NAVIGATING COACHING THEORY AND PRACTICE:
A GUIDE TO USING LEADERSHIP COACHING IN ORGANISATIONS

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A white paper from the Personal and Applied Learning centre at the Gordon Institute of Business Science

At the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) we take a personal, holistic, and integrative approach to learning. The Personal and Applied Learning (PAL) department is an area established within the business school to be the custodian of expertise, best practice, and thought leadership in the domains of personal change, transformation, and applied leadership practice. This department guides teams throughout the School on designing and delivering applied learning and leadership development into programmes. A core part of the expertise the PAL unit curates and designs is coaching. The unit also delivers programmes on facilitation and coaching direct to market.

This commissioned white paper presents a useful perspective and guide for navigating the theory (bodies of knowledge, theoretical influences, and range of approaches) and practices (frameworks, techniques, and tools) of coaching – a discipline that began as a very applied practice. The coaching profession is informed by theories that underpin the practices and, more recently, has been developing its own unique body of knowledge. We feel it is important to promote and encourage both the development of these theories and the theoretical education of coaches, together with appropriate practical skills training. Furthermore, it is important that there is clarity and transparency conveyed to the users and buyers of coaching services regarding the depth, breadth, and choices coaches undertake in their training and applied experience.

Therefore, this "guide" represents one version of a practical navigation tool and a perspective representing GIBS's evolving position on the choices made and communicated in coaches' training and preferred orientation. This white paper aims to support:

1 **Coaches to make informed training and continuous professional development choices; and**

2 **Buyers of coaching services to make informed buying choices.**

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Executive summary

Coaching is a recently developed discipline originating largely from practice. However, the profession has grown immensely over the last three decades and research in this field and its related fields has become rich and widespread. Research shows that coaching has grown from multiple bodies of knowledge and theoretical practice and that there are a multitude of methodologies, frameworks, techniques, and tools being used in the field of coaching. This paper intends to provide a useful guide to coaches and coaching clients to navigate the use of coaching within the context of leadership development in organisations. The most familiar theoretical influences and approaches, as well as practical models and tools used in leadership development coaching are explored, without proposing that any one approach is better; rather that the particular situation will influence which approach may be more appropriate.

This paper is divided into two sections. *Section one* provides an overarching understanding and overview of coaching theory, covering its intellectual and conceptual foundations, including relevant bodies of knowledge, theories, core principles, common concepts, range of approaches, and ethical considerations. *Section two* focuses on the practical application of coaching theory, exploring methodologies, frameworks, techniques, potential challenges, and recognised benefits.

The practice of coaching was informed by four key bodies of knowledge and its related theories - the social sciences, business and economic sciences, adult learning and change, and traditional Western philosophies and Eastern spiritual influences (Cavanagh et al., 2005). More recently, neuroscience has influenced the coaching body of knowledge significantly (Riddell, 2018). Coaching approaches vary from being focused on skills training on the one end of the spectrum to transformation and transcendence on the other end (Hawkins & Smith, 2007). Evolving perspectives and trends as well as the specific context need to be considered when selecting an approach. Contemporary contextual trends include cross-cultural coaching and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in coaching. Considerations include challenges surfaced by these trends, ethical matters, and the benefits that coaching provides.

Dependent on their theoretical affinity and training, coaches will make certain choices about how they practise coaching. Coaches will reflect the body of knowledge they locate themselves in, the theories that inform their coaching style, the models and tools they select for their coaching processes, and the techniques they use in coaching.

The authors suggest that coaches need to be able to highlight the *necessary and essential* training and experience they received in core competencies and principles of coaching, and also be able to indicate the intentional *choices* they made in theoretical training as well as their *choices* related to practical application. Transparency in being able to clearly communicate their coaching practice and its underlying theory allow for informed buyer choice and a clear alignment to client needs, which will continue to build the coaching profession.

Introduction

The coaching industry has undergone remarkable expansion and evolution in recent years and based on studies by the International Coaching Federation (ICF; 2023), the coaching market was estimated to reach a value of US$6 billion worldwide in 2024, with an expected continuation of this upward trend. The rapid growth of coaching has resulted in an accelerated increase in coaching approaches and research. This abundance means choice; choice in selecting the best fit for development needs as a buyer of coaching services, choice in the most appropriate coach training as an aspiring coach, and choice in continuous professional development options as an established coach. Ironically, one of the biggest reasons for the explosion of coaching is that it helps us deal with cognitive overload. The underpinning driver is that the incoming data we need to process daily has multiplied exponentially, whilst our brains have not (at least not spontaneously).

The coaching discipline developed mostly over the last three decades. For a recently developed field and profession originating largely from practice, the research has been rich and widespread. Findings from the research show that coaching has grown from multiple bodies of knowledge and theoretical practice (Brock, 2008). This may create the perception that coaching is made up of an eclectic, and potentially chaotic, collection of methods or is a practice forever in search of a theoretical foundation, which can cloud understanding of the value and distinctiveness of coaching.

This also explains the widespread confusion about what exactly coaching is, what its contributors are, and how it can be thoughtfully and intentionally utilised for a specific purpose and meaningful outcomes. Consensus has largely been reached about what differentiates coaching from other similar modalities, such as mentoring. Mentoring relates to an instructional form of learning versus coaching being an enabling and empowering form of learning. The former uses a mentor's expertise to give to a recipient, the latter uses coaching expertise to elicit internal change and action relevant to an individual's reality. The simplest way to think about these differences is that mentoring (and training and consulting) weighs more towards input provided (advice, content, information), while coaching draws insights from an individual (drawing on the capacity and capabilities a person already has).

In the GIBS context, coaching is a human learning and development process that involves structured, focussed interaction for the purpose of desirable and sustainable change for the individual coaching client (and other stakeholders). The most appropriate strategies, expertise, frameworks, tools, and techniques are identified and used. Coaches are fellow thinking and personal change partners, qualified and experienced in facilitating applied personal change and transformation that is relevant to individuals.

Coaches do this by challenging outdated habits and limiting beliefs in the holistic context of an individual's life and context, and by fostering the curiosity and agency for change, unlocking the drive that makes change happen. The coaching process is defined as a thinking relationship in which qualified coaches partner with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential.

In leadership development, coaches can help leaders develop new ways of thinking, so they can better analyse and understand their current style and thinking patterns. It is regarded as an effective and proven means of leveraging leadership capability, optimising potential, and driving performance aligned to an organisation's learning, development, and talent processes. Therefore, coaching has been used very effectively in leadership and management development either alone or in combination with classroom teaching and experiential processes.

The developments in the sophistication of the coaching industry surfaced a need to navigate the terrain from an informed perspective. The purpose of this paper is to support both coaches and buyers of coaching services to make choices. By making informed decisions related to training and preferred approaches, coaches will be able to clearly position themselves in the market, whilst buyers need to be able to confidently assess specific needs and source services that can meet those identified needs appropriately.

The position taken is that coaching is considered an applied field of practice with intellectual and theoretical roots in a range of disciplines, the diversity of which creates valuable opportunities for meaningful and enriching interaction, but can also create the potential for confusion. In our experience, further misunderstanding arises from the terminology used to refer to the practice and application of coaching. In both organisational and institutional contexts terms are often used interchangeably and although this may be acceptable, it can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Terms relevant to this discussion that are frequently used and confused include bodies of knowledge, theories, concepts, principles, methodologies, frameworks, models, techniques, and tools.

This paper has two distinct sections. Section one focuses on coaching theory. It provides the intellectual and conceptual basis for understanding coaching, including bodies of knowledge and theories that inform coaching, as well as core principles, common concepts, the range of approaches, and ethical considerations. Section two explores coaching in practice – the application of coaching theory through methodologies, frameworks, and techniques, as well as potential challenges, and well-known benefits.

