



The Five Maturities: A New Paradigm for Coach Development

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Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you
know nothing about. Be kind. Always.

Robin Williams

NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

This report has been a labor of love for the past year, written during a challenging yet liberating journey with Long COVID. It is the culmination of 25 years spent working to advance the field and the practice of coaching. I appreciated the early support from the Institute of Coaching. It has been an honor to be one of their Thought Leaders, and I fondly recall the game-changing experiential workshop on *Moments of Meeting* I led at their conference in 2016.

This report will become a short book as part of our new series. For now, I want to make this work as widely available as possible for all those seeking a new way forward for coaching. It has been amazing to see its impact already in the packed rooms at the 2024 IoC Healthcare & Leadership Conference and the largest turn-out ever for an event hosted by The Moment Institute.

This report is a rich resource. Notice what you are drawn to. Pace yourself. Use the *Reflections* pages to take notes for yourself as you read it. My deep hope is that it will inspire you to reflect in new ways on your journey as a coach and to start or join in the conversations we need right now.

You are welcome to excerpt from this report using standard academic protocols in publications which benefit the field. I encourage you to share pieces that are meaningful for you with others, while honoring the integrity of the copyright as noted on each page.

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Thank you for your time and consideration. Blessings to you wherever you are. May this report inspire you to contribute to a more awakened, humane, and sustainable world through coaching.

Kind regards,
David

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The author

Notes from the author

Acknowledgements

Introduction	9
1. Why are competencies not enough?	15
Addressing the challenges with competency models	
Aligning efforts and evidence	
Introducing a new paradigm	
2. What does coaching need instead?	25
Starting from a new pedagogy	
Understanding the path to mastery	
Understanding the role of maturity	
3. What are the Three Pillars of the new paradigm?	33
Introducing the iBEAM model	
Introducing The Five Masteries	
Introducing The Five Maturities	
4. How can we use The Five Maturities?	43
Using The Five Maturities Framework in coaching	
Expanding our knowledge as coaches	
Using The Five Maturities Matrix in coaching	
5. Where do we go from here?	57
Reimagining the development of coaches	
Introducing initiation and rites of passage	
Proposing a new future for coaches and coaching	
Conclusion	69
Summarizing the new paradigm	
Proposing a new taxonomy for coaching	
Inviting you to get involved	
References	80

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1.	Aligning our efforts with the evidence	20
Figure 2.	A view of coaching as a value chain	25
Figure 3.	A comparison of investments versus outcome	26
Figure 4.	The five iBEAM factors	35
Figure 5.	The foundations for a new coaching paradigm	39
Figure 6.	The Five Maturities Framework as used in coaching	46
Figure 7.	The Integrative Window	50
Figure 8.	The Five Maturities Matrix	52
Figure 9.	A proposed taxonomy for coaching	72
Table 1.	The dimensions and factors of iBEAM	34
Table 2.	Sample questions to ask yourself using the three pillars	47
Table 3.	Example of a coach using the Five Maturities Framework	48
Table 4.	Example of using The Five Maturities in mentoring a coach	53

INTRODUCTION

The [American] Dust Bowl occurred because people had been telling themselves the wrong story and had tried to inscribe that story — the frontier — on a landscape incapable of supporting it. The environmental rhythms of the Plains ecosystem were cyclical, with good years and bad years following each other like waves on a beach. The problem of human settlement in the region was that people insisted on imposing their linear notions of progress on this cyclical pattern.

William Cronon

This report was prompted, in part, by a recent paper on team coaching competencies in which the authors wrote, “In the absence of an agreed framework, we are of the view that Drake’s (2009c) framework of coach mastery, while offered as a framework for one-to-one coaching, offers a useful lens through which to consider a framework for team coaching competencies” (Widdowson, Rochester, Barbour, & Hullinger, 2020, p. 40). I realized it was time to update the framework in line with what coaches need now. This is timely as the world we live in now is not the world in which coaching was born. The world that is emerging is not a world for which coaching, as we know it, is adequately prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities before us.

Coaching is now globally recognized as an essential skillset; many more people now call themselves a coach or use coaching in their role; and the breadth of the demands on coaches has grown significantly. At the same time, there is an increased sense that neither our approach to developing coaches nor coaching itself have kept pace. For example, plenty of questionable yet normative assumptions still dominate the discourse in coaching (e.g., “agendas and goals must be set”; “coaches don’t talk about the past”; and “coaching is not therapy”). They are largely based in assumptions which ignore contextuality, reduce coaching to a uniform process, and seek to homogenize coaching behaviors (Jacobs, Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2014).

However, most of these assumptions don’t reflect how experienced coaches think and work. They served a purpose as coaching took off, but I would argue they now hold us back. This report offers a way forward in keeping with both current realities and the evidence — both of which are calling for change. This is important because in the absence of defining and pursuing what we need, the market will do it for us. To move forward will require both humility and audacity in recognition that “identifying, assessing and developing the professional qualities of practitioners involved in complex professions such as coaching is a difficult process” (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015).

To address these issues, this report connects the affiliated and non-affiliated, the traditionalists and hybridists, the scholars and practitioners, and the founding generation with the newer generations. It calls for collaborative dialogue and decisions around how to proactively shape the future of this large, diverse, and vital eco-system called ‘coaching’. It offers ‘pylons’ for the bridges we will need to build and then cross in finding our way to a new future for coaching and the new forms that will emerge beyond coaching.

Focus of the report

Coaching remains a complex and loosely bounded space that struggles to break free of some of its historical and political baggage. A key challenge has been the unquestioned claims to social standing for coaches (and coaching itself) in the marketplace and the presumption of autonomy without the requisite level of self-regulation of entry, training and practice in this space (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016). While having its proverbial cake and eating it too has enabled coaching to advance rapidly, the internal and external challenges it now faces call for a collective maturation to address the crowds gathering under the umbrella called ‘coaching’.

One could argue that coaching is at a critical juncture in its evolution. For now, it feels important to map the landscape and pose some essential questions. This will enable us to move beyond the current situation in which coaches are torn between the unfettered autonomy of the ‘Wild West’ (Sherman & Freas, 2004) and the fettered hegemony of the ‘forts’. To do so, we need strategies which offer pathways to a more mature ecosystem. This includes acknowledging coaching’s place in a long line of psychosocial scholars and practitioners on whose shoulders we stand, while at the same time taking seriously the duty of care to define the next steps in our own evolution.

This report is designed to spark deeper dialogues among stakeholders in coaching, both those at its core and those around its edges who are seeking a new way forward.

While the evidence seems clear that changes are needed, the challenge will be to navigate the historical, political, cultural, and commercial pressures involved in bringing about change. Achieving this vision will require open and robust dialogues between coaching associations, educators, providers, practitioners, scholars, buyers, users, and increasingly technologists. Every stakeholder would benefit from a clearer pathway, stronger scaffolding, and more advanced guidance for coaching in their context. Success in meeting these needs will require a collective strategy and a willingness to change in serving a diverse set of educators, practitioners, and users.

To cross the threshold into what is next will require us to address three challenges in how coaching is conceptualized, learned, and delivered. To meet these challenges, we need to bridge the gap between coaches’ formal training and inherited assumptions on one hand and the demands of coaches’ everyday practice and the world on the other (Raimy, 1950). It feels urgent because both ends of the gap are changing rapidly — placing an unprecedented pressure on practitioners to adapt in the face of greater uncertainty and higher stakes for our well-being, livelihoods, and planet.

Challenge 1: Making clearer distinctions about key terms

I have long suggested that coaching is unique in that it emerged from the marketplace rather than the academy (Drake & Stober, 2005). As a result, it lacks the requisite definitions and hierarchies, unified knowledge base and foundational theories, and best practices and strong evidential discipline as is found in established domains such as medicine. There is a significant difference between knowing enough about medicine to offer basic first aid versus knowing enough to perform

open heart surgery. This is in sharp contrast to coaching where anyone can call themselves a coach and there is little agreement as to what makes a ‘good coach’ (Jacobs et al., 2014).

Making clearer distinctions about who and what is a coach as well as what is coaching and what is beyond coaching will enable practitioners to identify themselves and progress with more clarity and confidence. This will require a new vocabulary and explorations of questions such as: (1) Is ‘coaching’ still the right word for what many of us do?; (2) How will we differentiate between informal *and* formal coaching, coaching as an occupation *and* coaching as an orientation, between coaching *and* related established professions?; (3) How do we sort the confusion in the market between accreditation, certification, validation, etc.

**The aim is to develop practitioners who can
make choices in real time that reflect the
best of what masterful coaching offers and
meet the highest needs of those we serve.**

Challenge 2: Developing a clearer vision for the future

There is a lack of clarity and cohesion around the discernment of where coaching should go from here, how these decisions should be made, and how we will get there. Given the number of professional associations and programs — each with constituencies and sunk costs — it is hard to see the path forward. Rising to this challenge will require a greater consensus around how we can be of the highest service to the world we are in now and to the world we want. This will require leadership from associations, graduate coaching programs, influential coaching schools, and advanced coaches (in terms of mastery, not position or profile) (Drake, 2011b).

For these and many other reasons, coaching would benefit from a clearer sense of what it is seeking to become and what distinctions will be required as a result. It will be fascinating to see from where and how these decisions arise as we address vital questions such as:

- How can coaching help us to address the larger issues we face as a society and a species? How do coaching and coaches need to adapt to make that possible?
- What is the consensus on foundations, boundaries, and measures? How can coaching be distinct *and* inclusive, locally adaptive *and* universally recognizable?
- What role do we want digital technologies to play in coaching? How can we deepen our humanity and adapt our vision for coaching at the same time?

Challenge 3: Upgrading the development of coaches

There is insufficient cross-fertilization between practitioners, educators and researchers as well as between science, with its proclivity to be generalized in the ways questions are framed and answered, and practice, with its proclivity to be localized in the ways solutions are crafted and applied (Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998). As a result, there are insufficient ties between what we know about development and change and how coaches make decisions in coaching, reflect on their coaching, and seek to improve their coaching (Drake, 2008; S. C. Hayes, Barlow, & Nelson-Gray, 1999; Kraiger, 2002).

There is also not enough in place to help coaches integrate ‘evidence-based practices’ and ‘practice-based evidence’ (Orlinsky, 2007; Rycroft-Malone et al., 2004) to enrich who they are and what they do. This issue is compounded by the fact that each context for and application of coaching has its own demands, priorities, and objectives. This often results in a lack of fit between how coaches are educated and assessed and what coaches are confronted with and asked to do in coaching sessions (Saury & Durand, 1998). As such, there is a need to create a more robust ecosystem for coaching that supports greater maturation and mastery for all involved.

Purpose of the report

Coaching is positioned here as a dynamic, multi-dimensional process rather than as a fixed dyadic encounter. As a result, it calls for frameworks for developing coaches that are more aligned with the evidence about what makes the most difference in developing practitioners and contributing to client outcomes. It shifts the focus in coach development from *content* and *coaches* to include *context* and *clients*, and it raises the bar for all coaches in the process. It calls for new thinking and new approaches to mastery as well as a greater emphasis on maturity— on *who* the coach *is*, not just *what* the coach *does*. It advocates for prioritizing the growth of the client in the coaching process so that more weight is given to what actually makes the most difference in the end.

While the resources in this report can be used for both assessment and development, my focus is on liberating coaches to develop themselves and their role in new ways. This report takes us beyond competency models to offer a new path forward for coaches and coaching itself. It is designed as a series of invitations not a litany of declarations. The aim is to develop practitioners who can make choices in real time as sessions unfold that reflect the best of what masterful coaching offers and meet the highest needs of those they serve. This report is designed to spark deeper dialogues among key stakeholders, both those at its core and those around its edges who are seeking a new way forward. **This moment is our curriculum.**

It is important to acknowledge as you read this report that there is no royal ‘we’ to turn to (though some players have more reach). *Change will need to emerge from many places. In the end, it is less about whether or not you agree with everything that is written here — and more about what it sparks in you in thinking about your work and growth.* As you read the report, notice, and celebrate elements that you are already using in your practice. Notice what provokes you and see what is to be revealed there. Notice what is calling you — whether it is deepening your work as a coach, using coaching to transform your medical practice, or traveling with others to see what is beyond coaching.





**Each person carries her own healer inside her.
We are at our best when we give the healer who
resides within each person a chance to work and
can meet them there as a wounded healer.**

Albert Schweitzer, MD (paraphrased)

CHAPTER 1: WHY ARE COMPETENCIES NOT ENOUGH?

Rather than teaching a sense of awe, our universities [and professions] teach the very opposite: counting and measuring over delight, sobriety over enchantment, a rigid hold on scattered individual parts over an affinity for the unified and whole.

Herman Hesse

My initial publications on coach development (Drake, 2007b, 2008, 2009a, 2009c, 2011a, 2011b, 2014) were informed by a review of the related literature, qualitative research with experienced coaches at an ICF Coaching Research Conference, conversations with key colleagues around the world, and insights from teaching narrative coaching to thousands of practitioners, teams, and leaders. They were written as coaching was seeking greater legitimacy by positioning itself as an evidence-based practice along the lines of psychotherapy and medicine. While there has been some progress in fulfilling that vision, there is still a long way to go in connecting research and practice to (1) develop better coaches; (2) a better understanding of the coaching process; (3) and a greater reach and outcomes from coaching itself.

For example, there is an inverse relationship between what is often talked about in coaching spaces (coaches & methods) and what research suggested makes the most difference in coaching outcomes (clients & relationships). This gap is perpetuated through an unfortunate over-reliance on competency models, with their focus on the former rather than the latter (Cavanagh & Lane, 2012; Cox, 2003; Drake, 2009b; Garvey, 2011). As Bachkirova and Smith (2015) suggest, a “reliance on competency frameworks oversimplifies coaching practice and expertise and stultifies more creative solutions” (p. 218). Competency models cannot specify all that is required to be effective in a complex professional role such as that of a coach and end up decreasing effectiveness and limiting the growth of individual practitioners.

This report offers a new way forward which includes yet transcends the use of competency models in offering a new paradigm that is both more holistic and more effective. In doing so, it invites coaches, coach educators and coaching bodies to insights on the need to (1) properly induct novices and ensure duty of care in an era of diminishing coherence in the industry; (2) provide continuous development for practitioners who work across disciplines and networks; and (3) determine ethics and standards in light of multiple stakeholders and increasing inter-connectedness (Drake, 2014). In this chapter, we will identify challenges with competency models; explore how to better align our efforts with the evidence; and introduce a new paradigm for coaching and coaches.

A competency model cannot specify all that is required to be effective in a complex professional role such as that of a coach.

Addressing the challenges with competency models

My first jobs as a young person were in restaurants, including training waiters at a landmark dinner house. What I soon realized in watching those who excelled in the role was that it was not their skills in each area that set them apart as much as their ability to move between them with ease while under pressure. They could mentally track the status of their orders, personally interact with each customer, and professionally optimize revenues and tips — all at the same time. Coaches face the same complexities and more. This is why it makes more sense to develop coaches as a whole, not one competency at a time. Plus, as coaches progress beyond a certain point, they need a greater maturity to be able to use their competencies at a higher level and with more agility.

Competencies

Richard Boyatzis (1982) defined a competency as “a set of functionally related skills (i.e., behaviors) organized around an underlying intent that produces effective performance.” Rychan & Salganik (2003) described competencies as the abilities, dispositions or resources embedded in an individual. However, in coaching, competencies are often conflated with job tasks and perpetuate the focus on the coach in isolation. A more holistic approach to coach development would distinguish, for example, between inquiry as a *job task*, asking open-ended questions as a *competency*, and astutely adapting questions to match client readiness as a *capability*.

