

Base Metal…

The Monthly Newsletter
from
Alchemy of Coaching

The 2017 edition

Introduction

We write Base Metal every month with the intent that it stimulates, challenges, encourages and may even provoke coaches into thinking about and reflecting on their coaching. We write in a largely questioning mode that aims to encourage thinking and reflection.

We are passionate about the importance of coaches continually reflecting on what they do and how they do it, and even more about how they are being when acting as coaches.

Each month we write a short article about a topic we believe is of interest and ally it with an accompanying book review that is relevant or connected to the article.

In this e-book we have compiled all the articles and book reviews from the first twenty four months of Base Metal and we plan to repeat this every two years.

We hope that you find Base Metal useful and ask you to pass this annual review on to anyone that you believe may be interested. Please also ask them to let us know if they would like to receive the monthly version of Base Metal.

The Alchemy team

Ian, Ray and , David

Feb 2018







Contents

2017

January — **How ALIVE are we to our opportunities and responsibilities**

"The Cross-Culture Kaleidoscopes – a systems approach to coaching amongst different cultural influences"
Jenny Plaister-Ten, Karnac Professional Coaching Series, 2016

February — **Four years of Base Metal**

"Good Question – The art of asking questions to bring positive change"
Judy Barber, Bookshaker, 2005

March — **Coaching using the Wheel of Wisdom**

"Pioneering the possible – awakened leadership for a world that works"
Scilla Elworthy, North Atlantic Books, 2014

April — **Directive vs Non-Directive coaching**

"Effective Coaching – Lessons from the Coach's Coach"
Myles Downey, 2nd Edition, Thomson Texere, 2003

May — **The difference between knowing and understanding**

"How things are – a science toolkit for the mind" xxxx "
Ed, John Brockman and Katinka Matson, Weinfield and Nicolson, 1995

"Blink: The power of thinking without thinking"
Malcolm Gladwell, Penguin, 2006

June — **How Neuroscience has informed my coaching**

"30 second brain – the 50 most mind blowing ideas in neuroscience, each explained in half a minute"
Ed. Anil Seth, Icon books, 2014 in hardback

July — **Stuck??**

"Unstuck – a tool for yourself, your team and your world"
Keith Yamashita and Sandra Spataro, Portfolio/Penguin in paperback 2007

August — **Coaching Leaders**

"Coaching for Leadership"
Marshall Goldsmith et al, Pfeiffer, an imprint of Wiley, 3rd edition 2012

September — **"Transformation"**

"Waking from Sleep" Steve Taylor, Hay House 2010
The World beyond your head" Mathew Crawford, Straus and Giroux, 2015
"Leading from the emerging future" Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer, Berrett-Koehler, 2013

October	**Innovation**
	"Smart things to know about innovation and creativity" Dennis Sherwood. Capstone, 2001
November	**More on the SOCK-I diagram**
	"Integral Life Practice – A 21st Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity and Spiritual Awakening" Ken Wilbur, Terry Patten, Adam Leonard & Marco Morelli, Integral books, 2008
December	**"Transformational coaching"**
	"Three Horizons – The Patterning of Hope" Bill Sharpe, Triarchy Press, 2013

January 2017

How ALIVE are we to our opportunities and responsibilities?

As we discussed what topic to choose for this Base Metal we considered language, because clarity of communication is crucial for effective coaching and because clarity can help understanding in volatile and febrile conditions. The words we use are vital ingredients in our coaching. We may employ the discipline of Clean Language - using the exact words and metaphors of the coachee within a particular structure of questions. We may attend to patterns and to the distinctions of the NLP Meta Model - distinguishing deletions, generalisations and distortions in the patterns of our own and our client's thinking and speaking. We may apply positive psychology and appreciative inquiry to guide our choice of words and questions. We may prefer to minimise our use of words by being mostly - perhaps entirely - silent. ***How aware am I of use of words when coaching?***

I began to think about this theme of language, and was struck by the great diversity of languages. There are hundreds of languages spoken around the world, and increasing numbers of people who speak more than one, or several, of these. There are differences, too, in the structure of languages, their range of vocabulary, their speed of change, and the extent to which they are spoken by non-natives. I thought also about local dialects and about different accents**. *How conscious am I of these differences as I seek to make sense of what is said and written?***

Listening is a core skill for coaching. Through practice I can improve my listening. I seek to listen generously, giving my full attention as a gift; to listen as if my life depends upon it; and, rather than to agree or disagree, to listen in order to report back accurately, such that the speaker can correct me or amend what they say so that I may better appreciate what they wish to convey. I can seek to listen empathically, so as to sense the feelings behind the words and to intuit what is unexpressed - and to check for understanding. I may use a structure for my listening, for example "Time to Think". Yet this week a mentor provoked me to consider that even the highest level of active listening can be part of the problem (I recall Einstein's view that we will not be able find a solution by employing the kind of thinking which gave rise to the problem). Listening is not doing - to listen I *am* listening: I embody a state of *being* listening. ***What is the quality of my listening as a coach?***

No matter how fully I am present and listening, I will make assumptions. I am more or less aware of my values, preferences and behaviours yet certainly, by definition, unaware of my unconscious bias. ***In what ways am I constrained by my patterns and assumptions?***

Much of my coaching is with participants on international programmes from many different countries and cultures. Despite their similar management and leadership roles in large organisations, they are different in significant ways of which I am unaware. Diversity in culture is accompanied by individual difference. All is not what it seems. ***How curious am I about difference? How can I be more aware?***

I have chosen to extend the topic of language, to begin to explore opportunities and responsibilities for us as coaches in 2017. In service to my coachee and myself I will attend to being **aware**, to **listen**, to **inquire** with respectful curiosity, to acknowledge and **value** difference and vitality and to engage with empathy and **enthusiasm**. I want to be **alive** to the challenges the year will bring.

Book review

"The Cross-Cultural Coaching Kaleidoscope - A Systems Approach to Coaching Amongst Different Cultural Influences", Jennifer Plaister-Ten, Karnac Professional Coaching Series, 2016

Writing from her personal and professional experience internationally and her research into the lives of highly experienced coaches practising in twenty-seven countries who have coached forty-three nationalities, Jenny Plaister-Ten provides a model to raise awareness, increase understanding and facilitate culturally appropriate responsibility in the coaching relationship. Phillipe Rosinski has commented that she "promotes a dynamic and inclusive notion of culture, which is very much needed in today's complex and turbulent environment".

