

TRANSFORMATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

The Four Conversations of Integral Coaching®

Joanne Hunt

ABSTRACT This article provides an introduction to the process used by Integral Coaching Canada in working with clients over time. Four distinct types of coaching conversations are illuminated in this article. First, the Intake Coaching Conversation is described. This conversation serves to introduce the coach and client to each other, including the client topic and related questions as they begin their developmental journey. Next the Offer Coaching Conversation is presented. This conversation allows the coach to bring forward and explore metaphors that express the client's past and future relationship to the topic at hand. The use of metaphors is discussed in relation to its contribution in creating new realities, interaction with subject-object theory, and provision of anchors to clients during times of change. Then an overview of Cycles of Development Coaching Conversations is provided. The intentions and dynamics of this developmental phase are explored in terms of capability building, practice design, and types of practices. Finally, the importance of the Completion Coaching Conversation is discussed. Throughout the article references are made to a client case to highlight how these conversations progress in real time.

Key words: AQAL; conversations; human development; integral coaching; transformation

This article builds on the groundwork provided in the first three articles of this issue. The first article, "Introduction to Integral Coaching®" (pp. 1-20), provides an understanding of our coaching method and the theory upon which it rests. The subsequent two articles, "Looking AT and Looking AS the Client" (pp. 21-40) and "A Unique View Into You" (pp. 41-67), present the set of integral lenses used in our Integral Coaching® methodology. This article dives more fully into putting this human development model into action. I will do this by detailing the four types of coaching conversations that occur during our Integral Coaching® process, the focus and components of each conversation, and some of the more subtle or nuanced elements attended to throughout. The four types of conversations are:

1. Intake Coaching Conversation
2. Offer Coaching Conversation
3. Cycles of Development Coaching Conversations
4. Completion Coaching Conversation

These four types of conversations can occur in long-term formal coaching relationships, in a few consultations, or compressed into a single occurrence; the depth is scaled depending on client requirements. The process can be offered to groups (e.g., coaching circles, peer coaching, Integral Life Practice [ILP] communities) or to organizations, scaled appropriately, as they too have a systemic or composite "way of being." Each of the four

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types of coaching conversations has a specific focus, outcome, and process in our Integral Coaching® method, which is rigorous in structure and dynamic in application, thus supporting both new and highly experienced coaches.

Coaching conversations are directly impacted by the orienting quadrant(s) privileged and/or the change approach advocated by particular schools of coaching. In fact, conversations in the field of professional coaching are typically presented as the *basis* of the relationship versus the *vehicle* through which a coaching method occurs, and there is very little delineation between the types of conversations that can exist between coach and client. Practitioners in the field of human development have exhibited an increased interest in “conversations,” as evidenced by the best-selling books such as *Crucial Conversations* (2002), *Fierce Conversations* (2002), *Difficult Conversations* (2000), and *Powerful Conversations* (1999).¹ Our pluralistic culture is interested in conversations that occur with impact, results, and advancement (orange altitude) as well as an effective and sensitive meeting of equals in expression of unique views and collaboration (green altitude). Through our Integral Coaching® approach, we are interested in providing guidance and structure not just in terms of conversations becoming more effective and useful, but in advancing awareness of the different types of conversations that occur throughout a coaching engagement, their unique contributions, and their roles in serving a client over time.

The four types of coaching conversations presented in this article illuminate the role and technical components of each. For the purpose of this article, I will not fully explore the complex embodiment characteristics of the Integral Coach™ that are necessary to carry out each of these conversations, except for illustrative purposes in specific instances. Coach development will be the subject of a future article that will examine what it truly takes to build the somatic, emotional, cognitive, relational, moral, and spiritual capacities of an Integral Coach™. Therefore, the following four coaching conversations may feel more cognitively informed, given their technical descriptions, but, in fact, the coach and the client have a profoundly intimate personal and professional connection.

1. Intake Coaching Conversation

The purpose of the Intake Coaching Conversation is to enable the coach and client to learn about each other, discuss the topic that the client brings forward, and explore the possibility of a coaching relationship. It is during this initial conversation that a coach learns about the kinds of change and development that is of interest to the client. Of course, the topic becomes more nuanced if a coach and client work together over time. However, it is in this initial connection that the client first gives voice to what is of developmental interest and importance at that moment in time. Topics are wide-ranging in their scope and expression. A client may speak of a yearning or future goal: “I want to be able to speak more confidently in meetings” or may share his or her suffering with how things presently are: “I am so frustrated with how often I lose connection with a wider, more expansive me and I want this to be a more stable part of my day-to-day life.” Some topics arise in the workplace, such as when a client wants to learn how to contribute within a new organization or role, whereas others concern specific relational issues such as becoming a more inspiring team leader, patient parent, or engaged partner. In an effective Intake Conversation, the coach gains initial access into and appreciation of how the client sees the world, how they have approached their coaching topic up until now, what they have tried, how they see things, and who else is involved—all of these are elements of the coach Looking AT and Looking AS the client.

During this initial conversation, the coach seeks to learn about what deeply matters to the client, relying on embodied listening to discern hints as to the client’s way of being and what excites or frustrates him. The coach is not only receptive, but also actively engaged in asking powerful questions that are guided by the set of six AQAL lenses that give rise to a client’s AQAL Constellation™. The lenses used in our Integral Coaching®

method include four quadrants, levels of consciousness, six lines of development, states of consciousness, and types (gender and Enneagram). See “A Unique View Into You” (pp. 41-67 in this issue) for a more detailed presentation of the full set of lenses.

Within the framework of each lens, the coach listens throughout the Intake Conversation using a Looking AS capacity: What must it be like to see the world through this client’s eyes? They also draw on Looking AT capacities: Which competencies and perspectives are present and not? What are the situations or environments in which the topic resides? Who else is affected or involved? Looking AS and Looking AT are also described more fully in “Looking AT and Looking AS the Client” (pp. 21-40 in this issue), but Figure 1 provides a depiction of the two ways of getting to know the client: 1) from the inside out and 2) from the outside in. In our culture, we naturally build capacities for Looking AT. Our school systems, testing, and performance reviews are all built on effective Looking AT criteria. Far less developed in our society is the ability to Look AS. This is due, in part, to the fact that increased perspective taking is a developmental achievement. In simplistic terms, to Look AT and Look AS requires third-person perspective-taking abilities, which generally begin at early orange altitude. And certainly, the range of Looking AT continues to get more and more nuanced while the ability to sensitively Look AS substantially shifts, becoming more powerfully robust through a fourth-person perspective-taking capability that begins to become available at green altitude and beyond.

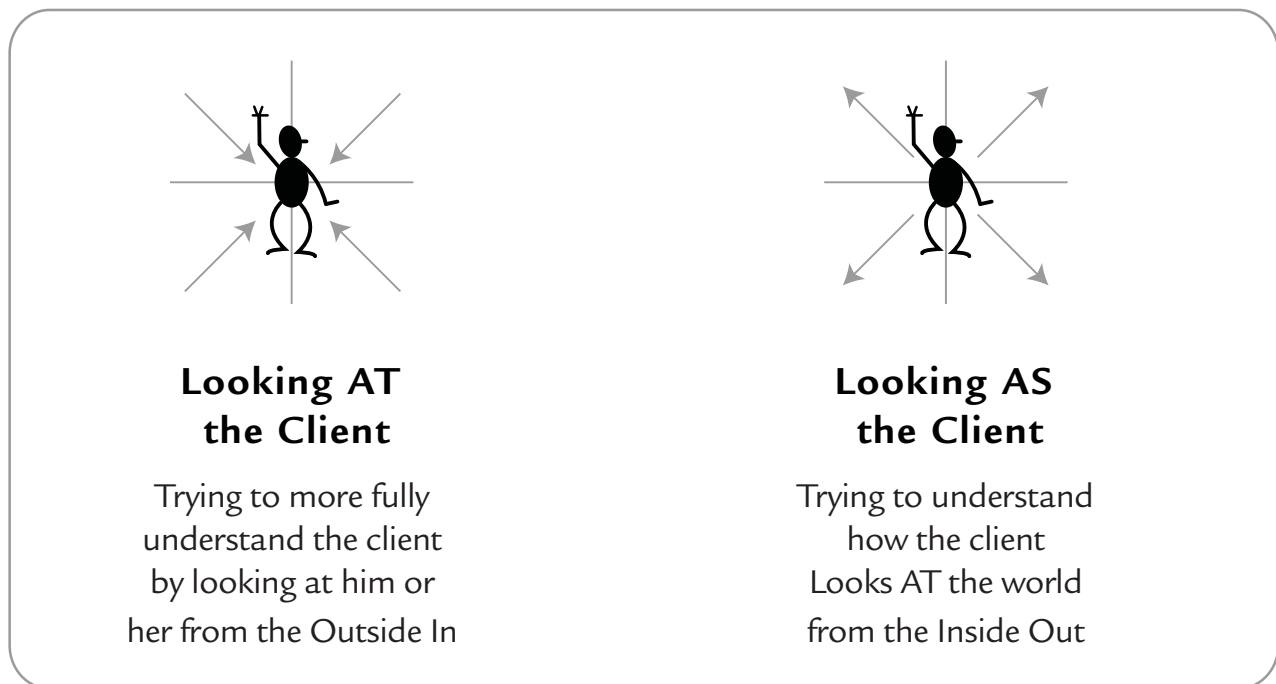


Figure 1. Looking AT and Looking AS the client.