Competencies are not inherently a bad thing in coaching. They typically are behaviors we would expect to see (Lawrence, 2022), and they offer usable guides for those starting out. They serve what Petriglieri & Peshkam (2022) describe as *instrumental purposes for learning* designed to foster *incorporation* — hence their value for those starting out. As Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) noted, they are useful in:

- defining the gateway for entry and a track for novices to follow
- acquiring the requisite knowledge, vocabulary, and tools
- acquiring the requisite processes, skills, and behaviors
- adopting a recognized and shared identity
- defining and measuring foundational behaviors
- assuring there are basic safeguards

At the same time, competencies tend to reflect an over-simplified view of the coaching process that is often based in business models more than development models (Nadeem, Garvey, & Down, 2021) and questionable assumptions such as: (1) competencies are a sufficient measure across all skill levels; (2) they can be universally applied; (3) they are suitable indicators of mastery or efficacy; and (4) we can easily differentiate between coaches on the basis of their compliance with standardized competencies. Even well-intended lists of competencies often bear little relation to the actual, let alone desired, decision-making processes in coaching (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015; Gambrill, 2007) — particularly in more advanced coaches. As a result, this one-size-fits-all approach doesn't fit very well at all with the realities in which coaches work.

Competency models

It is important to acknowledge that the identification of coaching competencies, mostly by the large associations, has thus far been foundational in understanding what to teach coaches and how to evaluate their proficiency. At the same time, many of these competencies seem less useful for assessing and developing people at more advanced levels, particularly in terms of their ‘use of self’. While it is possible to deconstruct excellence into observable components, it is less possible to reconstruct excellence from these components (Drake, 2011b). It is time to move beyond what Paulo Freire (1970) called the ‘banking method’ in which knowledge is ‘deposited’ into practitioners with the assumption that they will be able to ‘withdraw’ it for use in real time.

Competency models are sets of competencies deemed essential and comprehensive for a given level of practice. Unfortunately, in coaching they are often framed in generalized and idealized absolutes and, as a result, they don’t consider context, prioritize what the client needs, or reflect the hybrid roles experienced coaches play. Coaching is an adaptive process in which coaches are accounting for a range of variables and, as such, a fixed set of competencies seems counter-productive. We are each unique; come to coaching from different backgrounds; and interact with different clients, in different contexts, and for different purposes. Why then do we believe that a generic competency framework could cover it all?

An attachment to competency models in coaching also reflects an allegiance to the medical model that privileges the coach as an expert, frames client concerns as problems to be solved, and ordains which competencies are required (Bohart & Tallman, 2010). Competency models are based in a modernist view favoring linearity, hierarchy, controllability, measurability, and predictability (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015; Garvey, 2016; House, 2011). They fail to account for the skills acquired outside of coaching which they bring to their coaching. These biases are out of sync with the emergent process of coaching and its advocacy for clients’ self-authorship and self-agency.

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This is why many have challenged the assumption that assimilating a theoretical understanding of concepts or a repertoire of competencies sufficiently enables practitioners to take appropriate and effective action in the complex situations often encountered in coaching (see Bachkirova, Jackson, Gannon, Iordanou, & Myers, 2017; Cavanagh & Lane, 2012). In addition, there is little evidence that coaches accredited at the highest level in competency-based systems are inherently more effective. As Clutterbuck and Megginson (2010) wrote, “Having a certificate or diploma is at best a hygiene factor, indicating that the coach has undergone some form of training in the role. Systems for individual accreditation largely show that the coach is good enough, rather than how far on a personal journey they have travelled” (p. 5).

Competency frameworks reinforce the status quo and those who benefit from them, more than they provide meaningful guidance for practitioners seeking to mature and advance their practice. This is compounded by the fact that assessment and certification are often done by the same body in a closed loop. In addition, there are seldom comparisons made with experienced coaches who are not in these systems to determine what makes a masterful coach and how to make that determination. Overall, there is often too much rigidity in competency systems based in on a belief that there exists ‘a true way of coaching’. This limits coaches’ ability to customize their journey and to work with what emerges in coaching. (Paquette, Hussain, Trudel, & Camiré, 2014).

Competencies will get a practitioner to ‘good’. The further a coach goes beyond that stage, the less useful competency frameworks become in supporting growth or performance. If coaches want to go beyond ‘good’ to ‘great’, they need to walk the longer road to mastery. This requires that we study masters, not continue with our attempts to scale novices. The need to do so has been heightened by the rise of technologies such as AI in the coaching space. How can we critically think about its role in coaching and coach development and rise to the occasion by deepening our maturity and our humanity?

Additional challenges with competency models

- The competency models promoted by coaching bodies have been endorsed “without reference to the serious debate on the consequences of adopting this approach to selecting, training and assessing fitness to practice” (Lane, 2016, p. 650).
- Competency models do not include every aspect that is critical to superior performance in coaching, and some argue that superior performance can also be achieved with a different set of competencies (T. L. Hayes, Oltman, Kaylor, & Belgudri, 2020).
- Competencies are useful markers for novices, beyond which they tend to promote conformity with external demands rather than promote the maturity required for better internal decisions as a prerequisite for growth (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015).
- Competencies are based in a reductionist philosophy that orient coaches to focus on the task in front of them rather than developing the critical thinking necessary for reflection and improvisation (Foss, Janken, Langford, & Patton, 2004).
- There is no universal agreement about which competencies should be included or any competency’s value in coaching, especially when issued as blanket statements.
- Having the same competencies for all types of coaches and coaching is contrary to mature professions.
- Competencies are often modeled on behaviors that were successful in the past rather than addressing what is needed for the future. This reinforces current hegemonies instead of opening up new possibilities. (Granstrand, 1997).
- Competencies do not account for the relational nature of coaching, the shared meaning making between practitioners and clients, the emergent nature of conversations, the role of the client in the process, or the influence of contextual narratives and demands.

Many coaches seeking certification through associations report the same experience: (1) They coach all week in ways that suit them and their clients; (2) they contort themselves and their coaching to temporarily satisfy the rigid requirements of the testing process; and (3) they go back to how they were coaching before. As a result, they get feedback relative to their compliance with the assessment expectations not their actual capability or impact as a client. This is a loss for them, their clients, and coaching as a whole. To move forward personally and collectively, coaches should be able to perform at their most conscious, authentic, and informed selves when they are being assessed rather than having to tick the boxes that others are looking for.

This report offers a new paradigm that addresses these concerns and more, in large part by learning from those who excel at coaching but do so outside of dominant competency models. Significant steps in this direction would include: (1) developing more integrative measures; (2) valuing maturity and the whole person; (3) recognizing there are many effective ways to coach depending on the circumstances; and (4) undoing or at least making more transparent the co-mingling of membership, certification, and revenue models in coaching. This would enable us to develop a better understanding of how great coaches develop and perform at higher levels as well as use these findings to upgrade coach development and coaching itself. More broadly, relying on competency models in fast-moving environments like ours limits inquisitiveness and innovation, resulting in greater risk aversion at a time when new thinking about coaching is vital.

**In the end, the whole is no more equal
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In the end, the whole is no more equal to the sum of the parts in coaching than having a pantry of great ingredients and a recipe equals a great dinner. “The magic is in the artistry of the chef in relation to their knowledge and skills, the food, and the diners — just like it is with the artistry of the coach in relation with their knowledge and skills, the conversation, and the client” (Drake, 2011b, pp. 139-140). This requires a shift in emphasis from competencies to capabilities (and beyond) as a more accurate and useful assessment of coaches in terms of who they are, what they can do, and best to support their development (see table in Bachkirova & Smith, 2015, p. 132). This also requires a shift in how practitioners coach so as to be more aligned with the evidence.

Aligning efforts and evidence

Competency models are based in a transactional approach to evidence and practice. Coaching would be better served if we thought of evidence in a more systemic fashion — working at the intersection of research *and* wisdom, roles *and* realities, behaviors *and* outcomes. This can be seen in the following chart which illustrates the mismatch between what often gets the most attention in coaching (column 1) and what the research consistently suggests makes the most difference for clients and their outcomes (column 2). This report’s aim is to offer scaffolding for individual and collective efforts to better align our efforts with the evidence around what works.

Order of attention in this space	Order of variance in outcomes
1. Method (brand)	Client
2. Coach	Relationship
3. Relationship	Coach
4. Client	Method (brand)

Figure 1. Aligning our efforts with the evidence

A client’s readiness, willingness, and ability to act in sessions and after sessions is the most critical variable in coaching. This is backed up by decades of research in psychotherapy, for example: Orlinsky & Howard’s (1986) classic review of 1,100 outcome studies identified five factors related to successful outcomes from therapy, *all of which were connected to the client and/or the working relationship*: (1) the therapeutic contract; (2) the therapeutic bond with the client; (3) the active role of the client; (4) the openness of the client, and (5) the willingness of the client to do the work. The bond with the therapist was more important than the interventions, and the client and factors in the client's life accounted for more variance in therapeutic outcome than any other factor.

While this evidence is drawn from the field of psychotherapy given its longer tenure and history with research, I would posit that the difference between the two columns is likely starker in coaching. This is also why coach training programs should not be measured by satisfaction with the program, but rather by performance afterward in real-world settings (Druckman & Bjork, 1991). It underscores the need for better ways to integrate the evidence and recommendations from feedback and research into coaching practice (and vice-versa) in support of better outcomes and better coaches. “Practitioner and academic research are . . . of equal value to the coaching community and its developing body of knowledge (Global Coaching Community, 2008, pp. 9-10).

To support this process and the evolution of coaching overall, there is a growing recognition of the need to establish an evidentiary canon for the field in regards to: what works; how it works; why it works; how well it works; how we know it works; when and with whom it works; and what might work better (Drake, 2008). Coaches need to be able to answer questions like: (1) How do I currently use the evidence to guide me in my practice?; (2) What would I *actually* do differently with more and better evidence?; (3) What evidence would I need to be more effective and wise in my practice?; and (4) What evidence do I contribute to the collective for the good of the whole? (Drake, 2008). A healthier relationship with evidence is an important element in the new paradigm.

A client’s readiness, willingness, and ability to act is the most critical variable in coaching.

Introducing a new paradigm

We can more readily answer these questions if we're using a paradigm that transcends competency models and we think in new ways about knowledge, evidence and practice given the fact that:

- the contexts in which we live and work are changing faster than any of us can manage with our familiar ways of thinking, learning and operating;
- knowledge and 'evidence' is only a few keystrokes away, and it is accumulating faster than we can track or integrate into our practice;
- the expertise that coaches need is increasingly embedded in distributed technologies and the shared narratives of multiple professional communities; and
- coaching continues to expand its reach and applications, leading to a dilution of the term and difficulties in supporting a coherent evolution (Drake, 2011b).

To start, it is important to recognize that knowledge and evidence are not isolated facts, but rather they are part of living systems with competing narratives, e.g., definitions of 'success' among stakeholders. Mastery in the new paradigm requires a deeper, more reflexive relationship with knowledge and evidence as they are applied in one's practice (Drake, 2011b). The Five Maturities Framework was designed for this purpose and to address the tensions between the needs of: (1) those providing coaching; (2) those seeking their assistance; (3) those representing the industry and their claims of authority; and (4) the communities and cultures in which coaches work.

**The focus in development should not just be
on the results that coaches achieve, but also
on their ability to make conscious choices
in real time in coaching (Sen, 1999).**

Being in integrity — with ourselves, our clients, our agreements, and our work — is central to the new paradigm and to the maturation and mastery of coaches. This is echoed in Bachkirova's (2016) focus on "developing the coach as an instrument of practice; increasing reflexivity and criticality; developing congruence between self and practice; and the development of ethical maturity" (p. 37). Each one informs the others. As such, it is important to equip coaches to clarify and articulate their philosophies and formulations (why they do what they do) as well as be clear about who they are accountable too and for what.

The focus in development should not just be on the results that coaches achieve (mastery), but also on their ability to make conscious choices in real time (maturity) (Sen, 1999). It highlights the need to account for the role of people being coached, the unpredictable nature of the coaching relationship, and the context of the coaching engagement (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015). Therefore, coaches and those who support their development need to recognize where coaches are on their learning journey — and support them accordingly (Nash, Ashford, & Collins, 2023). A new paradigm would enable those who coach to make choices that are more authentic, conscious, and evidence-based (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003).



Reflections

Key Points

- There is often an inverse relationship between what is talked most about in coaching spaces (coaches and methods) and what research suggested makes the most difference in coaching outcomes (clients and relationships).
 - Even well-intended lists of competencies often bear little relation to the actual, let alone desired, decision-making processes in coaching.
 - Competencies will get a practitioner to ‘good’. The further a coach goes beyond that stage, the less useful competency frameworks become in supporting growth or performance.
 - Coaches should be able to perform at their most conscious, authentic, and informed selves when they are being assessed rather than having to tick the boxes that others are looking for.
-

Three questions to consider as you reflect on this chapter:

1. What stood out for you?

2. What is the core insight or message for you?

3. What might you do with that insight or message to move the conversation forward?

Situations that were once antithetical to our meditation now become our meditation. Obstacles that previously obstructed our path now become our path. That means that everything becomes our meditation.

Andrew Holecek



CHAPTER 2: WHAT DOES COACHING NEED INSTEAD?

Each person carries their own healer inside them. We are at our best when we give the healer who resides within them a chance to work.

inspired by Albert Schweitzer, MD

This chapter sets the stage for what is to come: a new approach to developing coaches that is more in keeping with where the industry and the world are now. It starts with the foundation in a more generative pedagogy, building on the work of applied philosopher and educator John Dewey. From there, we will explore the path to mastery and the vital role of maturity in developing practitioners. Along the way, we will make connections between philosophy, pedagogy, and practicality as scaffolding for the future of coaching. Starting from a new pedagogy is the foundation for enhancing maturity and mastery because there is a reciprocal relationship between how we develop coaches and what we believe about coaching.

Starting from a new pedagogy

The aim is to support the development of coaches with higher levels of consciousness in an increasingly complex world. This calls on us to question our underlying pedagogies (how we learn) and epistemologies (how we know) in support of ‘intelligent action’ so we can constantly adapt as we show up in the moment (Pring, 2007). This feels essential in coaching as “a radically unpredictable, almost iterative process in which the next step is informed, in large part by the conditions immediately preceding it” (Lane & Corrie, 2006, p. 155). It starts with how we think about coaching and, as a result, how we structure its delivery and position ourselves as coaches.

I developed the following chart (*figure 2*) in working with organizations seeking a more systemic and effective approach to their investments in coaching. It helps us see why we need to re-align our approach to coaching to more closely with makes a difference. This will increasingly involve a dynamic alignment between humans and technologies in terms of what each can best offer.