Coaching is explored from the perspective of leadership development in organisations. The intention is to provide a useful guide with which to navigate this territory, both from the perspective of a continuously developing coach and the perspective of a coaching client with a need for clarity and transparency to understand various coaching offerings. Included in the discussion are the commonly used terminology and what it means related to coaching, as well as an overview of the most used types of coaching in leadership development. Furthermore, this paper does not propose that any one approach is better; rather that the situation will influence which approach may be more appropriate. In essence, this guide provides a comprehensive overview of key elements informing coaching with the intention to support strategies for making informed decisions.

Figure 1 illustrates how the theoretical foundations underpin the practical application of coaching. Each layer provides a snapshot of examples. Core concepts, principles, and ethical considerations are universally applicable, whilst the theoretical influences, range of approaches, and coaching practices allow for choices to be made by both coaches and buyers of coaching services.

Assessments Journaling Role-play Worksheets	Tools
Active listening Goal setting Relationship building	Techniques
ABC GROW OSKAR	Frameworks
Transactional analysis Group coaching The Thinking Environment® Integral Coaching Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)	Methodologies
Cognitive-behavioural theory Social network theory Adult learning theory Ontological theory	Theories
Social sciences Business and economic sciences Adult learning Philosophy	Bodies of knowledge

Choice: Range of approaches

Coaching practice

Coaching theory

Universal: Concepts, principles, ethical considerations
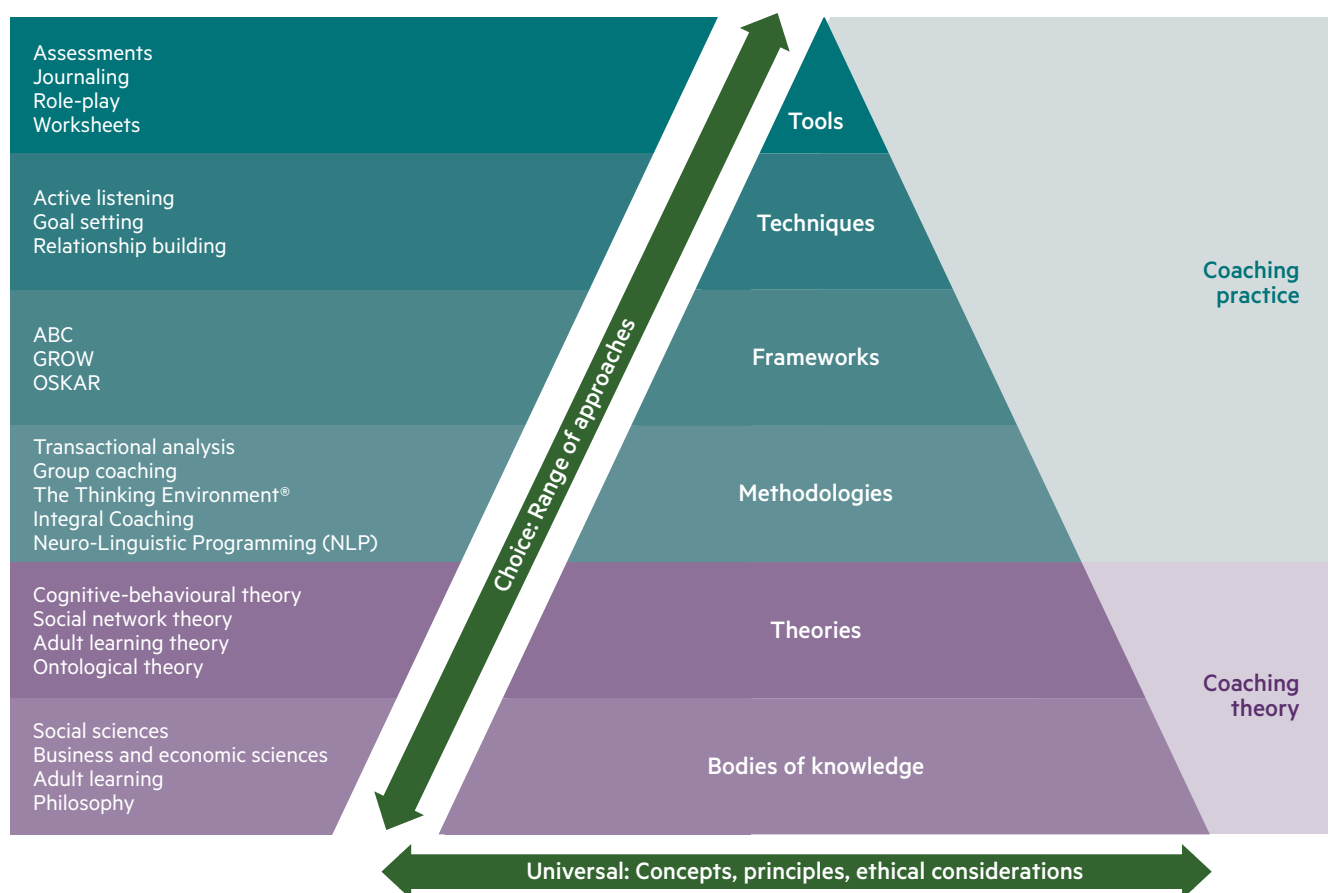
Figure 1: Overview of examples of the theoretical foundations and examples of practices of coaching

Section one: Coaching theory

This section covers the intellectual and conceptual basis for understanding coaching, including bodies of knowledge and theories that inform coaching, as well as core principles, common concepts, the range of approaches, and ethical considerations. These enable both coaches and clients to make informed choices, selecting approaches that align with their individual styles and needs. Bodies of knowledge and theories generally provide an overarching understanding and overview of a particular approach.

1

Towards a coaching body of knowledge

What is a body of knowledge?

A body of knowledge, often referred to in the format of the acronym BoK, represents the collection of known information, theories, and disciplines of study for a specific subject area. It provides a broad understanding of the field and is used by practitioners in the related field to guide their practice or work. The term is also used to describe the required accumulation of "knowledge in a particular area an individual is expected to have mastered to be considered or certified as a practitioner" (The SFIA Foundation, 2023).

Clients in need of coaching services should be able to ask providers which body of knowledge informs their practice of coaching. As a coach practitioner, it is not enough to have access to many models and tools to use in coaching processes, one also needs to be able to locate oneself in a particular body of knowledge with the rigour and credibility that comes with this broad and critically reflective understanding. That is, it is important to know how the coaching body of knowledge developed and what currently influences it.

Coaching is commonplace in the worlds of management, leadership, entrepreneurship, and performance in other spheres of life (Cunningham, 2014). In 2005, Flaherty described the discipline of coaching as a focus on the question of "how a person can help other people develop new capabilities, new horizons, and new worlds of opportunity for themselves and those around them" (p. XVII). The focus on the discovery, personal awareness, and change components of "how" this happens for individuals made coaching a distinctive and cohesive approach. It is this focus that has made coaching particularly relevant for the era of uncertainty, rapid change, and cognitive load that organisations have experienced since the early 2000s and still find themselves in.

The research and practice of coaching has been informed by four key bodies of knowledge (Cavanagh et al., 2005), namely:

1. The *social sciences*, including sociology, anthropology, and psychology – it is noted that health practices like medicine, physiology, and stress also had early influences;

2. *Business and economic sciences*, including leadership, management, and organisational change and development practices;

3. *Adult learning* and change, including workplace learning and development; and

4. *Philosophy* – both traditional Western perspectives and Eastern spiritual influences, especially ontology.