It is important to note that Looking AS is not the same as “empathize with” or “connect to,” but instead involves being able to step into another person’s shoes, to get inside their world (as best as another being can), and look out at the world through their eyes with one’s body, heart, and mind. From a perspective-taking capacity, this is the ability to be aware of our own way of Looking AT the world (which arises from our unique AQAL Constellation™) as we attempt to Look AS the client, which involves perceiving, from the inside out, how the client Looks AT the world (see Fig. 1). This multiple level embodied perspective taking is a critical capability that is

developed in our coaches while concurrently not losing awareness of their own self as instrument—the current manifestation of the coach’s AQAL Constellation™. In other words, when a coach is trying to Look AS their client, they are in essence trying to feel into—from the inside out—the client’s way of Looking AT the world, which includes the client’s way of seeing, going, and checking. This requires that the coach be aware of his or her biases associated with “self as instrument” as he or she interprets what is being sensed. This is an important point, for it calls for more complex integral perspective-taking capacities to be embodied in our coaches. It requires knowing how our own biases show up in both Looking AT the client (quadrivia) and Looking AS how the client Looks AT the world (quadrants). Figure 1 represents the two primary types of “looking” in our Integral Coaching® model.

The questions posed by the coach during an Intake Coaching Conversation reveal aspects of the client’s full AQAL Constellation™, using six lenses to guide the coach’s exploration of the territory brought forward by the client. It is a time of connection, intimacy, powerful questioning, and embodied listening. Often clients have major insights about themselves and their topic during this first conversation. However, the conversation is not about trying to solve the topic as though it—or the client—is a problem to be fixed. With an integral approach and a competency-based understanding of development, the coach is probing not just the topic that the client has raised, but how this topic has become central to them—what has been present and not, what is supporting them and not, what do they see and not. In essence, the coach tries to understand what has given rise to this topic and to appreciate how the client’s best efforts have not enabled them to be in their topic in ways that are more skillful, supportive, and enlivening.

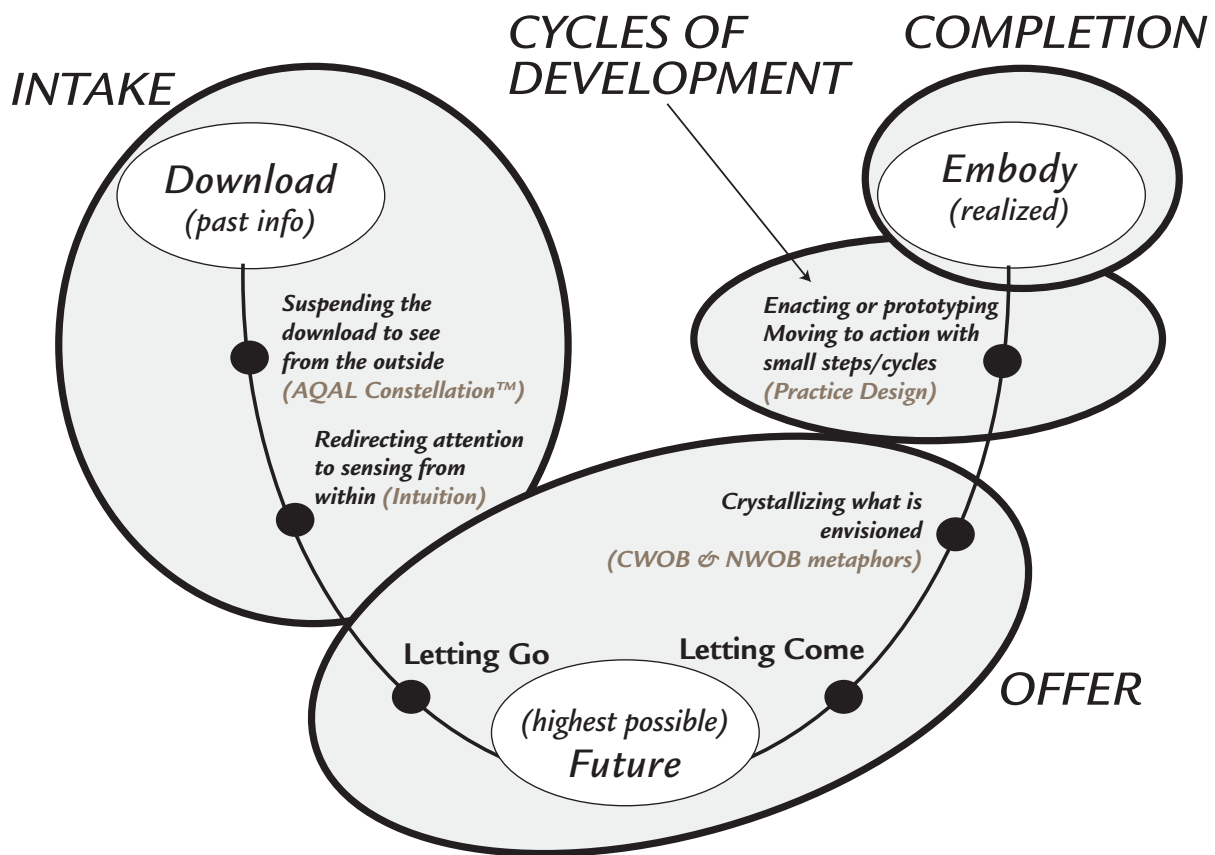


Figure 2. Mapping of four coaching conversations to Otto Scharmer’s “U.”

It is interesting to note that the process and ability to “drop into” a client’s world parallels the intricate process developed by Otto Scharmer for connecting to emergent futures. In Scharmer’s *Theory U* (2007), he maps a process—in great detail—for connecting to and enacting our highest possible futures. He suggests that discontinuous change requires doing more than looking to the past and acting from the wisdom garnered from that time period. He does not propose that one is not informed by the past, but that it is just one of the places to locate wisdom. In coaching, of course, the client sits on the fulcrum between their past and their emergent future. There are many parallels in the Scharmer process to the steps that our coaches take to understand and work with their clients (see Fig. 2).

The first step in dropping down the left side of Scharmer’s “U” is to suspend the historical-based download of information. In the coach’s case, this refers to suspending initial judgments, conclusions, and advice-giving. For example, an unconscious download includes hearing about a client’s difficulty with their boss while the coach simultaneously remembers a time in her own history when a similar challenge presented itself. From that experience, she offers to her client, “Just try this when you’re with him.” In *Theory U* (2007), suspending what has automatically been done in the past is the first step in the process. The second step is *seeing* with fresh eyes (Scharmer, 2007, p. 45). This parallels our Looking AT capabilities, drawing on the full set of AQAL lenses to better see and understand the client. As we continue dropping down the U, the third step is sensing, which involves leaning into a larger wisdom, moving beyond cognition into wider perspectives, and more subtle ways of sensing (Scharmer, 2007, p. 45). In coaching work, this step occurs when the coach shifts perspective in order to feel into, sense through, and Look AS the client. What must it be like to move through the world as this precious human being? Scharmer’s work is most often used to “drop into” our own highest possible future and create from this place. Our coaching process involves feeling into the emergent futures with and on behalf of our clients and co-creating from this place. It is a powerful and intimate way to begin the journey as coach and client.

This first conversation also allows the client to get to know the coach. The client is exploring what it would be like to work with this particular human being. How the coach engages with the client during the Intake has a significant impact on the possibility of establishing an open, trusting, and direct coaching relationship. The client will also want to learn about the Integral Coaching® approach to development, what it requires over time, the general schedule, length of meetings, and information about what happens between sessions. The coach responds with an abbreviated summary about the coaching approach, including how each person’s way of seeing and being in life is the source from which we do what we do, say what we say, and get the results that we get; how it is through becoming aware of this current way of being while simultaneously becoming aware of new ways of seeing and relating to a topic that we can begin to bring about sustainable change. Along with fresh awareness and insight, there will also be a need to develop new muscles/new competencies to be able to live in expanded and more supportive ways.

The coach lets the client know that they will be engaging in new activities, practices, and exercises daily and weekly to build the muscles needed to support the coaching topic. The client understands that he or she will be moving through a series of cycles of development that build awareness and develop new competencies such that the client actually realizes, manifests, and sustains their desired objectives. Meetings will be held every two to three weeks depending on the client and the nature of their topic. Clients are often both surprised and relieved that there is a muscle-building or capacity-building component in coaching work (vs. just conversations), and this solid foundation gives them hope (and responsibility). The coach shares with the client what the approach includes and not—per some of the areas discussed in the “Introduction to Integral Coaching®” article (pp. 1-20 in this issue). The client, of course, receives and responds to this information through their AQAL Constellation™. Therefore, their replies and comments provide the coach with more riches to absorb as the

coach continues to Look AT and Look AS the client until the last minute of the conversation. Acute listening remains even when the coach and client are discussing, what could seem to be from the outside, more general aspects of our Integral Coaching® approach.