Phase in coaching cycle	Investment	Benefit
1. Pre-session: Inform coaching	Medium	Low
2. In-session: Do coaching	High	Medium
3. Post-session: Leverage coaching	Low	High

Figure 2. A view of coaching as a value chain

This chart points to the frequent disconnect between how coaching engagements are structured and funded (with the dominant focus on the session itself) and what primarily contributes to growth and outcomes (priming, scaffolding, and intentional practice post-session). It invites us to see coaching not as an episodic transaction but as an ecologic process. This matches research by Goldsmith and Holman (2005) who studied outcomes from management development programs (cited in Zenger & Folkman, 2009). They looked at the average investments versus the average contributions to the value of the learning process:

Phase 1: (before learning event) — allocated **10%** of funding, contributed **26%** of value
Phase 2: (learning event) — allocated **85%** of funding, contributed only **24%** of value
Phase 3: (after learning event) — allocated **5%** of funding, contributed **50%** of value

Figure 3. A comparison of investments versus outcomes

This research echoes the graphic on coaching as a value chain (figure 2) in calling out the mismatch between how we invest in and approach learning and development *and* what makes the most difference in the end. In both cases, a content-based paradigm and industrial-age pedagogy are most often even though they generally have a poor return on value. I believe that one of the gifts of this new paradigm for coaching is the focus on empowering clients to direct their own learning & development and supporting them how and when they need it most. We know in our heart of hearts that the old ways are not as effective as they could be. Perhaps this report will give us the courage and resources we need to chart a new course (no pun intended).

One of the benefits of shifting to an ecosystem-based paradigm is that investments become aligned with their contribution to desired growth and outcomes. This leads to shifts in how coaching is delivered and coaches are developed, especially in prioritizing what clients do *after* sessions because that is where much of the value is found in the end. For example, I've found good results from shorter sessions followed by brief experiments, immediate feedback, focused reflection, and simple next steps. I believe that technology can help us here by resourcing coaches and clients in preparing for coaching and leveraging what emerges from coaching.

**There is a reciprocal relationship between how we
develop coaches and what we believe about coaching.**

This report celebrates these pedagogical shifts and their implications for our practices. It offers resources for coaches and coach educators ready to change. Its recommendations start from a new paradigm for coaching and a new pedagogy for developing coaches who can work this way. I am using the resources in this report myself to design the new learning community at The Moment Institute and to co-design the new Ovida Labs (ovida.io) to use AI to accelerate the growth of coaches. While the technologies are new, the foundations of this pedagogy have been around for over a century through early pioneers such as William James, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey.

Even though he was writing a century ago, Dewey advocated for many of the propositions in this report:

- Connect their experience and knowledge, their intrinsic motivations and extrinsic demands, and their present needs and future aspirations.
- Think of curriculum as a spiral, revisiting the same key ideas and information but at a higher level of representation and integration — even while recognizing that each step ‘prepares for’ the next without knowing outcome in advance.
- Focus less on pre-determined outcomes of learning and more on the process of growth in supporting learners as living organisms in a reciprocal relationship with their environment.
- Growth depends upon overcoming difficulty in the child's present experience that is nearly within his/her capacity to solve (with the minimal viable scaffolding).

(Garworth, 1966; Pring, 2007)

Understanding the path to mastery

While there is much here that can be used to improve our approaches to assessment, its higher purpose is to offer a more robust framework for coaches to use in developing themselves. It positions mastery as a fuller incarnation not as a definitive destination. It has more to do with presence than perfection. Bachkirova & Lawton Smith (2015) argued that “mastery transcends rules and modifies existing knowledge according to the master’s own organisation of experience and his or her own self” (p. 128). This is why development is as much about mastering oneself (and often starts there) as it is about mastering skills.

As a student of mine put it, “*Now that I know I am good enough to be certified, how do I develop my own style, my own depth to be with my clients . . . and a pathway to mastery that is both collectively acknowledged and personally aligned?*”¹ With that said, it is important to reiterate that this report is not intended to declare a singular definition of ‘mastery’ in coaching — or that there is even the possibility of one — let alone that there is one path to get ‘there’. Its purpose is to offer resources for coaches to develop themselves so they can wisely use what they know from the research and their experience to be at their best more often when they are coaching.

Masterful practitioners are less tied to explicit rules, standard processes, contextual cues and, as such, they can act effectively yet with less effort.

¹ Personal communication, B. Brummel, April 1, 2023

While there is no universal profile of a ‘master’, many of the characteristics identified by Holyoak (1992) and King (2009) are summarized here:

- increasing self-awareness; a quiet self-confidence; comfort and humility that allows them to be open to experiences and information;
- more realistic expectations for themselves and their clients; a more comprehensive and deeper knowledge base which enables them to distinguish the critical and relevant information and engage in effective action;
- a superior procedural knowledge, which involves knowing what to do when; a pragmatic and eclectic approach; and
- a way of thinking and acting strategically, based on an awareness of motives, needs, resources and contextual constraints; understanding of how to tailor interactions, recommendations and actions to meet clients’ priorities (Drake, 2011b).

Mastery is a fuller incarnation not a definitive destination. It has more to do with presence than perfection.

Novices start the journey of mastery by developing plans-as-resource to use as scaffolding for the new skills they need. Advancing their mastery involves a shift to a plan-as-interactively-emergent-organization-of-activity approach (Hendrix-Jansen, 1996). The farther a coach is on that journey, the more they will draw on the latter. Their progression is marked by an increased ability to move beyond the explicit to also work with the implicit. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) described it as the progression from *novice* to *advanced beginner* to *competent* to *proficient* to *expert*. An expert is a practitioner who can effectively apply what they know well. They (2008) later added *mastery* as a sixth level marked by perspective shifting to distinguish it from the *expert* level.

Contrary to the way the term ‘master’ is loosely yet widely applied in coaching, true masters in any field are actually rare. Mastery is available to “strongly motivated experts who not only have exceptional natural talent but who also . . . continually enlarge the number of intuitive perspectives and actions that, with experience, come naturally and effortlessly to them” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2008, p. 113). “To take the master’s journey, you have to practice diligently, striving to hone your skills, to attain new levels of competence you also have to spend most of your time on a plateau, to keep practicing even when you seem to be getting nowhere” (Leonard, 1992, p. 15). *What are the implications for coaching here?*

Masterful practitioners have matured in their craft in ways that often transcend their expertise. They are less tied to explicit rules, standard processes, contextual cues and, as such, they can act effectively yet with less effort. They sense underlying principles through gradually absorbing a repository of working rules of thumb, or heuristics, combined with book knowledge (Jarvis, 1992). Because of their deeper knowledge and experience, they recognize the patterns in play (Kahneman, 2002) so as to be effective in the moment. They sense situational rules as well as intuit and prioritize important factors (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986) to get to the crux of issues more quickly.

They are master craftspersons who can see in the mind's eye where the difficulties lie (Sennett, 2008) and direct their attention to the salient features in the coaching 'field' and process (Lane, 2016). They move through four phases in developing greater mastery: as *novices* they learn the rules, as *intermediates* they break the rules, as *masters* they change the rules, and as *artisans* they transcend the rules (Drake, 2011b). They have the confidence to "act in seemingly unprofessional ways, because they are acting according to a broader set of human and social values, without being stultified by professional boundaries" (Fook, Ryan, & Hawkins, 2000, p. 195).

The aim is to deepen coaches' capability to fluidly act with purpose, not to rigidly seek perfection. Becoming more masterful in coaching depends on a coach's ability to use their capabilities to support the desired effects. However, the path to get there has both common elements and unique features as every coach represents a constellation of competencies at different stages of mastery situated within the wholeness of their being. "The first move towards mastery is always inward — learning who you really are and reconnecting with that innate force" (Greene, 2012, p. 19). In time, how masters work becomes who they are (Flyvberg, 2001). This is because mastery is about "being consciously aware, even at a very low level of consciousness, of the total situation within which the actions are performed" (Jarvis, 1992, p. 93).

**In time, how masters work becomes
who they are (Flyvberg, 2001).**

Understanding the role of maturity

One of the core premises of this report is that we need to better understand and more seriously attend to maturity in the development of coaches. While more advanced coaching practitioners are more proficient in the core skills, their increasing mastery is more a function of their maturity, e.g., reading contexts, shifting perspectives, adapting practices. Thinking about maturation brings to mind: ripening, coming to fruition, differentiation and integration, unfolding of the full potential, and a refined and embodied consciousness. As we mature, we can take more perspectives, trust ourselves more fully, discern what is called for in the moment, and use our knowledge wisely.

A mature person can more readily self-regulate, which enables them to come back to center, be more fully present, and optimally respond to present circumstances. They can stay professionally agile, which I define as the ability to authentically, ably and appropriately move between roles in service of the best outcome in the moment and over time (Drake, 2017). After a certain point, mastery is more about curation than acquisition, such that less becomes more. You can see this in chess in the Grandmaster who looks at less and sees more because his unconscious skill set is much more highly evolved" (Waitzkin, 2007).

Maturity is about becoming an integrated human being who is psychologically robust and aware, has a realistic self-evaluation and the ability to create meaning, discerns what to learn from experience, and knows what to do differently (and has the capacity) as a result of what one has learned (du Toit, 2011). The more mature a coach is, the more they can engage in the coaching process as a form of "regulated improvisation" (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 79). In this sense, immaturity is defined as having a limited set and organization of experience, leaving one less prepared to respond appropriately and effectively to what one encounters in coaching (Pring, 2007).

Maturity is more a state than an endpoint. A mature coach is someone who can think for themselves as well as critically examine and critique aspects of their life, their work, and their industry. They cultivate authentic and genuine values which they are free to embody and express. This enables them to recognize and grow from their encounters so that they can learn in real time. With greater maturity, coaches are able to notice the nuances and details of situations and they have a greater capacity to articulate, influence and potentially change these situations (Bachkirova & Cox, 2007). This enables us to do the same for our clients. This is important because the growth of their cognitive and applied skills depends on firm emotional architecture (Maté, 2022).

Jung's (1969) notion of *individuation* is an important frame here as it refers to a lifelong process of maturing. The more mature we are, the more able we are to incorporate others' assessments about us into the way we see ourselves and, as a result, we are better able to adjust our behavior and improve our performance (London, Sessa, & Shelley, 2023). We are also more able to grow from experiences we find difficult, a fact I can attest to given the spiritual pilgrimage that emerged from an on-going series of health challenges. Maturation and individuation equip us to coach with a deeper integrity and ethic.

**Maturity is more a state than an endpoint.
Maturity enables us to recognize and grow
from opportunities to learn in real time.**

Mature and masterful coaches can work with greater reflexivity and criticality; their sense of self and their style are more congruent; and they tend to engage in deep reflective practice (Bachkirova et al., 2017). They have “accurate self-knowledge, notice critical coaching moments, have developed excellent professional intuition, and can handle complicated situations” (Biswas-Diener, 2023, p. 5). Mastery and maturity are symbiotic; each one needs and scaffolds the other. Otherwise, we end up with immature masters who are experts but can't connect with others or mature novices who connect well with others but lack sufficient skills. Both processes start with a deeper awareness of what we *actually* do now as the basis for focusing our energy to grow.

Over time, I saw that what many coaches often lacked was the maturity to trust and use what they knew in service of the client in the moment. It was too easy to get caught up in a perpetual need to know more and do more. As a result, they could often talk in new ways with their peers about their work, but their underlying assumptions about what they were supposed to do remained the same. A reliance on competency frameworks, linear models, and a hyper-focus on individual factors play a big role here. This report starts from a different pedagogy and paradigm in service of what coaching and coaches need now. It acknowledges that cultures have unique understandings of what it means to be in a state of maturity and what factors contribute to that state (Mazo, 2021).

The new paradigm calls for coaches to release more of the *partisan* in them (compliance with institutional norms) to make more room for the *artisan* in them (commitment to the craft). This enables coaches to create their own approach, be authentic in their role, and participate with integrity in the coaching community. A key measure of a coach's maturity in this regard is their ability to enhance the maturity of their clients as a foundation for new narratives and new actions. Let us move now to explore The Five Maturities as part of a new paradigm for developing coaches.

Reflections

Key Points

- One of the benefits of shifting to a new ecosystem-based paradigm is that investments in coaching would be aligned with their contribution to desired growth and outcomes.
 - Maturity enables us to recognize and grow when we encounter opportunities to learn and develop ourselves in response. Maturity is more a state than an endpoint.
 - Mastery and maturity are symbiotic in that one needs to mature to be able to advance one's skills and openings for maturation often arise from feedback and reflection on the use of one's skills at higher levels.
 - Masters have the confidence to act in seemingly unprofessional ways because they are acting according to a broader set of human and social values, without being stultified by professional boundaries.
-

Three questions to consider as you reflect on this chapter:

1. What stood out for you?

2. What is the core insight or message for you?

3. What might you do with that insight or message to move the conversation forward?

**You can dance in a hurricane. . .
only if you are standing in the eye.**

Brandi Carlile

Our work is a moment moving through us.

David Drake



CHAPTER 3: WHAT ARE THE THREE PILLARS OF NEW PARADIGM?

Ultimately, preparation is more about being centered and present than anticipating every possible outcome.

Mark Nepo

This report, and all the work that went into it, is designed to illustrate and validate a new paradigm with maturity at its core. It is the culmination of a journey that began with Narrative Coaching but came to full fruition in the formation of Integrative Development (Drake, 2021, 2022a, 2022b) as an innovative approach to learning and development. I have used the three pillars introduced in this chapter in designing dozens of innovative change, coaching, and leadership programs and projects on three continents. We are using it now to build the next generation of the Ovida platform to enable users to translate the feedback they receive into new mindsets and behaviors.

Integrative Development (ID) is a philosophy about life and living, a theory of learning and development, and an approach to liberating the potential for growth in any moment. It is well-suited for a new paradigm for coaching and developing coaches because it starts from a more grounded and effective pedagogy. It enables coaches to move beyond competency models so they can pursue new paths to greater maturity and mastery for themselves and their clients. Integrative Development is central to the new paradigm in this report, not only as a theory to explain how and why it works but also to guide efforts to bring the new paradigm to life in our practices and professional bodies.

The three pillars

There are three core pillars in the new paradigm: (1) *iBEAM* offers the five factors that affect our ability to learn and perform; (2) *The Five Maturities* offers a comprehensive approach to developing *who we are* as a practitioner; and (3) *The Five Masteries* offers a comprehensive approach to developing *what we do* as a practitioner. Together, they provide a strong yet adaptive foundation for a more holistic approach to developing ourselves as coaches so we can do the same for our clients. I use the plural forms for ‘mastery’ and ‘maturity’ to make finer distinctions and make it easier to identify what needs to be developed and how to go about it. The two tools in Chapter 4 are both built around five strands — each strand containing an iBEAM factor, a maturity, and a mastery — in support of one of the five elements in a coaching conversation.

Integrative Development is a philosophy about life and living, a theory of learning and development, and an approach to liberating the potential for growth in any moment.

Introducing The iBEAM Model

In creating Integrative Development as a grounded theory and approach to change, I consolidated the findings from research on learning and performance (see Drake, 2008; Gilbert, 1978; Peterson, 2006; Teodorescu & Binder, 2004) into five core factors: identity, behavior, environment, aspiration, and mindset (iBEAM). In this context, *aspiration* includes values, intentions, and motivations. Each factor affects the others, and we can be and perform at our best when all five factors are aligned — just as strands of twine are stronger when woven into a rope. The new paradigm draws on a range of social sciences, not just psychology, to emphasize identity and the environment not just individuals and their behavior. This provides a stronger foundation for coaches to adapt to what emerges and is needed most in the moment.

The iBEAM model addresses the need to move beyond assessing coaches based on their competency with each ‘string’ in isolation. It offers a more integrative way to assess them on how well they work with ‘rope’ in real time so that we can better support their development. It helps us identify what needs attention in support of the desired change. It mirrors Donald Meichenbaum’s (2017) mapping of the dimensions of the dynamic ‘field’ in which we work. The aim is to be aware of and utilize five strands as we coach. Competencies can be helpful in deconstructing feedback and identifying what to do about it more so than in assessing coaches in the first place. For that a more integrative frame is required. The following outlines his five dimensions (my descriptor in parentheses) and aligns them with the iBEAM factors, a focus of inquiry and an example.

