

# Philosophy of Coaching

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## Editor's Introduction

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Welcome to the current issue of *Philosophy of Coaching*.

The Columbia University Coaching Center of Excellence (in the Department of Organization and Leadership at Teachers College) is pleased to partner with *Philosophy of Coaching* for this special issue. Our center's vision is to be the Ivy-league of high-quality professional coach preparation and ongoing professional development, including certification programs, conferences, and networking, a vision which aligns well with the journal's mission of bringing a theoretically-grounded, historically-informed approach to the study of coaching and coach education.

Six of the seven papers included in this issue were presented during the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Columbia Coaching Conference, held on the campus of Columbia University on October 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in New York. The 2018 conference brought together over 450 delegates to explore coaching from a systems perspective with an eye toward promising practices focused on "whole-person" and "whole-organization" engagement, grounded in research, informed by lessons drawn from pivotal experiences, or a combination of the two. The conference program included 20 concurrent sessions resulting from a blind, peer review selection process. Specifically, the call-for-proposal highlighted the following questions:

- What does it mean to bring a systems perspective to the work of executive and organizational coaching?
- What is the interplay between coaching and employee/leader engagement?
- What are proven and promising practices for amplifying engagements at all levels of systems, with coaching as an enabler?
- What knowledge-base is needed for systemic coaching? What are the related competencies?
- What are examples of research and/or promising practices for expanding the work of coaching beyond the individual (i.e., peer coaching, team/group coaching, organizational coaching, etc.)?

- What are promising examples of how coaching is combined with other interventions (e.g., leadership development programs/action learning; human resource development; process consultation; change leadership; group facilitation; and so on)?

The seven articles in this issue provide perspectives and insights on these questions, and more.

The first article, written by Vicky Jo Varner, entitled “Systems Coaching, Models of Typology, and Emergence,” draws on Jung’s theory of psychological types, temperaments, and social styles in presenting a typological model that describes how value systems present within individuals materialize in the emergence of the relational field between the coach and client. Coaches can utilize these typological models (i.e., conative, affective, & cognitive) to enhance the effectiveness of the coaching process—in short, to coach the “whole-person.”

The article by Sean Anthony O’Connor and Angela Wright, “Needs Supportive Coaching and the Coaching Ripple Effect,” extends our understanding of coaching as a modality for positive change by supporting and enhancing engagement at multiple organizational levels. The paper starts with a review of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to outline three psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – before outlining a broaden and build theory (BBT) that serves as a framework for helping clients access a range of resources (intellectual, social, psychological, and physical) that facilitate the expression of positive emotions during coaching conversations and broader organizational change. The author concludes that by taking a systemic coaching approach, based on research supporting the coaching ripple effect, in the application of SDT and BBT, coaches and organizations are better equipped to positively impact multiple levels of system.

In the third article, “Seeing Polaris: A Call to Integrate Visual Images into Coaching Action Plan,” Yaron Prywes and Elisabeth Mah make a convincing case for applying this innovative, yet practical, approach to “whole-person” coaching by clearly outlining how to transform typical “text-heavy” action plans to “visual-text hybrid action plans” through a case study, combined with supporting theory and research. This approach utilizes “Visual Explorer” image cards offered by the Center for Creative Leadership. The authors provide a clear map for coaches to apply Polaris throughout the entire coaching engagement. It is also a useful structure for coaching supervision, education, and training.

Next, Liane Kemp, in her article “Reciprocal Peer Coaching Supported by a Professional Coach: The Future of Sustained Leader Development,” demonstrates the power of integrating coaching with existing interventions, in this case embedding peer coaching into an existing three-day residential leader development program. Participants are introduced to coaching via the GROW model during the workshop, which is reinforced by five 90-minute peer coaching pods, consisting of three participants who rotate the role of coach, client, and observer—using a combination of sessions facilitated by a professional coach and self-directed sessions. This promising practice fosters skill development and increased goal attainment combined with skill and learning transfer.

In the article entitled “How to Improve Complex and Creative Knowledge Work in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Organizations with Kanban,” authors Gabe Abella and Shannon Arvizu shift the unit of focus from individual and peer coaching to teams by outlining the agendas, principles, and practices of Kanban, along with providing a list of resources for continued exploration. Specifically, this paper draws on a socio-technical systems approach to organizational and team coaching, in the context of knowledge work production. Their work extends many existing team coaching models that focus on the creation of necessary conditions for effective team performance (i.e., optimal social system for a team) by shining light on how to also improve how we think about the work system of a team and how it interacts with its environment while performing complex and creative knowledge work. This approach also integrates some of the peer coaching components described in Liane Kemp’s article.

Michael Valentine’s article, “Contextual Coaching: Leveraging for Alignment in the System,” presents the preliminary findings from a multi-stage research project focused on understanding an organization’s environment (culture and climate) as important context for leadership development work, including coaching. The paper contributes to our understanding of the key contextual areas of alignment necessary when taking a wholistic, systems perspective to coaching. The findings highlight specific contextual factors that influence achieving coaching outcomes and leaders realizing sustained behavioral change, then concludes with recommendations for practice and future research.

Finally, Angela Wright, Margaret McLean Walsh, and Sarah Tennyson’s article on “Systemic Coaching Supervision: Responding to the Complex Challenges of Our Time,” introduces what they call “The Cycle of Developmental Supervision,” that recognizes the centrality of “self” in realizing

coaching outcomes. The overall aim of this approach is to increase reflexivity and breadth, while taking a systemic perspective. Their work represents the effective integration of adult development theory, systems theory, complexity science, and systems intelligence with clear implications for the practice of coaching supervision, professional coaches, coach educators, and organizations deploying coaching services.

What is systemic coaching? While there is yet to be a unifying definition, a number of key themes emerged from both the 2018 Columbia Coaching Conference and this issue, including:

- Beyond one-on-one coaching
- Aligned with one or more strategic priorities
- Coaching as an enabler (e.g., development & effectiveness)
- Integrated (i.e., systems perspective – synergy across interventions)

An expanded view of coaching that includes working with individuals, dyads, groups, teams, and entire organizations – that attends to *head, heart, and hand* – seems appropriate in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world in which we live. We hope you enjoy this issue of the journal.

Terrence Maltbia Ed.D.  
Guest Editor

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## Table of Contents

---

<b>Editor's Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Editorial Board</b> .....	5
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	7
<b>Systems Coaching, Models of Typology, and Emergence</b> Vicky Jo Varner Ph.D. ....	8
<b>Needs Supportive Coaching &amp; the Coaching Ripple Effect: Elevating Individual &amp; Whole System Engagement</b> Sean Anthony O'Connor Ph.D. and Angela Wright .....	21
<b>Seeing Polaris: A Call to Integrate Visual Images into Coaching Action Plans</b> Yaron Prywes Ph.D. and Elisabeth Mah.....	34
<b>Reciprocal peer coaching supported by a professional coach: The future of sustained leader development?</b> Liane Kemp.....	57
<b>How to Improve Complex and Creative Knowledge Work in 21st Century Organizations with Kanban</b> Gabe Abella and Shannon Arvizu Ph.D. ....	76
<b>Contextual Coaching: Leveraging Context for Alignment in the System</b> Michael Valentine J.D., Ph.D. ....	93
<b>Systemic Coaching Supervision: Responding to the Complex Challenges of Our Time</b> Angela Wright, Margaret McLean Walsh and Sarah Tennyson.....	107