One outcome of the Intake Conversation is a decision regarding whether or not the coach and client will move forward together in a coaching relationship. This decision is based on several factors. First, some topics are not appropriate for coaching, such as addictions, psychological issues like severe depression or debilitating anxiety, rage or post-traumatic symptoms, and relationship concerns involving abuse or violence; in such instances, an Integral Coach™ is ethically bound to refer the client to a qualified mental health professional. Secondly, some clients may prefer and/or need interventions such as mentoring. For example, a young manager may need mentoring guidance in order to get to know the system that they have just joined and this knowledge may be best learned from a more experienced manager. Thirdly, clients may need other forms of learning such as an appropriate course, strength trainer, spiritual teacher, or other professional in the ecology of support that is available. Finally, the coach and client need to agree there is mutual resonance and shared depth in their preliminary rapport, the client feels sufficiently met and understood in their topic, the coach is developmentally able to take the perspectives of the client (Looking AS), can understand the breadth of their topic and its developmental needs (Looking AT), and the client is open to Integral Coaching®.

If the decision is to proceed together, the coach lets the client know that the next conversation will be what we call an Offer Coaching Conversation. The coach usually says something like,

“Between now and when we get together next, I will be sitting with all that you have shared with me today. When we get together at our next meeting, I will try to offer you my sense of how you have been approaching your coaching topic which, I hope, will help shine a light on why this topic may have been so challenging up until now. Usually that has some key insights all on its own and you will have much to offer in terms of what you see as we play with your topic. I will also bring forward a possible new way to approach your topic that, once again, we will build together. During this coaching work, you will be working with the strong capacities that you already bring to the table as well as developing new competencies to support moving forward. And, of course, we will collaborate to make sure that I am always current and clear regarding what you need at each step. I will also bring a draft of a formal coaching agreement which will detail the developmental capacities that we agree will best support you so that we have a roadmap for our journey. We will look at it all and edit it jointly so that we can reach a place where we are both clear on the focus of our coaching work together.”

The coach checks to see if the client has any questions and responds in kind. Ideally, the client leaves this first meeting feeling skillfully met and is confident in moving forward. The coach has asked questions that resonated with the client and already has him pondering new vistas. The client has been inspired and usually feels that he has learned something about himself that he had not realized before. Already the client is percolating in the coaching container. This Intake Conversation forms the basis for the container moving forward.

Following the Intake Coaching Conversation, the coach spends time steeping in the client’s AQAL Constellation™, developing the parameters of the formal part of the coaching work to be done, as well as the components of the client’s Current Way of Being (CWOB) and New Way of Being (NWOB) that will be offered through metaphors to the client in the next coaching conversation. This process involves not just rigorous

cognitive work but deeply dropping into the client's full and complex reality through meditation, centering, somatic work, and other methods for accessing a quieter wisdom on behalf of another human being. In continuing further down the left slope of Scharmer's "U," the coach moves to the bottom of the U, or the apex, which includes a substantial shifting from "places and practices of connecting and seeing" to "places and practices of stillness and presence" (Scharmer, 2007, p. 45) (Fig. 2). From this place, the highest possible future of the client can be tasted. Sitting in this place of vast emptiness, one can touch a client's world from a remarkably spacious, free, full, and transformative place. As the coach emerges from the *causal* space, they begin the journey up the right side of the "U" with a glimpse into a metaphor and a *subtle* grasp of the client's world. The coach proceeds further up the U to the *gross* realms of practice design that are deeply supportive of the client and his or her emergent future.

As Wilber has noted, U Theory is an almost perfect enactment of the states of consciousness that starts with the orientation to the world of the client (*gross*), examining what their world looks like today, then dropping further down the U into feeling or sensing the situation and the client from a wider space (*subtle*) before letting go and dropping into pure emptiness (*causal* to *non-dual*). From this stillness, the coach begins to ascend back up the U as a creative image or metaphor arises for the client (*subtle*) and then further up the U, designing and implementing in the *gross* realm (Ken Wilber, personal communication, December 16, 2008).

This span between the Intake and Offer Conversations is a poignant time for the coach as they sit with the reality of another human being. Coaches are called into deep service and a desire to support human development. Our coaches have embodied a way to let the client "roll around" inside their own body-heart-mind-spirit. It is through this embodiment that integral theory shows another aspect of its profound elegance. In the preparation for the next conversation with their client, an Integral Coach™ experiences the set of AQAL lenses as a living organism. It is not only a cognitive exercise. It is a deeply felt connection to see, think, and feel another human's life through these lenses. Coaches sit in silence and enable the voice of the client to be heard inside the coach's own awareness. Often coaches are moved to tears and laughter as they connect to the lived reality of another person. Laughing in our shared and unique joy. Crying in our shared and unique suffering.

At an event that I attended in Boulder, Colorado in 2004, Ken Wilber was asked, "How do you know if you're developing?" He sat quietly for a few moments and replied, "You laugh more every day and you cry more every day." Development continues to make us more and more sensitive to the pain and suffering of the world, especially deepened through realized experience. We can see more perspectives, so we also access more pain and joy. These same widening developmental perspectives enable us to both "hurt more and be bothered less" (Wilber, personal communication, January 9, 2009) as we enact right livelihood. It is from this place of shared humanity and embodiment of the integral model that coaches prepare for the Offer Conversation.

2. Offer Coaching Conversation

The Offer Coaching Conversation is the "backbone" to the dance that the coach and client will engage in over time. This conversation includes the coach setting the context and focus for the development steps to be taken. The Offer Coaching Conversation will include the following components: 1) a review or check-in regarding the client's coaching topic to ensure that the coach gained an accurate understanding of the topic during the Intake Coaching Conversation, revisiting why this topic is so important to the client, and exploring if anything new came up since the Intake Conversation; 2) offering the client a sense or particular view of their CWOB in their topic and bringing it to light in a way that they have never seen before; 3) offering the client a possible NWOB in this topic that takes them beyond any perspective that they could have come up with on their own; 4) laying out the proposed map of the focus and approach of the coaching contract; and 5) launching the agreed upon first actions.

In the Offer Coaching Conversation—at this very early stage—clients feel deeply appreciated and seen. They are usually surprised and intrigued at what an Integral Coach™ has been able to articulate after one short Intake Conversation. The primary reason why our coaches can bring profound insights forward after only one conversation is due to the comprehensive method, embodied perspective taking, and way of being that is cultivated in the training that they have received through the Integral Coaching® Certification Program. They are able to bring forward an “offer” versus a solution or answer. And this offer calls for the client to be active in the process. During the Offer Conversation, the client becomes very involved with articulating, forming, and re-forming all offers that the coach brings forward. The offer is always the starting point and becomes the client’s to own, shape, and work with over time.

It is important to note that the choice in our coaching school of the word “offer” is deliberate and crucial. There is great debate in the field of professional coaching as to whether a coach should ever *offer* an observation to a client. In fact, some schools of coaching hold the opinion that offering what you see to a client can be held as evidence of a lesser-developed coach and that a master coach is always able to keep their views, biases, and judgments at bay. We believe that coaches, like all humans, make judgments, assessments, interpretations, and conclusions all of the time and that our questions and assertions naturally come from this place. The view that we do not make judgments or assessments is also a view! We feel it is important to bring these assessments to light during coach training, actively get to know and work with the unique biases and observations that arise in each coach, and limit the projection that can take place when interior conclusions are not attended to consciously—let alone mistakenly hold the view that we no longer have judgments or conclusions once we are master coaches. Our coaches work actively with the biases and perspectives that arise from their unique AQAL Constellations™. This does not mean that an Integral Coach™ is without bias—quite the opposite. Coaches need to be intimately aware of their assumptions and judgments and then be awake to what they are bringing forward through their unique way of seeing, going, and checking in order to be more skilled and discerning while working with clients. Our rigorous method, which includes working with both a client’s and coach’s AQAL Constellations™, helps bring these biases into the light and leverage them on behalf of the client.

When our coaches bring forward a perspective or sense of a client’s way of being, it is held, metaphorically, like a hand extended out with an open palm. The offer sits gently on the open hand. It is not gripped tightly by the coach. It is not asserted to the client that this is the right view or the only view. The offer remains an offer until the client picks it up, holds it himself, shapes it, forms it, interprets it, and acts on it as his own. It is at this fundamental juncture where we agree with many coaching schools: the client has the final say. If the offer—or any part of the offer—does not work for the client, they do not pick it up and the coach lets it go. Together the coach and client explore this emergent space. We have found that clients want to know the perspectives of their coach not because they expect their coach to be right, but because they value the coach’s functional expertise and unique contributions. Clients want to be supported and challenged, held and stretched. As Kegan summarized:

Reading of centuries of wise reflection on what is required of an environment for it to facilitate the growth of its members, I would say this: people grow best where they continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge; the rest is commentary. (1994, p. 42)

Sharing our sense of the client’s world and exploring that territory with them requires a blend of love and rigor embodied in the skillful and compassionate presence of an Integral Coach™.