Using the dimensions and factors of iBEAM		
<u>Dimension</u>	<u>iBEAM factor</u>	<u>Focus of inquiry</u>
1. x-axis (width)	mindset	What is the person thinking?
2. client-axis (height)	aspiration	What is the person seeking?
3. z-axis (depth)	behavior	What is the person doing?
4. xyz coordinates (motion)	environment	What is happening here?
5. ‘field’ (energy)	identity	What is changing as a result?
Example		
<u>Dimension</u>	<u>iBEAM factor</u>	<u>Sample question for the coach</u>
1. x-axis (width)	mindset	What was going on in your mind then?
2. client-axis (height)	aspiration	What were you paying attention to?
3. z-axis (depth)	behavior	Did you notice that you did not pause?
4. xyz coordinates (motion)	environment	How did this affect the conversation?
5. ‘field’ (energy)	identity	What might deeper silence reveals

Table 1. The dimensions and factors of iBEAM

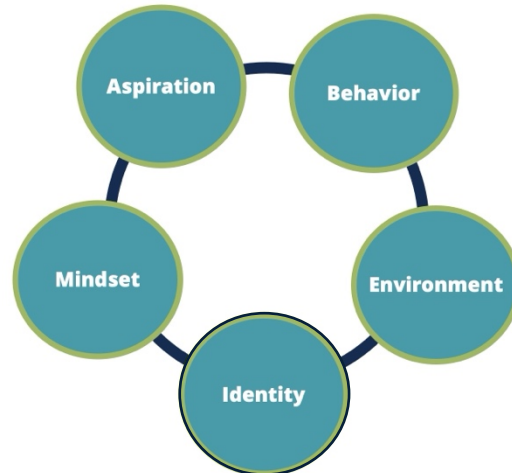


Figure 4. The five iBEAM factors

The iBEAM model is a simple yet powerful resource for identifying where to focus one's attention in order to better understand and address a development or performance issue. While the five factors can be used in any order, I've placed them here — starting and ending with identity — because it is the most common sequence when used in guiding development or practice. The 'I' for identity is in lower case so that it will stand out from the other four factors as the key organizing principle and the base upon which we operate.

The model calls attention to the fact that many issues related to performance are often a function of the environment (e.g., inefficient processes, structures or systems; biased cultures or conflicting rewards; role confusion or misalignment) as much as they are of the individual. “More than any other factor, it is the environment — the conditions under which development takes place, which either do or don't meet our multiple needs — that determines which potentials will or will not manifest” (Maté, 2022, pp. 117-118). All too often in coaching we send changed people back to unchanged environments — with less than satisfactory results. The new paradigm calls for greater awareness of the worlds and stories from which are clients come and to which they will return.

All too often in coaching we send changed people back to unchanged environments, which often leads to less than satisfactory results.

The new paradigm for coaching supports more sustainable change by using the iBEAM factors as a more systemic approach to learning and development *and* our ability to make the changes we seek. For example: (1) a coach uses iBEAM to recognize that neither his *mindset* as a coach or his *aspiration* for coaching are sufficiently valued by the *environment* in which he works; (2) a client uses it to recognize that she is struggling to shift some of her *behaviors* after a promotion because she is still acting from her old *identity*. The five iBEAM factors are intimately connected with The Five Masteries and The Five Maturities, and they can be used to increase our *mastery* (e.g., knowledge and ability) as a coach as well as our *maturity* (e.g., wisdom and agility) as a coach.

Introducing The Five Masteries

The iBEAM model provides structure for taking a more integrative approach to developing coaches on the journey to greater mastery than using a traditional competency-based approach. It sheds light on how each maturity and mastery can be used to focus our understanding and improvement of a person's growth and performance. Competence on its own is a two-dimensional, static, and transactional frame; it is important but insufficient for a multidimensional, dynamic, and relational process like coaching. That is why competence is but one of five masteries²:

- **Capacity** is what you can draw on.
- **Clarity** is what you can see.
- **Competency** is what you can do.
- **Capability** is how well you can do it.
- **Credibility** is what you understand and achieve.

In exploring The Five Masteries, let's start with the three most common masteries used in assessing coaches (see Hawkins & Smith, 2007) — *Capacity*, *Competency*, and *Capability* — with *Competency* the most dominant in coaching by far. Two other masteries, *Clarity* and *Credibility*, are introduced below to round out the set of five. As a reminder, these five are categories for consideration and customization by users and, while the focus here is on the coach, they apply to those being coached as well.

Capacity relates to the *person* who is coaching and the innate abilities and inner resources they can draw from as they work. It is what they bring to the table as a fellow human, and it is the foundation for their 'use of self' in coaching. For example, a coach who intimately understands the essentials of grief and transitions will have a greater *capacity* to deal with a client's job loss than a coach who has not. Deepening coaches' capacities matters because clients generally can't travel further than their coach in dealing with difficult issues, emotions, or situations in sessions.

Clarity relates to the *perspectives* by which coaches operate, the range and acuity of what they notice in sessions, and the degree to which they can clearly see what is unfolding without judgment. It enables coaches to build generative working alliances, address their blindspots, and work with ethics and integrity. For example, a coach who can work with a high degree of emotional intelligence will have greater *clarity* in terms of the unconscious dynamics, needs and projections in a session than a coach who cannot.

Competency relates to the *practices* used by coaches as they are working, and this includes their knowledge, dispositions, skills, and behaviors in service of what they are trying to achieve. These relate both to what they can do themselves but also how they use what is around them to support their performance. For example, a coach who has developed a fluency and agility with their questions will have a greater *competency* to deal with a complex dilemma than a coach who has not. Most coaches focus their development here but would do well to attend to the other masteries.

² 'Seeing' encompasses the use of any or all of our senses.

Capability relates to the *purposes* that are served when coaches use their masteries well and wisely in working with clients. It reflects how coaches are guided by their internal values to transform available resources into relevant actions in service of what matters. The same competence (e.g., powerful questioning) will be used differently by individuals at different levels of capability. For example, a coach who has practiced using focused feedback will have a greater *capability* in using their skills to address a client's challenge than a coach who has not.

Credibility relates to the *pivots* that coaches make to adapt their thinking and their actions as they coach. It reflects their proficiency in getting good results, but also in understanding and articulating what has happened, how what transpired contributed to the results, and what could be done differently to support different results. For example, a coach who can gauge the readiness level of a client and adjust their approach accordingly will have a greater *credibility* with clients (which will increase their trust and confidence) than a coach who has not.

The more masterful the coach, the more attentive, adaptive, and generative they can be in the moment and across an engagement. As an example of all five masteries in action: (1) What is the coach's level of comfort (*Capacity*) with a client seeking to make a major change in their life or work?; (2) What do they pay attention to (*Clarity*) with this client?; (3) What do they know about working with change (*Competency*)?; (4) What level of presence can they maintain with this client and how can they use the silence to support the process (*Capability*)?; and (5) What do they see as their role (*Credibility*) with this client at this stage (and why do they think that)? A coach's ability to embody and express each of mastery will be enriched by deepening its respective maturity.

Competence is a static, two-dimensional, and transactional frame. It is important but insufficient for a dynamic, multidimensional, and relational process like coaching.

Introducing The Five Maturities

Some reminders as we look at The Five Maturities: (1) maturity is seen here as a dynamic and multi-faceted process not a final destination; (2) we can be more mature in some dimensions than in others; (3) there are contextual and cultural differences in what constitutes 'maturity' that need to be considered; and (4) as with the masteries, these are five descriptive categories not definitive declarations such that coaches can determine articulate what they mean to them and how they can best be used in their context.

Jungian analyst James Hollis (2001) observed that the more mature you are, the more you can sustain the tension of opposites in yourself and around you, thereby allowing the developmental and regulatory potential of the issue to emerge. This is why in the work I teach we start every program with the maturation of ourselves. Coaching is as much about our *being* (if not more) as it is our *doing*. Each of the five maturities is briefly described below along with what it includes and how to develop it. They are listed in this order not as a linear progression, but to reflect the fact that the maturities become more complex as you move down the list.

1. Personal maturity

It operates at the level of the *persons* in coaching — with a focus on the *mindsets* and the *developmental knowledge* they bring to their work together. For example: maintaining their presence and composure, flexing their attention to meet emergent needs, being aware of and open to what they are experiencing, and holding space for the work to be done. To support their personal growth and *capacity*, coaches and clients can engage in reflective journaling, therapeutic support, and observational validation to get a deeper understanding of themselves in action.

2. Spiritual maturity

It operates at the level of the *perspectives* in coaching — with a focus on the *aspirations* and the *relational knowledge* that coaches and clients bring to their work together. For example: building a strong working alliance, becoming more aware of what is happening in the ‘field’, and shifting perspectives to see more of what is true for them. To support their spiritual growth and *clarity*, coaches and clients can engage in somatic and breathing practices, notice their attachment patterns when relating, and distinguish between their espoused values and values in use when coaching.

3. Professional maturity

It operates at the level of the *practices* in coaching — with a focus on the *behaviors* and the *procedural knowledge* that coaches and clients bring to their work together. For example: acting ethically and with a duty of care, understanding how the change process works, and thinking critically about and taking the work seriously. To support their professional growth and *competency*, coaches and clients can engage in mutual feedback around the process and their progress, use intentional practices to increase their skills, and deepen their theory of change.

4. Social maturity

It operates at the level of the *purposes* in coaching — with a focus on the *environments* and the *ecological knowledge* that coaches and clients bring to their work together. For example: engaging respectfully around cultural differences, supporting responsible choices after sessions, and focusing on what matters most in the big picture. To support their social growth and *capability*, coaches and clients can adapt the systems in which they work, the social narratives which shape their actions, and address cultural differences affecting the work together or client outcomes.

5. Contextual maturity

It operates at the level of the *purposes* in coaching — with a focus on the *identities* and the *alchemical knowledge* that coaches and clients bring to their work together. For example: working in third spaces beyond polarities, adapting to what the client needs most and is ready for, and deepening their accountability. It is the ability to see the forest *and* the trees, and to wisely access what is needed in the moment. To support their contextual growth and *credibility*, coaches, and clients can check in about their formulations and choices, reflect on what has shifted and why, and adjust their approaches in line with what emerges and the client is seeking.

The key to improving each of these masteries as a coach is to deepen the maturity that underpins it.

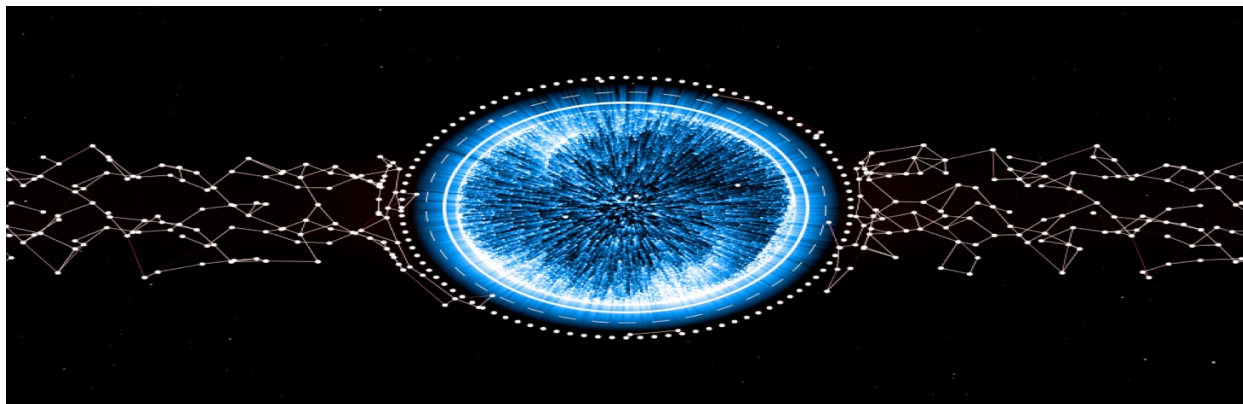
The chart below outlines the key frames and terms for the new paradigm. It brings together the three pillars of Integrative Development (The iBEAM model, The Five Maturities, and The Five Masteries) with their respective knowledge in support of the five elements in a coaching session (see Figure 7).

Element	Person	Relationship	Skills	Process	Outcome
iBEAM	Mindset	Aspiration	Behavior	Environment	identity
Mastery	Capacity	Clarity	Competency	Capability	Credibility
Maturity	Personal	Spiritual	Professional	Social	Contextual
Knowledge	Developmental	Relational	Procedural	Ecological	Alchemical

Figure 5. The foundations for a new coaching paradigm

Together, these foundations provide the necessary scaffolding for co-created development for each person in coaching through *moments of meeting* (Drake, 2016a; Stern, 2004) in which there is a mutual recognition and evolution. These often unexpected encounters open up an affectively charged moment of truth for both the coach and the client which pulls the two of them fully into the present and the opening for personal and relational maturation. These openings must be seized if the working alliance is going to co-evolve in ways that support the next level of conversation that is being called for.

The more that coaches and clients can step into these moments, the stronger the foundation will be for their work together and for what clients can do when they leave sessions. When coaches and clients can step into the work to be done in *moments of meeting*, they not only deepen their coaching relationship but also the client’s ability to embody and enact what they have gained. This is important because the key moment for the client may start in the coaching session but what matters more what happens when they try what they learned for the first time after the session. As such, the connections between the three pillars becomes clear in supporting a holistic approach to developing coaches who can do the same for their client as a platform for their success.





**Ultimately, preparation is more about
being centered and present than
anticipating every possible outcome.**

Mark Nepo



CHAPTER 4: HOW CAN WE USE THE FIVE MATURITIES?

Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later become subjects.

Paulo Freire

Taken together, The Five Masteries and The Five Maturities provide a more integrative approach to the development of coaches than what is possible using current competency-based models. I mapped these two sets of five and their respective iBEAM factor to the five elements of a coaching session to create *The Five Maturities Framework* (figure 6) and *The Five Maturities Matrix* (figure 8). The *Five Maturities Matrix* provides a simple tool to harvest insights from using the Framework to guide a person's development based on what they learned. Together, competencies are placed in a larger context in support of a comprehensive approach to growth and advance our approaches to developing coaches and coaching itself.

While competencies provide a good baseline, they are fraught with issues and limited in what they can support. Like with standardized tests in school, competency assessments are only a moderate indicator for proficiency and potentiality. They often lead to and reward conformity to a prescribed norm rather than foster the authenticity, agency, and agility that practitioners need to master their craft and mature themselves. The Five Maturities Framework offers a new approach to the maturation and mastery of coaches *and* clients that reflects my observation that the success of a coaching engagement is contingent on the growth of each party and their work together.

It can be used to help coaches move from managing coaching conversations in order to conform to competencies to trusting conversations in order to unleash their potential. Along with an updated version of The Mastery Window (Drake, 2009b) referenced at the start of this report, it challenges us to innovate in terms of (1) how we conceptualize 'coaching'; (2) how we support the coaching process; (3) what it means to be a 'coach'; (4) how we determine what masterful coaching includes; (5) what knowledge is essential for mastery; and (6) how we assess and develop coaches as a result.

**Release your need to manage the conversation
so you can release its full potential.**

The Five Maturities Framework is built around the five key elements in a coaching session, not just the coach, and it prioritizes what the research consistently suggests is most related to outcomes: variables related to the client and the working relationship. Its stance is reflected in the most common feedback I give to coaches, especially as they start their Narrative Coaching journey: *"Please stop coaching for a moment . . . and notice. You are missing a lot of what is happening right in front of you"*. The point of coaching is not coaching — but what our clients can do as a result of who they become in the process and what they can do differently as a result.

