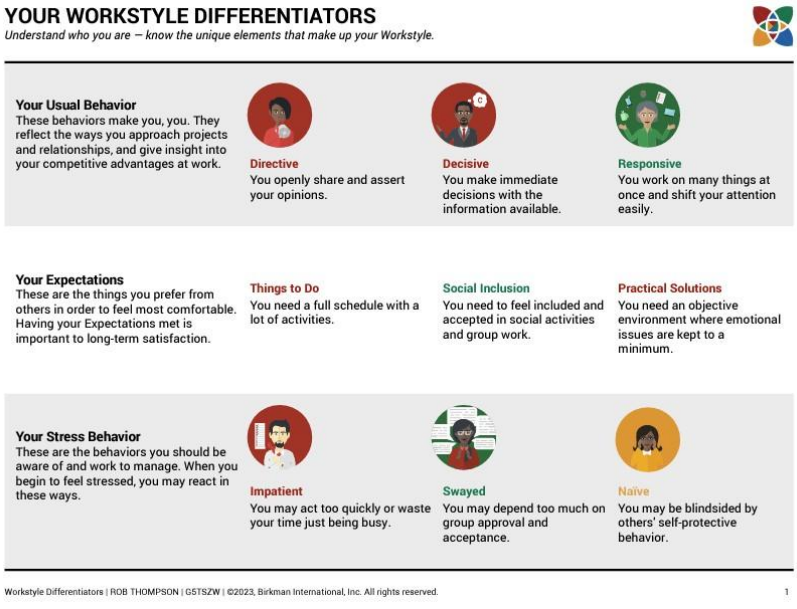
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High-performing leaders and teams are driven by a common Purpose and continuously create an environment of Clarity and Psychological Safety, as inspired by Amy Edmondson.



BIRKMAN

High-performing leaders and teams are driven by a common Purpose and continuously create an environment of Clarity and Psychological Safety.



YOUR WORKSTYLE DIFFERENTIATORS

Understand who you are — know the unique elements that make up your Workstyle.

Your Usual Behavior
These behaviors make you, you. They reflect the ways you approach projects and relationships, and give insight into your competitive advantages at work.

- **Directive** — You openly share and assert your opinions.
- **Decisive** — You make immediate decisions with the information available.
- **Responsive** — You work on many things at once and shift your attention easily.

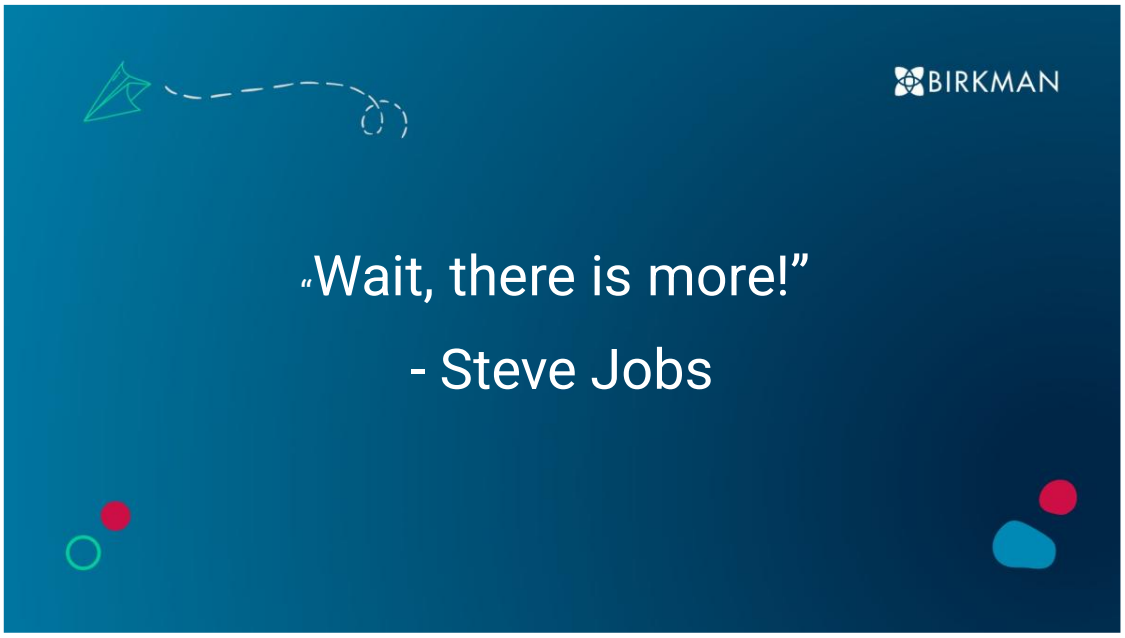
Your Expectations
These are the things you prefer from others in order to feel most comfortable. Having your Expectations met is important to long-term satisfaction.

- **Things to Do** — You need a full schedule with a lot of activities.
- **Social Inclusion** — You need to feel included and accepted in social activities and group work.
- **Practical Solutions** — You need an objective environment where emotional issues are kept to a minimum.

Your Stress Behavior
These are the behaviors you should be aware of and work to manage. When you begin to feel stressed, you may react in these ways.

- **Impatient** — You may act too quickly or waste your time just being busy.
- **Swayed** — You may depend too much on group approval and acceptance.
- **Naïve** — You may be blindsided by others' self-protective behavior.

Workstyle Differentiators | ROB THOMPSON | G5TSZW | ©2023, Birkman International, Inc. All rights reserved. 1


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“Wait, there is more!”
- Steve Jobs


BIRKMAN
Culture
Strategy
Leadership
Mindset



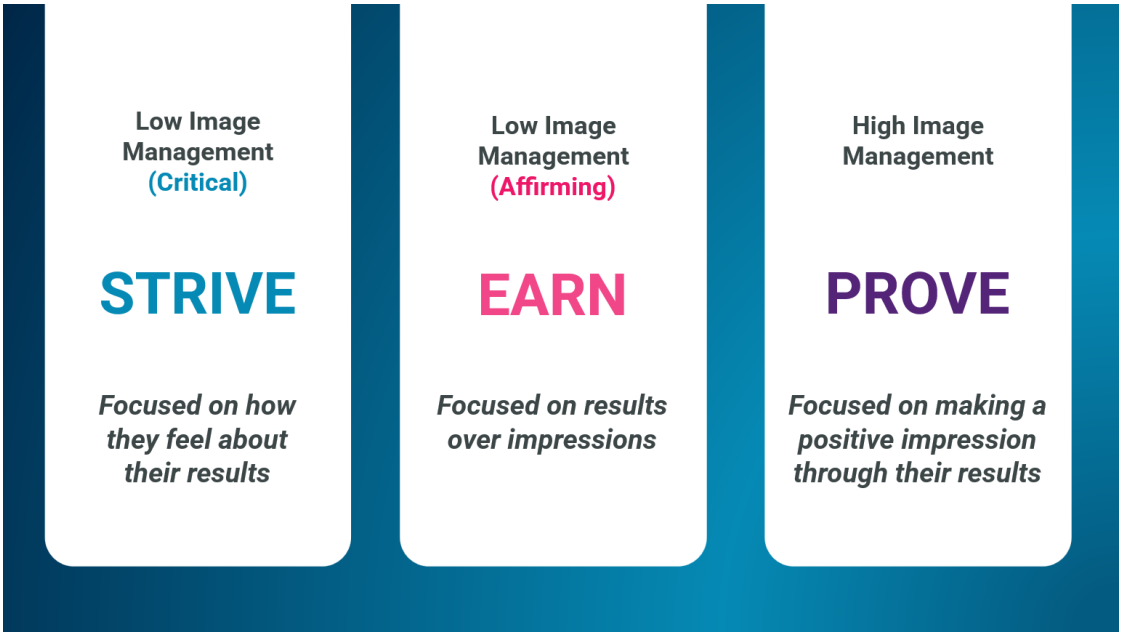
Image Management

BIRKMAN

Reveals the extent to which an individual devotes energy to managing and maintaining a positive public image.

The higher the score, the more important it is to the individual that others see them in a socially acceptable way.





High Image Management

"I am concerned with making a positive impression through my results"

- Affirm worth through validation from others
- Present themselves with an air of confidence and charm
- Subconsciously hide self-doubt with outer confidence

PROVE

Low Image Management (Affirming)

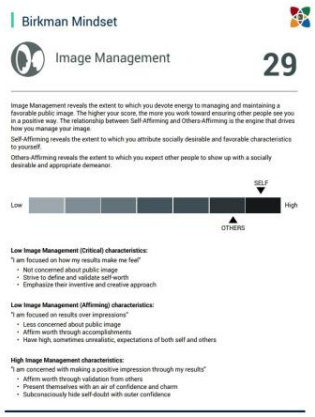
"I am focused on results over impressions"

- Less concerned about public image
- Affirm worth through accomplishments
- Have high, sometimes unrealistic, expectations of both self and others

EARN

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary





Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Birkman Certified Professional

Mindset-Wise

Jim leans toward Image Management and Other-Affirming frames; Jim values being seen as competent and respected.