From the coach's perspective, holding something out on your open palm is humbling and vulnerable. It lays naked the coach's deep inquiry into their client's life. The coach practices non-attachment to any view that they bring forward and still, it is sometimes much easier to be "questioners" than "offerers"—bringing ourselves forward into the light in a desire to be of service to another person. With this sensitive attenuation in mind, I will now explore the elements included in the Offer Coaching Conversation.

As cited at the beginning of this section, it is important to re-establish a good connection with the client, ensure they have a solid sense of what will be covered during the Offer Coaching Conversation, and re-confirm the coaching topic so that there is an explicit shared understanding as well as an acknowledgement as to why this topic is so important to the client. It is crucial to confirm the coaching topic at this second meeting, for without shared understanding and clarity in an intersubjective space, the coach and the client will spend a lot of time each having a different picture of the focus of the coaching work based on their own perceptual maps. For example, having a topic of wanting to "cultivate patience" or "be more inclusive" does not mean the same thing to everyone. For one client this might involve becoming more agentic and for another it might require becoming more receptive—it all depends on what is presented through the unique AQAL Constellation™ of the client. It is critical that the coach understands the words of the topic from the client's perspective. Not only does clarifying the topic bring increased precision, it is also the first of many occasions in this conversation where the client feels profoundly seen, honored, and respected. Hearing back from your coach in language that shows that she deeply understood the topic greatly advances the quality, intimacy, and trust in the coaching relationship that began to form during the Intake Conversation.

Once the topic has been established, the next step is to look at the client's Current Way of Being (CWOB) in this coaching topic, including their approach up until now, their views and considerations, the actions they have taken, and the possible reasons why bringing about the desired change has not been possible or sustainable. The coach will make the first move in this dance by offering what they have sensed. In making this offer, the coach is attempting to have what is invisible or fuzzy to the client become available so that they can see how they currently perceive and relate to their topic as well as how this view plays out. What makes this offer so powerful is that it is not a report of a series of tests, observations, and/or evaluations that tells the client, "You are this and therefore" or "This is how you rate on a scale of 1 to 10." Rather, the coach is offering a sense of how the world looks through the client's eyes, how the client sees the world (self, others, things), and therefore how this perception colors how things go in their topic. It is an intimate and personal act for the coach to offer this seeing to a client. It requires the full embodiment of the coach and non-attachment to what is being offered. As previously stated, it is an act requiring the coach to be courageous and vulnerable as they share and openly receive the client's response. In almost all cases, clients are deeply moved by what an Integral Coach™ has been able to "pick up" after a short Intake session. The response from clients is often, "How did you see me and my world so clearly after such a short first meeting together?" Tears of recognition, relief, and appreciation often arise for the client in this accurate seeing.

Coaches usually offer an image (e.g., flowing water), a metaphor (e.g., the humble gardener), or a phrase (e.g., "a life lived fully") to portray a client's CWOB in their topic, which allows the client to access something that feels familiar and yet "behind the curtain" of what normally see. In offering a metaphor of their CWOB in the topic, the coach is serving as a catalyst for the client to freshly see himself. It is important that time and space be available for the client to respond to, build upon, and shift what has been offered until it powerfully resonates for him and has become his own. The coach starts the process because they are able to bring something forward outside of the client's view. But then the client has the opportunity to pick up the offer from the open palm, extended metaphorically to him, and begin to mold it with his own hands.

A powerful metaphor has to include the client's own views of himself, but also transcend them and provide new seeing. (If a metaphor is too obvious or too obscure, it will not resonate.) The metaphor needs to be something that the client relates to, but is one that also gets him seeing himself and how he has been in his topic up until now in a fresh light. The metaphor expresses the relationship the client has with the topic—it is not just a literal depiction of how they have described their topic. Rather, it is expressed in language and form that enables the client to see some aspect of self that had been elusive, yet once seen, feels familiar. And, if the metaphor that is introduced does not work for the client, no big deal! The coach simply lets that offer go, explores what components of the offer did and did not work for the client, and together they play with what has been brought to light to the point where a new or embellished metaphor arises that more powerfully reflects the client's CWOB in their topic.

The use of metaphor in our Integral Coaching® method is central to the ability to have subject become object on the client's developmental path. I would like to take a further look at the use of metaphors, given its role in our work. Robert Kegan (1994) provides a helpful entry to our use of metaphor in the coaching profession:

Metaphors. . . have a number of salutary features, especially when they are introduced tentatively, with an ear to the client's own use of images and a readiness to abandon the offered metaphor if the client does not incorporate it into her own discourse. A metaphor is interpretive, but it is an interpretation made in soft clay rather than cold analysis. It invites the client to put his hands on it and reshape it into something more fitting to him. Especially when the therapist's metaphor addresses the internal circumstances of being a maker of meaning-structures, the client may find that, drawn to put his hands to reshaping it, he is engaged in reshaping the very way he knows. (p. 260)

This quote elucidates a number of important points that are useful to explore further in our way of using metaphors. First, it is offered *tentatively* to the client. As mentioned previously with our image of an open palm, this moment in time is not “jabbing a pen at the client's chest and telling them how they are,” as one of our students so aptly expressed. It is an offer on behalf of a client having a new and precious seeing of their life, a human life. And in this precious seeing, there is relief in being witnessed. It is through this honoring and respectful intention that a metaphor is offered to a client from a compassionate and embodied Integral Coach™.

Second, the metaphor is offered by the coach versus asking the client to come up with their own metaphor for how they have been in their topic up until now. Some clients have the perspective-taking capacities to do this and some do not. In either instance, however, the client-developed metaphor would live inside the frame of what they already see because the client would be coming up with a metaphor from within the perspective of their AQAL Constellation™. As noted by Gemma Corradi Fiumara in *The Metaphoric Process* (1995), “Metaphors and models are often the last to be perceived by those who use them, so deeply embedded are they in the system they hold together” (p. 76). We live the metaphoric systems of our life. When we are living these metaphors, they are least available to us because they are part of the structure of who we take ourselves to be. Thus, the offer from the coach can serve as a catalyst for awakened awareness.

When the coach offers a metaphor it comes from a different set of lenses that can provide fresh seeing to the client. It does not matter if the metaphor is perfect. There are millions of metaphors and many would suffice. We do not expect the metaphor to represent *truth*, as though there is one truth. We endeavor to provide a pathway to new or fresh seeing that is outside of the client's conscious view through metaphor. The form it takes

from the moment the client picks it up, adds to the contour of it, and makes it their own is when the metaphor has value and relevance. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) pointed out:

Though questions of truth do arise for new metaphors, the more important questions are those of appropriate action. In most cases, what is at issue is not the truth or falsity of a metaphor but the perceptions and inferences that follow from it and the actions that are sanctioned by it. (p. 158)

What the client does with the metaphor, how it newly informs and shapes them from this moment on, is of keen interest to the coach.

As Lakoff and Johnson also pointed out in their now classic *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), metaphors are the primary units of our language composition and are anchored in our direct embodied experience. Thus, metaphors are not just ideas or images; they have a felt sense and bodily meaning. Others have also recognized the power of metaphors as playing a key “role in slaking the thirst for meaning. . .the more we understand metaphor, the more we understand ourselves” (Pink, 2005, p. 140). Metaphors create new realities, and in so doing they enable the client to take the first step in the subject-object developmental path having their “I” (invisible to me because I am subject) become “Me” (I can see me) or “My” (I can see my way of being).² This is another reason why the Offer Coaching Conversation is so powerful for a client—this first developmental move is already freeing the client to wider perspectives of who he takes himself to be. Further, it starts the process of developing “witness” capacities in the client. This is necessary not solely from a spiritual- or consciousness-development perspective, but is a vital capability that will be drawn upon in the cycles of practice and development ahead.

It is important to note that the metaphor offered is representing the client’s way of seeing, going, and checking in relation to their coaching topic. The metaphor may resonate for the client in all aspects of their life as well, but the coach focuses specifically on the topic at hand. The metaphor does not represent the “all” of the client. It is a window into the client’s world. It is a critical “access point” through which the client can look at him or herself, now and as a future “Me.” Similar to how the integral map is not the territory, the metaphor is not the whole territory of a client. The use of metaphor is central to our Integral Coaching® work, but it is never intended to represent the full human being. Similar to Wilber using metaphors of a “ladder” and “conveyor belt” to describe level or structure-stage development, the metaphor does not do justice to the territory, but it provides great access for understanding complex terrain. Metaphors in coaching work are also powerful tools in enabling subject to become object, in having a person’s central “I-ness” be made object and therefore, accessible in a whole new way. Metaphors should not be taken too far, as though they are the sole foundation of meaning making for the client, but as a strong component of a healthy integral development system, they are extremely powerful and eminently useful.

As the coach and client continue the discovery and mapping of the client’s CWOB, the coach initiates exploring what this way of being has allowed for up to now. The client’s CWOB has brought him to this point and needs to be fully acknowledged. This is a poignant time in the conversation when the client feels fully met. During this dialogue the client also fills in the details of how this CWOB got him here safe and sound. It is a tender viewing of the past to present through a metaphoric lens as the coach holds an open and vast container for the client’s exploration. At some point, the client remarks, “But it’s not all good, you know. It’s not working really well anymore.” It is natural for the client to progress to the elements of his way of being that are not supporting him presently—hence why he brought forward the coaching topic in the first place.