Within each of these established fields of knowledge are various schools and traditions, each with their own set of assumptions about human nature, growth, change and the process to facilitate it. More recently, neuroscience has influenced the coaching body of knowledge significantly. Coaching is about learning and change, and changes in thinking, the experience of emotions, actions, and behaviours form part of this. Therefore, coaching also depends on changes in neural networks in the brain (Riddell, 2018).

1.1 The social sciences

Psychology is the social science with the biggest influence on the field of coaching. Several psychology theories and models are used in coaching, including psychometrics, developmental and evolutionary psychology perspectives, organisational psychology, the humanistic perspective, cognitive-behavioural techniques, wellness approaches, psychotherapeutic theory, family systems theory, and positive psychology.

1.2 Business and economic sciences

Business and economic sciences is a broad category that informed coaching mainly from areas like organisational change and development, management, leadership and social network ideas, career development, consulting, and contributions from the human capital movement. Some examples of elements that have been incorporated into coaching include leadership frameworks and competencies, general systems theory, apprenticeship, and workplace learning to improve performance.

1.3 Adult learning

Our view is that adult learning theory underpins all coaching practice (Cox et al., 2018). The concept of change, inherent in the concept of learning, is the essence of any coaching encounter. The basic principles from adult learning theories that are a core part of coaching are andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning. Some of the most essential elements include acknowledging that adults bring their own experiences, perspectives, context, and knowledge to a learning process, and thus personal values, purpose and meaning, self-direction, goal-setting, flexibility, and experiential learning are key elements in coaching as well. *Transformative learning involves a deep, fundamental revision of beliefs, feelings, and taken-for-granted frames of reference*. Consequently, it implies a significant shift in perception that holds the potential to substantially alter our understanding of ourselves, others, and of possibilities. Beyond adult learning theory, it is important for coaches to be able to clearly articulate their specific position, such as gestalt, cognitive behavioural, or management theory.

1.5 The role of bodies of knowledge in coaching

Individuals who work as coaches come from a wide range of occupational backgrounds, including business, consulting, management, teaching, training, learning and development, psychology, performing arts, and sport. Each of these occupational backgrounds is based on its own body of knowledge made up of theoretical frameworks and practical applications. In general, coaches will rely on their legacy field as a foundation for their coaching practice and incorporate tools and techniques from the other disciplines as they continue to develop.

Due to the substantial amount of research in the coaching field, the discipline is developing a body of knowledge of its own (de Haan, 2019). A common body of empirically tested knowledge is important in the establishment of any profession. The research has been largely driven by studies in three interconnected areas: (1) the coaching experience; (2) the increase in professionals within the coaching field; and (3) the growing sophistication of management and human resource professionals (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Outcomes from the research have surfaced useful knowledge on the effectiveness, challenges, and dynamics of coaching within the context of organisations (de Haan, 2019).

Coaching is certainly no longer seen as an atheoretical practice that relies only on common sense, some basic interpersonal skills, and an eclectic combination of tools or frameworks. Several theory-based approaches (all with distinctive features, limitations, essential elements, and assumptions) offer cohesive explanations of how developmental change and learning take place and how these are best adapted and used in coaching. Some of those that are best known and with the most influence on coaching are covered in this paper. Each of these has distinctive features, primary methods, and dominant areas of focus and application. These areas of focus drive the choices made by coaches to suit their style and made by clients to meet their need.

1.4 Philosophy

The contributions to coaching from the field of philosophy relate to ideas of being, consciousness, and spirituality (Blackmore & Troscianko, 2018). Ontology is what philosophers refer to as "the study of being, the study of who we are" (Rock & Page, 2009, p. 34). Coaching is often about a need to explain and make sense of the world. Some of the underlying principles, values, and methodologies that guide the practice of coaching have been strongly influenced by philosophical perspectives, such as existentialism, humanism, the Socratic method, pragmatism, ethics, and taking a holistic view.

2

Theories that inform coaching

What is a theory?

Theories systematically explain observable factors and provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular subject or field. According to Wacker (1998), a theory has four basic elements, including:

1. Conceptual definitions;

2. Clear boundaries of the related field;

3. The forming of connections; and

4. Predictions to consider

Theories are important because they offer a basis for analysis and enable the development of the particular field, whilst initiating practical application to real-world problems. Coaching has primarily been informed by theories from the bodies of knowledge noted above, as well as theories developed within the field of coaching. Some of the major theoretical influences are summarised below.

2.1 Social science theories

Theories from the social sciences have been the largest contributor to the coaching discipline with psychology being the main influence.

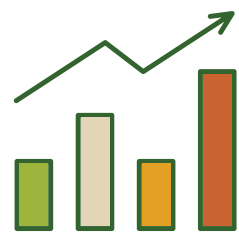| Theory	Summary
Adult-development theory (Erikson, Levinson, and Kegan)	This theory concerns the significance of individuals' successful involvement with their relationships, work, and community for healthy development. Adults move through alternating periods of stability and transition throughout their lives. Developmental changes in meaning-making, world views, and ego maturity occur in a logical sequence of stages throughout individuals' lives.
Behaviour based theory (Watson and Skinner)	This theory focuses on an understanding of the role the environment or context plays in an individual's behaviour. Learning takes place in interaction with the environment.
Cognitive-behavioural theory and coaching (Beck and Ellis)	This approach emphasises the importance of identifying realistic goals, facilitating self-awareness of underlying cognitive and emotional barriers to change, and equipping the client with more effective/appropriate thinking and behaviour skills.
Cognitive theory (Piaget)	In this theory, individuals are seen to construct an understanding of the world around them, and then experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment. Learning takes place in the reconciliation of the discrepancies with the understanding of the world.
Family systems theory (Bowen, Ackerman, Kempler, and Framo)	Family systems theory aims to understand human functioning by considering the interactions between individuals in a family and between the family and the environment in which that family is entrenched (Watson, 2012).
Gestalt theory (Lewin and Perls)	Gestalt theory states that behaviour is a function of individuals in their specific environment, which means that behaviour cannot be viewed in isolation. It is a holistic approach to human experience by prioritising individual responsibility and awareness of present psychological and physical needs. Its main principles are a creative adjustment to a changing environment and a paradoxical theory of change; the approach emphasises a need for a "moment-to-moment" awareness of experience and the blocks to awareness.
Humanist or person-centred perspective (Rogers)	In this perspective, people are viewed as unique, having their thoughts, feelings, and emotions contributing to their overall life experience. Individuals' subjective experiences are prioritised.
Narrative theory (Epston and White)	Individuals are conceptualised in terms of an overarching life story, or personal narrative, and viewed as the experts of their own lives. A narrative approach views problems as separate from people and assumes individuals as having many skills, abilities, values, commitments, beliefs, and competencies that will assist them to change their relationship with the problems influencing their lives.
Positive psychology (Bandura, Clifton, Diener and Seligman)	Positive psychology is based on the idea that building on positive emotions and strengths is often a more effective path to success than trying to force excellence in areas we are simply not suited for. In practice, this theory involves identifying one's strengths and seeking more opportunities to use them.
Psychodynamic theory (Freud and Jung)	Psychodynamic or psycho-analytical theory focuses on unconscious processes and unresolved past conflicts as influences on behaviour. It aims to encourage understanding of an individual's emotions and unconscious patterns of behaviour as a way to initiate learning and transformation. There is a significant layer in coaching that lies below conscious awareness and grasp, but significantly influences dynamics on multiple levels.
Psychometry (Galton, Cattell, Spearman, Binet and Simon)	Psychometry centres on the theory and techniques of measuring the psyche, in whole or in part, using reputable, scientific instruments with reliability and validity (Scoular, 2020). Examples include the measurement of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and personality traits.
Social psychology (Lewin and Festinger)	Social psychology is the study of the different ways in which people think, feel, and behave in social settings, groups, and close relationships.