Prioritizes harmony and considers how others will experience his actions.

He may suppress his own Needs to maintain an impression of control and capability.

BIRKMAN

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Via BirkmanGPT 3D Insights

Here's a Mindset Summary for Jim and his team, using Birkman data to assess tendencies toward:

Image Management – driven to maintain a composed, competent appearance

Self-Affirming – internal sense of self-worth, confidence, and agency

Others-Affirming – orientation toward harmony, sensitivity, and valuing others' perspectives

BIRKMAN

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Strategy Disagreement - Aligned with Jim's Image Management Birkman Insights

You bring clarity and conviction when others are still sorting ideas, which gives the team a lot of momentum.

That said, some voices held back during the last debate—possibly because the pace moved too fast for processing.

Let's explore what the process would look like if we allowed for a slower pass. I'm not saying you're wrong.

I want to ensure we're not missing nuance that supports the long game.

BIRKMAN

Coaching Context?

BIRKMAN

Jim Harrington

Mindset Summary

Via BirkmanGPT 3D Insights

Risks to Psychological Safety + Mitigations
Risks:

Risks:
- Jim may not vocalize Needs due to a preference for composure and control
- He may internalize criticism or unclear feedback as personal inadequacy
- High standards for himself may unintentionally isolate him from his peers
- Environments that value improvisation over planning may leave him unmoored

Mitigations:
- Normalize the articulation of Needs in team culture ("What do you need right now to be effective?")
- Offer consistent, transparent feedback loops—not just correction but calibration
- Model vulnerability and humanity from leadership to permit Jim to show his
- Allow space for solo ideation as a valid phase of collaboration—not everyone needs to brainstorm out loud

BIRKMAN

My AI Assistant

3D Insights

Observable Agreements

I will check in periodically—not to manage you, but to clarify priorities and offer calibration.

I will respect your preference for independence, but flag moments when collaboration may amplify your impact.

When the stakes are high, I will offer direct and constructive feedback rather than letting ambiguity linger.

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The Journey Continues

- Clear Directions
- Quiet voices amplified
- Better decision process
- Team working better Together



Thank you!

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Experience
The Birkman Method
by scanning the QR Code


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LQ's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · MORNING OCTOBER 15, 2025


LQ™
Listening Intelligence
BEYOND ACTIVE LISTENING
Unlocking a New Communication Strategy with Listening Intelligence


What makes a good
LISTENER?
LQ
Listening Intelligence


THE GOAL:
Radically change the way you THINK ABOUT listening.
LQ
Listening Intelligence

The Cost of Poor Listening

TIME: Teams lose the equivalent of **nearly an entire workday (7.47 hours)** per employee each week due to poor communication

REVENUE: A US company with 500 full-time employees **loses** between $6.25 and $13 million annually

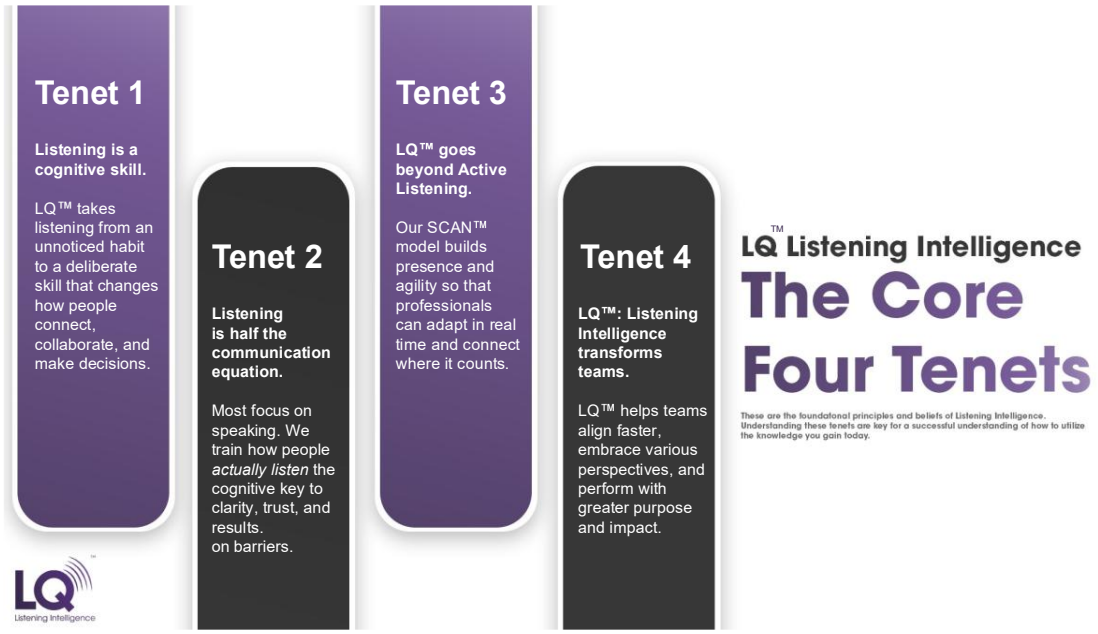
ENGAGEMENT: **91%** of employees said their leaders lack communication skills. **82%** of employees surveyed say they would consider **quitting their job** because of poor leadership.

PERFORMANCE: **86% of employees and executives** cite lack of collaboration and ineffective communication for **workplace failures**.

TRUST: A study of over 4,200 leaders found that those rated as **poor listeners** ranked in only the **15th percentile for trust**, while **excellent listeners** reached the **86th percentile**.

CONFLICT: **80%** of workplace conflicts stem from poor communication.





The Vision

Activate a global movement where listening is profoundly intentional because when people are truly heard, they connect, collaborate, and contribute to one another and the world with greater purpose.



The Mission

Transform how individuals listen—to others, information, and across systems—so that professionals, teams, and organizations can become agile communicators.





Active Listening Vs. Listening Intelligence

- Rooted in the humanistic approach to psychology, emphasizing empathy, understanding, and personal growth
- Often taught as a standard set of behaviors to give the impression one has the speaker's full attention
- Cultural understanding of what listening "looks like"

- A skill that can be developed with self-awareness, attention and intentional cognitive and behavioral adjustments applied in real-time
- A practical framework to achieve clarity, connection and alignment
- Goes beyond simply understanding another's feelings with prescriptive adjustments to improve the quality of the interaction

LQ
Listening Intelligence

LISTENING INTELLIGENCE IS YOUR ABILITY TO:

Understand your own listening preferences

Recognize the listening preferences of others

Adapt to circumstances and people in real time



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LQ Listening Intelligence



Just Listen

LQ Listening Intelligence

We All Listen Differently

- We all process information differently with unique filters
- No two brains are alike
- We hear with our ears and LISTEN with our brain
- What we think about, care about and already know shifts our listening capacity.



LQ Listening Intelligence

Listening Is a Habit

Listening is a cognitive function and a measurable HABIT

hab.it /'habət/

(noun)

A habit is a routine or behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur subconsciously

LQ Listening Intelligence

The ECHO® Listening Profile
LIFT™ Training Program

Assessment Landscape

PERSONALITY	BEHAVIORAL	COGNITIVE
Analyzes internal values, drives, motivations and produces a personality or psychological profile.	Measures patterns of external behavior, focusing less on internal drives, values, etc.	Measures preferences based on how the individual's brain processes information.
E X A M P L E S		
• Myers Briggs • Keirsey Temperament Sorter • Strengthsfinder	• DISC • Social Styles • Leadership Assessment Instrument	• ECHO Listening Profile • Emergenetics • Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument

LQ Listening Intelligence

ECHO® Validity Portfolio

The Echo Listening Profile: Initial Validity Evidence for a Measure of Four Listening Habits

Graham D. Bodie
School of Journalism and New Media, The University of Mississippi

International Journal of Listening,0:1–25, 2019 Copyright © International Listening Association ISSN: 1090-4018 print / 1932-586X online
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2019.1611433



The Echo Listening Profile: Initial Validity Evidence for a Measure of Four Listening Habits

Graham D. Bodie
School of Journalism and New Media, The University of Mississippi
John Winter, Dana Dupuis, and Tom Tompkins
2ECHO Listening Intelligence, LLC

This article contributes to the larger literature on meaning construction and misunderstanding by developing a typology of listening habits and a corresponding scale to measure individual differences in typical ways of listening. Our typology includes four habits of listening grounded in two underlying aspects of meaning, context and relational, found in any spoken message. Analytical Listening (AL) involves filtering information through an interest in words and facts, while Conceptual Listening (CL) involves filtering information through an interest in concepts and possibilities. Connective Listening (CV) involves filtering information through an interest in others (people, groups, processes, or audiences), while Reflective Listening (RV) involves filtering information through one's own interests and purposes. Results from two studies provide construct, convergent, and discriminant validity evidence for the resulting ECHO Listening Profile. In particular, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to create a 40-item version of the ECHO Listening Profile (ECHO) that was shown to map onto a conceptually similar measure of listening habits, the Listening Style Profile. ECHO did not, however, fully duplicate that scale and thus adds to our knowledge of how all listening is biased. Moreover, through use of comparative forced-choice scaling, ECHO reduces concerns found with self-reporting of listening, including response bias. Future work investigating the impact of Connective, Reflective, Analytical, and Conceptual Listening on how people navigate their personal and professional lives is warranted.