At this point, the client and coach turn to look at how this CWOB is currently limiting or preventing access to certain capacities or perspectives related to the topic and how the CWOB no longer fits, like outgrowing a favorite shirt. Because the coach and client are working with the metaphor to describe the beauty and limits of the client's CWOB in their topic, it begins to solidify as object while the client starts building capacities to witness. By the end of the discussion about the client's CWOB, what was mysterious as to why their topic has been such a challenge up until now becomes more obvious and the client begins to see that there must be something beyond what this current view affords. Seeking to see beyond the landscape of the CWOB, a client will often ask, "But what do I do? This way of being is so ingrained in me." The desire for a NWOB (New Way of Being) naturally emerges in this part of the Offer Conversation, when the territory of the CWOB has been fully fleshed out and the client has taken clear and tender hold of "who I have been up until now. . . what's great about that. . . and there must be another way forward."

Before moving to the NWOB description, I would like to provide an example of a CWOB metaphor that I developed with one of my clients. I will mark these passages using *italics* so the reader will be clear when I am entering and exiting the client example.

Dave came to coaching looking for a new way to contribute to his organization as a seasoned executive with over 35 years of experience in the telephony industry. A long-time Vice President of Technology in a fast-paced environment, he wanted to contribute to his team more fully but he felt "stuck in his ways." Further, Dave felt that he had much wisdom to share but did not know "how to do it" so he "got things done himself." His executive peers and subordinates found him to be gruff, unapproachable, and inflexible. However, he thought there was plenty that "they didn't get" and that he "doesn't suffer fools lightly." He had never sought the support of a coach and was not sure how it would work but he was willing to "give it the old college try." (Already you can probably hear some of his ways of being in these expressions.)

I will not go into the specific and confidential details of our Intake Conversation since building and working with a client's AQAL Constellation™ is more fully explored elsewhere in this issue; I will instead focus on the metaphor that I offered to him a week later. *When we got together for the Offer Conversation, I thanked him for all that he had disclosed to me. I told Dave that it was clear that he had no one he could speak to about his quieter need to contribute and that I appreciated his trust in me. He had been someone used to "going it alone" even as he surrounded himself with many people.*

As I explained in the discussion of the Offer Conversation, the details of a metaphor, what it has allowed for in a client's life pertaining to this topic, and what it is now preventing in a client's world are filled out by the coach and client together. For brevity, I will offer the full metaphor without delineating aspects that I offered, aspects which he added, and those we built together. I will present it as one paragraph versus the back and forth that takes place once the coach makes the first move. I will also identify the dimensions of ways of seeing, going, and checking so that these elements are made explicit for the reader.

"You know, Dave, as I was sitting with all that you shared with me last week, I had this image come to mind that felt to me like your way of relating to your topic: feeling stuck regarding the ways that you contribute your well-earned wisdom in your company. I kept thinking about how you have been in these last few years as a senior leader and the image that came to me was the Alpha Wolf. I could picture you on the ridge of a mountain overlooking the plains as you keep an eye on the territory. You're part of the pack but on the periphery of it because you are the Alpha Wolf. While the other wolves sleep, you are awake on the ridge, paying attention, staying alert. The way that you relate to the territory is that 'it's dangerous out there and it's my job to protect the pack' (way of seeing). It's your job to protect the company (way of seeing) by making sure that you don't

miss anything that is happening in the rapidly changing technology marketplace (way of going). So your way of moving at work is to be vigilant, sharp, and direct (way of going). You don't waste a moment (way of going) because anything could happen (way of seeing). It is a risky market that only the wise, old Alpha Wolf understands (way of seeing). No one else has been around as long as you. Even the President is new. No one else knows as much about the territory as you. And as much as you try to nip at the younger wolves to get them to see what you see, they don't have your instincts yet. At the end of the day, you are satisfied as long as there have been no surprises, nothing missed, no emergencies” (way of checking).

Dave also added as his final input, “no rest for the weary in that picture.” We explored being an Alpha Wolf and he added more poignancy to the picture as he shared the Alpha Wolf characteristics that also show up at home with his wife and three adult children. Then I moved into sharing how the Alpha Wolf has supported him well up until now:

“You know, the Alpha Wolf has the ability to sniff danger a mile away. (I raised the various dangers that he had sniffed out and protected his company from even just in the last couple of weeks. These are proprietary activities so I cannot disclose them, but the specifics of what I shared had significant impact as he could see his actions through this new metaphor.) As an Alpha Wolf, my sense is that you are clear, direct, and battle-scarred. People see the scars and respect them. You have been through tough battles and everyone knows that you've had their back. As you shared with me, you are feared but you are also respected. You're wise and the young pups like to hang around you, wrestling you a little if they can, so they can see what they know and don't know. My sense is that you would never have made it to Alpha if you hadn't been strong, consistent, and reliable. People know where they stand with you. There are no games played. You are wise and wily. The pack sleeps at night because they know if they miss something, you will catch it. You give them rest. You give your colleagues rest. You give your family rest. How does this resonate with you?”

At this point tears welled in Dave's eyes at the recognition of his achievements. He looked down and said, “I'm very tired.” I replied, “Yes, of course you are. You're sniffing the air constantly. Each day your nose and somatic wisdom gets more and more attuned such that you can pick up even the slightest disturbances in the territory. With this increased sensing, my guess is that you would also be more and more alone. Not many people can pick up the subtleties in the marketplace. You're vigilant and, as you shared with me, not sleeping very much. I would guess that your body gets tighter and more wound up as your senses pick up more and more. And you probably get more aggressive with the younger wolves who are not picking up what you do. And they, in turn, emulate you and become more aggressive themselves. As you get older and closer to retirement five or six years from now, the young wolves start taking runs at you and you are in a constant challenge from the stronger wolves in the pack. There is no rest. You are wise. And you are tired. You have a sense that there is more to draw on and a different way to be in this environment, but you don't know what it is. So, you head to the ridge. You are alone. At risk. And given the look on your face and what you told me last week, this saddens you. Tell me, what is ringing for you as you sink into the power and challenge of this way of being?”

At this point, the tears had welled up to overflowing in the Alpha Wolf. This strong, ethical, contributing, and wise leader acknowledged that he had reached the edges of what he knew to draw upon. He nodded and confirmed the accuracy of the offer. Dave also spoke about the pain of this way even as he recognized that it had served him well; it no longer fit who he wanted to become. He quietly commented, “There are some things about Alpha Wolf that I want to keep, for sure. I want to be respected and reliable. And I do have that sensing capacity that I can't quite explain to people, but it's just like you said. And I want people to know they can count on me. But this way of working isn't all of what I think I can bring at this stage in my career. And I

am tired of the young wolves biting—not to mention taking this home with me each day. So, how do I develop another way and keep the good stuff?” We continued to travel around with the metaphor in all the environments that Dave participates in and we agreed that the Alpha Wolf powerfully captured his CWOB...and now what? Staying here keeps both his nobility and his pain. This is the call for exploring a NWOB in his topic.

The next stage in the Offer Coaching Conversation is to offer a NWOB metaphor that opens up a possible way of moving forward that could enable the client to make powerful progress in their topic. This new way is *not* a strategy or an action plan or a new goal; it is *not* a new “something” for the client to become committed to and drive towards. It is a new way of seeing, going, and checking in their topic. It is a new context. It is a glimpse into an underlying emergent structure and associated views. It has new eyes and ears and a new body. This new horizon, new seeing of a possible self supports the client’s topic and it also holds the topic in a wider frame. It does not replace the topic; nor is it simply the opposite of the CWOB, as though the CWOB could be cut out and tossed away. It is a view that includes and goes beyond what is available through their CWOB while still including what deeply matters. The coaching topic ends up “sitting in” this wider NWOB. Given that it is in this moment that the client is opening to something more expansive, the coach needs to be sure to take time for the client to really take it in, feel it, taste it, and know it, similar to the CWOB process, mold it to become their very own.

As the client works with the NWOB, getting their hands into the soft clay of their future self, the coach continues to steep in their client’s world. Similar to the Intake, the coach continues to receive riches regarding their client’s AQAL Constellation™ through the whole conversation. The coach can readily tell when the NWOB metaphor has resonated and been fully explored by the client because it is in this moment that the client usually says, “If I was living that way of being, then my coaching topic would be easy to work with, easy to accomplish. That would be amazing.” And then they follow with, “I just don’t know how to get there.” How could they? This NWOB is outside their current way of seeing, going, and checking; it is outside of their existing perceptual map. If a client were to pursue a NWOB on their own, how would they do it? They would do it through their current frame: their CWOB. They would bring their current way of seeing, going, and checking to trying to build a new way. Thus leading to the well known phrase, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you will always get what you’ve always gotten.” We will pursue new ideas or thoughts through our current ways of seeing, going, and checking. Yes, it will lead to development over time. New muscles will definitely get built. However, in a truly transcend and include method, it does not have to be that painful, a welcome possibility for clients accustomed to the excise/discard/implant/replace ways of developing.

So, let us now take a look at this point in the conversation with our beloved Alpha Wolf. We left off with him asking how to develop new skills moving forward.