Theory	Summary
Solution-focused psychology (Erickson, de Shazer and Berg)	The basic premise is that knowing how a problem arose does not necessarily tell you how to fix it. It is based on defining a desired future state and then constructing the action and thinking that best assist one to achieve that state.
Transactional analysis perspective (Berne)	This perspective focuses on concepts such as ego states, life scripts, and a variety of defined interactional patterns.

Table 1: Social science theories

2.2 Business and economic science theories

Business and economic science include theories from disciplines, such as leadership, management, and organisational change and development.

Theory	Summary
Leadership theory (Carlyle, Lewin, Fiedler, Hersey and Blanchard)	Leadership theory attempts to explain how and why individuals become leaders and what may contribute to the development of leadership capabilities and the manifestation of leadership. Theories of leadership have evolved over time and generally involve individual traits, behaviours, specific situations, and broader context. Leaders have a future vision and include others in putting that vision into action. They maintain stability, whilst adjusting to change in creating sustainable systems.
Management theory (Taylor, Fayol, Weber, Mayo, McGregor, and Drucker)	Management studies were elevated to an academic discipline in the early 20th century with Frederick Taylor's principles for designing processes for the workplace in 1911, and later McGregor's (1960) proposed theory Y and theory X. Management theory concerns how to organise the work that people do and consists of notions that recommend how to manage an organisation, including operational efficiencies, teamwork and employee motivation, and how organisations are structured to best meet their stated goals.
Organisational behaviour (Weber, Fayol, Barnard and Follet)	This field of study investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structures have on behaviours within the organisations for the purpose of improving organisational effectiveness (Robbins et al., 2013).
Organisational development and change (Lewin)	Organisational development and change refer to a set of planned change interventions, activities or tools that seek to improve organisational effectiveness through employee well-being.
Social network theory (Lewin and Freeman)	Social network theories focus on individuals, teams, and organisations, and the network of interpersonal relationships that hinder and enable human action within these social systems. Several avenues of research explore how network relations are interconnected with identity, power, meaning, and other socially constructed components. Variables that are often considered include culture, economics (and social embeddedness), communication, and meaning-making.
Systemic models (Easton)	The basic unit of Easton's system analysis is "interaction". Interactions lead to interrelations, which are then considered a "system". The concepts in this theory include the system, the environment, responses, and feedback.

Table 2: Business and economic science theories
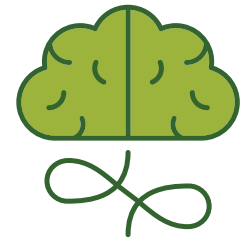
2.3 Adult learning theories

Theories from adult learning and change include workplace learning and development.

Theory	Summary
Adult learning theory (Knowles and Kolb)	Adults have the ability to draw on life experience to assist with learning. As individuals mature, their perspective changes and there is a need to learn practical skills to help solve problems encountered in their lives (Knowles). People engage in the learning process by experiencing something new, reflecting on that experience, drawing conclusions from the experience, and then experimenting with the new understanding (Kolb). Transformative learning results in deep fundamental learning and revised action.
Change theory (Lewin, Kübler-Ross, Bridges, Howell, Kotter, Senge, and Boyatzis)	Change theories include various models and perspectives that aim to explain and facilitate the process of change in individual and group behaviours. Generally, change theories consider a multitude of personal and contextual factors that influence the process of change. Change is mostly viewed as a process that occurs over time, involving progress through a series of stages, not necessarily in sequential order.

Table 3: Adult learning and change theories

2.4 Philosophy theories

Some of the theories from the philosophical body of knowledge that have informed coaching are listed in Table 4.

Theory	Summary
Ethical theory (Kant, Bentham, and Mill)	Ethical theories provide a perspective in ethical analysis and inform decision-making. These theories offer a useful point of departure that can be used as guidance. Major ethical theories include deontology, utilitarianism, rights, virtue, morality, justice, and care.
Existential theory (Kierkegaard, May and Frankl)	Three principles describe the human condition: relatedness, uncertainty, and existential anxiety. The approach is one of exploration of clients' world views from within the context of their presenting concern.
Integral theory (Wilber)	Integral means inclusive, comprehensive, and whole. This theory considers that any experience has four perspectives: the inside and the outside of the individual and of the collective. These perspectives allow for the exploration of the subjective and objective dimensions of the individual (e.g., thoughts, emotions, behaviours) and the collective (e.g., cultural, social, systemic factors).
Ontological theory (Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty)	This perspective explores how individuals perceive and make sense of their existence and reality. The role of language, emotions, and physiology (body posture) are key, with context, identity, and observation being some of the elements to guide learning and growth.

Table 4: Philosophy theories

2.5 Theories informed by a variety of bodies of knowledge

Some theories integrate psychological, business, adult learning, philosophical, and spiritual perspectives. The growing coaching body of knowledge is heavily influenced by the integration of theories and the incorporation of new bodies of knowledge, such as neuroscience.

Theory	Summary
African and indigenous perspectives (Magadlela)	This perspective focuses on the inherent capacity of normal healthy individuals to seek connection with others. A central premise is the ubuntu concept: "I am because you are, you are because we are" (Segalo, 2019). Interconnectedness and subordination of individual interest to those of the collective or greater good are central to this theory.
Emotional intelligence theory (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, Bar-On, and Goleman)	This theory is based on the results from research on the interaction between intelligence and emotion (Mayer et al., 2004). In brief, emotional intelligence refers to individuals' capacity to understand and manage emotions – both their own and that of others.
Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) (Bandler and Grinder)	This orientation aims to identify patterns that are taken to represent how individuals construct their realities to control their experience in various contexts. It uses specific techniques like matching, pacing, and anchoring.
Neuroscience (Rioch, Schmitt, and Kuffler)	Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system, including the biological basis of consciousness, perception, memory, and learning. Observations about cognitive behaviour are linked to the physical processes that drive the behaviour (Oktar, 2006). Examples include studying attention, habits, neuroplasticity, and creativity. Neuroleadership is a field that evolved from neuroscience (Rock & Page, 2009).
Science of happiness (Czikszentmihalyi)	The science of happiness refers to the scientific study of "what makes happy people happy", the psychology of optimal experience and, specifically, the experience of "flow". The science of happiness extends to areas, such as the impact of exercise and nutrition on psychological well-being and the effect of social media on happiness.
Transpersonal discipline/ tradition (Grof and Sutich)	This approach recognises dimensions beyond the personal, not to be confused with religion or spirituality. Much of the emphasis is on engaging with various emergent manifestations of the transpersonal, such as creativity, completeness, and joy.
Wellness theory (Dunn, Travis, Ardell, and Hettler)	Wellness theory studies multiple components related to a state of optimal well-being, including lifestyle, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and the impact of the environment.

Table 5: Integrated theories

Please note that the tables above do not attempt to cover all the theoretical influences on coaching.

3

Popular concepts used in coaching

Concepts commonly applied in leadership development coaching are outlined below.

Accountability

In the coaching process, clients take accountability for progress in their thinking, learning, and actions in relation to their goals. Coaches assist their clients in creating accountability structures and measures from the start.

Accountability partner

Identifying and using an accountability partner can be part of a coaching process to help individuals stay on track, implement actions, and sustain developed behaviours. The accountability partner may be another participant in the development programme, or it can be a trusted colleague, partner, or friend, who agrees to take on the role.

Active listening

Coaches listen with attention and awareness to understand the essence of what their clients are communicating both verbally (words, silence, tone of voice) and non-verbally (body language, emotions, and energy) to hear the underlying beliefs and concerns, motivation and commitment, and vision and goals. This helps coaches integrate and build on their clients' thinking, insights, and learning.

Agenda

Clients identify what they want to achieve as a result of the coaching and coaches align to this agenda throughout, without being over-attached to the outcome.