The Five Maturities Framework allows us to map what is happening in sessions and inquire into how decisions are made, how the elements interacted, how the process unfolded, and how the outcomes turned out. This chapter will highlight why centering clients and client relationships is paramount; how to use The Five Maturities Framework in coaching and reflecting on coaching; and how the new *Integrative Window* sets the stage for using The Five Maturities Matrix in developing yourself and others as a coach. It reminds us that the most important thing a coach has to offer is a relationship because it promotes a space and climate within which clients can feel safe and prized, and begin to trust and use their self-healing capacities (Bohart & Tallman, 1999).

Centering client relationships and clients

The new paradigm offered here is grounded in research evidence and the experience of seasoned coaches, both of which point to client factors and the coaching relationship as the most significant variables in terms of outcomes. As such, there is a need for greater focus on these two variables in how coaching is conceptualized and delivered and how coaches are developed and assessed. This enables us to connect the dots between the levels of masteries and maturities in coaches and clients and what emerges as a result. The Five Maturities Framework (figure 6) enables us to move beyond atomized coach behaviors to take a more relational and co-developmental perspective on the coaching process.

There is substantial evidence that the relationship is critical to the coaching process and is one of its outcomes. For example, Carl Rogers (1967), arguably the godfather of coaching, once wrote that, “therapy has to do with the *relationship*, and has relatively little to do with techniques or with theory and ideology” (p. 185). The relationship creates a safe and generative space for joint inquiry and discovery between coaches and their clients as equal partners in the process (Bachkirova & Borrington, 2019; Bohart & Tallman, 1999). Centering the relationship with clients involves seeing it as a resource for growth in itself, not just as a container for the methodology and its steps.

The most important thing a coach has to offer is a relationship because it promotes a space and climate within which clients can feel safe and prized, and begin to trust and use their self-healing capacities.

While the mantra in coaching is to be client-centered, in actual practice clients are often under-represented in how coaches are developed and assessed. There are legitimate reasons why this is the case, e.g., there are many factors affecting client outcomes (not just the coaching session), and clients and coaches often have different impressions about what was important in the session. At the same time, if client-related factors are the most significant variable in outcomes, then it behooves us to account for them more fully. The Five Maturities Framework is based in the proposition that the best indicator of a coach’s maturity and mastery is how well they enhance the same for those they coach. The focus in coaching in the new paradigm is therefore less about how we coach and more about who those we coach become as a result.

This is because coaching is most effective when it provides space (and resources) for clients in which they can access and mobilize their own self-healing capacities (Rogers, 1961). This enables them to become more aware of what they *actually* do now, translate and transfer the experience of the coaching session, and integrate and enact what they gain. This is backed by consistent research suggesting that clients are the most potent contributor to outcomes (Assay & Lambert, 1999; Bohart, 2020; Duncan & Miller, 2000; Duncan, Miller, & Sparks, 2004; Miller, Duncan, & Hubble, 1997). This is why assessing coaches by just listening to their recordings is only moderately effective as it fails to account for the clients' experience of, perspective on, and results from the coaching session³. Rather than investigate, inferences are made (often incorrectly) from observing coaches' behavior (Lawrence, 2022).

**The journey from *new* coach to *good* coach
depends on sufficient competency. The
journey from a *good* coach to a *great* coach
depends on sufficient maturity and more.**

In addition, we can develop coaches more fruitfully if we assess their capacity to learn not just their performance. The same is true for clients. This requires enlisting the client as a full partner in the processes of coaching, accountability, and review (Duncan et al., 2004) This means that developing coaches is not just about enhancing what they do in sessions but also (and perhaps more) about what their clients do in and after sessions. In part this is because the person the client will become — as one who can achieve what they are seeking — is not the person they are right now. In addition, it is important that clients come to view the changes that emerge from the coaching process as resulting from something they did and can repeat in the future. This is why clients play a more central role in the new paradigm and therefore in how coaches are developed.

Using The Five Maturities Framework in Coaching

Coaching is seen here as engaging in an experiential, developmental ecosystem rather than executing a series of steps. It includes five elements: (1) coach; (2) client; (3) relationship; (4) process; and (5) outcomes. The diagram below is laid out to reflect the flow between the *coach* and the *client* in *relationship* through the coaching *process* in support of meaningful *outcomes* for the client. Each mastery and maturity is placed in the coaching process where it often has the most impact. As a result, the framework creates a stronger connection between the evolution of the coaching participants, the coaching process, and the coaching outcomes.

Coaches, clients, and stakeholders can use The Five Maturities Framework to assess (1) where the time and energy was spent in working together (using the iBEAM factors); (2) how they respectively grew in working together (using the five maturities); (3) how they improved their skills in working together (using the five masteries); and (4) and how they worked together to

³ The author is Executive Advisor for Ovida, an AI-informed start-up whose platform accelerates the development of coaches and leader (Ovida.io), and Head of Ovida Labs to support organizational and institutional users to optimize their results.

create valuable outcomes (using the new paradigm as a whole) — all as feedback to guide the next steps in their development. In a sense, a coaching session can then become a laboratory for change.

The Five Maturities Framework

as used in coaching

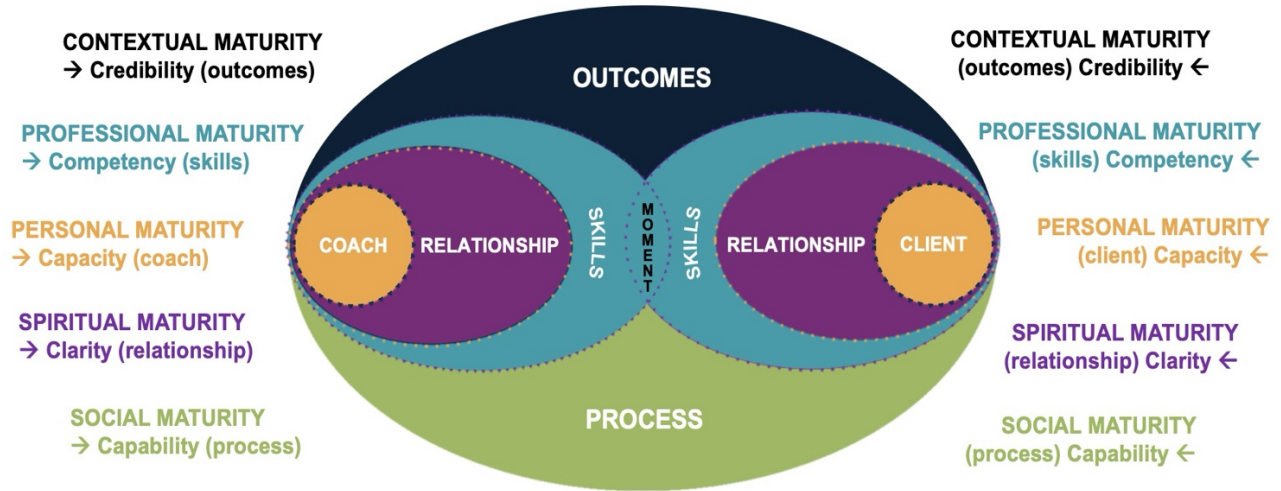


Figure 6. The Five Maturities Framework as used in coaching

The Five Maturities Framework offers a new paradigm for coaching conversations and the roles of coaches. It draws attention to the interdependent nature of the ecosystem in coaching sessions to provide a more grounded and useful approach to developing coaches. The coach and a client are working in the ‘field’ they co-create to do the work. Their work is enacted through their working alliance, and it yields internal and external outcomes for the one being coached (and often indirectly for the coach as well). Each of the five sets of three (as seen below) contains a primary mastery, maturity, and iBEAM factor in support of the growth of each party as well as their working relationship, process, and outcomes.

To illustrate how a coach and client could use one of the sets of three sample questions from the chart to guide their development:

A coach and client work together to increase their self-awareness and ability to mentalize (*Personal Maturity*) around a difficult interaction, increase their ability to hold space for the work to be done (*Capacity*), and increase their openness to what is present and calling for their attention (*Mindset*). It reflects that what clients often need most is a safe place to experience and experiment with new aspects of themselves and new ways of being, relating, speaking, or acting. You can use questions like these to reflect on your own practice or to guide others.

Personal Maturity	How aware am I of what triggers me in coaching?	What you can draw on
Capacity	How well do I self-regulate while I am coaching?	
Mindset	How often is my mindset in sync with my client?	
Spiritual Maturity	How aware am I of what is happening in the ‘field’?	What you can see
Clarity	How readily do I shift perspectives while coaching?	
Aspiration	How much do I invest in building the relationship?	
Professional Maturity	How aware am I of my clients’ readiness for change?	What you can do
Competency	How often do I reflect on my actions in sessions?	
Behavior	How open am I to feedback on the choices I make?	
Social Maturity	How aware am I of my assumptions about clients?	How well you can do it
Capability	How much of what I know do I actually use well?	
Environment	How much do I attend to what clients do afterwards?	
Contextual Maturity	How aware am I of my patterns/habits in coaching?	What you can understand and achieve
Credibility	How well can I explain why I did what I did?	
identity	How would I describe my role as a coach?	

Table 2. Sample questions to ask yourself using the three pillars

It is important that clients come to view the changes that emerge from coaching as resulting from something they did and can repeat in the future.

The table below (Table 3) offers an example of how a coach used The Five Maturities to develop herself and support her client’s development so they could work together more effectively.

Maturity	Coach’s focus for developing herself in reflecting on a session	Coach’s reflections on how she supported her client’s process
Personal	I was aware of my discomfort with the client’s tears and sought to comfort him more than necessary.	I realized he was hoping I would rescue him, so I stepped back to demonstrate my trust in his capacity.
Spiritual	I relaxed as we went along, aided by shifting my perspective on what he needed most right now.	I could see the client relax when I was present and self-regulated as it modeled what he could do himself.
Professional	I let go of my need to ‘solve’ his sadness and shifted to using a witnessing stance and language.	I observed the client appreciating being ‘seen’ and helped him notice what this felt like and made possible.
Social	I got braver in what I allowed myself to feel and say to the client — and the conversation deepened.	I explored with the client where to find grief support and invited him to experience speaking from his heart.
Contextual	I shared some of my experience with his issue to offer assurance in walking alongside one another.	I noticed he seemed relieved when I mentioned my recent loss; it seemed to normalize his experience for him.

Table 3. Example of a coach using the Five Maturities Framework

The Five Maturities Framework is a template which can be customized by practitioners, schools, and associations to address their specific contexts, approaches, terms, and needs. It offers a human-first paradigm and resource and, in doing so, invites others in the global community to join the conversation and contribute to a better way forward. I look forward to more dialogues around developing coaches and clients concurrently, particularly because increasingly there will be a third partner — technologies — in the mix. For now, let’s turn our attention to the knowledge and approach to knowledge we will need to be able to work this way.

Expanding our knowledge as coaches

The inspiration for this report grew out of a paper on team coaching competencies (Widdowson et al., 2020) that showcased The Mastery Window. This model and its iterations (Drake, 2009c, 2011b, 2014) drew scholars on expertise (Berns, 2010; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, 2008; Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Ericsson et al., 2007; Hendrix-Jansen, 1996); craftspeople and iconoclasts (Dooling, 1986; Mishler, 1999; Sennett, 2008); multiple forms of knowledge and evidence (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2004); and practice decision

making (Plath, 2006). The three pillars are useful in deconstructing observed coaching sessions to offer feedback as well constructing focused plans for practice to get better. Key to that process is to understand what new knowledge might be useful as scaffolding for the growth they are seeking. This will also come in handy when we look at The Five Maturities Matrix (figure 8).

Development is a process of illumination in which each step taken enables coaches and clients to access greater portions of the whole that existed within them all along. From this place, they can use their strengths more flexibly, consciously, and effectively. The new paradigm offers a better approach to development given the need for greater maturity in holding space for clients, the dynamism of coaching, the diversity of requisite knowledge, and the complex demands of our world. The challenges and opportunities before us are increasingly epistemological and existential; they call us beyond the ‘bright and shiny’ to the ‘clear and present’.

This is, in part, why The Mastery Window has been updated to: (1) highlight the role of maturity in developing coaches; (2) acknowledge there is foundational knowledge in each ‘pane’; (3); help us move between contexts and ‘panes’ while working; and (4) take an integrative approach to developing and assessing coaches. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith’s (2015) model adapted this frame for assessing coaching capabilities by defining the intrinsic/extrinsic as one axis (vertical) and preparation/manifestation as the other axis (horizontal). *The Integrative Window* provides stronger connections between the development and the performance of coaches, in part to help the industry move beyond the singular focus on competence and procedural knowledge.

The Integrative Window includes the type of knowledge that is foundational for each of the five sets (maturity, mastery, iBEAM factor). I am using the word ‘knowledge’ here in the fullest sense of the word. There are many ways of knowing and many types of knowledge. I am especially advocating for knowledge that is often less privileged in commercial, professional, and academic circles yet influential in terms of client experience and outcomes (Drake, 2014). Thinking more expansively will enrich our efforts to move beyond competency models and their limitations, e.g., an emphasis on mechanistic thinking; a focus on individual job tasks; and a bias for Western frames such as ‘goals’, ‘progress’ and ‘independence.’

Development is a process of illumination in which each step taken enables coaches and clients to access greater portions of the whole that existed within them all along.

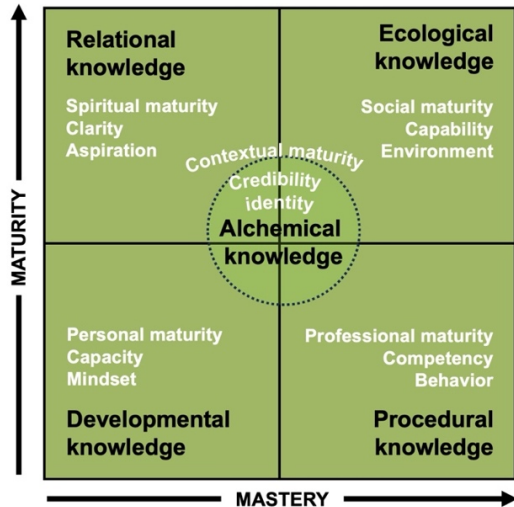


Figure 7. The Integrative Window

With its axes of maturity and mastery, The Integrative Window mirrors the distinction between horizontal and vertical development by seminal thinkers such as Robert Kegan (1994) and Suzanne Cook-Greuter (2004). *Horizontal Development* refers to adding more knowledge, skills, and techniques in support of what we can do in our quest for mastery. *Vertical Development* refers to deepening our abilities to use who we are and what we know with acuity, agility, and wisdom in support of who and how we can be in our quest for maturity.

The three pillars of Integrative Development can be used to balance the time spent on horizontal development (mastery) with more time spent on vertical development (maturity). This is important because the methods for horizontal development are often very different (typically learned from an expert) from the methods for vertical development (typically earned for yourself). The resources in this report emphasize the growth of coaches and clients (maturity) as the requisite foundation for their ability to improve in working together (mastery).

You can use The Integrative Window to support the *technical development* of coaches to increase their horizontal mastery in support of their performance as practitioners and the *transformational development* of coaches in support of their vertical (inter)personal maturity in support of their development as people (Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006). In the end, notions of ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ become less useful given that coaching is a dynamic, emergent process best done in an integrative manner in which maturity and mastery are intertwined. This calls for a shift from consuming knowledge to curating knowledge as well as stronger connections between collective knowledge and individual practice. We will address this further in Chapter 5 when we look at rites of passage.