I offered to Dave that there could be a “new way to hold the upcoming five or six years in his corporate life before he retired. You have spoken about having more to give, more wisdom to pass on to the next technology folks on your team. And that the way of the Alpha Wolf doesn’t give you expression for the full range of what you have to bring. I’d like to offer you, at least as a starting point, a new way to perhaps hold this next period of time as we work together. Is that of interest?” It was of interest to him because he had already exhausted his own efforts in finding new ways of moving forward, but to no avail.

I offered, “You know, in everything you have said to me, there is an element of ‘team.’ It is evident in the sports you participate in—hockey twice a week in the winter and your standing foursome in golf in the summer. The activities with your friends, family, and colleagues at work are always group activities. Membership in groups is part of who you are. And, what came to me, as I connected to your coaching topic, is that you have the op-

portunity to become the Legacy Athlete. Last week, you spoke about wanting to leave a legacy at work. The Legacy Athlete is the experienced player/mentor. In the later years of their game, they take on very different roles than in their younger or peak energetic days. They become the veteran that everyone wants to play on the same line with because they elevate everyone else's game. People always wanted to be on Wayne Gretzky's line in hockey because they scored more goals when they got to play with him. It was the same with Magic Johnson in basketball. And in golf, in his later years, Arnold Palmer was the guy who you wanted to have on your Ryder Cup team—not necessarily because he was the BEST player at the time but because he was the WISEST player.

In later years, Legacy Athletes shift their role to enabling others to perform, not just showing what they can do themselves. They now influence the team. They see their teams as developmental opportunities to open new horizons (way of seeing). So, the Legacy Athlete's way of succeeding becomes something that occurs in quiet one-on-one conversations, learning moments, and giving players the chance to make mistakes, but then being there beside them letting them know it is okay (way of going). Legacy Athletes speak not just to what needs to be DONE, but also the INTENTIONALITY behind what is being done even when there is much pressure, rapid deadlines, and limited time (way of seeing and going). There is a shift in personal performance to legacy opportunities—the chance to contribute to something bigger than them alone. The focus becomes the success of the players they support, watching them try new moves, while also being direct and forthright because they're still learning (way of checking). There is still the strength and wisdom of the Alpha Wolf, but it is channeled through a new vehicle—the Legacy Athlete.”

Dave found this metaphor to be extremely powerful. And unbeknownst to me, Wayne, Magic, and Arnold were his three favorite athletes. Together we filled out the metaphor with more details and nuances, including his family and friends in the picture, and he was very excited to get started. He said, “I don't know how to become that, but I can tell you that it is exactly what I have been trying to express.”

The next step in the Offer Conversation is to examine together the formal coaching agreement that forms the container for the longings, goals, and related developmental objectives of the client. The quality and meaning of this discussion has a very different feel and resonance for the client after jointly developing the CWOB and NWOB metaphors than if the conversation had started with just capturing goals—imagine starting with developmental objectives without this rich metaphoric context. The articulation of CWOB and NWOB give the client access to their current context and a future context in which the focus of the coaching development work can now sit. This formal part of the conversation enables the client to clearly grasp the new muscles they will build as they include and transcend in this developmental journey.

With my newly inspired client, we looked at the new muscles that would need to be built to move along the continuum of including the healthy Alpha Wolf while transcending to the Legacy Athlete. I had four areas to propose and we assembled this list:

1. *To widen your range of timing, tone, delivery, and subtlety (become a finesse player).*
2. *To become more developmentally supportive with your young executive team so they experience great success (less “do this” and more “this is why” and “what do you think?”).*
3. *Widen your ability to enjoy and celebrate various players' styles or “ways” that are similar and dissimilar to yours (need a full range on a winning team).*
4. *Experience greater satisfaction not just in WHAT got done today but HOW it got done.*

Notice how these objectives would support becoming the Legacy Athlete. While I am not going to cover the details of Dave's AQAL Constellation™ in this article, what I can say is that these four objectives placed emphasis on the aspects of his Constellation that needed development in relation to his topic. And you would also be able to work with each objective across all of the lenses. If we look at the first item, from the perspective of lines and quadrants, you can see that Dave would require significant somatic, emotional, and interpersonal work as well as focused attention to the LL and LR quadrants as shifting his role with his team is dramatic. All six of the AQAL lenses were utilized in drawing up these four developmental objectives. The language used to describe these objectives was informed by his altitude or level of consciousness. Can you tell what that level is?

The coaching topic is clearly defined in the coaching agreement both in terms of *what* the topic is as well as *why* it is important to the client. The developmental objectives specify the competencies that will need to be built (new muscles, new capabilities) in order for the client to successfully expand from their CWOB to a NWOB. This step in the conversation brings the depth and breadth of the two metaphors down to a practical and tangible focus directly linked to what this is all on behalf of: the client's topic. It is at this point that the client's question is answered about how they will grow into their NWOB, which further enables them to see the direction their developmental journey is going to take. Inspired and grounded, the client is ready to step into their first cycle of development.

Practices are a critical component of our developmental approach. This is the playing field to which clients bring their new insights, learning, and widened perspective taking. Practices take place in between coaching conversations. There is a lengthy list of experts who have spent their lives working in the field of human development, focusing on the role of practice (e.g., George Leonard, Michael Murphy, Richard Strozzi, to name a few). In Wilber and colleagues' latest book, *Integral Life Practice* (2008), integrated and timeless wisdom regarding practice is brought to bear with great elegance. The opening paragraph speaks to a life of practice:

For thousands of years, in almost all parts of the globe, human beings have engaged in practices to transform and balance their lives. From the magical rituals of ancient shamans, to the contemplative science of the mystical traditions, to the latest scientific breakthroughs in health, nutrition, and physical exercise—we have always sought a way to connect with our deeper truths, to achieve well-being and harmony, and to realize our highest potentials. (p. 1)

The practice field is critical to the development of the client. In our coaching work, we use two types of practices: *focus practices* and *foundation practices*. Focus practices are conducted by the client during the time between meetings, which usually occur every two to three weeks. These practices tend to be more intense, focusing on a particular “muscle” or aspect of the client's AQAL Constellation™, and always involve a reflective component so that the client keeps developing their conscious awareness and integrating new insights.

Foundation practices are long-term practices designed to support the coaching topic and muscle-building components that will best serve the client over time. These practices are done regularly, a few times a week or over several months (if not indefinitely), depending on the client. Some examples of foundation practices are strength training, meditation, yoga, healthy diet, journaling, or embodied reading. The practices are selected with a longer perspective of building the body-heart-mind-spirit of the NWOB. Foundation practices also may have a reflective component depending on the capacities needed by the client within their topic. Together these two types of practices support the muscle building that occurs through cycles of development over time.

The first step for a client after the Offer Conversation involves engaging in a practice that enables them to learn more about their CWOB by “shining a light” on a particular aspect of this way. They do not change anything yet. This first practice enables them to get to know the full power and presence of their CWOB in day-to-day life. The first foundation practice usually begins at this same moment to support the journey of developing the new muscles needed to shift from their CWOB to their NWOB. Alternatively, the first foundation practice may be brought forward in the second cycle of development if the first focus practice is designed to provide an intense entry. As with every future Cycles of Development Conversation, it is important for the client to know the purpose of each practice and how it will support them.

For this first practice, the coach explains that a critical developmental step is to get to know their CWOB more intimately, in real time, viscerally, and cognitively. Developing an awareness of and intimacy with this CWOB is necessary in order to enable a future that includes having conscious choice regarding its manifestation (rather than being unconsciously driven by it). We first need to be able to see ourselves more clearly. Understanding this developmental step strongly motivates the client to engage in this first cycle, as they understand that it will enable progress in future cycles.

The first focus practice for my client included shining the light on a couple of aspects of the Alpha Wolf to enable him to become familiar with the everyday workings of his Alpha-Wolf-ness. Daily he was to simply witness himself in conversations with these two questions in mind:

1. *What is your “position” in the pack at this moment? (alpha wolf, weaker wolf, nurturing wolf, belonging to the pack, solo wolf walking alongside the pack, etc.)*
2. *How does this “position” show up in your way of being in this particular conversation? (body shape, tone of voice, content shared or not)*

I asked him to pick two conversations each day and record his responses in a small notebook that he carries in his jacket pocket. At the end of each week, I asked him to read through his notes from that week and answer these two questions:

1. *What did you learn about your preferred “positions” in the pack?*
2. *What parts of you get to show up in this “position” and what parts remain in the dark?*

This was a two-week practice. Note that with the Alpha Wolf, you could focus on any number of aspects: vigilance, tension in his body, intentions, or emotional tones. For this client, with his propensity to be with the collective, I wanted him to get to know the various “positions” he takes. At this early stage, I offered a simpler practice because I wanted to also determine his ability to self-reflect, as this is a necessary competency to build moving forward if it is not in his current capability set. And still, even with a simple practice, much is uncovered! I decided to give him his first foundation practice at the next meeting so that he could concentrate his first practice efforts on the detailed observation of his CWOB—shining the light specifically on his preferred Alpha Wolf “positions” and their effects.