Awareness

Awareness may be of self, of others, of situations, and/or of the context. Coaching is about raising awareness in relevant areas for individuals to develop and function at a higher level. It leads to enhanced learning, achievement, and enjoyment.

Container

Container refers to the psychological safety and holding space that a coach establishes with a client. Both hard containers and soft containers need to be created to build psychological safety. The hard container refers to the concrete aspects of the coaching relationship, including structure, timing, and a conducive environment, whilst the soft container refers to the more subtle aspects, such as the coach's tone of voice, body language, ability to balance empathy with challenge, and generally building a trusting relationship with the client.

Confidentiality

The ICF describes confidentiality in coaching as the "coach's duty to not disclose any information obtained during the course of the coaching relationship without the express permission of the client" (McMahon, 2018). Clients have the right to set the boundaries of confidentiality, but coaches need to clarify (verbally or written) the limits of confidentiality in the coaching journey.

Contracting

Contracting refers to the terms and/or boundaries of the coaching process that the coach introduces at the start of a coaching process. It includes commercial contracting, psychological contracting, and contracting with the work scope itself (Scoular, 2020). Contracting generally includes, but is not limited to:

- Confidentiality;
- Purpose and objectives of the coaching;
- Expectations of the individual client;
- Areas of development that the individual wants to work with;
- Timing and duration of the coaching process (number and frequency of sessions, length of sessions, overall period over which the sessions will run);
- Cancellation policy (generally 24-48 hours in advance); and
- Complex contracting: in the organisational context, you may be contracting with the organisation, the individual, and even in parallel with many others involved.

Partnering

The relationship between a coach and a client is based on equality. This allows the process to be co-designed.

Presence

Coaches' presence allows for a spontaneous and deep relationship to develop with their clients, helping their clients to also be fully present to the coaching process and to apply this level of consciousness to other areas of their lives.

Professional standards

Coaches needs to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times and understand and model appropriate professional standards, such as the ICF Code of Ethics.

Reframing

Reframing concerns helping individual clients to understand things from a new perspective.

Responsibility

In coaching, the premise is that a client made the choice to complete a coaching process and therefore will take ownership and will commit to take action (Gallwey, 2001). Coaching cannot be imposed on an individual. Increased responsibility leads to enhanced potential, confidence, and self-motivation.

Triad coaching

Triad coaching are coaching sessions attended by a coach, a client, and their line manager. Triad sessions are often included as part of the coaching process to support individuals' learning and development, and to enable alignment with the client organisation based on the assumption that the person responsible for the individual's performance in context is their line manager.

4

Principles of coaching

What is a principle?

A principle is a standard, or rule, or a set of standards or rules that guide actions and behaviour in a specific context or in support of a particular process (Wang & Kania-Gosche, 2013). Principles provide a basis to work from in the form of foundational beliefs or values that inform decision-making and activities.

Coaching is generally characterised by a systematic process intended to enable development and change on cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioural levels. The following are key principles of coaching (Ives, 2008):

- Aimed at a non-clinical client base (i.e., not a therapeutic focus);
- Customised to the particular needs of a client;
- Aimed at improved self-regulation;
- Based on the development of awareness and responsibility/agency;
- Relies on the skills of listening and questioning;
- Implies a collaborative and equal relationship, versus one based on authority;
- Requires client accountability and ownership of decisions made and actions to be taken;

- Involves the inner resourcefulness of a client and access to their knowledge, experience, and intuition; and
- Generally, focused on the achievement of a clear stated goal, rather than problem analysis.

Reid et al. (2020) noted that "coaching is about using listening, dialogue, trust, and the coaching relationship itself as tools for change" (p. 7). A number of common principles that have been identified through the practice of coaching in the GIBS leadership development context are described in Table 6 (PAL Coaching SIG, 2020). Popular concepts will naturally reappear in this list.

Principle	Description
Action and accountability	Coaching emphasises taking concrete actions to achieve desired outcomes. Clients are held accountable for their commitments and progress, fostering a sense of responsibility and forward momentum.
Active listening	In the 1960s, Carl Rogers pointed out that just being deeply listened to is often enough for many people to resolve their problems *without* any other intervention, and this is still true more than six decades later (Scoular, 2020). The condition is that it is a form of trained active and expert listening. Coaches practise active listening, paying attention to both spoken and unspoken cues. This helps coaches understand clients deeply, ask relevant questions, and guide discussions effectively.
Client-centred approach	Coaching centres around the needs, goals, and aspirations of a client. Coaches create a safe and supportive environment to help clients explore their challenges, opportunities, and desired outcomes.
Confidentiality and trust	Trust is crucial in coaching relationships. Clients need to feel safe sharing their thoughts, challenges, and aspirations. Coaches maintain strict confidentiality to build and maintain trust.
Continuous learning	Coaches are committed to their own continuous learning and development. Staying updated on coaching techniques, psychology, and leadership trends enhances their ability to support clients.
Cultural sensitivity	Coaches respect and acknowledge clients' cultural backgrounds, values, and perspectives. This ensures coaching is tailored to individual needs and avoids imposing any biases.
Feedback and reflection	Constructive feedback is provided by coaches to help clients gain awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement. Regular reflection allows clients to integrate their learning and insights.
Feedback loop	Clients and coaches engage in an ongoing feedback loop to ensure the coaching process is effective. Adjustments are made as needed to align with client goals and preferences.
Goal orientation	Coaching is goal-driven. Coaches work with clients to define clear and specific goals, which serve as a compass for the coaching process. These goals guide discussions, actions, and progress assessment.
Non-directive approach	Coaching is non-directive, meaning that coaches do not provide solutions or tell clients what to do. Instead, coaches facilitate their clients' exploration and guide them to find their own answers.
Powerful questioning	Coaches ask thought-provoking questions that encourage reflection, exploration, and new perspectives. These questions help clients expand their thinking and generate insights. In many ways, along with listening, questioning is the cornerstone skill in great coaching. Questions direct attention and the conversation, so in a non-directive dialogue, it is crucial to be skilled in the appropriate questions. It is lifelong learning, by itself. There are questions that focus attention, follow interest, raise awareness, generate responsibility, etc.
Self-discovery and empowerment	Coaching focuses on helping individuals discover their own insights, solutions, and strengths. Clients are empowered to take ownership of their development journey and make decisions aligned with their values.
Strength-based	Coaching often draws from positive psychology principles, emphasising strengths, resilience, and well-being. Coaches help clients identify and leverage their positive qualities to achieve their goals.
Sustainable change and expanded capacity/ consciousness	Coaching aims for sustainable change by focusing on long-term growth and behavioural shifts. Clients are encouraged to develop new habits and practices that extend beyond the coaching relationship. Coaching aims to develop clients' overall capacity, consciousness, and adaptiveness. It uses goals, while intentional and specific in themselves, as levers for broader general consciousness and change.

Table 6: Common principles in coaching

These principles are common to the discipline of coaching, notwithstanding the identified body of knowledge and selection of theory or theories underpinning their practice by a coach or informing their leadership development by a client of coaching services.

5 Coaching approaches

What is an approach?

An approach can be described as a "set of principles, beliefs, or ideas about the nature" of a particular subject (Hoque, 2016, p. 3). It is the basic philosophy underpinning the subject matter being discussed and includes the related assumptions or point of view held by practitioners within the field (Hofler, 1983; Hoque, 2016). Consequently, an approach provides a general direction and informs how a specific task, problem, or outcome is addressed.

A coaching approach refers to the way coaches deliver their service and reflects the body of knowledge the coaches locate themselves in, the theories that inform their coaching style and techniques, the methodologies they have chosen to adopt, and the models and tools they select for their coaching processes (Tee et al., 2018). Many coaches may move across approaches depending on the situation and the needs of their clients.