She includes her own stories to show how we unwittingly make mistakes which require reflection and the need to look at ourselves first and foremost. Her intention is that we find ways to raise collective consciousness towards respecting and embracing difference. She offers a series of lenses, provides signposts for "working with paradox", and relates the model to teams. Short, clear excerpts quoted from coaches participating in her research are accompanied by key contemplations, prompting the reader to reflect further. Coaches are guided towards alignment to values, levels of meaning and higher purpose, building bridges and coaching with collective intelligence. She explores implications for the future, suggests next steps, and invites feedback on the use of the model.

Dr Elaine Cox describes the book as "vital reading for coaches who work in a cross-cultural setting, which, as the author suggests, means all of us; and Sally Bonneywell of GlaxoSmithKline as " brilliant, challenging and informative". It is clearly written, engaging, thoroughly referenced and very timely.

February 2017

Four years of Base Metal

When we wrote our first edition in January 2013, the main article was "Being present as a coach". More than providing information to our readers we set out with the deliberate intent of writing articles in a way that aimed to achieve four purposes. Firstly - to encourage reflection about the topic, often done by including some questions in the text. Secondly - to prompt readers to explore the topic, to be curious, to think that there might be more to seek out. Thirdly - to be gently provocative, usually through posing a challenge. Fourthly - to signpost further resources related to the preceding discussion.

We were clear that we wanted Base Metal to proceed down this path as this is very much in line with the Alchemy approach which is based upon creating a learning environment to encourage learning together

rather than teaching. Whilst we are sure that we can do better, we are gratified to get feedback that suggests we are achieving our aims. We want to avoid becoming complacent and so will continue to provide this kind of stimulus with each monthly edition.

The accompanying book reviews have always sought to complement the article and we hope they have done just this and pointed readers to books that they might not otherwise have encountered.

When considering this article I had thought that I might be able to group the topics in some way. As I look through the titles of the first 49 editions I realise that grouping them would mean an extremely artificial set of connections. So, let's explore the topics through a different lens – possibly only mine!

We have looked at such familiar topics as Supervision, Holding the coaching space, Silence, Boundaries, Psychodynamic theory and What is coaching? These topics are well known within the coaching fraternity.

We have covered some topics from more than one angle and I notice that 'presence' has appeared in three guises. Perhaps this suggests special importance – it certainly is an essential skill or attribute for a coach.

We have asked some quite big questions, e.g. "Is the relationship everything?" and "What do you do when you don't know what to do?" These questions, hopefully, cause us to be curious about our own coaching and to reflect on our approach, style and capabilities. With the articles based on "Awareness" we have sought to encourage thought and reflection on how well we are able to be both present and thinking ahead, based on our observations from being present whilst allowing the coachee to remain in control of their agenda.

Some of our articles have encouraged – or aimed to encourage – a wider exploration about the nature and context of coaching and have included topics such as "What are the values and needs which underpin your coaching?", "From transactional to transformational coaching" and "The relationship is everything!"

We have generally avoided presenting models and tools, although a few have crept in, namely the SOCK-I diagram (Self, Other, Context, knowledge and Integrating) which is central to the Alchemy approach, The Success Model (Be, Do and Have) and Mastery (from the book by George Leonard).

And many of the topics don't fit easily into sets: they are interesting subjects in their own right.

So, to encourage you to be curious, to explore your own coaching approach and your coaching practice:

Q. Is your CPD and coach development covering a sufficiently wide spectrum?

Q. Are you integrating all your knowledge, experience and learning effectively into your coaching?

Book review

"Good Question! The Art of Asking Questions To Bring About Positive Change" by Judy Barber, www.bookshaker.com, 2005

Judy Barber has brought together in a single volume some of the favourite questions of 28 contributors from business and personal development. Her intention is to extend her reader's repertoire of good questions to bring about transformational conversations in every walk of life. There are questions here for managers, trainers, coaches, counsellors, teachers, parents, partners, friends, carers, writers and business people. "How do you know which one to ask?" inquires Coen De Groot in his introduction. The table of contents is a useful place to begin, providing subject areas organised into eight sections. In each part are up to seven questions from different contributors, ranging from "Why are you here and what are you doing?" and "What's to be done now?" to "Who am I?" and "What do you want to do to make a difference in this time?". The eight parts include exercises and activities. Judy asserts that good questions

give you more choices, and “which might be most important of all, you can be inspired by “Good Question!” to develop new questions of your own”.

March 2017

Coaching with the Wheel of Wisdom

The Wheel of Wisdom is both a tool and a discovery process for tackling the kind of questions and conundrums that show up at transitions and turning points, outmanoeuvring regular ploys of thinking (attack, deflection, deflation, distraction or circumvention). The matter may be unprecedented, or it may come with that ‘here we go again’ feeling. In whatever guise, it is big, dynamic and feels lonely. A life challenge and/or a business challenge for which the one involved *has* to find a viable way forward *for and by themselves,* and for whom the presence of a coach can provide invaluable catalytic support.

There is never a way forward that lies ‘outside’ the person concerned: ‘I and my problem’ are bound together interactively, systemically. And yet, if I am a part of the pattern in the problem, how can I find a fresh outlook to examine it?

The Wheel of Wisdom derives from the archetypal perspectives of an indigenous tribal council. These are expressed as embodied Roles – eight wise elders - of human leadership. Each wise elder holds a unique perspective of questioning which is distinct in itself, and at the same time is an integral aspect of the whole Wheel. And the Wheel stands as a representation for the Whole Human.

Every problem contains a Quest. The first step is to clarify and articulate the quest that lies foremost with the coachee right now. What is the salient issue among many possible ones that could be chosen at this time? The coach helps the coachee in dialogue to clarify what seeks expression and to write down their clear and urgent question.

Then the Wheel of Wisdom takes the coachee, as Questioner, on an experiential journey. The Coach serves as a guide - both host and servant - to the process, helping it forward appropriately at each step. In this design for decision making, once the question is found and fully articulated, the eight Roles of the Wheel are introduced one by one. Each of them evokes an embodied aspect of innate understanding and skill *within* the coachee.

The progression becomes very powerful, for as I (stepping into the shoes of a coachee) take up the mantle of each Role, I can connect directly with the aspect of knowing and specific questioning that the particular Role represents. In this way, the sequence of the Wheel opens successive orders of perspective, awareness, and learning. Learning about me; about the issue I have brought forward; about my connection with it; and about my intentions for it. The Wheel in process sheds new light upon my predicament in ways I could not previously imagine. This feeds me with energy and insight to transform my issue and my relationship with it.

In this way people regain for themselves - within themselves - new orders of personal strength and agency: purposes, pathways and viable practices in response to otherwise ‘impossible’ challenges, and new scope to decide their course and commitment to action.

It is best to avoid time constraints to do this work, as the process benefits from relaxation from tension and a reflective approach. It is well worth taking half a day or so to complete a session, and more when the issue at hand occasionally warrants it.