Before completing the Offer Coaching Conversation, the coach makes sure that the client has written copies of their formal coaching agreement and their initial practice(s) moving forward. Sometimes there are also notes or drawings that capture the essence of their CWOB and NWOB that the client wants to keep and be able to reference. The purpose of having the coaching agreement and practices in writing is so that the client continues to experience being supported by a structure that can hold them and which they can refer to once they are

out in their day-to-day world. This is especially important at the beginning of the coaching relationship when the client's CWOB is still in strong force, as they can tend to unconsciously modify the practices to suit the comfort of their CWOB.

The coach takes time to confirm that the client has the support that they need until the next meeting. This is yet another form of structure and support that the coach provides the client so that they can fully engage in this crucible of their own development. The end of the Offer Conversation marks the beginning of the coaching process that occurs over the many Cycles of the Development Conversations that comprise the bulk of the time that a coach and client spend together.

3. Cycles of Development Coaching Conversations

The number of Cycles of Development Conversations depends on the client's topic and their unique rate of development. Some coaching work consists of just a few conversations; other development topics require longer periods of time with an Integral Coach™.

During the cycles of development phase, the client is growing in ways that effectively support working with both their CWOB and NWOB. The client develops a deeper understanding of their CWOB through direct experience of it, in real time, in real life. As this awareness and understanding grows, the client progressively and increasingly relates to the CWOB as object. As this occurs, the unconscious grip of the CWOB loosens and there is space for the emergence of the client's NWOB in their topic through progressive development of necessary competencies. Cycles of development are based on the premise that there needs to be a sequence of growth where the development of one capability gives rise to and makes possible the emergence of another. In each cycle, there is much to learn (and, perhaps unlearn) and much to integrate. Hence the word *cycle* rather than a linear action plan.

While there is a fundamental set of objectives for this type of coaching conversation, the specific tone, texture, and focus can vary based on where the client is in their developmental process, which capabilities have begun to arise, and what is needed next. A Cycles of Development Coaching Conversation is about richly learning from and building upon the client's experience of having engaged in focus and foundation practices as well as determining the next area of focus. Usually the conversation begins with a discussion regarding what happened during the client's latest practice period. If there has been a check-in with the client (phone call, email, etc.) midway in the client's practice cycle, this information is also included. As the client shares their practice discoveries, the coach interacts in a way that enables the client to further flesh out their observations and make more powerful linkages with their topic, CWOB, and NWOB. These coaching conversations can often serve as additional "intake" sessions as the client continues to provide the coach with a large amount of information gained through engaging in the practices. The key for the coach, as they are listening to the client, is to continue to hear and see the patterns of the client's CWOB (including its way of seeing, going, and checking) as well as noticing evidence of their NWOB emerging. Clients may not necessarily see these patterns initially because the Offer Conversation gave them access or "ah-ha" moments regarding their ways of being, but this access is not yet embodied knowing. It is cognitive understanding with lingering emotional resonance at this early stage.

These conversations are usually rich with new learning for the client as they continue to see how their CWOB remains active as a driver—which it will for a while, as this way has been around for a long time and is still partially effective—while also celebrating the progressive emergence of the NWOB. It is important, especially in progressive cycles, to keep showing the client how their NWOB is emerging as well as to note the evidence

of the healthy integration of their CWOB. Coaches speak to the progress and impacts using all AQAL lenses anchored in the CWOB and NWOB metaphors.

The coach explores with the client the degree to which they are developing reliable capabilities that current practices have been designed to build, as well as discovering what else might be developing that is beyond what was anticipated. This involves checking in on the specifics of the practice (are they doing it fully per the integral design?) and the results of the practice (what is happening in and around the client?). It is important to seek “evidence,” as self-report can sometimes be mired in the client’s current way of seeing, going, and checking. It is also critical to link the progress being made through a specific practice with the developmental objectives captured in the coaching agreement so that client and coach are both able to 1) see the link and 2) register progress. Taking the time to do this significantly supports the client integrating what they are learning and gaining from their practices. It is often difficult for a client to see progress when they are in the midst of their own developmental process. Taking the time to step back, help them make and elaborate upon connections, register progress, and make any necessary adjustments all leave the client feeling solid and inspired to continue. The coach attends to the container of the relationship, endeavoring to provide the right amount of challenge and support.

The conversation readily flows into a discussion about what is next in a client’s development. The next practice is designed based on the client’s AQAL Constellation™, their CWOB and NWOB, the developmental objectives, and the practices they have engaged in up to now. This information is used as a compass to guide the design. With the support of this rigorous compass in the background, the coach and client discuss the next capability that needs to be developed for a given competency to manifest. As the cycles of development continue and the NWOB emerges more fully, the client develops a heightened ability to sense what is needed and has a greater and greater role in co-designing their next practice. Clients are not asked to take the lead in designing practices early in the coaching relationship as they would all be created, of course, from within the client’s CWOB, thus keeping their own frame intact. However, while the coach designs the practices, he also seeks the client’s input for adjustment or refinement to ensure that the practice works for the client. Closer to the end of a coaching relationship, a client is more actively and creatively initiating practice designs and actions that support their NWOB. A Cycles of Development Coaching Conversation usually ends with the coach and the client confirming the date of the next coaching conversation and planning a check-in during the elapsed time period, if that is needed for support.

Now that I have outlined the focus and objectives of the Cycles of Development Conversations, I will provide additional insight into the intentions and dynamics of this developmental phase. Prior to the Cycles of Development Conversations, the client has repeatedly tried new actions using many different strategies yet falls into old patterns. Why? Because of the strength of his CWOB. His muscles were built to support that way of being, including his ways of seeing, going, and checking. In any topic, however new or old, the client has brought forward his current way in many forms, trying various things thinking that it is a new way, when it nearly always is simply new activities, new “doings” accompanied by the same ways of perceiving and checking for how things are going. No matter how badly he wants to see the change occur, he keeps struggling or experiencing only periodic shifts, then seeks out the support of a coach.

Similarly, when a client has been unsuccessful in being with a practice while working with a coach, we do not question his commitment or chastise him with comments like, “You must not be committed enough” or “You need to try harder and just follow through!” Instead, we examine the existing competencies present and the new muscles that are necessary to support moving forward in a whole new way. Often when a client has not done a practice, they have not yet developed the “muscle” needed to carry it out. For example, giving a

client a practice called “Saying No To Requests” may cause the client’s body to become so agitated that it is virtually impossible to carry out. So: the coach needs to break this practice down and work with the client’s somatic agitation as a cycle of development all on its own. New coaches often feel confused when a practice is not done by a client: “The client was so excited when we discussed it during the meeting.” Again, carrying something out involves a very different set of muscles than speaking about doing it! The excitement of a new practice (or ah-ha moment) does not equate to competency or execution. We truly need to engage in practice to build stable and reliable new capacities.

Another important role of the Cycles of Development Conversations is to allow a healthy integration of the CWOB as it is included and transcended to reduce the emergence of projection and shadow reactions. During the developmental cycles, the client’s CWOB (living, seeing, perceiving life) shifts from a world of the first-person, subjective “I” to an understanding of self through “Me” (first-person objective) or “My” (first-person possessive) as the CWOB becomes seen, recognized, and integrated over time. This CWOB is worked with during the Cycles of Development Conversations so that the subjective or “blind driver of my life” becomes objectively integrated in a healthy way that enables the client to move to the next level of development. Otherwise, aspects of the CWOB can be denied, repressed, and splinter off into unhealthy aspects that do not become integrated; which are often projected on to others. This is a move not from “I” to “Me” or “My” but from “I” to “It” and represents the subject of one level becoming the shadow of the next level. This repression and unhealthy subject-to-object development contributes to flare-ups when client buttons are pushed, as these splinters have not been recognized, integrated, and translated in development. Growth by its very nature includes subject-to-object development, which gives rise to new light and triggers new shadow work opportunities! The CWOB’s shadow elements are worked with throughout the cycles of development, thus allowing another layer of transcendence and inclusion.

Working with their CWOB is always a monumental, eye-opening journey for a client. Without delving deep into psychological history or therapeutic interventions, the client clearly recognizes herself with a familiarity that usually brings equal parts grimacing and grinning at the accuracy of the metaphor or sentence or picture of their CWOB in their topic. It is not judged as good or bad. It is simply a “what is” that has supported her very well up to this day and may now be thwarting some of her new efforts. This CWOB is something she can hold in the palm of her hands and get to know. She can see her CWOB arise during stressful interactions at the office, running to get things done, her drive home at the end of the day—everywhere. The all-pervasive presence of a CWOB brings laughter and exasperation, and the force and strength of its limitations becomes a strong motivator to want to transcend and include into a NWOB: the kind of being-in-the-world the client longs to become.

At the beginning of the Cycles of Development Conversations, this NWOB is still an object, a concept that, while inspiring, is nowhere near being embodied by the client as subject. As the client develops the underlying capabilities and competencies needed to be able to live in this NWOB, the I-ness of it needs to be cultivated and filled out during the Cycles of Development Conversations. The coach needs to help the client gain access to looking through the eyes of this NWOB through such things as exploring the voice of this new way, the body of this new way, or emotional access through this new way. As the client continues in their cycles of development, this cultivation of the I-ness of the NWOB begins to take root and progressively the NWOB emerges in the client’s body, heart, mind, and spirit.