Development is a process of illumination in which each step taken enables coaches and clients to access greater portions of the whole that existed within them all along.

This report is informed by non-Western and indigenous views on knowledge that are based more in the whole than the parts. They offer a more inclusive and generative epistemology that seems more fitting for the challenges we face and the dynamic nature of a coaching conversation. For example, anthropologist Julie Cruikshank observed that the Tlingit⁴ see themselves as “part of a moral universe inhabited by a community of beings in constant communication and exchange”. Incorporating these epistemologies would enable coaches to contribute more fully to a more adaptive and cross-cultural future for coaching. It enables coaches to learn how use circular thinking, contextualized approaches, and embodied knowledge (Burkhart, 2004), so they can be more present to and agile with what IS in the moment.

In reviewing the literature (see Drake, 2011b) I also found great value in Bent Flyvberg’s (2001) thinking about the distinctions between: (1) *episteme*: knowledge that; (2) *techne*: knowledge how; and (3) *phronesis*: knowledge why. *Episteme* is of the head (the theories, laws, and analysis of science) and *techne* is of the hand (the skills and production of art/craft), but neither form of knowledge takes us very far in deciding what we ought to create or do (Frank, 2004). For that we need *phronesis*, which takes far longer and is from the heart (the ethics of values and their implications for action, why something matters). To practice *phronesis* is to “train oneself to be in constant self-awareness as a moral actor” (Frank, 2004, p. 223). It is a habit of attentiveness that makes one’s past experience flexibly available while allowing the present situation to reveal its particular significance (Dunne, 1993).

The Five Maturities Framework offers a *phronetic* approach to development which is better suited for the constant, constructive deliberation and praxis, particularly related to values and power (Flyvbjerg, 2001) in coaching. We can see this in expert coaches who are principled yet flexible, using careful consideration and ever-evolving knowledge to adapt their practice, co-create deeper developmental experiences, and thereby meet clients’ emergent and vital needs (Hemmestad, Jones, & Standal, 2010). They are more adept at *phronesis* as “a habit of attentiveness that makes one’s past experience flexibly available [while] allowing the present situation to unconceal its own particular significance” (Dunne, 1993, p. 305). Keep this in mind as you read about the Matrix and see if you can bring a *phronetic* mindset as you do.

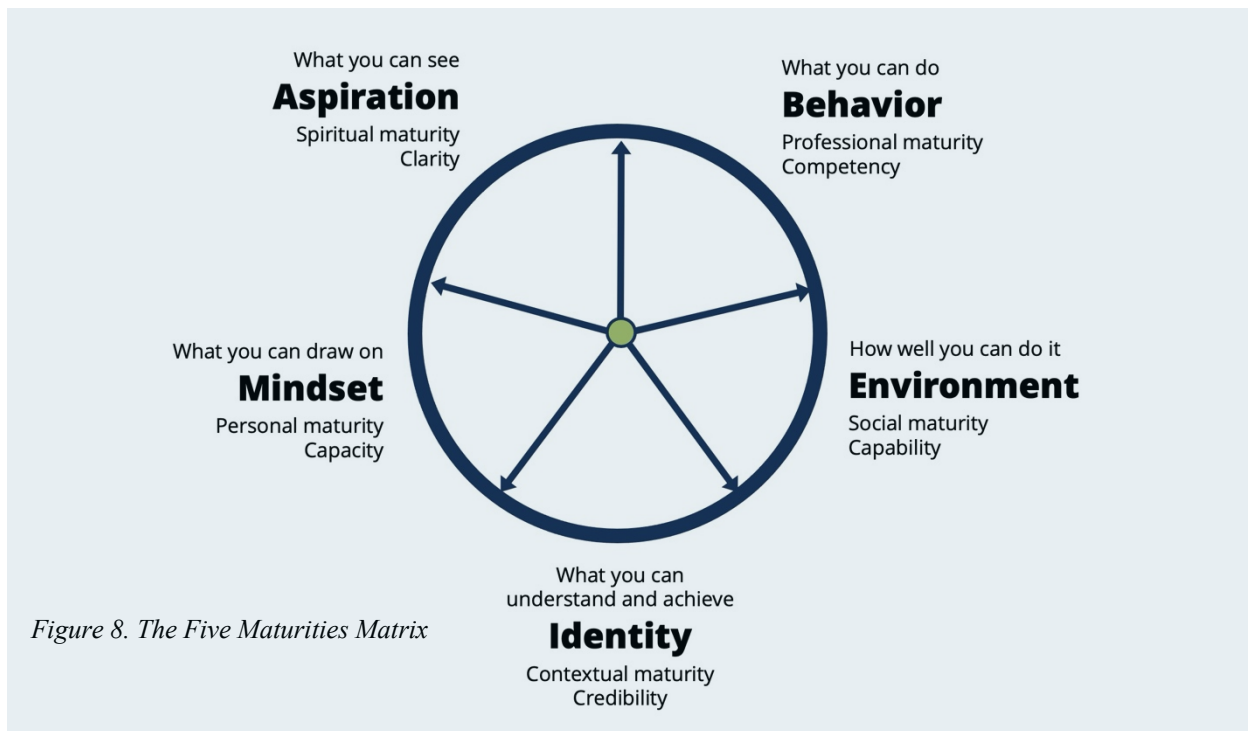
Using myself as an example:

My **Developmental knowledge** includes a background in *grief work* which I use to gauge clients’ readiness for change. My **Relational knowledge** includes *attachment theory* which I use to understand my clients’ patterns in working with me. My **Procedural knowledge** includes *improvisation* which I use to guide clients to experiment with new behaviors. My **Ecological knowledge** includes *Family Constellations* work which I use to help clients uncover hidden dynamics. My **Alchemical knowledge** includes *Feldenkrais* work which helps me sense even small movements in the ‘field’.

⁴ an indigenous community and culture spread across what is now SE Alaska n the US

Using The Five Maturities Matrix in Coaching

The Five Maturities Framework offers a new way to conceptualize a coaching conversation, our role in coaching, and our development as a coach. The Five Maturities Matrix, as seen in the graphic below (Figure 8), offers a prototype for using The Five Maturities Framework to guide the development of yourself or others as a coach or coach educator. Users can identify their priorities in each of the five areas as a guide for their development and/or that of their clients. Each vector is defined by its iBEAM factor in support of both development and performance. While the Matrix might one day be the basis for a more formal assessment tool, its role here is to offer an informal structure for developing coaches and clients. I am using it in designing some innovative elements of our new learning community.



For example, a user might shade in each section to indicate their level of mastery and/or maturity in the context of a given challenge (with low in the center and high at the outside). They can then reflect on their current level of development and decide where to focus their attention. In this way, the Matrix can be adapted and used by mentors, supervisors, and peers to support the coach's intentional growth and integrative plans in a given area. It is applicable across contexts and cultures because it does not prescribe normative definitions. While there is an underlying philosophy, users can define what is required at any stage of their development in each of the five areas.

**Incorporating non-Western epistemologies
would enable coaches to work more fully
with what is already present and contribute
more fully to an adaptive future for coaching.**

The Five Maturities Matrix is offered as a prototype so that institutional users, teams/groups, and practitioners can adapt and use it to meet their specific needs. For example, a coach who has just finished a graduate-level certificate program feels quite strong in Competency (professional maturity and procedural knowledge) but recognizes they are not confident in their Clarity (forming strong working relationships with clients) or their Capability (applying what they now know). An observed behavior will likely be connected to many sections. The secret is to focus on one area for improvement even though the outcome you need might require work in another area.

Coaches and clients can use The Matrix to leverage insights gained through working with each other to support to target their respective development. As a graduate of Narrative Coaching wrote in using the Matrix, *“the data can be personalized, leading to unique and granular insights for the coach”* (Brummel, 2023). The table below (Table 4) is an example of a coach who used the Matrix to make decisions about where to focus her development efforts in the new year. The words in italics are synopses of what she worked on with me as her mentor. Her success in addressing these issues in herself deepened her ability to help her client to do the same.

Maturity iBEAM Mastery	Self-rating 1-10 (<i>high</i>)	Focus for learning and development SCENARIO: Mentoring a Narrative Coach post-session
Mindset Personal Capacity	6	She saw that she asked questions that kept them in their comfort zones, often at the expense of what the client needed. <i>We worked on what would help her to self-regulate enough to stay present to what IS, even when it is difficult.</i>
Aspiration Spiritual Clarity	5	She saw that she stayed largely in her head — when what was called for was more compassionate presence with each other as humans. <i>We worked on how to help her stay more connected to her body and the ‘field’ between them.</i>
Behavior Professional Competency	9	She saw that she needed to build her repertoire of styles of communication, especially her abilities around silence and affect. <i>We worked on what came up in her that typically led to taking a ‘fixing’ stance.</i>
Environment Social Capability	7	She saw that to do this she needed to make some changes in how she saw and embodied her role. <i>We worked with a narrative coaching practice to help her speak more directly so she could help her client to do the same.</i>
identity Contextual Credibility	3	She saw that she needed to respond with more agility to what was emerging. <i>We experimented with options, and she identified two reminders to help her stay in the moment and talking more from her heart.</i>

Table 4. Example of using The Five Maturities Matrix to mentor a coach



Reflections

Key Points

- The point of coaching is not coaching — but what our clients can do as a result of who they become in the process and what they can do differently as a result.
 - The coaching relationship creates a safe and generative space for a community of joint inquiry between coaches and their clients as equal partners in the process.
 - Coaching is most effective when it provides a context and resources for clients in which to access and mobilize their own self-healing capacities.
 - Development is a process of illumination in which each stage of development enables coaches to access greater portions of the whole that existed within them all along.
-

Three questions to consider as you reflect on this chapter:

1. What stood out for you?

2. What is the core insight or message for you?

3. What might you do with that insight or message to move the conversation forward?

Those who can answer the essential question inside become more able to handle the uncertainties around them.

Michael Meade



CHAPTER 5: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The journey to superior performance is neither for the faint of heart nor the impatient. The development of genuine expertise requires struggle, sacrifice, and honest, often painful self-assessment. There are no shortcuts.

(Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007)

The Five Maturities Framework and The Five Maturities Matrix are the culmination of twenty-five years I've spent advising, writing, teaching, and practicing on the frontiers of coaching. They support a movement beyond competency models that will advance our understanding of how to create better coaches and better outcomes for those being coached. This report is an invitation for readers (especially emerging leaders who represent the next wave in coaching) to grab the baton — and reimagine your own professional development, take the conversation forward wherever you are, and advocate for change in your circles of influence.

Looking back on the analogy of the bridge in the fog: Where are the first pylons for the bridges we need? Who would join us there to dream of what is next? How can we create (1) more room for coaches to leverage the best of what they know and who they have become; (2) more freedom for those who coach to find their truest expression; (3) more guidance on adapting coaching for different cultures and contexts; and (4) more spaces for open, honest dialogue and innovation? We can look back 100 years when the field of medicine was at a similar stage for inspiration.

Medical educator Abraham Flexner's (1925) observations are relevant to coaching programs and schools today: "The medical school cannot expect to produce fully trained doctors; it can at most hope to equip students with a limited amount of knowledge, to train them in the method and spirit of scientific medicine and to launch them with a momentum that will make them active learners — observers, readers, thinkers, and experimenters — for years to come" (pp. 13-14). Around the same time, neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1927/1989) wrote in a letter to a friend, "I want to protect analysis from physicians . . . and from priests. I want to trust it to a profession that doesn't yet exist, a profession of secular ministers of souls." In this chapter we will explore possibilities for a new future for coaching, for coach development, and for those who coach — a future I believe will take us closer to Freud's vision.

I want to protect analysis from physicians
and from priests. I want to trust it to a
profession that doesn't yet exist, a
profession of *secular ministers of souls*.

Reimagining the development of coaches

This report is a resource for the global coaching community and its search for a greater consensus around what coaching could become and how best to get there. This would include stronger reciprocal connections between theory and practice; more emphasis on maturity and an integrative approach to development; and new forms of professional authority to provide “distributed coherence” (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) in coaching. This collective reimagination would enable us to advance beyond the current competency models (built on assumptions about how coaching *should* be done) to a new integrative model (built to support our aspirations for what coaching *could* become).

One of the keys to making this shift, both professionally and collectively, is fostering greater adaptability. This includes the ability to draw from a range of knowledge sources with discernment, make sense of that knowledge when combined with our own experiences and senses, and have the maturity and awareness to make conscious choices in service of what is needed most. It involves developing and applying ourselves in ways that are recognizable by others as masterful coaching and recognizable by ourselves as the mature expression of who we are. It requires new narratives for coaching that foster both our need for (a) stability, consistency, continuity, and coherence as the basis for safety and security; and our need for (b) agility, novelty, discontinuity, and change as the basis for exploration and growth.

It is an invitation to explore how to develop adaptable coaches with

a wider field of awareness based on a greater confidence in their abilities and more familiarity with the terrain, [so they] know where to focus their attention based on patterns they can recognize after years of experience, can adapt their approaches based on years of experimenting with theories in action across a diverse range of clients, and are more willing to be accountable for and learn from their experience (Drake, 2011b, pp. 145-146).

These tensions are growing given the dramatic rise in social and environmental challenges, the rise of AI in the coaching space, and the proliferation of coaching applications and platforms are all raising the stakes for the future of coaching. The good news is that coaching is a relatively new and ever-evolving field of practice that is ripe for innovation in what is now a diverse global market. We are being increasingly called to think and show up in new ways in coaching with our clients. These needs for greater maturity and adaptability can also be seen in what our clients are bringing to coaching and buyers are expecting from coaching. What will they increasingly need from us and our work with them?

**It involves applying ourselves in ways that
are recognizable by others as masterful
coaching and recognizable by ourselves as
the mature expression of who we are.**

One starting point is the shift from seeing coaching as something that we *do to* clients to seeing it as a mutual, intentional conversation that we *engage in with* clients. This would enable coaches to act with integrity in moving more freely and ably between roles in service of what their clients need. Coaches can only take coaching conversations as far as they have traveled themselves, which is why the journey to mastery starts with maturity. It is also true that maturity grows through stretching ourselves or being stretched towards mastery where there is readiness and scaffolding. Coaching needs more spaces and resources for both. This new paradigm looks beyond coaching as we know it to explore what coaching might become.

What is being called for is a greater commitment to ‘enlightened pragmatism’ — an ability to bring maturity and mastery to any situation in coaching (and coaching to any situation) through a deeper integration of personal and professional development. Enlightenment without pragmatism in coaching leads to wonderful experiences but often falls short in translating them into meaningful action. Pragmatism without enlightenment leads to outcomes but often falls short in getting to the crux of issues. We can see enlightened pragmatism in *The Five Maturities: personal and spiritual maturities* enrich our level of enlightenment; *professional and social maturities* enrich our level of pragmatism; and *contextual maturity* enriches our ability to bring enlightenment and pragmatism together in the moment.

Enlightened pragmatism reminds us that we cannot develop coaches in isolation. We are called instead to develop coaches in the spaces between them and their environments, between their narratives and their practices, and between the experience they bring to coaching and the expectations others have of them as a coach. Coaches who possess practical wisdom and practice wisely have expertise based in maturity and mastery which cannot be reduced to general truths but which enables them to adapt to meet the needs of each particular situation (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Paradoxically, coaching would benefit from being both more agile and more definitive.