The Wheel of Wisdom is also very well suited to group work, and the business of engaging personal difference for optimum team impact - and that is another story.

For more information about the Wheel of Wisdom, contact David Adams:
david@alchemyofcoaching.com

Book review

"Pioneering the Possible - Awakened Leadership for a World That Works", Scilla Elworthy, North Atlantic Books, 2014

In 2004 Richard Branson sought Scilla Elworthy's help to realise an idea which he and Peter Gabriel had first broached with Nelson Mandela: to create a group of wise people from around the world who could provide guidance for better decisions for the future of humankind. The result, from three hundred potential members, the final dozen chosen by Nelson Mandela, was The Elders, including Mary Robinson, Jimmy Carter, Kofi Annan and Desmond Tutu. Scilla, who founded the Oxford Research Group in 1982 to develop dialogue between nuclear weapons policy-makers, has been three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. "Pioneering the Possible" is much more than an account of these achievements and the very many visionary and dedicated people who delivered them: it is a wake-up call for all of us to act, to change the world in whatever way each of us can, lest human society brings about its own destruction. The book is a catalyst for a new awareness - a radical shift in consciousness. What values, thinking, presence and action can contribute to such a leap in capability and capacity to address a sustainable way to live? These questions are explored; many examples are cited, exercises described and strategies provided to demonstrate extraordinary contributions on which we can build. Inner change - personal awareness, reflection and transformation - will be required to address the challenges of a world in crisis. This book speaks to coach and coachee: what is my purpose, what difference can I make, how do I begin, how will I be resilient? David's words (above) resonate: "…people regain for themselves - within themselves - new orders of personal strength and agency: purposes, pathways and viable practices in response to otherwise 'impossible' challenges, and new scope to decide their course and commitment to action". As Scilla concludes: "… what happens next depends on all of us".

April 2017

Directive v Non-directive coaching – is it simply one or the other?

Much has been written about these fundamentally differing ways of coaching. Often in summary these writings suggest that a balance between the two is the 'best' approach. I want to explore the underlying intent behind each of these styles, pose some questions about whether they really sit at either end of a continuum or are simply different, and finally suggest that there might be another way of viewing this apparent dichotomy. Let's begin with a summary of the key points about each approach together with some positives and negatives about each one.

Directive coaching can be characterised as: The coach -

• provides direction	• is in charge and controls the process
• outlines the goals	• acts as a leader in a hierarchical relationship
• gives (not offers) advice, tools and ideas	• uses their formal expertise

Positives: the coach brings formal expertise into play; works best when the coachee truly values the coach's approach; can provide a step change quickly; provides challenge and support; can be helpful if the coachee does not know where to start.

***Potential negatives*:** might not work when the coach provides direction or guidance which does not fit with what the coachee wants or needs; the coachee may pay lip service to direction, input or actions; can be quicker in the short term but not long lasting.

Non-directive coaching can be characterised as: The coach -

• listens and questions	• accepts the coachee has the resources to make a change
• offers support and challenge	• expects the coachee to outline their goals and outcomes
• enables exploration and curiosity	• creates a partnership style of relationship

***Positives*:** the coach remains open minded; allows the coachee to own actions and outcomes; fosters greater commitment to action; does not need to be a subject expert; and offers support and challenge equally.

***Potential negatives*:** might be difficult to begin if the coachee has no idea about a starting point; may take longer (than time available); or when the coachee lacks the experience or knowledge to help themselves.

So, is it a better approach to balance between the two ends of the continuum – if it really is a continuum?

Or would an integrative approach be more effective? Would **Integrative** be different in the same way that being Assertive is not on the continuum between Aggressive and Passive - simply it is different?

What are the possible **fundamentals** of an Integrative approach?

• the relationship is based on equality	• awareness is paramount
• approach used by the coach is most appropriate for each situation – adopts right approach at right time	• The coach understands when to intervene or be silent
• The coach uses all available resources	• The coach is confident about shifting their approach

I believe the ***positives*** from this approach include: high levels of trust build up and allow for greater challenge; outcomes are achieved using all available resources; there is personal development as well as goal achievement; personal learning is always a part of the agenda; coaching can be very quick at times; reflection, insight and suggestion are all used to best effect; and confidence is experienced by coach and coachee.

Some ***potential negatives*** can be: 'stealing defeat from the jaws of victory' (when goals are achieved quickly and the session continues regardless); the coach feels out of control; the coach has to feel comfortable with being uncomfortable; whilst experience on both sides is valuable, is the coach's offer really appropriate?

Q. What are your thoughts about the differences between Directive, Non-directive and Integrative?

Q. What ideas or learning do you take from this article that can help with your learning and development?

Book review

"Effective Coaching - Lessons from the Coach's Coach" by Myles Downey, Thomson, Second Edition, 2003

Timothy Gallwey profoundly influenced the development of coaching through "The Inner Game of Tennis" and "The Inner Game of Work". In his Foreword for Myles Downey's book he writes: "The coach does not need to impart knowledge, advice, or even wisdom" - the coach's role is to evoke excellence in the person coached. Myles Downey does not recognise advice-giving as part of the coach's contribution: he does have a place for offering feedback and suggestions, occasionally, when the person "has a genuine choice whether to accept them or not". He has a place, too, for challenging - to raise awareness and access potential. Authority is a consideration in coaching: he prefers "player" to "coachee" as the latter

conveys the sense of coaching being done to the person by the coach, rather than as a partnership in the person's development. He offers four tests for the appropriateness of a suggestion by the coach: the intent; strength of trust in the relationship; whether it will raise awareness; and will it leave responsibility and choice with the player. The book has an early chapter on non-directive coaching, describes effective coaching and its requisite skills and stages; examines coaching in context including in the workplace and in teams; and addresses training and supervision.

Will Hutton comments: "...a compelling account …set out with great clarity …this is a must read."

May 2017

The difference between knowing and understanding

What is the difference between knowing and understanding? And what consequences does this difference have for the coach?

Isn't this a pretty basic sort of question? Surely, we work every day with both knowledge and understanding; have done for years, and I and my clients handle both of them with experience and skill. So why are you asking?

First, can knowledge and understanding be mistaken for each other?

I remind myself, ruefully, of times as a young professional, full of the hubris of 'going somewhere fast', and later, when I found things much more confusing than I had earlier imagined. It had seemed easy to be smart; to swallow up knowledge and 'know' anything that life presented; to find an ingenious and quick-witted rationale for 'everything'- and to finish other people's sentences. Life soon shattered this fragile, arrogant carapace. I *had* to get fresh understanding, a better viewpoint, a changed conception of myself, and quickly. Younger lives than mine depended upon it. I had indeed confused knowledge with understanding , and deeply. I had unpick them; it has been a long continuing journey.