Most people spend a good deal of their waking hours interacting with others (Duck, Rutt, Hurst, & Strejc, 1991). Studies attempting to document how much time people spend in particular communication activities have estimated that as much as two-thirds of our time is spent listening –

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Graham D Bodie, School of Journalism and New Media, The University of Mississippi. E-mail: gbodie@olemiss.edu

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/hijl.

Elements of the manuscript were presented at two meetings of the International Listening Association, 2017 (Omaha, Nebraska) and 2018 (Dublin, Ireland). The authors would like to thank Dr. Anna Brown of Kent University for consulting on data analysis for Study 1. ECHO Listening Intelligence maintains copyright of all ECHO Listening Profile items and Figure 1. Written permission is required to use items (blocks and/or answer choices) for any purpose or to reprint items or Figure 1. Inquiries can be made to info@echolistening.com.

The Four Way We Listen

CONNECTIVE LISTENING

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

ANALYTICAL LISTENING

CONCEPTUAL LISTENING

CONNECTIVE LISTENING

FOCUSES on what the interaction means for others

FILTERS through interests in other people, groups, processes, and audiences



LQ Listening Intelligence

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

FOCUSES on what the interaction means for them

FILTERS what is heard through one's own experiences, interests and purposes



LQ Listening Intelligence

ANALYTICAL LISTENING

FOCUSES on what the interaction means to an issue or objective situation

FILTERS what is heard through interest in results and facts



CONCEPTUAL LISTENING

FOCUSES on the big picture and ideas, often abstract

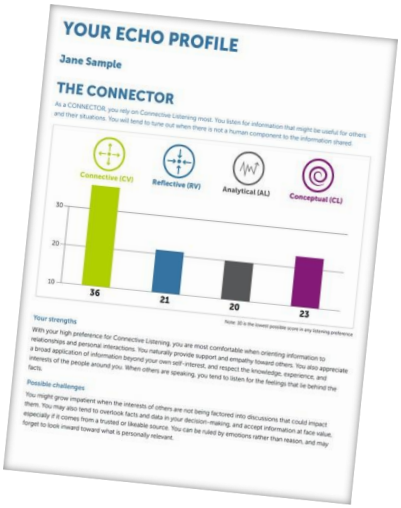
FILTERS what is heard through an interest in concepts and possibilities



Sample Profile Report

PAGE 4

- We all listen in all four ways
- You may show dominance in one or more of the habits
- Scoring shows degree or strength of preference relative to other habits



Listening Intelligence Is Your Ability To:

Understand
your own
listening preferences

Recognize
the listening preferences of
others

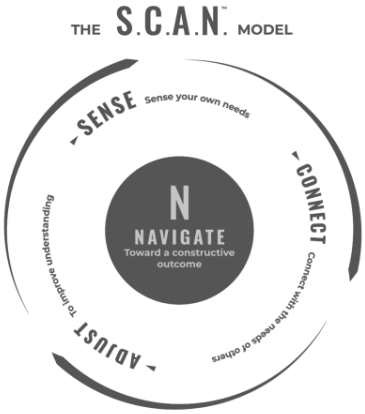
Adapt
to circumstances
and people in real time

S.C.A.N.™

The **framework** we use to apply our **LQ™ Training**

Sense **C**onnect **A**djust **N**avigate

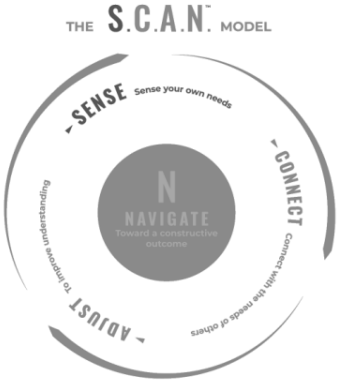
The LQ™ S.C.A.N. Model™



Sense Your Own Needs

FOCUSES ON:

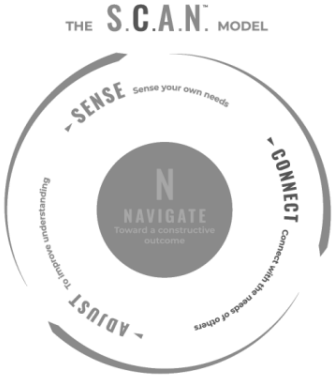
- What is important to me in this situation?
- Are the habit(s) am I relying on effective given the situation?
- Are events, conditions or emotions affecting my listening?



Connect With The Needs of Others

FOCUSES ON:

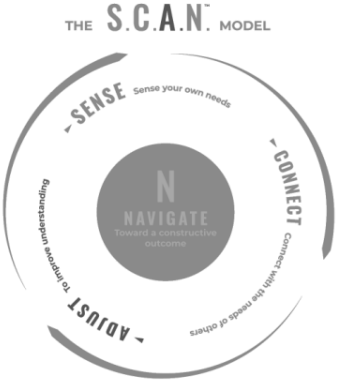
- What do I believe is important to them?
- Can I identify their listening habits?
- Are events, conditions or emotions affecting their listening?



Adjust to Improve Your Understanding

FOCUS ON:

- How do I stay agile and adjust as the conversation shifts?
- How can I address what is important to them while speaking into their listening preferences?

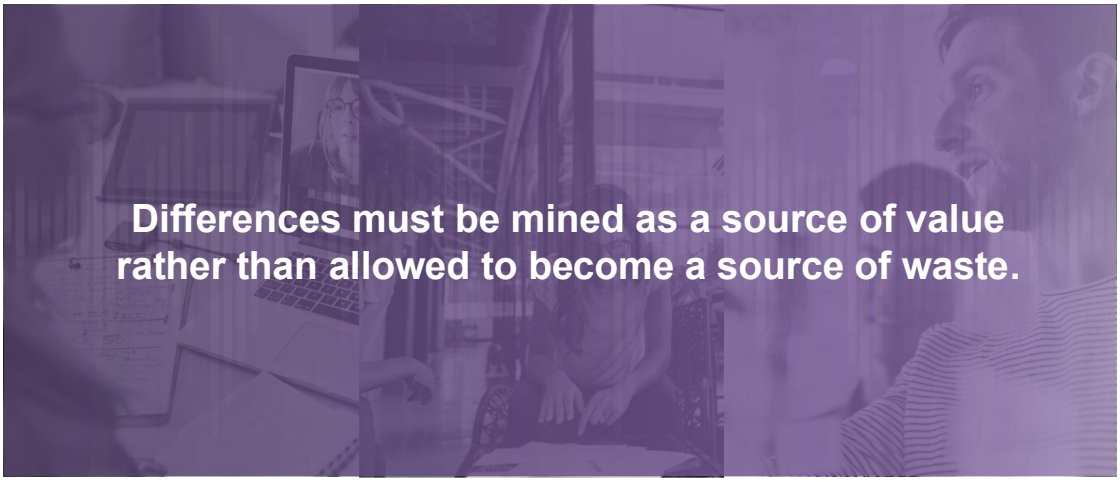


Navigate To a Constructive Outcome

FOCUS ON:

- How can I move the conversation toward a successful outcome using all stages of SCAN?
- How can I appreciate the cognitive and listening diversity of others in the conversation?





Listening Intelligence

Harvard Business Review

Teams Solve Problems Faster When They're More Cognitively Diverse

Alison Reynolds and David Lewis

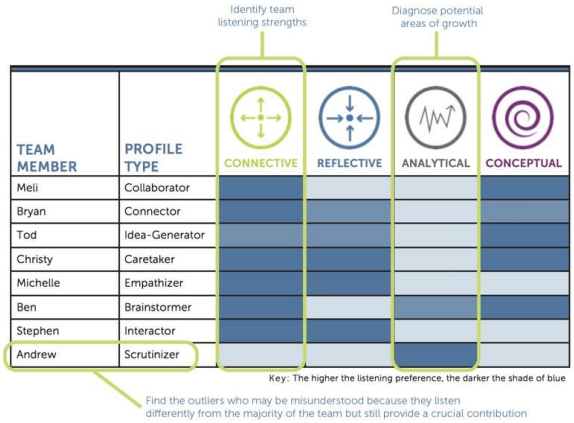
Studied differences that go beyond gender, ethnicity or age



LQ Listening Intelligence



The team grid is a display of a group's combined listening preferences.
Dominant listening habits are dark blue, low preferences are light blue.