The large number of influences on the discipline of coaching shows that coaching is not always the same and that there are multiple dimensions to coaching and how it can be approached (Jackson, 2005). Historically, coaching used a directive approach in the form of guidance, teaching, or instruction, especially since coaching partly developed from sports coaching. With the evolution of coaching as a distinct discipline, it has developed into a facilitative approach or a leadership style, that has become more and more non-directive. Coaching approaches vary from being focused on skills training on the one end of the spectrum to transformation on the other end (Hawkins & Smith, 2007). Figure 2 displays the continuum along which coaching can be approached.

Skills training	Performance improvement	Personal development	Transformation	Transcendence
Doing	Learning	Being	Becoming	Beyond self

Figure 2: Continuum of coaching approaches

There is complexity in the way coaching can be approached, which is influenced by several variables, including adherence to methodology, foundations of practice, level of pragmatism, perceived source of achievement of outcomes, and the level of attachment to actions (Jackson, 2005).

Figure 3 Coaching approach variables adapted (Jackson, 2005)

5.1 Skills training approach

A skills training coaching approach is entirely goal-orientated, directive, and generally short-term with a focus on immediate results, and is therefore appropriate in situations where upskilling is required and there are time constraints (Ives, 2008). In addition to pre-existing knowledge on the required skill(s), coaches need good communication skills, empathy, and the ability to transfer knowledge to others.

This approach is systematic and relies on the application of stage models and standard toolkits. A skills training approach is explicit and pragmatic with a focus on specific areas of competency in the execution of tasks and goals (Jackson, 2005; Stout-Rostron, 2009). On this end of the spectrum, the emphasis is on action and the role of coaches is to make use of knowledge, information, and processes to assist clients in attaining knowledge and learning and internalising the new skill(s). Managers, internal coaches, or external coaches may be suitable for a skills training coaching approach (Hawkins & Smith, 2007).

A skills training approach is appropriate when:

- The knowledge and skills required are clear;
- An individual is new in their role;
- Following a merger or acquisition;
- Additional responsibilities have been allocated to an individual;
- It forms part of on-the-job training;
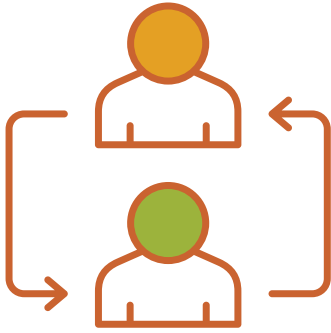- Modelling behaviour will be helpful; and
- There is a time constraint.

5.2 Performance improvement approach

Performance coaching is goal-directed with a developmental aspect and less directive than a skills training approach. This approach is applied when there is an opportunity for continuous improvement, such as when individuals want to prepare for the next level in their careers. The focus of the coaching process is on the understanding of goals and motivation to improve behaviour and performance (Stout-Rostron, 2009). This approach is not to be confused with a remedial or corrective attempt, in which case counselling would be a more appropriate intervention. Performance coaching will generally be based on a coaching model and have a high degree of dependence on practical problem-solving tools and competence building.
The role of a coach is to use processes to enable a client to achieve the identified goal (Ives, 2008). This role may be suited to managers skilled in coaching, internal coaches, and external coaching practitioners (Hawkins & Smith, 2007).

A performance improvement approach is appropriate when:

- Accelerating a high-potential individual's development;
- An individual is promoted;
- There is potential for increased responsibility;
- There is a willingness to develop;
- An individual's role has changed significantly in scope or scale;
- An individual has been assigned to a new project or key initiative; and
- It will form part of succession planning and/or development of an organisation's leadership pipeline.

5.3 Personal development approach

A personal development coaching approach is non-directive and generally takes place over a longer period (Ives, 2008). The process is emergent and less reliant on the application of models and tools, and is thus more conducive to shared idea generation. It is less about activities and skills, and more about understanding and awareness. The role of coaches is to help their clients become aware of their own unconscious thinking processes, intrinsic motivation, and values, and how these factors drive their behaviour. In this way, clients build an understanding of the meaning of these factors in their lives (Stout-Rostron, 2009). This coaching approach is more suited to well-trained internal coaches and professional external coaches (Hawkins & Smith, 2007).

A personal development approach is appropriate when (Peltier, 2001):

- Choice is encouraged;
- Personal responsibility and awareness are the focus;
- Individuality can be honoured;
- Authentic relationships are valued; and
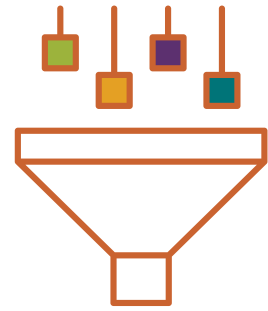- Clients must figure things out in their own way.

5.4 Transformation approach

The transformation coaching approach is facilitative and open to the incorporation of previous knowledge or experience into practice and the acceptance of non-coaching helping strategies as part of a coaching intervention. There is an emphasis on exploration rather than targets and an interest rather than adherence to doctrine (Ives, 2008). This approach is informed by psychodynamic and existential theories and characterised by bringing what is unconscious to clients into consciousness. Coaches' personal presence has a strong influence, rather than following a procedural approach. External professional and experienced coaches are best suited to this approach (Hawkins & Smith, 2007).

A transformation approach is appropriate when there is an agreement between a client and a coach to work at this level of depth. The value is encapsulated in the following quote from Kets de Vries (2006): "In a nutshell, what leadership coaches offer their clients is independence. True independence means being free from the domination of one's unconscious needs and desires and being courageous enough to choose one's own destiny."

5.5 Transcendence

Coaching over time and at depth can lead to transformation of the individual and the system along with them, in what can be referred to as "beyond self". Analytic-network coaching, systemic coaching, and group coaching, amongst others, are coaching approaches that have the potential for outcomes beyond the individual client.

5.6 Considerations for selecting the appropriate approach

There are also other different genres (or types of coaching) that are similarly shaped by context or purpose. These include manager as coach (the increasingly present requirement for managers to enable employees' development), peer coaching (reciprocal relationships between those with similar experience and responsibility), life coaching (enhancing well-being from a holistic perspective), health and wellness coaching (coaching to support people taking better care of their health for sustained change), and career coaching (processes designed to enhance career development and disrupt and develop career identity).

Leadership coaching works with challenges that face leaders in relation to developing themselves enabling others, developing a strategic perspective, balancing competing demands and interests, and resolving dilemmas. Executive coaching is leadership coaching with the most senior individuals in an organisation.

One way of approaching how coaches could match their relevant theoretical knowledge and practical expertise to their clients' needs is considering how each supports their clients on "horizontal" versus "vertical" needs. "Horizontal" refers to the way an approach is used to meet a specific goal-orientated need (from A to B as a concrete objective). "Vertical" is how an approach is used to meet a deeper, pervasive, implicit (sometimes unconscious) internal need for individuals. This could be, for example, a deep general capacity an individual wants to develop across all spheres of their lives, such as confidence, calmness, wisdom, and adaptiveness.

Coaching is a collaborative process and the best approach to use should ultimately be made in consultation with individuals. Flexibility and responsiveness to clients' needs are key aspects of a successful coaching process. The following considerations can assist both organisations and coaches in selecting the appropriate coaching approach:

- Coaching objectives and goals;
- Complexity of the objectives and goals;
- Learning styles;
- Personality preferences;
- Time frame and intensity;
- Organisational context;
- Organisational and individual level of readiness;
- Systemic support;
- Coach expertise;
- Feedback and collaboration;
- Flexibility and adaptability; and
- Ethics and cultural awareness/cultural context.

