Base Metal...

June 2025

Alchemy of Coaching

Introduction

Unusually for Base Metal articles, this one is a kind of lucky dip. Ray invites you to imagine the Alchemist's crucible cooled down and filled with sawdust and nature's hidden gifts. As you search here, what you find may not touch you; or perhaps will provide real value for you as a coach or for your clients. As a potential benefit, a particular ingredient or the whole piece may remind us to be aware of how different individuals are, for example in our preferences, personality, experience and learning style.

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy team**

Nature's gifts: a coaching bran tub

There's no such thing as bad weather - only inappropriate clothing I listened on the radio to a Scandinavian living in an area of the USA who was struck by the propensity of children there to stay inside whenever there was rain or snow; she was concerned by the limiting consequences for their play, their experience of the natural world, and hence their development, adaptability and resilience.
Q. What message does this have for our sense of environment, exploration, and the great outdoors?

We need mountains Speaking at the Himalayan Trust Sir Edmund Hillary Memorial Lecture (fund-raising to support schools, clinics and education in Nepal), writer and explorer Levison Wood gave an inspirational call for people throughout the world to appreciate and care for the natural environment. The theme of the event was the 80th anniversary of the first ascent of Kangchenjunga. Levison Wood's message went way beyond the challenges, thrills and ethics of mountaineering, to engage his audience in recognising that, rather than exploit our planet, we have responsibility to nurture it, and to co-operate in doing so.
Q. How in our work and wider lives can we look after our consumption of resources, wisely?

The long flight south Every autumn monarch butterflies make a 5000 kilometre flight south from Canada and the USA to the forests of central Mexico. Their numbers are declining as a result of habitat loss and the use of pesticides reducing the supply of milkweed, their only food source. Whilst WWF and others agencies are supporting reforestation and sustainable farming, the survival of the monarchs depends upon thousands of individuals helping to create and maintain a path of milkweed across North America - a shared effort working with nature.
Q. What examples come to mind of how individual action can contribute to collective positive change?

Off-road parking In residential areas, in the UK and other countries, many - in some places most - front gardens are being paved over to provide parking space for cars, resulting in significant degradation of biodiversity. A research study in an economically deprived part of northern England found that where ornamental plants were reintroduced, people's physiological and psychological stress levels were reduced. There is increasing evidence from research to show that human connection with nature is good for wellbeing.
Q. How does relationship with nature contribute to your personal state or that of your clients?

Britain in Bloom Where I live, local businesses and individual volunteers support the decoration of the town's gardens and streets with hanging baskets and floral displays. A similar voluntary scheme maintains the flower beds at the railway station. These efforts - providing, planting, tending and watering the flowers - brighten the environment and raise the spirits of residents and visitors.
Q. How does, or might, volunteering support you in your work as a coach or contribute to your clients' lives?

On becoming my grandfather In a telephone conversation with a friend today I mentioned that, as I now do less teaching, coaching and supervision work than I used to do (as with other coaches I know, our business environment has changed and clients are not as numerous as they were) I am spending much more time in my garden and very much enjoying the work and the results. My friend responded by saying "You are becoming your grandfather!" This was a great reminder to me of how, after he retired from employment, he had been my companion and guide when I was young, introducing me to the birds and plants of hedgerows and fields, the warmth and scents of greenhouse tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches and chrysanthemums, maintaining two allotments to produce vegetables year-round and passing on (some of) his many practical skills. Whilst I have much to do to emulate his achievements I realise that the gift he gave me was to love being alive and find great joy in the world of nature. This reminder raises thoughts of my own stage in life and prompts me to seize the day and do more of what I most enjoy.
Q. What did you love to do when young which can still, or once again, inform and fulfil your work and life now?

Recognising patterns and connections Everything is connected - yet we can become dislocated and isolated and lose sense of belonging or feeling that we can make a difference. Accepting the rollercoaster of living and the importance of both giving and receiving help when the going is difficult is all very well in theory and often much harder in practice. Patterns aren't always clear, the future is uncertain, and continuing to do what no longer works is too easy. Staying in touch, both with self and others, is important. That's where coaching can contribute!
Q. As a coach, what help would you like, from whom, and how will you find it?

Book review

Good Nature - The New Science of How Nature Improves Our Health, Kathy Willis, Bloomsbury, 2024 Highly informative and engaging, this account is written by the Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Oxford and former Director of Science at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Nature's Way - Designing the Life You Want through the Lens of Nature and the Five Seasons, Karyn Prentice, Ingram Content Group, 2019 Packed with practical resources for personal development.

Therapeutic Photography - Enhancing Self-esteem, Self-efficacy and Resilience, Neil Gibson, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018 Theory, practice, exercises, examples and reflections to use with clients.

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"The goal of life is living in an agreement with nature." Zeno, 335 BC (Quoted by Karyn Prentice.)

"Gardening is something that we should definitely timetable into our busy lives". Katherine Willis.

"What is the sense of magic in your life? What helps you come into awareness of your own self, awareness of others and awareness of your environment? It might be those moments when the natural world takes your breath away, or when you stop to catch the scent of a flower." Five Minutes to a Mindful You, Aster, 2019.

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Contact us We look forward to all kinds of communication for **Base Metal**... it's a forum for sharing and learning about coaching. Please do send us ideas, thoughts, suggestions or feedback.

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