Research Spotlight: Episodic Listening Theory

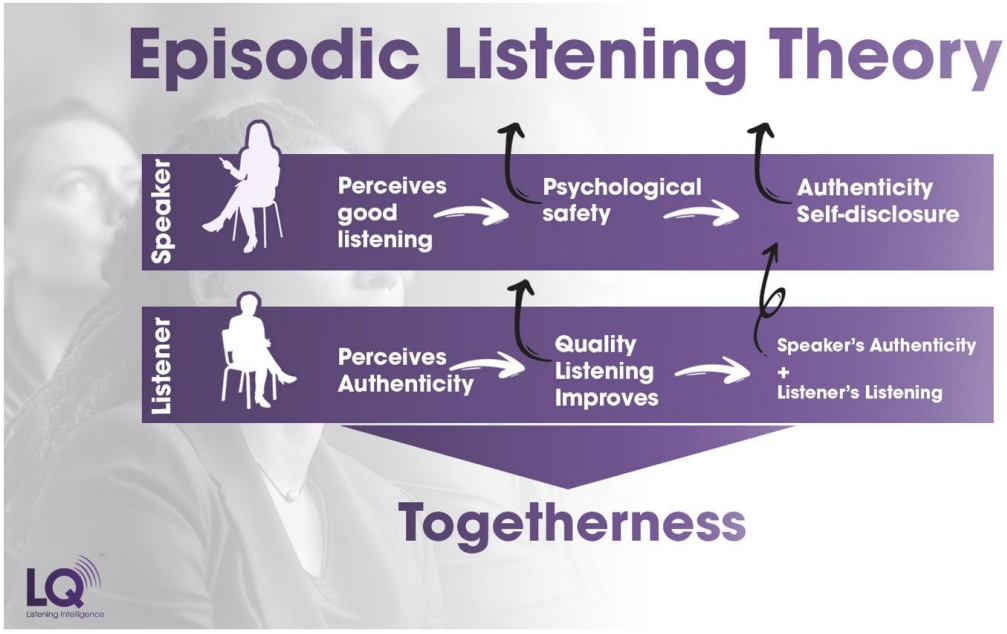
The Power of Listening at Work

Avraham N. Kluger and Guy Itzchakov

The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior

Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav. 2022. 9:121–46
First published as a Review in Advance on October 26, 2021




Episodic Listening Theory
Speaker
Perceives good listening
Psychological safety
Authenticity Self-disclosure
Listener
Perceives Authenticity
Quality Listening Improves
Speaker's Authenticity + Listener's Listening
Togetherness
LQ
Listening Intelligence


The Elephant in
THE ROOM
LQ
Listening Intelligence

Take-Aways

Individual Level:
Own the responsibility for being heard and understood
Slow down and pause
Observe yourself, Acknowledge what is at stake for others, Adjust as needed.

Team Level:
Use your new awareness to foster psychological safety
Leverage the SCAN™ framework
Harness cognitive diversity

Organizational Level:
Adopt a new approach to professional development
Emphasize listening as a critical business skill
Commit to listening as a core company value

Put Insights Into Action

Take the ECHO™ listening assessment

Use this link:
https://echolisteningprofile.com/take-assessment

Use this code*: **COLCC2025**

*Code is case sensitive and valid through 10/22/2025


2025 Columbia University
COACHING CONFERENCE
HIGH IMPACT COACHING
IN AN ERA OF HYBRID INTELLIGENCE
5th Biennial International
Columbia Coaching Conference
SHERLOCK's Sponsored Coaching in Organization Session
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, USA · AFTERNOON OCTOBER 15, 2025


International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC
AI Coaching — The Next Frontier:
Evidence, Impact, and Debunking the Myths
Puja Brahmasmi
Co-CEO & CPO
Sherlock AI
Dr. Deep Bali
Co-CEO, Chief Mentor,
Inventor & Founder
Sherlock AI
Kristina Shea
Business Futurist and
Well-Being Scientist
Sherlock AI
Jazz Rasool
Research and Analysis
AI Coaching Alliance
Brett Badders
Global Head of Career Coaching
S&P Global
Mario J. Doyle
President and COO
DSS Inc.
columbiacoachingconference.org
SPONSORED SESSION: COACHING IN ORGANIZATIONS
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Sherlock

THE WORLD'S FIRST
COACHING NATIVE AI ©

END QUIET FAILING.
UNLOCK 100% WORKFORCE POTENTIAL

SherlockSuperCoach.AI ™

Confidential | XCalibrate Global Solutions Inc. | 2025

01

Quiet Failing = Hidden Enterprise Cost

Unsupported Managers
70%
Managers feel overwhelmed without coaching support.

Drifting Teams
23%
Productivity lost for lack of guidance and feedback

Cultural Erosion
30%
Feel recognized & encouraged in alignment with their values.



$4 38 billion
Global cost of employee disengagement

02

Evolving Workforce, Rising Risks

70% Millennials consider leaving due to lack of guidance & real-time feedback

91% Demand personalized development exposing a massive gap between expectation & reality

$36,295 Cost of Losing One Employee before lost knowledge and disruption

The Impact

Bleeding Cash
Costly turnover & disengagement

Choking Growth
Innovation stalls, customer trust erodes

Eroding Value
A silent drain on long-term enterprise worth



03

Sherlock
The World's first Coaching Native AI

Born in Coaching
Sherlock is built on 10,000+ hours of elite executive coaching from master coaches and coaching scientists, encoding proven methodologies and human wisdom. Not a chatbot with bolt-on features, but a true AI-powered coaching platform—backed by coaching science, leading academicians, and research

Raised in AI
The only no-human-in-the-loop coaching platform, delivering consistent, measurable quality at enterprise scale. Evidence-based, bias-checked, and built enterprise-ready

Every Manager, Empowered 24/7
From middle managers to frontline leaders, Sherlock makes coaching always-on, giving every manager real-time support, anytime they need it.



Sustainable Enterprise Performance
Drive productivity, performance, innovation, and well-being at scale with development that's continuous, cost-effective, and built to last.



Measurable Impact
Sherlock quantifies, optimizes, and proves impact delivering data-driven outcomes your organization can see and trust.



04

Sherlock AI Coaching Platform

Real Coaching, Grounded in Science, End-to-End, and Adaptive

Deep coaching science & research

Scientific underpinning : coaching psychology, behavioural science, neuroscience & emotional intelligence & multiple development frames

Full end to end coaching platform

From coaching intake and context mapping to tools and actionable insights —reinforced by nudges and ongoing check-ins—and measurable analytics for the organization

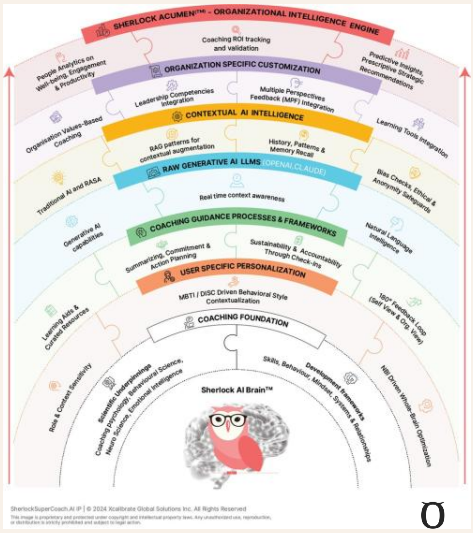
Adaptive & Evolving

Listens across dimensions to build a contextual baseline, learns with every interaction, and surfaces behavioral patterns across coaching conversations

Personalised, Contextualised & Customizable

Tailored to each individual's context, behaviors, and thinking preferences —and customizable to align with organizational culture and values

05



Real-Time Workplace Intelligence

Sherlock ACUMEN™

Supports Leaders Data -Driven Decision Making

Impact & Engagement

Monitor team dynamics and coaching effectiveness

Behavioral Signals & Mindset Shifts

Track growth through measurable shifts in behavior

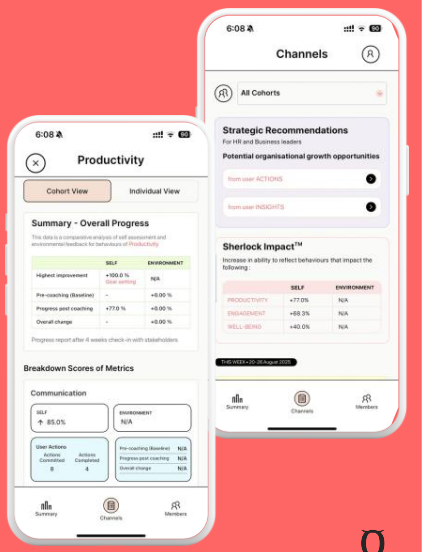
Intelligence & Recommendations

Turn cohort insights into clear organizational strategic actions

Well-being & Growth

Assess cohort health and development trends





07

Why Sherlock?