“[Flyvbjerg] believed that as an individual progresses from beginning to advanced skills, behaviour becomes increasingly intuitive and situation-dependent rather than rule-governed; the development of a kind of concurrent know-how. Such know-how is grounded in an assortment of implicit dexterity gathered from numerous experiences and a multiplicity of cases. It is here, in the field of practical competence based on highly nuanced, context sensitive tacit skills and their ethical application, that the essence of *phronesis* lies” (Hemmestad et al., 2010, p. 451).

As more practitioners and technologists gather under the umbrella called ‘coaching’, our lack of a coherent vision, clear distinctions, and consensual standards has an adverse impact on all involved. I doubt that coaching will ever become a profession in the traditional sense, *and* we need to professionalize the space through new collaborative agreements. What is being called for is an emergent strategy that leads to clearer distinctions and an intentional vision for the future of the industry. There is much we can learn here from the long-standing traditions related to initiations and rites of passage. What follows are points for consideration inspired by practices developed in previous eras to support the transitions and growth of a community’s members and workers.

Introducing initiation and rites of passage

This report invites us to learn more from coaches at the more advanced end of the spectrum, both those who move in traditional circles and those who do not. What are they doing differently and how might we use these observations to benefit the development of all coaches? One common characteristic is that they have invested in themselves as human beings, often in processing challenges in their own lives. That is why I believe that the advancement of coaching will come not from the marketplace but rather in developing initiatory processes and rites of passage through which both coaching practitioners and the coaching community continuously evolve.

**Coaches who possess practical wisdom and
practice wisely have expertise which
enables them to adapt to each situation.**

Initiation

Initiatory processes like rites of passage offer the time and space for demarcating and supporting movement through a transition in role and/or status. Current certification processes play this role to some degree, but they often lack sufficiently rigorous rituals, universally recognized requirements, and challenges to the status quo needed for the vitality of the community. We can learn here from R.S. Peters (1981) who saw education as an initiatory process which included both education as cultural transmission and education as cultural regeneration (Waks, 2013, p. 133). Both will be essential as coaching approaches a threshold in its history.

Initiatory processes like rites of passage are deeply personal, deeply relational, and deeply communal in nature. They enable individuals to individuate *and* reincorporate, and communities to perpetuate *and* regenerate. They reflect the larger rhythms of nature (Gluckman, 1962) and make visible the natural pattern of dying, chaos, and renewal that operates everywhere in the universe. Van Gennep (1960) saw this flow as a law of life in which the energy in a system runs down and must be renewed at intervals. This is, in part, why it may be more accurate and useful to see coaching as an ecosystem rather than an emerging profession.

Art education offers a brilliant example of an initiatory frame:

[It] is a given that mature artists develop unique perspectives and practices. They do this by working through traditions and conventions, as filtered through their unique life experiences and those of their generation, discarding outmoded forms while extending their fields in new ways. They do not study the old masters to become different from them; this would be immature and shallow. Rather they study masters to learn from them in the process of qualifying themselves as insiders or initiates — as creative members of the artistic community, agents positioned to manage and advance the tradition in creative and unexpected ways (Waks, 2013, p. 133).

Rites of passage

For much of human history, communities developed processes to support initiation (e.g., from childhood to adulthood, from life to death, from member to shaman/healer). These rites not only offered structured passages for the participants but also structured opportunities for the community to remember and refresh their values, culture, and traditions. Our understanding of these processes was enriched by Arthur van Gennep's (1960) original work on what he called "rites of passage", Victor Turner's (1969) work on applying this model more broadly, Joseph Campbell's (1973) work on the hero's journey, and my work in developing Narrative Coaching (Drake, 2003, 2005).

The three phases in the original rites of passage model included *external changes* (e.g., state, role, status), *internal transitions* (e.g., identity, orientation, attitude), and a *horizontal threshold* between them that was complementary (ensuring continuity) and contrary (enabling challenge). I added a vertical axis to (1) create four phases, each with a threshold; (2) map the movement between the past and the future; (3) address the changing needs at each threshold; and (4) acknowledge that we return 'home' a different person on a different mission than when we began (Drake, 2007a) in Narrative Coaching. Coaching would benefit from a shared understanding of the passages through which coaches advanced that could be locally adapted yet universally recognized.

**We need safe spaces where the coaching
community can collectively challenge
expectations, discuss unspeakable subjects,
tip over sacred cows, and test new roles.**

As John Dewey noted, development is the result of the continuous interaction between a developing organism and its environment such that both continue to grow. Rites of passage are communal sacred practices through which both the individual and the community evolve. This takes us beyond the usual positivist assumptions which are anchored in standardized assumptions, decontextualize the coaching process, and disregard the influence of coaches' learning experiences on their journey to becoming a coach (Paquette et al., 2014). Instead, they are based in constructivist assumptions which value the importance of praxis, contextualize the coaching process, and highly regard coaches' learning experiences on their journey to becoming a coach.

Another source we can draw on here is the notion of *Bildung* as the dynamic interplay between the self and the world through which both the self and the world change. The *Bildung* of each era is the expanding capacity to pick up what previous generations have left behind and comprehend it even more. It is "the continuous ability to assess the state of affairs here and now and to re-orientate oneself towards the future" (Rantala 2013, 74). *Bildung* is always historical in its formation, yet constantly becoming something new. The approach to heritage is firmly directed towards the future even as there are openings for individuals to transform tradition as part of the *Bildung* process.

The value of this for coaching is that through diligent reflection, coaches can "surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice" (Schön, 1983, p. 61). Otherwise, "as time passes and their skills become more satisfying to themselves and to others, the task of thinking systematically and impartially becomes even more

difficult” (Raimy, 1950, p. 86). Critical thinking is an essential skill for participating effectively in *Bildung* just as it is in rites of passage and the new paradigm offered here.

This is important because the developmental thresholds we face in coaching require deeper presence (maturity) and deeper thinking (mastery). At the moment there is a tangled web of terms, paths, and agendas related to becoming a coach and positioning oneself in the market. Bachkirova & Smith (2015) offer a useful play on words in writing about “rights of passage” in becoming a qualified independent practitioner in mature professions. Drawing on the ethic of *Bildung*, we can say that passages require *rites* at key points which, when passed, bestow on practitioners increased *rights* in what they can call themselves and what they can do.

Proposing a new future for coaches and coaching

The underlying issue for coaching is that it lacks a coherent narrative about what it is and what it wants to become. Its hybrid nature, starting with its roots in the marketplace, has allowed it to proliferate at an unprecedented rate. At the same time, it has spread beyond those who spearheaded its rise, and divisions have arisen between its commercial, vocational, evidential, and associational influences. While coaching has always followed a unique path, it is time for a collective deliberation on where it wants to go from here in order to guide its future.

The first step in the process may be to determine what coaching wants to become. For example:

- Is coaching an *industry*, defined as “a group of entities that are related based on their primary business activities”? This is partially true and the most accurate categorization among these options, though it primarily refers to the *commercial* side of coaching.
- Is coaching a *discipline*, defined as “a branch of knowledge learned at university level”? This is partly true in the case of coaching psychology, though the sociological nature of clients’ needs is often overlooked and practitioners come from many backgrounds. This definition primarily refers to the *evidential* (academic) side of coaching.
- Is coaching a *field*, defined as “an occupation that requires both the completion of an academic degree and licensure or registration to be eligible for employment in the occupation”? Not really, as it does not meet either requirement. Coaching has continued to position itself as self-regulating (done moderately at best) on the *associational* side.
- Is coaching a *profession*, defined here by the Australian Council of Professions as “a group of individuals with ethical standards, specialised knowledge, and skills derived from research, education, and training at a high level. They are recognised by the public as possessing this expertise and are committed to using it in the interest of others” (cited in Geddes, 2024). There is still a long way to go on the *vocational* side as noted below.

Passages require *rites* at key points which, when passed, bestow on practitioners increased *rights* in what they can call themselves and what they can do.

While those who have written in this space are clear that coaching is not a profession, there is still the ambition that it might one day become one. I would argue that while this has strong merit, it would require a series of fundamental shifts that may not be possible or desirable. Overcoming the sunk costs for all involved is likely an insurmountable challenge. Instead, in advocating for a new paradigm, I am suggesting that a better strategy would be to diversify the eco-system through creating sharper distinctions for coaching and coaches.

Out of this process new entities may arise to support the professionalization of some members of this ecosystem. Even so, I would argue that coaching will not become a profession in the traditional sense but, in creating something new, it may actually help more established professions reinvent themselves for this time. To illustrate why I believe coaching would best be served by charting a new course, I would point to the work by my colleague and fellow Fielding alum John Bennett (2006) who did the first literature review on what it would take for coaching to become a profession. I have summarized the essential requirements he identified, in part to demonstrate that coaching is only partially there.

Practice Essentials

- Generally accepted, required competencies
- Education/training required for proficiency
- Defined and widely accepted body of knowledge
- Practice grounded in research and knowledge
- Normative expectations of approach to work
- Identifiable and distinct skills
- Means of assessing competence

Professional Essentials

- Code of ethics monitored and enforced
- Governing body that enforces ethics
- Culture that is self-regulating
- Diversity of thought and practice encouraged
- Research, publications, and open debate
- Communities of practice established
- Merit is evaluated and recognized
- Formalized organization, recognized by others
- Status and recognition associated with membership
- Identification/classification by government agencies

You can see from this list that there is still a long way to go if coaching is to ever be recognized as a profession. Given the origins of coaching, where it is now, and that there is little in place to bring about major change, it is hard to see how it would ever be one even if we wanted it. As such, positioning coaching as an ecosystem in which there is a spectrum of roles seems most appropriate until we develop a new form that fits the unique nature of coaching. As shown in the taxonomy below (Figure 9), coaching is not one thing. It is different things to different constituencies, and practitioners can be part of and benefit from multiple identities and communities.

Coaching is not one thing. It is different things to different constituencies, and practitioners could be part of and benefit from multiple identities and communities.

Artisans

I have contributed to the art and the science of coaching for over 25 years. This can be seen in my work as the founder of Narrative Coaching (Drake, 2016b, 2018) as well as my newer work in Integrative Development from which the five iBEAM factors, The Five Maturities and The Five Masteries come. Four degrees in the social sciences profoundly shaped the *science* of my work and a lifelong love of iconoclasts in art, music, architecture, spirituality, psychology, and literature inspired the *art* of this work. I've run retreats and experiential workshops to offer a developmental laboratory where coaches could experiment with new ways of being and working. This is in part why I am drawn to the notion of artisan as a model for what coaching could become.

Traditionally, artisans were skilled craft workers who made material objects partly or entirely by hand. They were often artists who operated far from industrial mindsets and practices. They were and are practitioners who blend art (maturity of self) and science (mastery of skills) to work in flow states much of the time. As Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (1997) note, their “artistry . . . involves the application of a combination of both conventional and creative approaches incorporating values, knowledge and skills” (pp. 413-414). Many of the issues that coaching faces call for a new paradigm in which coaching practitioners are increasingly developed and recognized as artisans. The foundational task for doing so is the creation of ourselves (Dooling, 1986).

For crafts the overwhelming emphasis was on experience and practical learning through apprenticeship while, in contrast, for professions it was mastery of a significant high-level body of knowledge (as measured by independent examination) that was additionally required” (Fillery-Travis & Collins, 2016, p. 731). Mastery requires practitioners to learn the *science* of their craft to meet the needs for replicability and universality in attending to its advancement and the *art* of their craft to meet the needs for singularity and creativity in attending to individuals (Charon, 2006). As such, coaching would benefit from initiatory processes, apprenticeships, and guild-like supports.

As Richard Sennett (2008) observed in studying masterful musicians:

I have to be willing to commit error, to play the wrong notes, in order to eventually get them right. This is a moment of truthfulness for the musician. Technique develops, then, by a dialectic between the correct way to do something and the willingness to experiment through error. The two sides cannot be separated. If the young musician is simply given the correct way, he or she will suffer from a false sense of security. If the budding musician luxuriates in curiosity, simply going with the flow of the transitional object, she or he will never improve (pp. 277-278).

Guilds

Guilds were medieval associations of merchants in a region (as part of a larger network) or associations of artisans in the same industry formed to further their own interests. They typically set standards for quality, passed down closely guarded techniques and knowledge, and determined requirements for membership, controlled pricing and sales, and maintained structured training systems of apprenticeship. Their structure often included a governing body, assisting functionaries, and a members' assembly. Guilds were important because the knowledge, understanding, and even practical ability gained through formal learning did not by themselves translate into professional capability (Waks, 2013).

Those who were accepted into the guild were hailed as master craftsmen. Before novices could rise to the level of journeyman then mastery, they had to go through an apprenticeship process. Apprentices would typically not learn more than the basics until they were trusted by their peers to move toward mastery. Guilds eventually gave way to industry and professional associations as capitalism became the dominant economic force. Perhaps it is time to bring back some of the elements of guilds of old re-interpreted for these times. For example, rather than assume coaches are prepared after completing a program or leave them to endure a trial by fire in the marketplace, apprenticeships could be designed as an intermediate step in the journey.

The opportunity became apparent recently when I presented on The Five Maturities to two groups at the Institute of Coaching Conference and the medical professionals in the room saw the value in rethinking how we develop ourselves. In discussions with a number of them, they wanted more support in integrating coaching into their medical practices — for their personal, vocational, and commercial benefit. The path forward may well be served by seeing coaching as an eco-system in which there are modern-day guilds of artisans that blend art, science, and commerce. They would and allow for various modes of participation and identity formation even as it would be clearer where one was on their journey.



They would offer the safe and generative spaces where professional coaches could intentionally practice, get robust feedback, and gain the support they need to progress toward mastery. These are spaces beyond what traditional coach education programs and coaching associations offer and they would be a key part in making the important distinctions coaching needs. They align well with observations that coaches often learn most about coaching by engaging in it, and they are supported in doing so most effectively if their process is structured as a rite of passage.

We can draw inspiration from elders in communities who have guided people through rites of passage for centuries and master craftsmen/craftswomen in guilds who guided artists and others to acquire the essential skills in their craft or trade (Drake, 2014; Kneebone, 2022; Sennett, 2008). This is an important issue at a time when many of the advanced coaches who might serve in this role are foregoing existing credentials as not sufficiently relevant to their practice, performance or pay. It is important to recognize that we need new forms of elders who are more than supervisors and mentors as well as new forms of eldering for those who coach. They would stand at thresholds with those who coach, both in their passages toward mastery but also in support for coaching's passages toward regeneration.

The spirit of what we are after can be found in a recent note from one of our students who wrote after re-immersing herself in the study and practice of Narrative Coaching: *“It has been a kind of out-of-body experience, recognising how much I have evolved since commencing the program the first time. The learning has and continues to offer a profound and positive impact on my humanity. It is a deeply cherished gift.”*

Let's turn now to the Conclusion for a summary and a set of recommendations about where we might begin. . .

Josh Schrei describes this beautifully:

The apprentice, traditionally, has to learn patience. And while the apprentice waits. . . they learn which way is up and down. They learn their relationality with everything. They learn to listen. They tend the fire.

The time of initiation is vital. Exhaustion is involved. Despair is involved. There is some type of deep inner transformation necessary before the apprentice is trusted with anything that could actually affect anything — because otherwise, all of their own hidden drives, all the things they haven't burned away yet, all those things they still have to prove are going to profoundly impact what they create.

We need new forms of eldering and new forms of elders for those who coach.

What you encounter, recognize or discover depends to a large degree on the quality of your approach . . . When we approach with reverence, great things decide to approach us.