So what happens with understanding? Well, to start with, it *feels* different from knowledge. When I find some stillness and start to sense the two, they are in different places in me: knowledge is in my brain, knowing *what*, my muscles know a good deal, too, that's knowing *how*. Understanding seems spread around centrally, in the whole of me. Understanding feels more sensate, experiential, more of a moving towards new perception in 'the time of now'. Its essence feels like a discovery, a coming together of my inner inquiry-cum-speculation with outer sensing, perceiving reality. The feeling is there first, and words for it come afterwards. Understanding's arrival can be tortuous; the emergent thing is gathering, forming and still not quite there. And when it comes, understanding yields the sense of meaning.

If I take away the imaginary and fanciful, knowledge has that yes/no quality; I either know something or I don't. The coach is always clear about what they know and don't know, yes? Has to be strictly so, otherwise I've lost integrity, and the valuable knowledge that I do have fails to impact our process. The coach is also aware that, however well qualified, knowledge is known through the knower's lens; it cannot escape the imprint of the knower's human partiality and prejudice. Knowledge words come easily (and glibly!). With clarity I can view the great expanse of *not knowing*, and embrace it in our coaching process. For, in this space of not knowing, you and I can seek out, sense and discover understanding!

Consequences. Understanding moves the coaching process beyond the simple exchange of knowledge (while knowledge exchange is crucial to the coaching engagement). If the coachee is to surmount whatever dilemma they are dealing with, the field of our exchange has to enable a reframe of the presenting dilemma into a different order of possibility that the coachee can skilfully grasp and take forward. To open up a new and elevated field of possibility, we have to see it together; it has to 'click'.

To move into this field of resolution, it is my job to understand the coaching process I am in systemically, in my awareness of being, as well as to know about it. Our exchange has sensate qualities of me-ness, you-ness and us-ness. There is a dynamic, a kind of dance – a ritual, sometimes – of affirming/contributing, countering/questioning and reconciling/resolving as the process moves towards greater revealing, discovering, understanding, choosing and deciding.

A cartoon made me laugh, it said: 'Nothing right in my left brain. Nothing left in my right brain'. Good for not knowing?

Book review

"How things are: a Science Tool-kit for the Mind" ed. John Brockman and Katinka Matson, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995 and "Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking" by Malcolm Gladwell, Penguin, 2006

I read the piece above, and, believing I had sufficient time, ordered a book which I thought appropriate for this review. It has not yet arrived - expect the unexpected! So, instead, I took these two books from my shelf. Neither is new nor directed particularly towards coaches. I picked "How things are" for the chapter by Robert C. Shank entitled "What to Know, How to Learn It". The editors began the book as a present for their 13 year-old son to take with him into adult life. Robert Shenk asserts that we learn best by doing, and it isn't what you know that matters, it's how you come to know it. This is about learning to learn and make sense of experience.

Malcolm Gladwell's "Blink" is about those moments when we know something without knowing why we know it; when we make a snap judgement which proves more effective than a cautious decision. When making a split-second decision we risk being hostage to bias, prejudice and stereotyping. When our knowledge is shallow, we aren't grounded in understanding. Yet our adaptive unconscious is often capable of taking care of things. Sometimes we can do too much conscious thinking. Simply to survive we are capable of making very quick judgements and acting on very little information. From the case examples described in the book Malcolm Gladwell proposes that our first impressions and snap judgements can be mistaken – and that they can be educated and controlled: "The power of knowing, in that first two seconds, is not a gift given magically to a fortunate few; it is an ability that we can all cultivate for ourselves." This is work for coaches and for clients.

June 2017

How neuroscience has informed my coaching

Overall neuroscience has helped me really understand that the brain is awesome and fallible, not awesome and perfect. It's starting to give me glimpses into what is happening inside the person in front of me. Not by reading books starting 'Neuroscience for ...' but by reading books by Pinker, Damasio and Ramachandran on how the brain works. Also the jury is out on many things being reported as 'facts' including epigenetic changes being passed on, mirror neurons reading minds and true neural plasticity (not synaptic plasticity which is what most people mean when they say neural plasticity).

The brain is a 'wet system' shaped by genes, epigenetics and experiences. At every moment affected by internal and external stimuli; the innate assumptions it has; brain chemicals or lack of them; neural pathways with differing strengths and the growth of various parts which affects its operation. It is much easier to feel generosity and compassion towards a coachee when you believe that in front of you sits the shaping of every second of that person's life. All in all I am rarely surprised by a coachee's reaction or interpretation of something regardless of how many years they have been alive.

It is easy to believe that senior coachees should be in control of their thoughts and reactions because they are 'more mature'. But it can be easy to be caught out by a seemingly 'over-the-top' or 'irrational' reaction and that erodes the coaching relationship. So more years does not necessarily mean more stability or better control. In many cases it helps, although due to implicit memories, which are experiences that we don't store as memories and when evoked appear as 'truths', coachees respond to unknown memories rather than the situation that evoked that. For them the feeling of fear is just that, fear. As they see it the situation they are in has induced the fear so it must be a dangerous situation. Therefore, it can be difficult to talk about possible actions if the coachee perceives the situation as dangerous even though logically they kind of get that it isn't. But the feeling wins out. Often the feeling of fear comes from a memory, which has been evoked by some connection to the current situation, so realising that may be useful to help them move forwards. Just emphasising that the situation is not that fearful usually makes little difference and contradicts how they feel: try it out for yourself, think of something that really scares you and think of having to do it.

A neuroscientist once said, do your coachees come to your sessions excited to tell you about what they have learned from their progress and mistakes? Do they feel excited about their coaching journey and the coaching session? I have to say, I couldn't honestly answer yes for every session and every coachee. It made me think about how coaching is about change and that makes people fearful. Brains aren't that keen on it either as it takes energy and they use enough of that anyway. The point they were making is that under those conditions you have lots of useful chemicals in your brain that quieten the amygdala and make you open to change and action. So that's what I focus more on now; do they feel safe enough to make mistakes, curious about what they will learn and excited to tell me about them? Not an easy task but one worth persisting with now I have some understanding of how important brain chemicals are and the affects they can have.

Therefore I am more interested now about Mindfulness and Cardiac Coherence methods. If we need a quiet amygdala to have a good conversation with our full ability to think available, then stress and anxiety aren't helpful to a coachee. The issue with these is that the amygdala develops a lower trigger threshold and a bigger reaction, so it triggers easily, more often and overreacts. Cortisol is unhealthy in large and long term doses as it appears to disable and kill memory neurons. I am beginning to wonder if there is a point at which coachees would benefit from doing sessions with those calming techniques before starting a coaching programme.