It is during these Cycles of Development Conversations that the client draws on these two ways of being as anchors. Metaphorically, it is as though they hold their CWOB in one hand and their NWOB in the other hand. As

the client works with these two selves, she becomes more discerning of when to draw on the healthy aspects of the CWOB (further integrating them) or when to draw on the new muscles that are being developed to support the NWOB. She also feels the more limiting aspects of the CWOB and is able to make conscious choices, over time, about how to work with these capacities that no longer serve her. Just because a client can see a NWOB does not mean they have the capability to make the transition easily. In fact, in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson found the developmental journey to be quite complex. They identified two metaphors for two different ways to “hold problems”: the first way was to hold problems as “puzzles to be solved” and the second way was to hold problems as “precipitates of chemical reactions that give way to new precipitates and new chemical reactions—problems are never solved and new ones arise as a natural occurrence” (p. 144). Let us call these two ways of being *puzzles* and *chemical*. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out some of the challenges in trying to move from what we call a CWOB (puzzles) to a NWOB (chemical):

We see this as a clear case of the power of metaphor to create a reality rather than simply to give us a way of conceptualizing a pre-existing reality. . .our current way of dealing with problems is another kind of metaphorical activity. At present most of us deal with problems according to what we might call the PUZZLE metaphor. The PROBLEMS ARE PUZZLES metaphor characterizes our present reality. A shift to the CHEMICAL metaphor would characterize a new reality. But it is by no means an easy matter to change the metaphors we live by. It is one thing to be aware of the possibilities inherent in the CHEMICAL metaphor, but it is a very different and far more difficult thing to live by it. . .So much of our unconscious everyday activity is structured in terms of the PUZZLE metaphor that we could not possibly make a quick or easy change to the CHEMICAL metaphor on the basis of a conscious decision. [emphasis in original] (pp. 144-145)

So, our client holds puzzle in his one hand and chemical in his other hand, which is the start of a complex developmental journey. The role of practice is necessary in this alchemy as a bridge of development.

Dave and I met for eleven months through many cycles of development. I will not go into great detail regarding the progression of each of these cycles. However, for the sake of simplicity, using one lens (lines) I can say that many of the cycles included a focus on his somatic, interpersonal, and emotional development, which is not surprising given his topic and AQAL Constellation™. Here are the titles that we gave to some of the practices that Dave engaged in—notice the increasing complexity as the practices progressed:

- *The Body Position That Says, “I’m interested and have time for you.”*
- *Different speeds available in my mind and body (included Body Scan tapes).*
- *Half-speed practice from my office to the boardroom (and half speed back).*
- *I’m a quadrant, she’s a quadrant, and he’s one too (taught him orienting quadrants and gave him multiple practices for using it at work).*
- *Internal equanimity: What is it and how do I get some? (UL-focused practice that was then brought to the LL playing field).*
- *The Legacy Athlete interviews seven possible draft picks—the body leads.*
- *Meditation Ain’t For Sissies: 5 x 5 x 5 (five minutes of meditation, five times a day at work, five days a week).*
- *Pushing my buttons—triggers and projections.*

Each of these practices focused on multiple aspects of Dave's AQAL Constellation™, and as he built a greater ability to calm the vigilant Alpha Wolf he actually discovered amazing capacities of stillness, great wisdom, and profound questioning. Throughout the later stages of our work together, the subtle shifts from disintegrating orange altitude to wobbly green altitude were also evident in his perspective taking and embodied responses to those around him. The practice that involved developing internal equanimity was a key fulcrum point where the Alpha Wolf and the Legacy Athlete intersected in the transcend and include Integral Coaching® model. And Dave was actively using his two metaphors every day in discerning his internal states and his way of showing up in meetings. The metaphors enabled great ease and access into the fullness of his coaching topic and his life.

There is grace and ease in this developmental voyage and, though it is complex in nature, it honors the multifaceted intricacy of being human. There is powerful simplicity in our Integral Coaching® method once it is embodied by a coach in the service of a client's development. We do not build an action plan for a client to execute; we build capabilities organically through cycles of development where the focus and scale of the practices are guided by the client's AQAL Constellation™. We build competencies (new muscles) that enable a client to stably live their CWOB, steadily work with the arising of their NWOB, and embody the developmental objectives outlined at the start of the formal coaching agreement. When this development is stable, the work between the client and coach progresses to the final meeting. The coach and the client agree that it is time to bring their particular coaching engagement to a close and the final meeting is scheduled.

4. Completion Coaching Conversation

The Completion Coaching Conversation has an orientation both of looking back and looking forward. The first step is to fully register what has been accomplished. By going back and looking at the coaching topic and developmental objectives captured in the coaching agreement, the client and coach get a chance to articulate what has been developed and what is now present in the client's life. This can also include discussing the journey traveled to get to this place, which is often a very powerful conversation as it gives the client a chance to actually feel both where they were in the beginning and how far they have come. Because it is a process of ongoing and progressive cycles of development, it sometimes is difficult for the client to apprehend how much they have developed, grown, and changed. This conversation provides the client with a way to fully comprehend how far they have traveled, how much has changed, and what was accomplished (what was hard, what was really cool, what was surprising, and what was deeply gratifying). This Completion Conversation enables the client to healthily experience a beginning, middle, and an end; completion is a step that often gets missed as we simply move on to the next item in our rushed world of deadlines and deliverables. Honoring where we are *right now* is often ignored or overlooked. In our Integral Coaching® system, on an ongoing basis throughout the course of a coaching contract, the client is consistently put in touch with not just where he is headed, but what is also already here.

The second part of the Completion Conversation is about looking ahead and discussing both the possibilities and the challenges that the client may face as they move forward without their coach. The focus of this discussion is to support the client in determining what kinds of support they may need to pursue so that their NWOB continues to be supported and nurtured. Additionally, it enables the client to pause and see what potential lies ahead. With the strength of their newly developed competencies and their more awakened way of moving through their days, most clients look ahead with exuberance and optimism.

The final part of the conversation includes taking the time to acknowledge what the coach and client have deeply appreciated about each other and to say whatever needs to be said to feel complete. Perhaps the coach will touch base with the client in the following months. Perhaps they will agree to connect again in six months.

We recommend that coaching work is brought to a close and that a period of time passes before the client engages in a next topic or developmental journey. We do this for two reasons. The first is to enable a client to have a period of time when they are not supported by a coach to discern which muscles are stably present and which ones falter or diminish without the scaffolding of the coaching relationship. It is an integrating time for the client. Ultimately we are interested in a client becoming self-authoring and not becoming dependent on their coach. Dependence can be great for a coach's business, but is unlikely, in fact, to be of true service to the client's developmental journey!

The second reason that we recommend formal completion and a time period with no coaching is due to what we call "development fatigue." In these aspiring times, people can be constantly focused on the next muscle they want to build. There needs to be time when things settle, become more fully integrated, and stabilize. Even the most ardent and keen development-seekers (and perhaps especially) need a break to just simply live. As Ken Wilber said (personal communication, December 2, 2008), "Once they get to that place where they are fully developed, what are they going to do? Just live. Might as well live now too." After clients take a break, we have found that four to six months later, they return with even more insightful coaching topics, more discernment, and deeper questioning.

Conclusion

The process of Intake, Offer, Cycles of Development, and Completion can be scaled to one coaching conversation or a long-term coaching agreement. It can be scaled to coaching individuals or couples or groups (organizations have a CWOB, too). It is applicable at all levels of consciousness, becoming ever more elegant and nuanced along the ever-expanding ladder of development. It enables people to make significant and substantive changes towards yearned-for goals in their personal, professional, and spiritual lives. The process sits in a powerful development frame and once the Integral Coaching® methodology is embodied, our coaches do extraordinary work in collaboration with their clients, enabling remarkably profound and sustained results.

Eleven months later the Alpha Wolf is well on the path to becoming the Legacy Athlete, producing stunning changes that have surprised his colleagues, friends, wife, and children. He now engages in a meditative practice, body scanning, reading spiritual material, and various physical practices. He has difficult conversations more easily and works more consistently with situations that trigger him. People on his team say that he is more approachable and send him "thank you notes"—never before received—for how he showed up in meetings or supported them. Younger athletes are stepping up to the table and actively asking for his feedback. His life is more in balance. He has conversations with people that have more depth and vulnerability. He is quiet and thoughtful. He listens more. He is more at peace even amidst the harsh realities of his industry and role. He has started to engage in many modules associated with Integral Life Practice. The card he gave me at yesterday's meeting reads, "Eternal gratitude for an incredible ongoing journey."

I wish you could meet him. I wish you could meet all the clients and coaches who practice in the container of our Integral Coaching® system. You would understand the elegance and impact of integral theory in application far better than my writing skills can represent.

NOTES

¹ In addition to these titles, there are a number of others worth noting, including *Leadership and the Art of Conversation: Conversation as a Management Tool* (1997); *The Zen of Listening: Mindful Communication in the Age of Distraction* (2000); and *How the Way we Talk can Change the Way we Work* (2001). These books primarily serve orange and green altitudes for effective conversation.

² As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) more fully state, “New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to” (p. 145).

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