Measurability

Real-time visibility into what's working and what's changing.

Unlike traditional coaching, every interaction generates actionable data that informs strategic decisions and demonstrates clear ROI

Scalability

Enterprise coaching without the enterprise price tag.

Deliver personalized, high-quality coaching to thousands of employees simultaneously, breaking traditional resource constraints

Sustainability

Behavior change that sticks, not just sparks.

Our AI creates lasting transformation through consistent reinforcement and personalized follow-through



AI that turns engagement into action that sticks

09

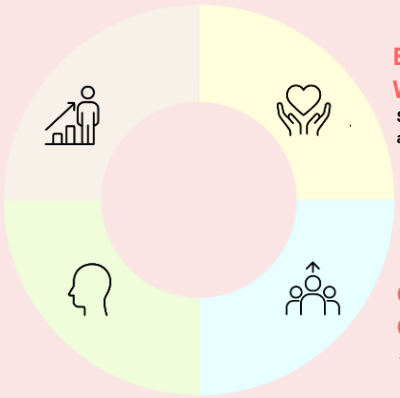
Sherlock Powers Your People Development Strategy with AI

Talent Development & Acceleration

Personalized development pathways aligning business needs and individual aspirations

Engagement, Retention, & Well-being

Support that sustains engagement, growth, and well-being



Leadership Development

Building next-gen leaders with adaptive, contextual coaching

Culture & Behavior Change at Scale

Transform culture with values-based coaching in daily workflows

08

Bespoke Coaching Strands







Coaching in the moment

for clarity, comfort, & confidence
for day - to - day workplace challenges

Coaching Horizons

for building skills, vision, & momentum for long term growth

Coaching for Well - Being

for strengthening mindset &
nurturing well - being

1000 + Coaching Conversations . **2,000+** Users. **92%** Effectiveness

06

Outcomes and Client Success

Across pilots and paid licenses

Guardian

ATLAS AIR

NYU

KPMG

KORN FERRY



10

Case Studies | ROI Proof that AI Coaching drives business impact

Guardian

250	13,700 mins	229
Users	coaching time	coaching conversations

90 day Success Metrics

	Expected results	Actual results
Adoption Rate	30%	70%
Repeat User	50-70%	74% atleast 2 times 46% > than 4+ times
Action completion	>50%	65%
Effectiveness	> 50% Coaching effectiveness	+90% Rating by users +92% Coaching effectiveness (% of users who moved forwar after coaching with Sherlock)

Productivity	Engagement	Well - being
+32%	+40%	+25%

11

ATLAS AIR

100	43,00 mins	77
Users	coaching time	coaching conversations

45 day Success Metrics

	Expected results	Actual results
Adoption Rate	30%	72%
Repeat User	50-70%	60%
Action completion	>50%	53%
Effectiveness	> 50% Coaching effectiveness	+100% Coaching effectiveness (% of users who moved forward after coaching with Sherlock)

Productivity	Engagement	Well - being
+78%	+88%	+60%

Sherlock AI is a platform that ...



.... goes far beyond a basic LLM chatbot — offering powerful coaching modules and tools that deliver real impact for employees

Greg Wagner,
Executive, Northwestern Mutual



.... coaching into AI-driven insights — pure gold for HR teams and an invaluable asset for the enterprise

Catherine Tucker,
Head of Organization Effectiveness & Learning , Guardian Life



....delivers scalable, innovative, comprehensive, and confidential coaching — creating mass impact through science -backed, bespoke AI

Dr. Jeffrey Hull,
Director at institute of coaching, Harvard



...makes coaching intentional, confidential, and accessible in the flow of work — driving wellness, growth, and engagement at scale

Cindy Cornell
Vistage Chair , Ex-lead Partner elevation KPMG

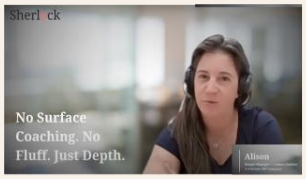


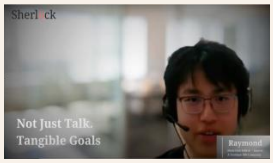
...delvers a comprehensive system architecture, with robust scaffolding for key coaching constraints and affordances

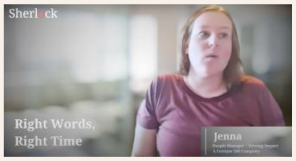
Jazz Rasool
Nominated UK Top 100 AI Thought Leader | Digital Leaders Verified AI Expert

12

Direct from Some of Our Users







★★★★★

+ Emotional & Mental Support
"Sherlock provides an outlet without adding worries to my shoulders. It helps me pause, change my mindset, slow my thinking, and offers good ideas to solve situations."

+ Psychological Safety
"Sherlock felt more personal and had human touch. I didnt feel judged"

+ On-time Coaching Support
"Sherlock helped me prepare for my performance reviews"

+ Gamification
"The gamification features motivate me to use the app —it taps into my competitive side."

13

AI Coaching Difference

(Sherlock compared to LLMs (Chatgpt, Claude..)

	Sherlock AI Coaching		Generic LLMs Coaching
Coaching Conversation Architecture			
	Designed with deep evidence-based coaching models		Surface-level inquiry
	Built-in coaching intelligence (No need for users to know prompts)		Prompt-dependent guidance
	Context augmented chats for personalized experience	☑ ☒	No integration for such augmented context
	Integrates learning tools in chats for JIT learning	☑ ☒	No such integration possible
	Calibrated through silence, tone & language		Based on end user knowledge of prompting
Measurability			
	Data driven analytics on what matters to organizations		No measurability available
	Quantifiable coaching ROI	☑ ☒	Does not track ROI
	Strategic predictive and prescriptive actionable recommendations		Does not support
Sustainability			
	Remembers past & supports continuity across sessions		Isolated interactions across sessions
	Regular check-ins on actions tailored to individual thinking	☑ ☒	No follow-through mechanism available
	180° feedback integration		Feedback absent
Customization (Organization Specific)			
	Integrates organization specific values-based coaching		Generic coaching
	Integrates leadership competencies-based coaching	☑ ☒	One-size-fits all guidance
	Seamless organization specific learning tools integration		Lacks support for organization learning system
User specific Personalization			
	Leverages user thinking and behavior preferences	☑ ☒	No cognitive or thinking tailored coaching
Be-spoke Coaching			
	Multiple be-spoke coaching modules : Career Progression, Agility, Resilience & more...	☑ ☒	No be-spoke coaching

14

2025 Sherlock AI Enterprise Pricing Plan

Pilot Plan

$12 per user/month

100 -250 licenses
(3-month subscription)

- Full access to Coaching platform
- No Sherlock Acumen ™ access. Reports shared at pilot end
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Enterprise Plan

$12 per user/month

500 -5,000 licenses
(Annual subscription)

- Full access to Coaching platform
- Complete Sherlock Acumen ™ access.
- HR team training included
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Global Plan

Speak to Us

5000+ licenses
(Annual subscription)

- Full platform suite access
- Dedicated success manager
- Custom integrations available
- 24/7 enterprise support
- SOC 2 Type 1 Compliant
- SAML & SSO integration

Additional Investment : $10,000 annual flat fee for advanced analytics platform (included in Enterprise and Global plans)

Securities and Standard Compliances

15

Creators, Core Leadership & Coaching Science Team

DR. DEEP BALI
Co-CEO & Chief Mentor, Inventor & Co -Founder
Global master coach with 7,000+ hours experience; Forbes Coaches Council & Columbia University ACI.



PUJA BRAHMASMI
Co-CEO & CPO, Co-Creator & Co -Founder
Seasoned Business Leader & Executive Coach (Columbia Certified); Tech Product Builder; Former VP at Publicis Sapient



KRISTINA SHEA
Chief Business Futurist
Well-Being Scientist & ICF -Certified Coach; Former Deputy Director & Finance Leader.



Backed by Research and a Renowned Science Board

With deep expertise in neuroscience, psychology, and organizational science



Prof. Jeffrey Hull
Best-Selling Author, Harvard Faculty - Inst. Of Coaching



Anna Gallotti
Co-Chair ICF AI & Coaching Task Force



Dr. Woody Woodward
Head of Coaching at BetterUp, Ex Director NYU SPS Coaching

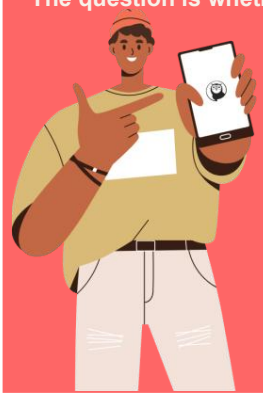


Cindy Cornell
Vistage Chair, Ex Deloitte, Executive Coach, KPMG, NYU, Yale

16

Ready to End Quiet Failing?