So neuroscience has a lot to offer us but not by reciting brain parts and brain chemicals.

We are very grateful to Deni Lyall for contributing this article. If you would like to receive her regular blog please contact Deni on deni@winningperformance.co.uk

Book review

"30-Second Brain - The 50 most mind-blowing ideas in neuroscience, each explained in half a minute", edited by Anil Seth, Icon Books, 2014 - hardback

Here is a book from nine contributors who explore the nature of the brain via a foreword, building, theories, mapping, consciousness, perception and action, cognition and emotion, and changing, with the text richly complemented by many colour illustrations. "Each of the 50 ideas is condensed - via 2 pages, 300 words and a picture - into concise, accessible, and engaging '30-second' neuroscience", accompanied by "a 3-second brainwave and a 3-minute brainstorm" capturing the essential message and extra food for thought. Related connections, biographical references, quotations, glossaries, further resources, notes on contributors and an index are included. Anil Seth is Professor of Cognitive and Computational Neuroscience and founding co-director of the Sackler Institute for Consciousness Science at the University of Sussex. In his introduction he writes "… the brain is … responsible for the way we perceive

the world and how we behave within it. So to understand the brain is to understand our own selves and our place in society and in nature. … Approach the book however you like. Read it in order, or dip in and out." This is an attractive and informative introduction and springboard for further inquiry into neuroscience; it concludes with a section entitled "The Meditating Brain".

July 2017

Stuck?

In Base Metal we have explored the pervasive nature and power of metaphor. Here are some *stuck* examples. From a positive perspective there's "getting stuck into" - wholehearted engaging with a challenge or activity; "stick at it", "stick with it" and "stick it out" - persevering to a conclusion; "stick by" - stay loyal to; "stick with me" - stay connected, and "stick together" - valuing the strength of the team, especially when lost; and there's "stick to the knitting" - continuing to do what you are best at and positively known for; and "sticky" in the sense of an attractive proposition.

In contrast there's "sticky" - a close and humid day; "stuck in a traffic jam", "on a sticky wicket" and "in a sticky situation" - struggling in difficult conditions, "stuck fast" - unable to escape, "stuck with it" - lacking choice, "stuck for something to do" - bored, and "stuck in the mud" - unwilling to change; "stuck on" - infatuated by a person or idea; "stuck-up" - haughty and arrogant; and, remembered from childhood, "if you do that you'll come unstuck" - heading for a fall. Then there's "stick your neck out"- take a risk; "stick in the mind" - memorable; "I'll stick" - passing on my turn in cards; and "stick it over there" - put it in a particular place. Thus we make meaning.

"Getting stuck into it" and "sticking with it" indicate my commitment and determination. Yet even then I can feel "stuck" - unable to move. I seem to have no way to turn, no solution. My thinking may become obsessive rumination, devoid of possibility, a continual loop of frustration and indecision, sapping my energy and resolve. I know from personal experience what being stuck is like, and I can reflect on how this resolves for me. Trying to overcome feeling stuck may result in my trying too hard - thinking too much, sinking deeper into the mire of dilemma or hopelessness. I notice that change can happen when I become distracted by some other concern or drawn into another area of attention, activity and opportunity. This may start with active avoidance and displacement: choosing something apparently unimportant and occupying myself with that: paradoxically such seemingly irresponsible distraction can sometimes free me. I find too that helping someone else with their difficulties is a particularly valuable escape from my own concerns, a change in sense of proportion.

What if I self-coach? I can notice that I'm stuck, identify how that feels and what my thinking patterns are; ask myself what my story is and what different narrative I would prefer, and rehearse this new story, reframing current thinking to create possibilities for change. I can ask myself what emotional, energetic and physical states will be congruent with how I want to be, and use positive reference memories to anchor and access resourceful states. I can visit different perceptual positions to investigate their perspectives and gain insights into alternative ways to view my current condition. I can observe my language patterns in thought, speech and writing, to heighten awareness of the generalisations, distortions and deletions which limit my understanding and inhibit my choices. I can focus on choice points to help me consider and commit to new steps. I can search for my limiting beliefs so as to challenge these and replace them with more empowering beliefs. I can be present to current circumstance; practise self-acceptance; acknowledge achievement and personal strengths and preferences and so encourage my sense of self-worth. I can connect with what really matters to me and find motivation and meaning from my values. I can nurture my physical, emotional and spiritual

wellbeing; I can start afresh at any moment. And yet, despite all this self-coaching, I may find that I am still stuck.

What's to be done? Seek help. Find a listener, someone who will witness my story with full attention, and without judgement or well-intentioned yet unhelpful advice; someone who will ask me incisive questions to support my inquiry. Here's where coaching has a positive role to play for those who are stuck. Working with a coach can assist me to see things with fresh eyes, more clearly and specifically and in a bigger context; to discover opportunities to which I was blind and to take different actions. As a coach, how do I assist my clients? When I come unstuck, how do I learn? How does my contribution assist others to come un-stuck?

Book review

"Unstuck - a tool for yourself, your team and your world" by Keith Yamashita and Sandra Spataro, Portfolio, Penguin (USA), revised edition in paperback, 2007

In their introduction the authors write "…It's our affirmed belief that getting stuck is simply part of life - if you're not stuck from time to time, in your work, or in your personal life, you're probably not aiming for greatness". I'm familiar with feeling stuck often enough without even considering aiming for greatness; when this book was recommended to me by another coach I was eager to discover what it offers.

"Unstuck" seeks to take away the stigma of being stuck: being stuck is commonplace. Getting unstuck requires acknowledging fear, then finding the smallest of possibilities to shift that fear and replace it with having fun - in the sense of a lightness of being. Three steps to getting unstuck are presented: admitting you're stuck (or how to recognise the symptoms); diagnosing why you're stuck (or how to get at the root causes); and getting unstuck (or what you can do right now) - this is the greater part of the book, offering numerous tools and techniques - including "more heart, less intellect". A further section addresses digging deeper. Being honest about how things really are is a prerequisite for progress. Seven primary causes for getting stuck are described: "The serious Seven". Each of these is a state of feeling. These are examined systemically and linked to appropriate tools. Whilst the book is structured for use with teams and organisations, the approach is valuable for individual work. Moving forward depends upon enlarging the view of the bigger picture.

August 2017

Coaching Leaders

Leaders seem to be in the spotlight a lot at present. There was a recent article asking "would you coach Donald Trump?" In the UK's general election the surprise result has placed a lot of pressure on the Prime Minister -does she have a coach? Both questions posit the notion - "If you were to coach them what approach or stance would you take?" So much is written about leaders and leadership where would you start when coaching a leader. In this short article I want to throw out some ideas for you to ponder and think about. I am definitely not suggesting solutions, more seeking to have you think about what you might do when coaching a leader.