Francis Weller



CONCLUSION

In times of great change, the learners will inherit the Earth while those attached to old certainties will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.

Eric Hoffer

It often seems these days that we are caught in a liminal time and space. We are trying to get our bearings, make sense and meaning, and move forward in a world that often feels upside down. While there is much to celebrate about what coaching has become and has accomplished — for practitioners and the world — the motivation to write this report came from a growing recognition that our valiant efforts were not enough. It seemed time for a new paradigm that would open up more potential for coaching and those who coach. In the end, it is more about deepening our maturity as a human than it is about adding to our ‘toolbox’ as a coach.

When writing this report, I kept coming back to two questions. The first was, *“What do our clients and the world need most from us now?”*. One response is to free coaches to work upstream closer to the sources of our clients’ issues and downstream closer to their efforts to implement what was important to them. This calls for an integrative approach to coaching that addresses the environments and narratives from which our clients come and to which they will return. This feels essential if want to contribute to a sustainable future (or perhaps a future at all). There is no point in coaching the person reupholstering the deck chairs if they are doing so on the Titanic.

The second question was, *“What assumptions about coaching do we need to revisit as a result?”*. One response is to devise a clear taxonomy of the key terms and roles and a clear strategy for meeting the needs of the broader coaching community (see figure 9). It would clear up much of the growing confusion about what it means to say, “I am a coach,” and it makes more space for the growing numbers of professionals and practitioners who integrate coaching into their primary role and/or work beyond coaching as we know it. This group is less inclined to join current coaching associations, but they have a lot to offer in developing practitioners, particularly at the advanced end of the continuum, and advancing coaching itself.

We are at a critical juncture in this regard as those of us who have led the quest thus far are called to pass the baton to new generations. For example, I recently spent time with the four Scandinavian EMCC chapters exploring The Five Maturities and the future of coaching in their region. This included some deep conversation with one of the Chapter Presidents around what the ‘baton’ looks like and means to him. I shared that coaching is less about moving toward idealized states and more about growing our capacity to be present states — and to keep returning to the present moment (what IS) as we walk alongside our clients. To get us started on that journey, a summary of the new paradigm, a proposed new taxonomy, and ways to get involved are offered.

Summarizing the new paradigm

Perhaps we are being called to take up Freud’s challenge to develop “secular ministers of the soul.” This would take us beyond the current paradigm to one in which, as Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz once said, “we react rightly without knowing why, it flows through us, and we do the right thing. With the help of the instinct of truth, we enter a meaningful flow, as a manifestation of the Self.” This will require a committed effort to mature as practitioners and as an industry. This report offers perspectives and resources for developing more coaches who can work this way and for advancing our thinking about coaching overall.

Key elements of the new paradigm:

- Starts from a wider and more inclusive range of epistemologies and ontologies.
- Uses integrative approaches to development based in sociology not just psychology.
- Shifts from competency models to three pillars: iBEAM, Five Maturities and Masteries.
- Aligns how coaching is done with the research- and practice-based evidence.
- Positions clients as a full partner in coaching, with their growth as primary outcome.
- Develops more ways to support clients in sustaining their work between sessions.
- Makes clearer distinctions and a clear taxonomy for coaches and coaching.
- Recognizes that coaching is not one thing, it will evolve, and we may need new words.
- Studies mature, masterful coaches to better understand their journey as a guide for others.
- Creates initiatory processes for all those who work across the spectrum of coaching.
- Is willing to explore what is out beyond coaching as we knew it.

We react rightly without knowing why,
it flows through us . . . we do the right
thing as a manifestation of the Self”.

Responses to the three challenges

Three challenges for the future of coaching were proposed in the Introduction. We return to them now with the new paradigm in mind and to add an additional challenge that is emerging. To start, as noted earlier, coaching began in the marketplace and has struggled to find consensus around questions such as, “Who can be classified as a “coach”?; “Who decides who is inside and outside coaching?”; and “What knowledge is essential?” (Drake & Stober, 2005). The words ‘coach’ and ‘coaching’ have come to mean many things and are used in many ways in what is now a saturated market. Making clearer distinctions about what it means to be a ‘coach’ will enable practitioners to be clearer about how to identify themselves and how to progress. For an increasing number of us, there is a sense that coaching is not even the right word for what we do.

To this end, it is hoped that this report will lead to conversations from which will arise the vocabulary we need to define the elements of a more comprehensive taxonomy and paradigm. It

offers (1) a distinction between coaching as a mindset, an activity, a role, and a collective; (2) a call for new words and roles for ‘coaching’, particularly at more advanced levels; and (3) a vision for coaching as a movement to shift how we learn and grow, live and work.

Coaching began as a broad field encompassing people who came from a wide variety of backgrounds and paths. But ‘coaching’ has become too broad and unwieldy as an umbrella. To support these efforts, a spectrum of providers is offered below (Figure 9) that begins to move ‘coaching’ in the direction of the range found in the psychological space: human kindness, self-help resources, peer support, therapeutic volunteers, therapeutic professionals, unlicensed but trained psychotherapists, licensed psychotherapists, to psychiatrists.

What we are after, regardless of the level is the development of coaches who are able to *openly* be themselves as deeply as can be in the moment. Perhaps nothing else is of any importance” (Rogers, 1967). This reflects a shift from a focus on conformity and uniformity in much of the current paradigm to a focus on maturity and integrity with ourselves, our clients, our agreements, and our community in the new paradigm. It is an opportunity to challenge the consumerist patterns in the coaching space and replace them with a sustainable paradigm like the one presented here.

This would enable us to (1) position coaching as an intentional but natural human conversation; (2) develop more rigorous and initiatory paths for development that are based as much in maturity as they are in mastery; and (3) develop new approaches to coaching and designs for its use oriented around the client journey. To make the transitions to the next era in coaching, we can draw on lessons from the formation of artisans and the role of apprenticeships in the guilds of old. This will be much easier to do if we identify a taxonomy for coaching.

The changes we need will emerge from the
conversations we are willing to have.



Proposing a taxonomy for coaching

I noted in an earlier paper that “as the field of coaching matures, it will eventually yield categories that formally distinguish among various levels and uses of coaching. As a result, new forms of professional communities will [hopefully] arise across the spectrum of people who identify with coaching” (Drake, 2008, pp. 20-21). Perhaps now there is enough critical mass and momentum to finally set a new vision in motion.

The taxonomy below identifies four core distinctions related to coaching (mindset, means, member, and modality) as a core part of the new paradigm. Professionals (like in health care or leadership) and practitioners can be in one or more groups. This feels like an important first step in making better distinctions in how we define and describe ourselves, with whom we affiliate and for what purpose, what support and passages we need, and how to contribute to the broader advancement of coaching and all it stands for.

PEOPLE WHO USE A COACHING APPROACH	PROFESSIONALS WHO USE COACHING	PRACTITIONERS WHO COACH	PRACTITIONERS WHO WORK BEYOND COACHING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits from industry • No institutional requirements • Minimal academic foundation • Based in new paradigm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliated with industry • Institutional recommendations • Complementary academic foundations • Integrative processes and resources • Offers apprenticeships • Based in new paradigm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with industry • Institutional requirements • Canon of shared academic foundations • Requires new measures, apprenticeships, etc. • Requires new bodies • Based in new paradigm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with industry • Institutional connections • Canon of integrative academic foundations • Dialogues with coaching stakeholders • Calls for new collective body and community • Based in a new paradigm
Coaching as a mindset	Coaching as a means	Coaching as a member	Coaching as a modality

Practitioners can be part of one or both groups.

Figure 9. A proposed taxonomy for coaching

There is an opportunity to challenge the consumerist patterns in the coaching space and replace them with a more sustainable paradigm like the one presented here.

A fourth challenge: AI and the future of coaching

One of the benefits of introducing a taxonomy for coaching is that it offers a space for us to deliberate on “what is coaching?” and what does it mean to be a ‘coach’. This conversation is even more important as we engage in important dialogues around the roles of humans and technologies in coaching. A number of the trends affecting coaching — including people’s need for augmenting their productivity, hyper-personalized services, and integrative and integrated care (Trigubenko, 2024) — will require coaches to engage with technologies. At the same time, there are also urgent, needs to be more fully present and kind, enhance our sense of belonging and mattering, mature our capacity to deal with differences, and enrich our shared humanity and fate.

These issues have become increasingly important with the rapid rise of AI in the coaching space. I see AI as a wake-up call for coaching to get out in front by releasing our attachment to competency models and coaching as we knew it in order to bring fresh thinking and wisdom to co-create what is next. What kinds of relationships do we want to forge with AI providers in supporting the development of coaches, coaching capabilities, and the evolution of coaching?

I believe that we are being challenging us to reflect more deeply on what makes us human and to develop more integrative ways of enhancing our maturity and our mastery. I believe there are a number of resources in this report to help us rise to this occasion.



So ChatGPT could weigh in, I asked: *What are the best uses for AI in coaching?* It wrote:

AI can be a valuable tool in coaching across various fields such as sports, business, and personal development. Here are some of the best uses for AI in coaching:

1. **Performance Analysis:** In sports, AI can analyze videos of athletes to help identify technical weaknesses and optimize performance. For example, AI systems can track movements, assess technique, and compare them with ideal performance metrics.
2. **Personalized Training Programs:** AI can help design personalized training and development programs based on individual performance data and goals. This can include adjustments to workout intensity, skill development activities, and recovery periods, tailored specifically to the athlete's needs.
3. **Predictive Analytics:** AI can use historical data to predict outcomes, helping coaches make informed decisions. In business coaching, for example, AI can analyze market trends, company performance data, and employee productivity to recommend strategic decisions.
4. **Virtual Coaching Assistants:** AI-powered virtual assistants can provide round-the-clock support and guidance. These assistants can answer questions, provide feedback, and deliver content that is customized to the user's learning pace and style.
5. **Mental Skills Training:** AI can deliver cognitive training programs that help athletes and professionals manage pressure, improve concentration, and enhance mental resilience. These programs often use techniques from psychology that are adapted to the individual's specific needs.
6. **Feedback and Progress Tracking:** AI systems can continuously monitor progress and provide real-time feedback, helping individuals understand their improvement over time. This feedback can be crucial in maintaining motivation and adjusting goals.
7. **Enhancing Communication:** AI can analyze communication patterns to help improve interaction between coaches and clients. For example, sentiment analysis can help in understanding emotional states and adapting coaching strategies accordingly.
8. **Accessibility and Reach:** AI enables coaching to be more accessible to people around the world. Through online platforms powered by AI, coaching can be delivered to individuals in remote locations or to those who cannot afford traditional coaching services.

These applications demonstrate how AI can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of coaching by providing detailed insights, personalized experiences, and scalable solutions.

To go deeper, I asked: Will AI ever be better at coaching than human coaches? It wrote:

AI might excel in certain aspects of coaching, particularly those that involve data processing, pattern recognition, and providing information quickly and accurately. However, whether AI can be better at coaching than humans depends on what aspects of coaching we consider and the specific context in which coaching is taking place.

Here are some considerations:

1. **Technical Skills and Analytics:** AI can be superior in analyzing large datasets quickly, identifying patterns, and providing quantitative feedback. This is especially useful in fields like sports, where biomechanical analysis or performance statistics are crucial. AI can surpass human capabilities in precision and speed in these areas.
2. **Personalization and Adaptability:** AI can tailor training programs and strategies to individual needs based on data. However, while AI can adapt responses based on algorithms, human coaches are often better at understanding deeper emotional nuances and adjusting their coaching style based on subtle cues that AI might miss.
3. **Emotional Intelligence:** Human coaches excel in areas requiring empathy, emotional support, and motivation. Human interactions often play a crucial role in coaching effectiveness, especially in personal development and executive coaching. AI currently lacks the genuine emotional depth and social intuition that human coaches provide.
4. **Ethical Judgments and Decision Making:** Coaching often involves ethical considerations and decisions that require a deep understanding of human values and societal norms. Human coaches can navigate these complex moral landscapes better than AI, which might apply rules rigidly without understanding the broader context.
5. **Innovation and Creativity:** Human coaches can think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions tailored to unique situations. While AI can generate ideas based on data patterns, the creativity and intuition that human coaches bring to problem-solving are not easily replicated by AI.
6. **Building Relationships:** The relationship between a coach and their client is fundamental to the coaching process. Trust, respect, and understanding built through personal interactions are key to effective coaching relationships. AI lacks the ability to form genuine human connections, which are critical for impactful coaching.

In summary, while AI may exceed human abilities in specific technical tasks within coaching, the holistic approach to coaching—especially aspects involving emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, and personal relationships—is likely to remain a domain where human coaches excel. AI can be seen as a tool that complements human coaching rather than replacing it entirely.

Inviting you to get involved

I sense that the movement we need will start in small groups of people imagining, experimenting, and advocating for a better way. As I speak on The Five Maturities around the world, I sense that there is a growing hunger for (1) freedom from assessments and norms which impede full expression and growth, (2) new personal and collective pathways to enhance maturity and mastery; (3) more coherence and clarity about the terms we use and the roles we play; and (4) the authenticity and autonomy to pursue excellence in ways that are appreciated by others yet true to ourselves. The work to be done requires that we study masters, not continue with our attempts to scale novices. This feels timely given the generational shift underway as the founding generation (myself included), passes the baton to those who are carrying coaching forward into a new world.

If you would like to connect with others on this journey, connect with us here:

<https://www.davidbdrake.com/the-five-maturities/#presentedglobally>

Next steps include creating opportunities for coaching scholars, educators, practitioners, and stakeholders to meet in various combinations to:

- talk openly with, connect with, and learn from each other
- co-develop a canon of knowledge, a map to the ecosystem
- co-evolve a taxonomy for coaching (starting with the report)
- co-design initiatory processes (including apprenticeships)
- connect integrative practitioners as scouts for the next era

I sense that the movement we need will start in small groups of people imagining, experimenting, and advocating for a better way.

Ways to get connected . . .

- **Use this attribution when using any table or diagram from the report:**
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WHAT IS CALLING YOU?

Hundreds of thousands of people have invested in some form of coaching training around the world. Now is the time to find new ways to support their growth, their practice, and their contribution. In this sense, the ultimate vision for the report is to start a movement in which there are many roles to play.

Thank you for taking your time to read this report. I hope you found the invitations inspiring and thought-provoking. My invitation to you: What does the world need from coaching now? Where can you convene or contribute to the conversations we need? Every voice matters.

At its core, this journey is about deepening our maturities as the foundation for greater masteries. This will enable each of us to bring all of who we are and what we know to our work. This will enable us to create new forms which make this possible. We can then invite our clients and others we walk with to do the same.

My personal mission is to deepen our understanding of how to liberate the potential for growth in any moment, particularly in reimagining our approach to education, health care, and communities.

If you have a request or an opportunity, you can reach me at david@themomentinstitute.com.

Kind regards,



An old idea suggests that each person's life is also a question being asked of the world; each life a specific question that is not completely answered until a person's last breath goes out.

Regardless of the conditions affecting the outer world, the old idea was to enter the question of one's own life fully and become the living answer.

Those who can answer the essential question inside become more able to handle the uncertainties around them.

Michael Meade

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Our disconnection from our evolutionary history and our planet as an ecosystem is adversely affecting us and all that sustains us. It is adversely affecting our epigenetic memory of how we naturally learn, develop and change. The two go hand in hand. **Perhaps coaching is ultimately about becoming better humans.**

This report is as much about remembering what we have lost as it is about discovering what is waiting to be found and creating what we need now. What is calling you?

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