The future of people development is here.
The question isn't whether AI coaching will transform your organization.
The question is whether you'll lead that transformation.



Contact us at pivot@sherlocksupercoach.ai for a demo

18



Sherlock
Contact
:

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Chief Business Futurist
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SherlockSuperCoach.AI ™

Confidential | XCalibrate Global Solutions Inc. | 2025

19

Laser Talks

International Columbia Coaching Conference
October 14-16, 2025 | Columbia University | NYC

Go Hybrid or Go Home:

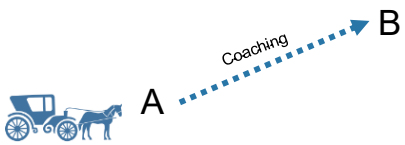
Why AI-Only and Human-Only Coaching Both Fail — and Why Hybrid Intelligence is the Only Path Forward



Jonathan Kirschner
Founder & CEO
AIIR Consulting

Executive Coaching

- Supports an organizational leader achieve important goals and growth.
- True to its etymology (*kocsi* is a Hungarian word for a carriage), the client is taken from point A to a destination point B.





In theory, it should be a fairly predictable, linear process

Assessment	Identify Current State and Ideal Future State
Insight	Conduct Gap Analysis and Root Cause Analysis to identify goals for desired growth
Implementation	Commit to and engage in a clear set of actions for achieving those goals
Reinforcement	Ensure new behaviors last over the long term

Artificial Intelligence

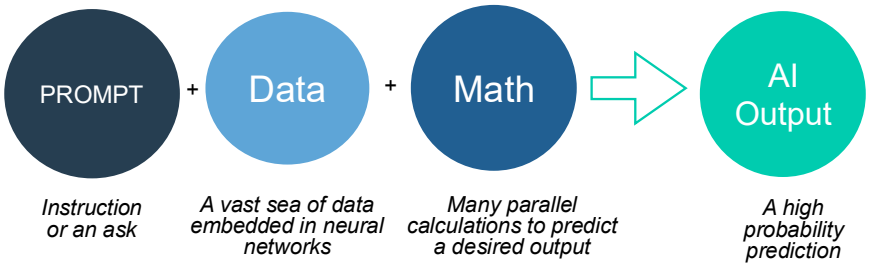
Artificial Intelligence

Simulates human thinking tasks with computers

Generative Artificial Intelligence

AI that actually creates things based on prediction (math)

Generative AI = Prediction Machine



The Question Many are Asking

If AI is an ever-improving prediction machine, that in many ways is already more advanced than the human brain, can coaching be delivered by AI only?

3 Coaching Clients

Case 1 CEO Succession	Go from Founder-CEO role to Executive Chairman. Hand over the reigns to incumbent CEO.	Navigating the emotional complexity of letting go and the existential implications of finding a new identity late in life just as all of his friends are passing away
Case 2 Burn-Out Risk	Reduce stress and delegate more effectively	Realizing that he can't save everyone or solve everyone's problems, and nor is it his job. In order to move forward, he would need to let go of a savior persona he developed as a child
Case 3 Better collaboration	Learn how to collaborate better and empower a team	Giving up a long held, deep seated belief that she was only valuable if she was under the spotlight. Having to shift her focus from "me" to "we."

The coaching journey is actually complex, non-linear, and not very predictable.

It does require prediction and intelligence, but also the deep connection and relationship with the coach.

Real Coaching Requires:

Human Relating

- Trust
- Compassion
- Emotional attunement
- Genuine Interest in understanding

+

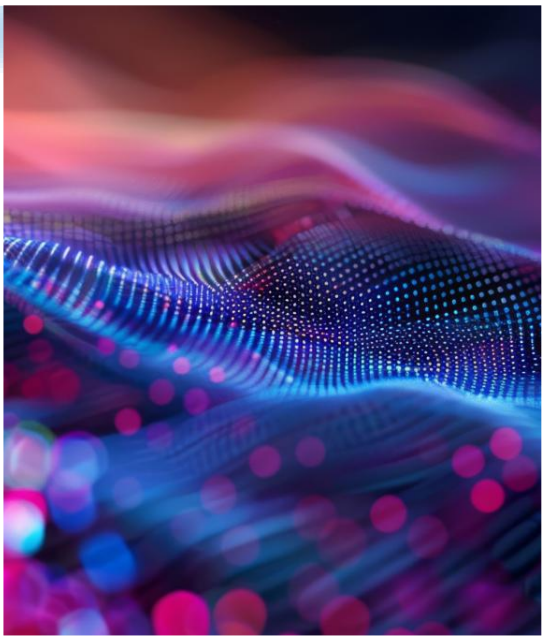
Intelligence

- Thought partnership
- Expertise
- Problem solving skills
- Prediction and Pattern Recognition

Our Great Opportunity

By combing our uniquely human skills of relating and connecting with the power of both human and artificial intelligence (hybrid intelligence)…

1. We get more time back for our uniquely human capabilities?
2. We bolster our impact through insights and interventions are even sharper
3. We increase our capacity to have greater impact



4 Ways Integrate AI into Real Coaching

1	2	3	4
Productivity	**Diagnostic**	**Supervision**	**Augmentation**
▪ Calendar and email management ▪ Transcription and AI summaries ▪ Automated coaching notes ▪ Resource recommendations	▪ Data interpretation and analysis ▪ Integrated assessment summaries ▪ Digital exhaust reports ▪ Strategic development plans	▪ Software that observes coaching sessions (audio/visual) to improve coach skills ▪ Analysis of Zoom/Teams transcripts to refine coaching technique ▪ Real-time feedback on coaching effectiveness	▪ AI coach assistants for behavior change ▪ Enhanced reinforcement between sessions ▪ Personalized development recommendations

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WEBSIT
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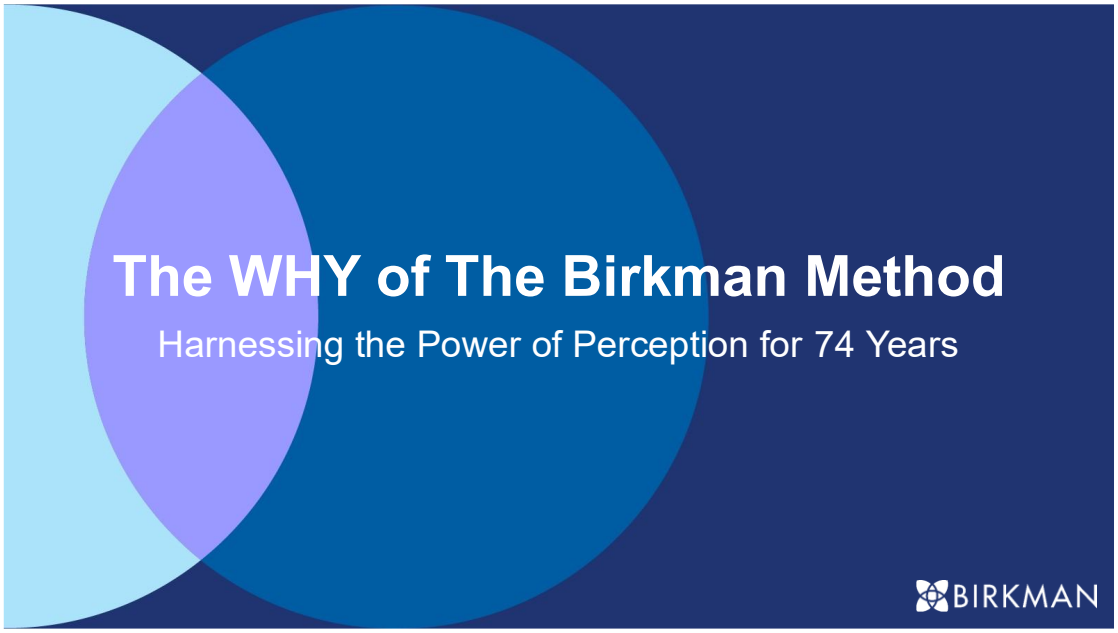
The WHY of the Birkman Method:

Insights into What Makes Each of Us Uniquely Human



SharonBirkman
CEO & Owner
Birkman International, Inc.