In seeking ideas for this article I looked through two books on coaching leaders. "Coaching for Leadership" by Goldsmith, Lyons and McArthur and "Leadership Coaching" edited by Jonathan Passmore. Both contain articles by a wide variety of authors and mostly outline using specific approaches or propose ideas for particular contexts. Many of the specific chapters share interesting material and I encourage you to explore both books. By focussing on approaches and contexts the following two questions come to mind.

Q. What do you imagine might be the benefits and difficulties you encounter if you coach using a particular leadership approach or model?

Q. What do you imagine are the particular challenges coaching within a particular context e.g. high potential, talent development or leading change?

You might consider thinking about these questions more broadly. What risks, benefits, challenges and difficulties might you encounter using a specific approach in any coaching context?

Another area to think about when coaching leaders is are you focussing on performance, development or some specific or emergent combination of both? It seems to me that when coaching leaders in most situations you are likely to need to address both. Improved performance will require development and development needs to be demonstrated in performance. So agreeing how you will address both with your coachee will usually be important. The leader has to want to change and develop otherwise coaching won't work.

Q. To what extent do you explicitly consider and then contract for performance and/or development with coaching leaders?

Looking at coaching leaders from a different perspective. To what extent are leading and leadership different now from any time in the past? What are the particular challenges that leaders face? Whilst it is clear that some things change e.g. increasing use of digital communications and apps, social changes leading to greater mobility and expectations from work and global or cross border relationships it is equally clear that many things remain the same and significant, e.g. the importance of dealing effectively with individuals, providing clear, understandable, direction and development opportunities, and giving good feedback on performance.

Q. Is coaching leaders very different now from any other time in the past? And, if it is, how do you relate to these differences?

Finally how about the extent to which we challenge leaders? In "Challenging Coaching" Blakey and Day present a model - ZOUD, the zone of uncomfortable discussion or debate. They suggest that we, as coaches, have a real responsibility to challenge our coachees. This theme was also outlined in the Coaching at Work article about Keith Antoine which is definitely worth a read.

Q. Do you challenge enough and appropriately?

Coaching leaders is a huge topic and I only have a small space to offer some ideas. If you have others you would like to explore in an article or would like us to examine please get in touch.

Book review

"Coaching for Leadership" by Marshall Goldsmith, Laurence S. Lyons and Sarah McArthur, Pfeiffer, Third Edition, 2012 – also available as an e-book.

Warren Bennis described this book as "the single best collection of writings and writers on executive coaching". The book was first published in 2000 as "Coaching for Leadership: How the World's Greatest Coaches Help Leaders Learn"; the second edition in 2005 was entitled "The Practice of Leadership Coaching"; and this significantly updated third edition arrived in 2012. The editors are joined by forty other contributors including Paul Hersey, Ken Blanchard, Edgar Schein and Dave Ulrich. Their thirty-seven chapters are divided into seven sections covering Foundations of Coaching, Portrait of a Leader, Challenges and Forces of Change, Recognizing and Developing High-Potentials, Into Action, Coaching Models and Tools, and Coaching for Leadership - Premium Web Content. The editors recommend approaching the book as a resource, picking a contribution that interests then reading on beyond. There are perspectives from the viewpoint of the coach and the leader, and explorations of challenges e.g.

governance (Anna Bateson) and societal wellbeing (Nancy J. Adler).The importance of open questions shows up in many of the chapters, for example from Paul Hersey in coaching for Situational Leadership and from Nancy J. Adler. There is a short piece on the importance of meaning: The Purposeful Leader by Richard J. Leider - which acknowledges Viktor Frankl and Robert Greenleaf.

September 2017

Transformation

Years ago my bosses sent me to turn around a small Danish company which was on the brink of bankruptcy. This became a transformative experience for me and the company, as we discovered - often the hard way - how to work together to do the work, to reach the viable outcome we all wanted. What a difference coaching could have made to my performance, had some been available. Later, with many more tough projects to accomplish, I had the good fortune of a wise coaching/mentoring boss.

Transformation, whether for better or worse, is stimulated by instability. The essence of it is a change from one active form, which has ceased to provide stability, into a form that will sustain a more stable state in the changed context. In a volatile, unstable world, needs for transformation are broadening and accelerating in almost any field one cares to look at. What do we understand about it that can assist would-be transformers?

After all, we live in the midst of many transformations. Living things (humans included) are transforming, and being transformed by, what they eat. Communications are transforming behaviour. Materials and resources are transforming into new artefacts. Life is full of things that begin with one kind of form only to take on, be given, or metamorphose into, a form that is substantially different.

And yet my relatively small scale efforts at transformation were really hard work. Double work, in truth, because to transform a situation, I found that I myself had to transform inwardly to somehow match the outward transformation I was attempting to bring about.

I had to learn and hold with conviction an attitude, understanding and belief about what I was doing, such that the actual outward transformation I sought had somehow already happened inside my being and thinking. As if I was drawing some real future state back into the present – or some future state was drawing me, and everyone about me, towards it. The realisation of a dream held with calm, clear affirmative commitment.

The reciprocal nature of transformative change holds a deep fascination. As I work with others to change something, we are changed by the change. An interactive learning-in-action process at the end of which everything entailed in it is somehow different. What is going on with this alchemical mystery?

The situation that has to transform offers an outline, however faint, of what it has the potential to transform into. It may be difficult to discern, and the agent(s) of change have to find out *how* to do it as well as having to do it. Rising to a new level of duty and responsibility; undertaking an important business or organisational development project; or accomplishing some life enhancing career change, for example. More radical than this, a person might be confronting some unforeseeable demand or calamity that entails a step change in capacity and capability for leadership.

Whatever the challenge, the 'I' concerned is forced to look deeply into their current state of resources, resourcefulness, know-how and connections. A vision is needed, however indistinct to begin with, of an outcome to be sought, with a method of how to achieve it. And good, insightful understanding of situation and context.

To all of this the coach brings a valuable independent third perspective of insight, challenge and support, helping to open and broaden the subject's vision, scope and understanding of what is being undertaken and how to succeed with it. The coach is there to encourage that vital transformative inner journey in which resources never before imagined can be found.

Book review

Three books for leaders and coaches to stimulate the inner journey, provoke awakening and support transformation:

"Waking From Sleep - Why Awakening Experiences Occur and How to Make Them Permanent" by Steve Taylor, Hay House, 2010

This book explores how we can go beyond our everyday sense of life's experiences to discover - or re-discover -higher states of consciousness, make these more accessible, and so attain 'wakefulness' as our normal state. Thus we can move from ego-isolation to a transformed freedom of energy, awareness and connection.

