

In discussing the value and technique of holding the space in coaching I aim to concentrate on Transpersonal coaching and thereafter having explored the concept then specifically focus on Transpersonal coaching for burnout and spiritual emergencies or awakenings.

The Oxford dictionary (2018) describes transpersonal as, "Denoting to states or areas of consciousness beyond the limits of personal identity".

In the context of Transpersonal Coaching the concept and practice of 'holding the space' is paramount. The value of same cannot be underestimated. It is more than an integral aspect of Transpersonal Coaching it is the underlying platform supporting the entire process.

Coaching, leadership, education and spiritual practices empower the individual to access and bring forth their greatest self but can be influenced by the power of the ego conscious conditioned mind. Transpersonal perspectives go beyond the ego conscious which is affected by past conditioning external to our true essence.

Transpersonal Coaching involves facilitating shifts in the client's perspectives by going beyond the client's normal state of consciousness. Walsh and Vaughan (1980) suggest that each state of consciousness reveals its own picture of reality, which in turn makes one's perception of reality only relatively real, therefore one's perception of reality is a reflection of one's state of consciousness. What one identifies depends largely on the state of consciousness in which the mind or self are observed. Consequently, the Transpersonal coach has the ability to help the client to change their reality and change their world.

This echoes the overarching idea in quantum theory that reality is observer created, or as it was stated by Anaïs Nin, (1961) we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are. The ultimate essence is an understanding by the client that they are in control of and are creating their world and by using transpersonal methods can identify their perfect world and create same. As Taylor 2010 citing Kant pointed out.

"Our view of reality is not the absolute truth but a vision which is relative to us and moulded by our particular kind of psyche. This is similar to what the German philosopher Kant suggested; that our awareness of reality is filtered through the structures with which we perceive it. Our mind does not just observe reality, it co-creates it."

The role of the transpersonal coach is to create and hold a safe space leading the client beyond their restricted tunnel awareness "a limited perception of oneself as separate from everyone and everything else in life, which in turn leads us to behave destructively towards ourselves, others and our environment." (Dangeli 2018, p.108)

It also involves "intuitive resonance and rapport, a participatory perspective, mindfulness, an accepting and compassionate attitude, and a shift in both practitioner and client from a narrow to an expanded state." (Dangeli, 2018, p. 42).

The coaching process can lead people to awakening and subsequent transformation by facilitating a shift in the clients perspective to overcome problems. Scharmer (2016, p.4)

describes the results of such a shift as “a heightened level of individual energy and awareness, a sustained deepening of one’s authenticity and personal presence, and a clarified sense of direction, as well as significant professional and personal accomplishments. ”

Paramount in the transformation is the shift in the clients perspective which can only be really completed by expanding their awareness and state of consciousness beyond the conditioned Ego using transpersonal methods.

A pre-requisite is that the coach have themselves experienced the transpersonal. A Transpersonal coach cannot authentically coach a client in the transpersonal without having a knowledge of the process and experiences of the transpersonal itself. Stork (2018, p.89) asserts that “we can at least agree a transpersonal approach to coaching is going to begin with the assumption that the human self is capable of states which can transcend beyond normal states of functioning and experiencing the world.” Bearing this in mind it is quite clear that the coach must have experienced themselves of transpersonal states.

I believe that the ultimate ingredient of coaching beyond which everything takes its rightful form and shape is the ability of the coach to create what is described in this essay title as ‘Holding the Space’.

More specifically, holding space in the transpersonal coaching relationship includes tuning in to establishing an open state of conscious awareness, otherwise known as open awareness Dängeli (2018). Open Awareness is a calm and receptive state of applied mindful awareness with aspects of introspective, extrospective and somatic awareness, accompanied by a sense of interconnectedness, compassion and a presence in the space-in-between (Dängeli, 2015; as cited in Dängeli 2018). Dängeli, J. (2018).

To further extrapolate from this, the ‘holding the space’ refers to what I believe to be a two-part interrelated process. The first part involves the art of creating a safe and encouraging platform for the client to feel comfortable to tread new pathways and explore aspects of themselves in open awareness from a transpersonal perspective.

Creating the space is described by Dängeli (2017, p.36) as “a liminal space that is open, receptive and emergent and that promotes transpersonal knowing” can be achieved predominantly by the coaches pure intention to present the platform to create the space.

The second part involves maintaining the safe space and open awareness, Open Awareness is a calm and receptive state of applied mindful awareness with aspects of introspective, extrospective and somatic awareness, accompanied by a sense of interconnectedness, compassion and a presence in the space-in-between (Dängeli, 2015; as cited in Dängeli 2018).

Once the space is created the second part the coaches’ ability to maintain Open Awareness for the purpose of “*Holding the Liminal Space*” in which the client’s process can unfold. (Dängeli, 2018) can be challenging and requires intuitive non-invasive action by way of probing and encouraging the client to evolve through the process unfolding in confidence

and with the reassurance of the underlying safe space already held. This is achieved as described by Dängeli, 2018), “the client through a transformative passage of questioning and expansion, while helping the client to reintegrate new, widened and resourceful perspectives into their lives” (Dängeli, 2018).

Intuition is very important and a coach who is highly intuitive can ensure that the pace of the process of unfolding for the client does not over accelerate over and above what is right for the client and does not gather a momentum that is beyond the clients ability to process.