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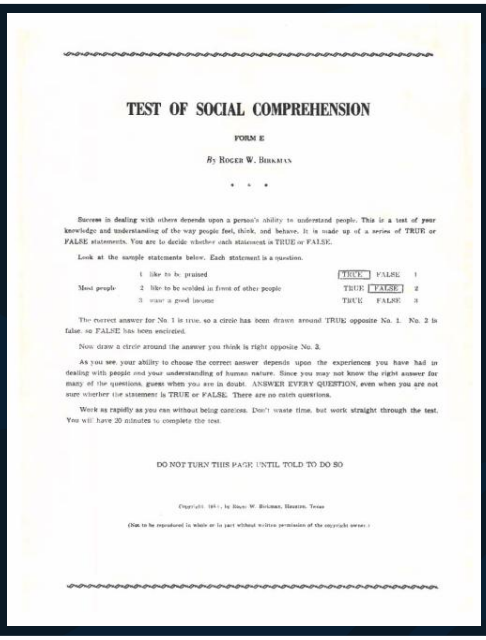






A Test of Social Comprehension (1951)

Roger W. Birkman, Ph.D.



TEST OF SOCIAL COMPREHENSION

FORM E

By Roger W. Birkman

* * *

Success in dealing with others depends upon a person's ability to understand people. This is a test of your knowledge and understanding of the way people feel, think, and behave. It is made up of a series of TRUE or FALSE statements. You are to decide whether each statement is TRUE or FALSE.

Look at the sample statements below. Each statement is a question.

	1 like to be praised	TRUE FALSE	1
Most people	2 like to be scolded in front of other people	TRUE FALSE	2
	3 want a good income	TRUE FALSE	3

The correct answer for No. 1 is true, so a circle has been drawn around TRUE opposite No. 1. No. 2 is false, so FALSE has been encircled.

Now draw a circle around the answer you think is right opposite No. 3.

As you see, your ability to choose the correct answer depends upon the experiences you have had in dealing with people and your understanding of human nature. Since you may not know the right answer for many of the questions, guess when you are in doubt. ANSWER EVERY QUESTION, even when you are not sure whether the statement is TRUE or FALSE. There are no catch questions.

Work as rapidly as you can without being careless. Don't waste time, but work straight through the test. You will have 20 minutes to complete the test.

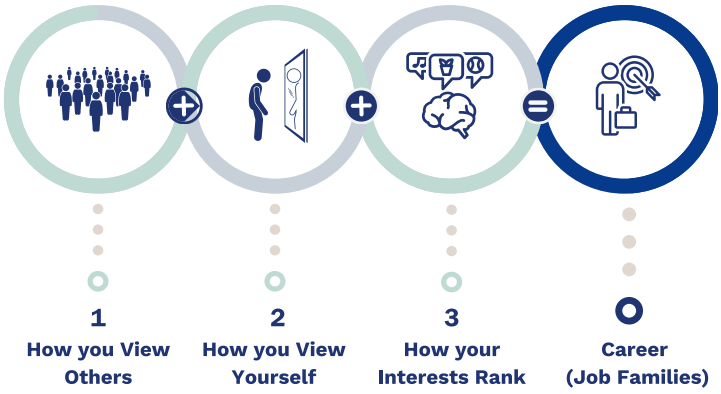
DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO

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"While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a company, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can."
-Susan Scott


A Motivational Assessment, NOT a Personality Test
BIRKMAN

Birkman is a comprehensive behavioral and occupational assessment



BIRKMAN

A Motivational Assessment

What makes The Birkman Method distinct from other psychological assessments?

1

Interior Needs

- Interpersonal Energizers

2

Behavioral and Occupational Insights

- Org Focus- task motivation
- Job Energizers

3

Personality and Interests in a Social Context

- Self and Others Awareness

BIRKMAN

Usual Behavior

Describes our daily strengths and our most productive self



Our visible behavior and our preferred way to relate and connect to others.

BIRKMAN

Needs:

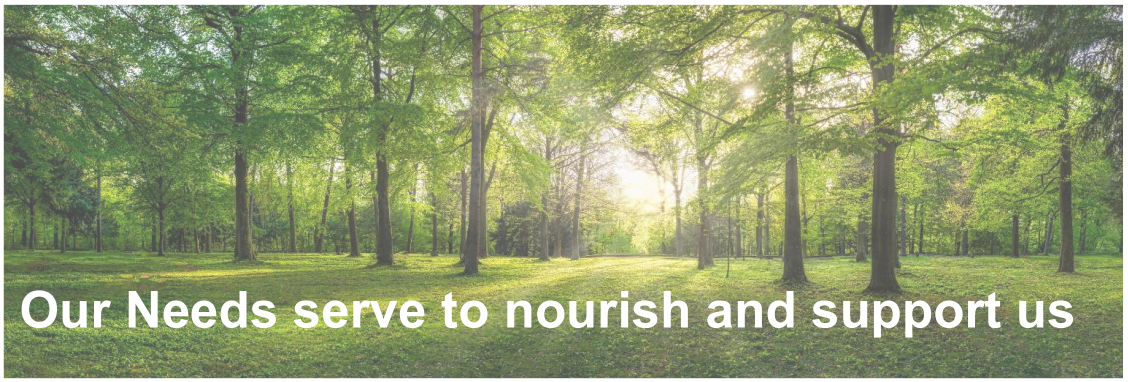
Our Self-Care Manual

Human behavior is challenging because it's perfectly normal for people to be far more complex than their outward behavior indicates.



Invisible to others,
Needs reflect our expectations.

Standing on Our Roots



BIRKMAN



The Dangers of Misperceiving

Needs are neither good nor bad, better or worse.

Just as plants require either little water or a great deal of water, there is no judgment associated with their Needs *or* our motivational Needs.



The Platinum Rule

Ideally, we should be able to communicate and work with others according to their Needs, rather than our own.

93% of people have Needs that differ from their outward behavior; it is not always easy to be clear.

"The reality of life is that your perceptions — right or wrong — influence everything else you do. When you get a proper perspective of your perceptions, you may be surprised how many other things fall into place."

- Roger W. Birkman



Thank you!

birkman.com/connect

BIRKMAN

Experience
The Birkman Method
by scanning the QR Code

The Future of Work has Wings:

What Birds Teach Us About Listening, Agility, and Thriving as Humans amid AI and Change



Katie McCleary
CEO
LQ™ Listening Intelligence

The World We're Leading In

79%
of Leaders Say

... that AI Adoption is Critical.

60%
of them Admit

... that they have no clear strategy on how to implement AI.

40%
Believe

... that their companies won't be viable in ten years without reinvention.

Fewer than 1/10

Workers feel confident that their leaders can bridge the gap between generational differences.

> **Awareness without adaptation is just information.**

Our Asteroid Moment



> If you're interested in doing original thinking, moving away from the familiar is required.
>
> - Dr. Amy Edmondson

Dinosaurs Still Roam the Workplace

Communicates their way and expect compliance

Has plenty of self-awareness, yet no agility to show up as needed

Prefers top-down control over collaboration



Three Birds, Three Lessons

Peregrine Falcon



Barn Own



Canadian Geese



Agile Speed and Adaptation



- Fastest Creature on Earth
- 200 Miles an Hour
- Extremely Focused on Goal
- Adapted to Live Globally and Thrive

Agile Listeners



- Listens with Whole Being and Brain
- Cuts out the Noise
- Swivels with Precision
- Locates what Others Cannot See

Agile Leadership



- Rotates Leadership
- Prevents Burnout
- Mutual Trust
- Sustains the Long Flight

> Agile organizations and leaders will thrive, no matter what asteroids or dinosaurs come their way.

Cognitive Agility

LQ™
Listening Intelligence

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From Quiet Failing to Future Thriving:

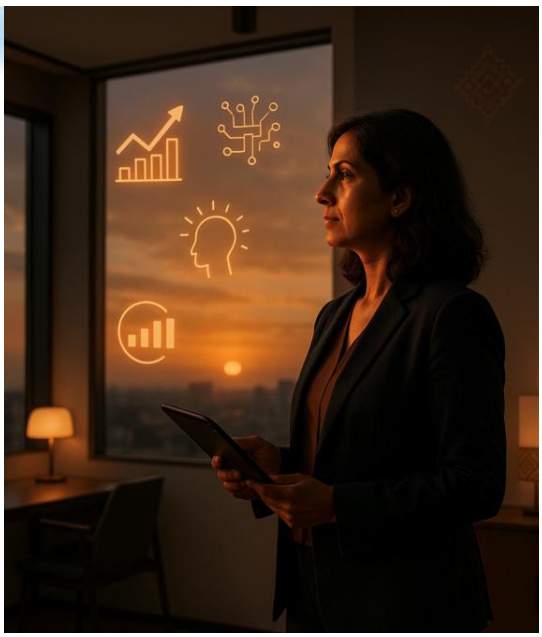
Coaching Native AI is the bridge!