"The World Beyond Your Head - On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction" by Matthew B. Crawford, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015

This work examines the way attention shapes the self; shows how some assumptions at the root of Western culture are profoundly at odds with human nature; and suggests how re-connecting with beauty will help us out of our heads - to reclaim the real world.

"Leading From The Emerging Future" by Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer, Berrett-Koehler, 2013

This is a guide to assist us to move from Ego-System to Eco-System economies. It builds on ideas of complexity and emergence and the application of 'Theory U', to enable us to address the dysfunctions of the current rapacious world and transform business, society, and self towards a more sustainable future.

October 2017

Innovation

I was fortunate recently to attend a short workshop on Innovation, and it set me thinking about Innovation as a coach.

Let me begin by outlining, briefly, some of the ideas described at the workshop.

1. Innovation is as much about renewal and change as about something completely new.

2. Innovation relates to organisations as much as to products and services.

3. Unless organisations innovate they will inevitably diminish or lose out in the marketplace.

4. The quick approach to introducing new things is 'swift and dirty', the idea being to get it (whatever it is) out into the marketplace, being tested and used by the public and so get feedback that enables the product or service to be improved. This can be a much cheaper and quicker way to get things 'out there' and discover whether they are wanted before high levels of investment have been committed.

So, what about innovation for coaches? Where do you and can you innovate?

The first and second points above imply that we need to undertake specific activities to foster renewal and change along with learning completely new ideas.

Q. Do you do enough to renew your skills and knowledge as a coach?

Q. Do you use opportunities for reflection and supervision to help you with renewal?

The third point led me to think about 'coaching organisations' that I work with: my own organisation and those where I am an associate or part time member. How do I help them to renew and change?

It seems to me that unless I put proper effort into activities for my own renewal and the renewal of the organisations that I work with, those organisations will eventually fall behind others who do put in such effort. This reminds me of comments that many top sportspeople and musicians make: "To get to the top requires talent and effort. To remain at the top takes an enormous amount of effort, practice and continual learning". So, unless I innovate I will fall behind.

Q. Do you do enough to innovate - taking this broader meaning of renewal, change and new learning?

The fourth point was a completely new one to me (since beta-testing for software applications is *before* the product reaches its intended customers): that an increasingly common approach to innovation is to do it 'swift and dirty'. By this I understood him to mean that you don't spend a long time preparing and developing products and ideas. You get them out to the market and test them in the market - on real customers. This can surely only apply to certain types of products and services as I want innovations in some products, notably vehicles, aircraft and medicines, to be safe! Apparently in our rapidly changing and developing world new approaches to taking products and services to market have become more common and perhaps, as coaches, we need to be willing to explore them.

So, how can I try out new ideas on my clients – whilst both they and I remain safe?

Making and taking opportunities for co-coaching with colleagues and peers can help me to renew my practice.

I can ask clients if it is OK to try ideas with them - and I stress 'with them' rather than on them!

A co-operative, collaborative, inquiring approach such as the co-creative Theory U allows for saying what we know, seeing clearly, sensing what can be let go, opening to what is waiting to emerge, and acting on this. Through involvement, listening, awareness and rapid prototyping experiments we can achieve speed with integrity. This is about avoiding waste and being attentive to environmental sustainability: 'swift and clean'?

So, let me conclude by asking:

Do you innovate enough?

Book review

"Smart Things to Know About Innovation and Creativity" by Dennis Sherwood, Capstone, 2001

The Smart series of books reminds us of Chris Argyris's view that even the most intelligent people can become ineffective in organisations, because they are too busy working, stop reflecting and fail to learn about themselves or notice that behaviours which were successful in the past may no longer be appropriate. Dennis Sherwood addresses innovation and creativity, offering definitions, fresh ideas, applications, insights into patterns, characteristics of innovative and uninnovative organisations, the significance of culture - and guidance on tools, action, resources, how to be wise and the importance of risk and openness to unlearning. He poses simple requests to stimulate inquiry, investigation and responsibility, e.g. "Tell me more about that" and "What do we have to do to make that work?" Well-chosen quotations and references provide pointers to more resources. He is influenced by a broad spectrum of authors, including Edward De Bono and Tony Buzan, to Roger von Oech, Arthur Koestler,

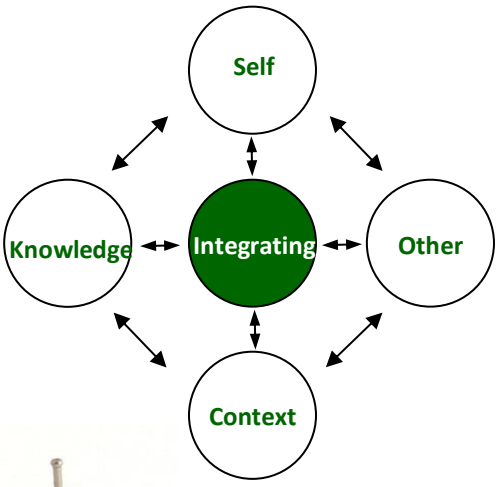
Joseph Jaworski, Peter Senge, Arie de Gues, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Kaoru Ishikawa, Susan Greenfield, Donald O. Hebb and James A. Christensen. This book is a valuable manual for would-be innovators.

November 2013

More on the SOCK-I diagram

We have written about the **SOCK-I** diagram before. It has become one of the key models that we use on the Alchemy programme as it highlights five key elements that are connected during any coaching relationship. In a recent Alchemy module we explored the diagram/model in more depth and new layers of insight were uncovered.

The diagram, which will be familiar to all readers of Base Metal, it was first outlined in February 2014 and used again in June 2015 and July 2016. That we have referred to it in three of our articles shows – well at least we think it does – that it helps us to understand what is going on whilst we are coaching.



The model shows that there are 4 four elements, Self, Other, Context and Knowledge, which when successfully Integrated - integrating is the fifth element - will help us to be effective. If we don't understand **Ourselves** and make sufficient effort to understand the **Others** in the relationship and the **Context** in which the coaching is taking place, and if we fail to take proper account of our current level of **Knowledge**, then we will not **Integrate** everything successfully.

What emerged from the recent discussion raised two new, and potentially deeper, insights to the model. We did not set out to draw **SOCK-I** as an egg timer; rather we wanted to begin thinking about what is going on within each person in the coaching relationship and how these factors are connected.