I believe that the quality of the coaches ability to keep their own ego and personal impressions and beliefs out of the space will determine the success of the journey for the client. There can be a tendency in coaching as per the universal law of attraction for coaches to attract clients with similar challenges and experiences to themselves. The temptation is to succumb to the Ego in bringing the coaches perspectives into the coaching session thus distorting the authenticity of the clients process. Awareness of this if it occurs is as important as maintaining the Open Awareness itself for the client.

The transpersonal coach facilitates the re-programming of beliefs and behaviours to be more aligned with the clients best expression. It is vitally important that the coach does not make any pre-suppositions or recommendations but keeps the space open and allows for the client to arrive at their own conclusions. Coming to their own conclusions will ensure a greater integration of this new perspective and realisation.

Transformation in coaching occurs when the coach creates a safe space with compassion and commitment to the client. The coach then facilitates in the emergence of a shift in perspective to see the true nature of the block and to allow for a transformational move forward and beyond the challenge. The client then recognises the positive message to be learned and the small steps to take to overcome the challenge and integrate the learning towards growth.

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The coach through the law of attraction can unknown to themselves be attracting clients with similar challenges to themselves. So it is so important for the coach to continually check that they are being fully at service to the client and the clients journey and experience and not mirroring or shadowing the experience from their own psyche. I think this requires a strong commitment and intention to serve the client fully and in whatever capacity one as a coach is directed and to commit to following the direction intuitively.

When a coach feels the urge to comment or make suggestions it is imperative they ensure they check in with themselves to see are they serving the client with the comment or suggestion or their own ego based idiosyncrasies. A personal commitment on the coaches behalf to keep a sacred space open, follow intuition and allow the vast majority of the discourse to come from the client will suffice and protect from overstepping the boundary.

The essence is 'holding the space', maintaining open awareness, ensuring the focus remains on the clients perspective only and then with the coaches intuitive ability to lead for the client's greater good. "intuitive resonance and rapport, a participatory perspective, mindfulness, an accepting and compassionate attitude, and a shift in both practitioner and client from a narrow to an expanded state" (Dängeli, 2018, p.42)

In considering this in the context of Transpersonal coaching for burnout and spiritual emergencies or awakenings the value of holding the space and maintaining same is clearly evident. Modern day society is suffering hugely from stress and the symptoms of stress and the over bombardment of the information and technology age. Hochschild (1983) referred to *emotive dissonance* , which occurs when "corporate expectations and pressures contradict worker's self-conceptions and emotions...workers...experience a sense of inauthenticity, alienation, and consequently dissatisfaction and burnout" (Schaible & Gecas, 2010, p.318).

Yet burnout may very well be the catalyst for transformation and evolution as described by Taylor (2010, p.21) "Turmoil and stress can be like an earthquake, breaking down the structure of the normal self and allowing a more expansive and intense state of being to unfold."

I believe that burnout or spiritual crisis and turmoil is the after effect of ignoring the subtle messages from the inner self to the outer self to change. The importance of realising our path and best expression is highlighted by Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels, Brown (2015, p.331) citing the Bhagavad Gita "it is better to do your own duty imperfectly than to do another's perfectly."

This form of transformation is tremendously powerful because it concerns all aspects and layers of the self. "Burnout is a form of deep human suffering at every level – physical, psychological, social, spiritual – which occurs when old ways of being in the world no longer work and start to disintegrate". Wright (2005, p.1-24) The transformation then affects all aspects of the self and brings alignment into the person at multiple levels. It is also hugely rewarding leading to a total transformation of the self to its true essential nature.

"Burnout ... can be, a door to walk through into a life with space, love and joy – indeed, a sense of being able to be one's true self" (Glouberman, 2002). The importance is further endorsed by Tolle (1997) "Awareness of the inner body is consciousness remembering its origin and returning to its source". The goal of the process then is an ultimate return to wholeness for the client and the essence of the process itself is the allowingness for the layers of conditioning and past perspectives and states of consciousness to subside to make way for the newly transformed self.

The importance of establishing securing and maintaining a safe space then is very important when one considers the intensity of this type of coaching and development. “The birth of a new self can be painful and dangerous, but eventually the difficulties pass and the new self settles into a new state.” (Taylor, 2017, p.158).

The coach not only needs to continue to hold and maintain the space but also to encourage the client to traverse normal states of consciousness to eradicate past conditioning and habitual patterns to enable the newly evolved self to emerge.

It requires strength and experience on the part of the coach to continue to hold the space as the client traverses this new paradigm in their development. It often requires a number of sessions to eradicate past habitual patterns from years of conditioning. Taylor (2010, p.xv) discussing temporary awakening experiences explains “You can think of our normal consciousness as a particular kind of ‘mental structure’. In awakening experiences the structure dissolves but it usually reforms itself soon afterwards”. “An awakened person may have preestablished behavioural traits that carry over into their new state and may take a long time to fade away (or may never fade away completely)” (Taylor, 2017, p.175). The coach facilitates the client to initially feel safe and supported in the space to allow the growth and transformation to occur and then thereafter continues to support to override past conditioning aspects and perspectives of the self no longer serving the client.

In summary, holding the space is fundamental and imperative without which the process cannot progress. Thereafter, the process involves maintaining the space and encouraging the clients progression in the fullness of support and in the absence of Ego to establish new states of consciousness and perspectives which serve the client in their development.

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