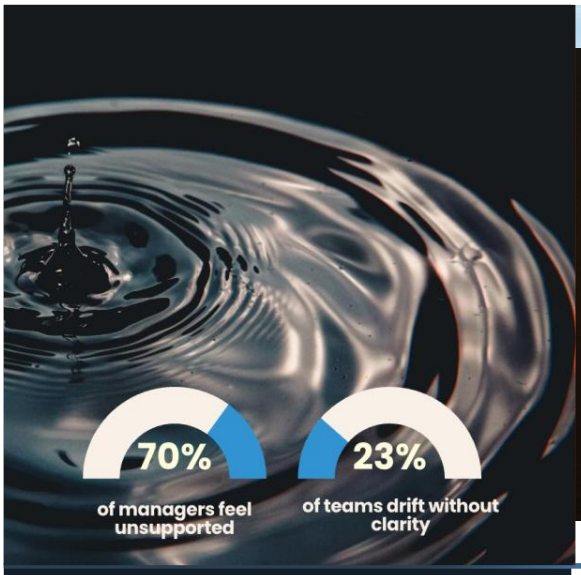


Dr. Deep Bali
Co-CEO, Chief Mentor, Inventor &
Founder of Sherlock AI
Sherlock AI

The Silent Struggle of Managers

Quietly Failing !!

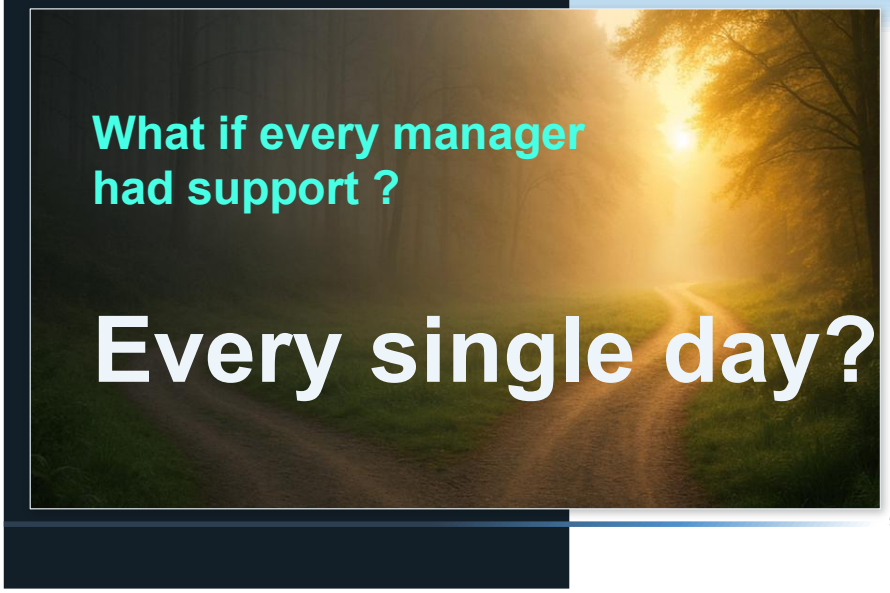


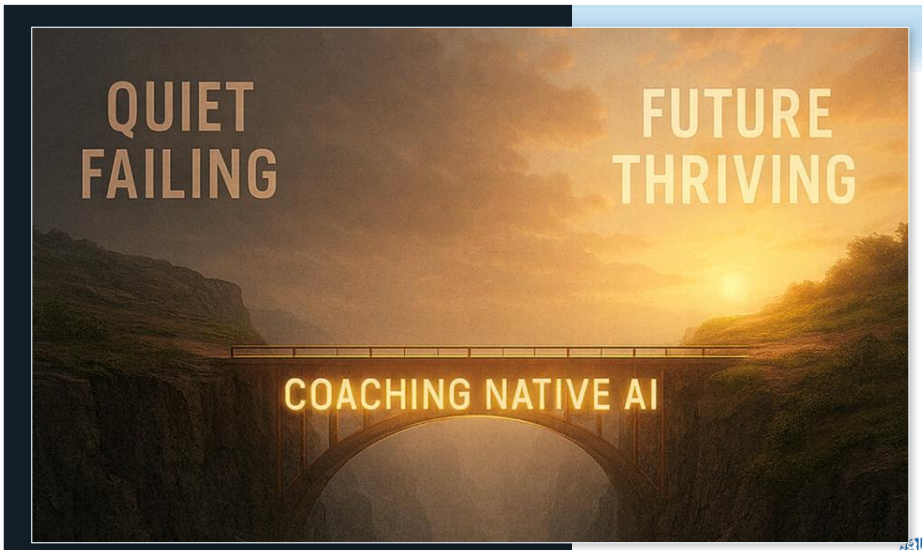


Source: State of the Global Workplace: 2025 Gallup Report

QUIET FAILING

Teams Drift
Cultural Erosion
Lose Billions



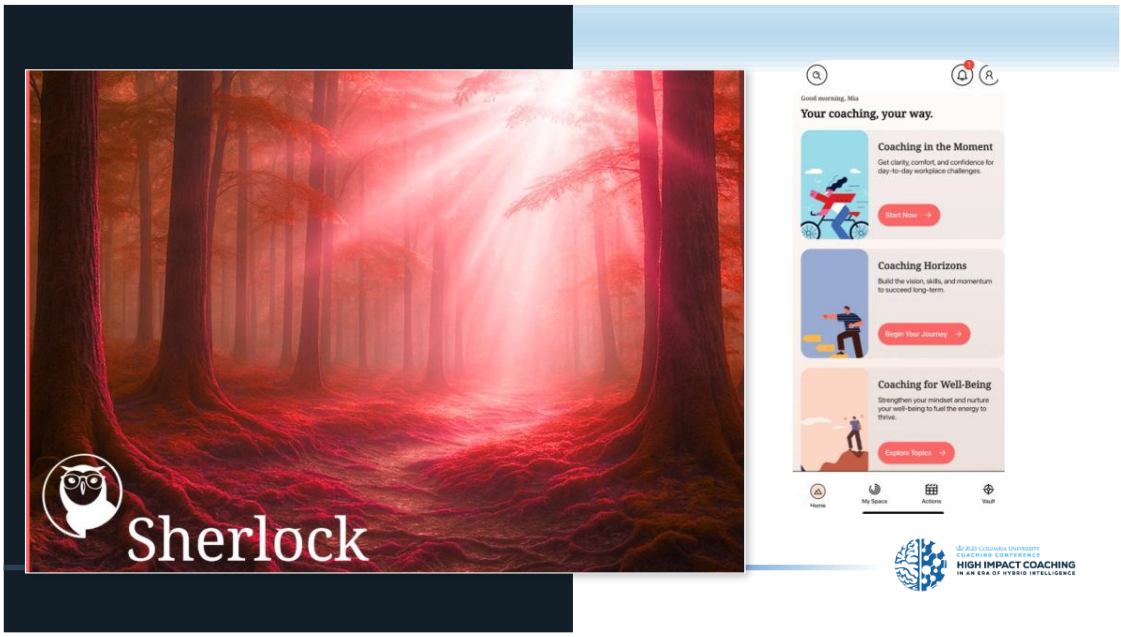


Dressed as a Coach



Born a Coach





Real Client Success Proof (of thriving)





Hybrid Intelligence doesn't replace humans, it amplifies them.

Helping every manager lead, decide, and thrive in real time.

The Big Question for Us

"What would thriving look like if every middle manager had a coach in their pocket who never sleeps, forgets, or judges?"


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Academic Co-Chair



Dr. Rachel Fichter.
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Teachers College Columbia University

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Margaret McLean Walsh

Outstanding Experiential Session Award



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Finalist

From Chakras to Chatbots:
A Framework for High-Impact Coaching in the Era of Hybrid Intelligence



Alexandra Phillips
Teachers College, Columbia University

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Finalist

The Awakening App:
Integrating Voice-Enabled Artificial Intelligence (AI) with Human-Centered Frameworks for Transformative Coaching



Brenda Hayden
Awakening App LLC



Leanda Pringle
Awakening App LLC



LisaArieti
Awakening App LLC

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Recipient

Robots in the Room:
Ethics, AI, and the Coach



Dr. Dana Kirchman
Teachers College | Columbia University



Wendy MyersCambor
New Lane Group Inc.

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Judith E. Glaser

Outstanding Paper Award



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Relational Mentoring in the Digital Age:

A Hybrid Intelligence Approach to Peer Coaching as a Mentoring Practice



Dr. Christina Young
Teachers College, Columbia University

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Finalist

Who Has Your Back at Work?
Coaching for Resilience Using Attachment Science in the Age of AI



Devon McConnell
The University of Oxford

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Finalist

Hybrid AI–Human Coaching:
A New Conceptual Model of Design Dimensions



Dr. Amber Barger
Teachers College,
Columbia University

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