The first insight was the idea that there were two **SOCK-I** diagrams, one on top of the other, evoking something like the image of an egg timer. Each **SOCK-I** related to one person in the coaching relationship; then viewing them together added a layer of complexity and a new, additional, place for **Integration** at the centre of the Egg timer shape – the focus of the coaching relationship. So, **Integration** was taking place at two levels, or indeed in three places: one within each person in the relationship and also where they meet and Integrate their collective understanding, skills and capability.



The second insight arose from the idea to imagine that the **SOCK-I** diagram is like a gyroscope: the elements are constantly moving and rotating to maintain their balance. A coach is certainly continually responding to what is happening in any coaching conversation and within the relationship as a whole. Thinking of this as making an effort to stay in balance is quite attractive and visually appealing. This dynamic image or metaphor may help us to hold, contain and work with all the moving parts within any relationship. In relation to the **SOCK-I** diagram it means drawing on all the elements of **Self**, **Other**, **Context and Knowledge** and keeping them in harmony, moment by moment, by **Integrating** successfully.

These two new ideas spark thoughts and images that show how complex a coaching relationship might be and how we might imagine holding things together, maintaining a balance between the elements of

the **SOCK-I** diagram, between trust and challenge, between exploration and forward progress, between a variety of competing or conflicting demands and requirements.

How well when coaching do you keep things in the appropriate **balance**? How might you do so?

Book review

"Integral Life Practice - A 21st Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity and Spiritual Awakening" by Ken Wilber, Terry Patten, Adam Leonard and Marco Morelli, Integral Books, 2008

"For thousands of years, in almost all parts of the globe, human beings have engaged in **practices** to transform and balance their lives." This book goes beyond *thinking* integrally, to offer an adaptive approach to *embody* an integral worldview and put this into practice in our everyday actions and choices. The authors use the metaphor of life as a game of cards, and invite us to accept the cards we are dealt, whether we like them or not, and to play them with responsibility as well as we can: "Be willing to live the life you are given. As that acceptance takes root, you can wholeheartedly and authentically engage the unique… opportunity". We are invited to "take a direct, intentional, and intuitive look at who we are in process of becoming and to make choices that support what's emerging."

Here, for me, is a resonance with coaching - as I act as listener, witness and holder of the mirror for another's exploration and discovery - and bring my whole self in service to this role. Practice is at the heart of this book, which invites us to live for real, want to make a positive difference, care for ourselves and for others, and continually grow in awareness. Frameworks and exercises - physical, mental, ethical and spiritual - are given to assist us in our purpose. "Balancing masculine and feminine qualities appropriately… is a dynamic play. Life is a little bit like white water rafting. The art is to stay attuned to the changing needs of each moment".

December 2017

Thinking for the future

Coaching is concerned in one way or another with 'the future': reflecting and questioning with the coachee on their quest for a better future (as they hold it) through the complexity of their context. However, future thinking is different from thinking about solutions, to which most professional training is devoted. For it entails thinking purposefully and appreciatively about the *unknowable,* for which there are obviously no solutions. How could I think about the future in a way that works?

Last month I took this question to Schumacher College in Totnes for a course on *Transformative Innovation: Thinking in Three Horizons*, with Bill Sharpe and Daniel Wahl. I wanted to reflect, as much for myself as for any coachee, with fresh information and an enriched perspective. I'll attempt a pocket summary.

Three Horizons Thinking makes practical what seems contradictory and confusing when people argue conventionally about the future. This approach recognises that people have plans for today, visions for the future and ideas to take them towards it. These are essentially three different ways of thinking in common use, which can be presented as concurrent horizons of active opportunity.

In First Horizon (H1) thinking, there is a down-to-earth 'business as usual' approach to the here and now, relying largely upon 'solutions'. Here we also face very large questions which are not amenable to conventional thought (e.g. climate change, sustainable development goals, resource depletion and rubbish accretion). 'Business as usual' is facing big limitations.

Third Horizon (H3) thinking is visionary. It tackles long term qualities and values for human living and being with the planetary environment. People often want life to become truly co-creative, meaningful, nurturing and *viable* for a benign future – for their grandchildren's grandchildren. The power of H3 visions shapes new purposes, gathers energy in the present for growing new patterns for planetary living.

Explorers, innovators and entrepreneurs create Second Horizon (H2) thinking, exploiting openings of need and opportunity; a multiplicity of initiatives and enterprises that reshape current context - as H1 activities meet diminishing returns, and H3 visions yield ideas and discoveries that can take more immediate productive shape.

Working on large wall charts, we mapped out our perceptions, thoughts and ideas in each Horizon. Seeing our patterns of understanding and intention taking shape at a meta level as we worked, we could attain a fresh, insightful future outlook that none of us could see before. It was transformative to see how present dynamic patterns are behaving, and what shifts at what levels of engagement might render them more beneficial: a gateway to future consciousness.

Our insights into patterns and pattern making were striking. Learning to see life and its activities as a process of flows and forms (or structures), which create multiple diversities of interactive patterns. From this perspective, future thinking becomes an inquiry into patterns of existing and desired behaviour, and how to relax and reshape patterns towards intentional ends. Practical future thinking becomes a searching, deepening awareness of desirable and dysfunctional patterns, and wisdom for energising the former and re-patterning the latter – the patterning of hope, in fact.

Obviously, our futures are being created now out of the current patterns of activity (personal, economic, social, governmental, ecological, climatic, etc.). To have a future that we want, rather than one which merely happens, we have to become highly skilled at seeing what patterns are in action, and at re-patterning them for the better.

Patterns interconnect at every level, which brings me back to my coaching question. Now I ask, "What must I learn to do or change in the moment that can help to create the kind of future that I, my coachee and others want?"

Book review

"Three Horizons - The Patterning of Hope" by Bill Sharpe, Triarchy Press, 2013

This book seeks to help us to become more reflectively aware of our experience in order to build a widely shared practice to support transformational change in conditions of uncertainty. "Three Horizons" are identified to differentiate the managerial voice - concerned with keeping things going; the entrepreneurial voice - eager to get on with trying out new things; and the visionary voice - aspiring for and committed to an imagined better way. Whilst we can relate to these simple distinctions, from day to day we are likely to be constrained by the demands of the managerial voice, by the difficulties of finding alignment and collaboration around differently imagined futures, and by the problematic nature of navigating the necessary transitions. Often our conversations and meetings are characterised by an ineffective mix of these different perspectives.

By recognising the three horizons as distinct mindsets we can more readily explore their different values and assumptions and work through the conflicts between them. Whilst the author states that this book is not a 'how to' manual for projects, the framework offered provides a tool for collaborative discourse. Explicit use of the distinctions can assist us in working more co-operatively with emergent change. Six diverse case studies are described to show how this has been done productively in complex policy areas. Later chapters address moving from attempting to *know* our way and instead *live* our way into the future for which we hope.