Evolving perspectives and trends need to be considered when selecting an approach. Advanced forms of coaching now include group coaching (a small group actively participating in learning and developing new capacities through exchange and interaction) and team coaching (increasing collective capability and performance of a team through coaching principles).
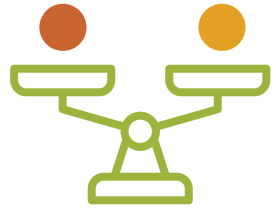
The famous 1961 Milgram experiment caused an uproar when 63% of ordinary, decent people were prepared to inflict fatal electric shocks on another human being because someone in a white coat told them to do so. Findings like this showed us in stunning terms how affected we are by context, particularly social context. These include roles, stereotypes, group dynamics, expectations of others, and our tendency to make the fundamental attribution error (the illusion that we are more masters of our destiny than we actually are). Group coaching brings context into the coaching interaction in multiple ways, such as varieties of feedback, the use of psychometrics, and testing live hypotheses.

Some of the contemporary contextual trends include cross-cultural coaching and the role of AI in coaching. The successful management of cross-cultural contexts involves the ability and capacity to manage paradox. Coaching in this context focuses on finding inclusive, synergistic approaches to conflicting challenges, finding clarity and commonality in complexity, and supporting a quest for identification of similarities (Cox et al., 2018).

Recently, a start-up called Practica, launched an AI-driven chatbot for professional mentorship. Whoop Coach, a wearable technology brand, is using ChatGPT to offer more personalised recommendations regarding health queries based on individual biometric data. The global coaching industry is certainly taking note of the rise of AI "coaching" tools. It is increasingly necessary to be informed and realistic about AI's possible benefits and limitations (Reid & Chiba, 2024).

In its current form, an AI machine is not regarded to be a viable human replacement. While a human being has general intelligence and can pick up inflections and information by listening as well as sensing and observing body language and eye contact, AI is process-driven, able to give thousands of different options and, based on previous data from similar situations, outlines the most likely route to follow. Prof. Manoj Chiba, a data and technology expert at GIBS, says he cannot see AI successfully replacing human coaches, although incorporating the benefits of AI into coaching in a hybrid form could offer significant opportunities to both coaches and their clients, as well as significantly increase access to personal development (Terblanche et al., 2022).

6
Ethical considerations

Due to the interpersonal relationship nature of coaching, ethical guidelines play an important role in protecting both clients and coaches. Professional coaching bodies have been established with this in mind and have a core focus on providing ethical standards for professional conduct, supported by credentialling processes to ensure coaching competence. The ICF, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, the Association for Coaching, and the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) are recognised professional coaching organisations.

Codes of ethical conduct and professional standards provide clear boundaries for the practice of coaching and ensure alignment to the best interests of clients. Five main themes can be found in most coaching codes of ethics:

- No harm to self and others;
- Act in ways that promote the welfare of other people;
- Practice within scope of competence;
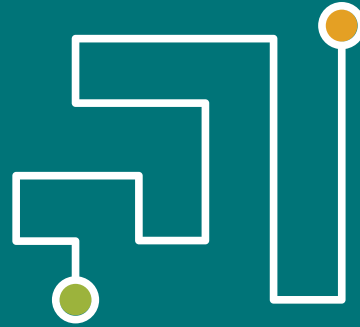- Respect the interests of the client; and
- Respect the law.

For example, the ICF Code of Ethics covers four areas of ethical standards, including responsibility to clients, responsibility to practice and performance, responsibility to professionalism, and responsibility to society. In practice, these themes can be summarised in the following ethical standards for coaches:

- **Beneficence and non-maleficence:** Coaches are expected to act in the best interests of the client and do no harm.
- **Confidentiality:** Coaches are responsible for maintaining strict confidentiality regarding all information shared during coaching sessions. There is only one instance in which coaches are allowed to break confidentiality and that is when clients threaten to harm themselves or others.

- **Equity:** Positive regard for different cultural and religious beliefs and an awareness of potential biases are critical in coaching.
- **Integrity:** Potential conflicts of interest that could impact the coaching relationship need to be disclosed and clear boundaries between coaching and other roles or relationships coaches might have with clients need to be established (e.g., internal coaching processes) to ensure objectivity.
- **Respect:** Clients should have the autonomy to choose or decline specific coaching tools and techniques; respect for their preferences and needs.
- **Responsibility:** Coaches need to work with methodologies and frameworks that align with their expertise and operate within the scope of their knowledge, qualifications, and competence. If assessments are part of a coaching process, clients need to be informed of the purpose, results, and potential implications.

Continued professional and personal development are core to integrity in coaching. Supervision is an essential element of any coach's continued development and is defined as: "the process by which a coach, with the help of a supervisor, can attend to understanding better, both the client system and themselves as part of the client-coach system, and by doing so transform their work and develop their craft" (Hawkins & Smith, 2007). There are multiple models for developing coaching supervision itself, such as Hawkins' seven-eyed model and the CLEAR model.
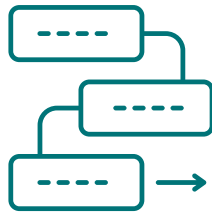
Section two: Coaching practice

The bodies of knowledge, theories, and research in a specific subject area drive the methodologies used in the practical application thereof. This section explores coaching in practice, including the application of coaching theory through methodologies, frameworks, and techniques generally used in leadership development coaching, as well as challenges that may surface, and the benefits of coaching. While methodologies are often derived from the underlying theory, both the practitioner and the client retain the autonomy to select those most applicable and appropriate to their specific context.

7

Coaching methodologies

What is a methodology?

When conducting research, methodology refers to the systematic way in which a research problem can be solved. It involves the various steps followed by researchers and the logic behind them (Patel & Patel, 2019). In the corporate world, and more specifically in project management, methodology refers to detailed and precise processes that usually contain a series of steps and activities for each phase of the process or project life cycle. Coaching methodologies encompass a systematic approach that generally includes related frameworks and tools.

A large number of coaching methodologies developed from the various theories that informed coaching (Bachkirova, 2017). In leadership development, a blend of these methodologies may be selected based on the identified development needs and coaching objectives. An overview of the most used coaching methodologies can be found below, and these are clustered similar to the theories in section one, according to the underlying bodies of knowledge.
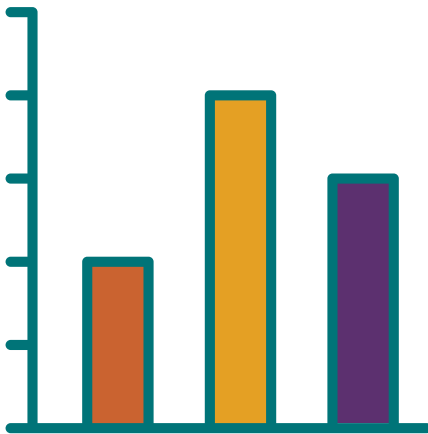
7.1 Coaching methodologies based on social science theories

