Alchemy of Coaching

# Base Metal...

## March 2026

### Introduction

In common with other professions, coaching membership bodies emphasise the importance of ethical conduct. Coaches seeking accreditation or credentialling will recognise the requirement to agree to follow their respective codes of ethics and practice. In this edition of Base Metal, Ray discusses the recent publication of a Global Code of Ethics for coaching.

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### A Global Code of Ethics for coaching

Following the first world war, the League of Nations was created, yet only some twenty years later another great war occurred. Having survived WW2, my parents were involved in local action to support the newly formed United Nations - again seeking to avoid future conflicts and foster international security through co-operation. Were they alive now they would be shocked and disheartened by the circumstances in which we now find ourselves: a world in which the ensuing rule-based order - often aspirational yet more or less widely supported for over sixty years - has given way to the primacy of power. Fear of existential threats finds expression in heightened intolerance and violence. This reality came viscerally to my notice during a call this week in which a coach based in the Middle East described the terrifying effect on her sense of safety made by the sound of a missile passing her home.

In this context of increasing anxiety and jeopardy, the recent publication of a Global Code of Ethics for Coaches, Mentors and Supervisors seems both ironic and better late than never. Coaching is a self-regulated profession, in which the many coaching bodies have each sought to guide their members in what is expected of them. For some time, with international cross-boundary work becoming more and more usual, a number of these organisations have been in discussion to find common ground for ethical practice, culminating in the new Global Code - adopted by The Association for Coaching (AC), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS), and nine other bodies across the world; whilst contributing to the process, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) is not a signatory.

Codes of Practice are not enforced by law - they are sets of rules pertaining to behaviour in specific (and varied) national, legal and cultural contexts. The achievement of a common ethical framework across many countries is therefore a considerable, remarkable and welcome achievement. Each signatory organisation retains the responsibility for dealing with breaches made by their own members.

Producing a shared document to which all signatories have agreed has required some changes and accommodations: similarities between the separate extant codes have helped the process of alignment. An important consideration has been the opportunity to make the document as suitable as possible for a rapidly changing world. The principal purpose of the Global Code is to promote professional excellence.

***Q. Do you adhere to a Code of Ethics for your work as a coach/mentor/supervisor?***

In a recent AC accreditation assessor meeting we shared our thoughts about the new Global Code. What had we noticed which caught our attention?

Firstly, what we expected to find. Briefly (*please do go to the full Global Code of Ethics document for greater detail and explanation*): Each signatory body will define exactly which of its members and other stakeholders are expected to abide by the code. Such members are expected to be aware of how definitions and terminology are used by their respective body. Members will, before starting work with their client/sponsor, make the Code available to them. Members will act with integrity; observe strict confidentiality; inform clients about supervision and anonymity; set and maintain clear culturally sensitive boundaries; avoid, or openly disclose, any conflict of interest; communicate and respect termination and service cover (e.g. illness, unavailability, retirement) agreements; avoid any known discrimination and enhance their own awareness of possible areas of such; engage in self-awareness activities; stay up to date with statutory requirements and organisational policies and procedures; uphold quality standards; hold appropriate professional indemnity insurance; operate within the limits of their own competence; be fit and healthy to practice; and engage in appropriate supervision and in continuous professional development.

Secondly, what was new to us in content or emphasis? Incorporation by the AC of the AC Values: Integrity, Courage, Respect, Responsibility, Making a Difference. And explicit future orientation, as in the Executive Summary: *"The Code reflects the aspired state of professionalism and the professional core values that we strive for. Even the reference to 'global' reminds us that what we might believe from our own ethical standpoint, may not be the case in other cultures. So our Code helps us navigate the world now and in the future. This will include providing support in a changing world, where we are becoming increasingly professionalised and supported by digital technologies including data science and Artificial Intelligence (AI). And a world where we see that the 'other-than-human' world face major challenges in the current climate and biodiversity crisis, from wildfires, to floods, drought, crop failure and famine. A world where racism is still prevalent and impacting ours' and others' experiences*."

Q. ***What do you notice in the Global Code of Ethics? How will this affect your own practice?***

## Book review

In addition to leading coaching and supervision handbooks which include chapters on ethics, e.g. **"The Complete Handbook of Coaching"**, these three titles are directed specifically to this topic:

**"Coaching Ethics", Paul L. Smith, Bite Sized Coaching, 2025** (cited by EMCC)

**"Values and Ethics in Coaching", Ioanna Iordanou, Rachel Hawley et al, Sage, 2016** (reviewed in BM 08.2019)

**"Coaching in the Grey Space: Exploring Boundaries, Ethics and Complexity when Coaching and Therapy Intersect", Lauretta Greer, Routledge, 2025** (resonating with some elements of the Global code)

## Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"Ethics stays in the prefaces of the average business science book." Peter Drucker.

"Professional practice as a coach requires ongoing commitment to ethics with continuous awareness and learning in the process." Dianne Brennan and Leni Wildflower.

Let us know your response to Base Metal articles and reviews. ***We welcome guest contributors!***

**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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