Type	Description
Behavioural/Goal-focused coaching	Goal-focused coaching is a structured coaching methodology that concentrates on setting clear goals and emphasises accountability and action planning. It helps clients clarify their objectives, overcome challenges, and create actionable steps for achievement.
Cognitive-behavioural coaching	Cognitive-behavioural coaching blends psychological principles with coaching techniques. Coaches help individuals recognise and modify unproductive thought patterns and behaviours that hinder their progress. This approach is effective for addressing limiting beliefs, managing stress, and promoting emotional resilience. It empowers individuals to develop a positive mindset and make constructive behavioural changes.
Gestalt coaching	Gestalt coaching draws from Gestalt psychology and emphasises awareness of the present moment and clients' experiences. It encourages individuals to explore feelings, thoughts, and behaviours within the context of their environment. Gestalt coaching enhances self-awareness, helps individuals integrate different aspects of their lives, and promotes personal growth through self-discovery.
Motivational interviewing	Motivational Interviewing is a client-centred approach that focuses on eliciting and strengthening people's intrinsic motivation to change. It involves active listening, empathy, and collaboration. Motivational Interviewing is effective for addressing behaviour change and ambivalence. It helps clients explore their motivations and overcome resistance to change.
Narrative coaching	Narrative coaching involves exploring individuals' life stories and experiences. Coaches help clients identify themes, challenge limiting narratives, and create new empowering stories. Narrative coaching promotes self-discovery and identity transformation, and helps individuals reframe their perspectives, ultimately leading to more purposeful and empowered lives.
Psychodynamic coaching	Psychodynamic coaching draws from psychodynamic psychology and explores unconscious dynamics, emotions, and underlying beliefs. It helps individuals understand how past experiences influence present behaviours and choices. Psychodynamic coaching facilitates self-awareness, insight into emotional patterns, and addressing underlying issues that may impact personal and professional growth.
Solution-focused coaching	Solution-focused coaching emphasises identifying and building upon existing strengths and resources to achieve desired outcomes. Coaches guide individuals in generating practical solutions and strategies. Solution-focused coaching is efficient for quickly identifying actionable steps and creating positive change. It is particularly useful when clients seek immediate solutions to specific challenges.
Transactional analysis	Transactional analysis is a psychological theory that explores human behaviour and communication. In coaching, transactional analysis can help clients understand their interactions with others, recognise patterns, and develop healthier communication and relationship skills. Transactional analysis provides insights into interpersonal dynamics and can lead to improved relationships and self-awareness, which are crucial for personal and professional development.

Table 7: Coaching methodologies based on social science theories

7.2 Coaching methodologies based on business and economic science theories

Type	Description
Content-focused coaching	Content-focused coaching involves addressing specific content, such as skills, knowledge, or tasks. The coaching focuses on improving competence in a particular area by providing instruction, feedback, and skill development. Content-focused coaching is valuable for skill enhancement, knowledge acquisition, and performance improvement. It helps clients develop expertise in a specific domain.
Group coaching	In group coaching, a small group of people meet, and together with a skilled coach actively participate in a coaching conversation. Group coaching offers an opportunity for learning and developing new capacities and skills through exchange and interaction with each other (PAL, 2022). Group coaching involves a coaching intervention, as well as a group intervention, and is influenced by psychotherapeutic group analysis and by organisational team processes (Reid, 2012). Team coaching is a form of group coaching where the coaching takes place with an intact team.
Performance coaching	Performance coaching is designed to improve overall job performance. Coaches work with individuals to set clear performance goals, identify obstacles, and develop strategies for achieving and exceeding expectations. Performance coaching enhances productivity, job satisfaction, and results. It is particularly useful for aligning individual contributions with organisational objectives.
Skills coaching	Skills coaching focuses on enhancing specific skills and competencies needed for success in a particular role or context. Coaches provide guidance, feedback, and practice opportunities to improve performance in areas, such as communication, time management, and leadership. Skills coaching is valuable for developing practical abilities that contribute directly to job performance. It helps individuals refine their strengths and address areas of improvement, leading to increased effectiveness and confidence.
Values-based coaching	Values-based coaching centres around helping individuals identify and align their actions and decisions with their core values. Clients explore what truly matters to them and work towards making choices that are in harmony with those values. Values-based coaching promotes authenticity, integrity, and a sense of purpose. It assists clients in making choices that lead to greater fulfilment and a sense of meaning in their personal and professional lives.

Table 8: Coaching methodologies based on business and economic science theories

7.3 Coaching methodologies based on adult learning theories

Type	Description
Appreciative coaching	Appreciative coaching emphasises exploring and amplifying individuals' strengths and positive experiences. Clients reflect on their successes to identify patterns and leverage their strengths. Appreciative coaching fosters a positive mindset, enhances self-confidence, and provides a foundation for growth based on what is working well.
Personal development coaching	Personal development coaching focuses on holistic growth and self-awareness. Coaches help individuals explore their values, passions, and aspirations to create a fulfilling and balanced life. This coaching supports individuals in aligning their personal and professional lives with their core values, leading to greater life satisfaction, purpose, and well-being.
Transformational coaching	Transformational coaching focuses on profound personal growth and change. Coaches guide individuals through self-exploration, helping them align with their values and achieve meaningful transformation. Transformational coaching can lead to lasting change, empowering individuals to step into their potential, shift their mindset, and make significant shifts in various aspects of their lives.
The Thinking Environment®	The Thinking Environment® is a process that aims to generate the independent thinking of a high standard through the application of 10 behaviours. The premise is that the quality of what individuals do is dependent on the quality of their thinking, and that quality of thinking is impacted by how individuals treat each other while thinking.

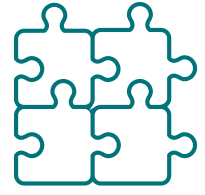Table 9: Coaching methodologies based on adult learning and change theories

7.4 Coaching methodologies based on theories from philosophy

Type	Description
Existential coaching	Existential coaching explores philosophical questions about the meaning of life, freedom, and choice. It helps individuals examine their values, purpose, and existential concerns. Existential coaching encourages clients to reflect on their life's purpose, make authentic choices, and embrace their personal responsibility, leading to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.
Integral coaching	This methodology integrates theories of many fields, including somatics and embodiment, adult development theory, neuroscience, ontology, integral theory, numerous spiritual traditions, and many other influences. Each client is viewed as an integrated whole shaped by their history, circumstances, relationships, and environment.
Ontological coaching	Ontological coaching centres on the notion of way of being. Coaches work with a combination of language, moods, physiology, and conversations to support clients in generating sustainable change for themselves.
Transpersonal coaching	Transpersonal coaching explores the spiritual and transformative aspects of human experience. It goes beyond traditional coaching by considering the deeper, meaning-seeking dimensions of people's lives. Transpersonal coaching is valued for helping clients explore their purpose, values, and connection to a broader sense of self, leading to profound personal growth and self-discovery.

Table 10: Coaching methodologies based on philosophy theories

7.5 Coaching methodologies based on integration across multiple theories

Type	Description
Analytic-network coaching	Analytic-network coaching is a process that draws on psychoanalytic, systems, and network theory. It is based on the idea that we live and work in a networked society, a globalised and connected world. It helps clients to develop their personal, authentic leadership approach and strategically influence the networks in which they work to create positive transformational change. It works with the ideas of ecosystems, representing our interdependent, networked, and fast-changing workplaces, and supports leaders to think strategically and develop sustainable strategies for change, in addition to achieving immediate goals.
Depth coaching	Depth coaching delves into the deeper layers of individuals' beliefs, emotions, and motivations. Coaches explore underlying factors that impact behaviour and help clients achieve meaningful insights and transformation. Depth coaching facilitates profound self-awareness and personal growth by addressing underlying issues that may hinder progress. It is well suited for individuals seeking a deeper understanding of themselves.
Directive coaching	Directive coaching involves coaches taking a more active role by offering guidance, suggestions, and advice to clients. Coaches provide solutions and specific strategies to address challenges. Directive coaching can be particularly effective when clients seek clear direction and practical solutions. It offers expert guidance and a structured approach to problem-solving.
Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)	NLP is a coaching methodology that focuses on the connection between neurological processes, language, and behaviour patterns. NLP techniques aim to reshape thought patterns, communication, and behaviours. NLP can help clients overcome limitations, manage emotions, and improve communication skills. It is valued for its practical techniques to create positive change.
Neuroscience-based coaching	Neuroscience has progressed very quickly in the last decade, opening our understanding to how our brain works and helping us to better understand ourselves. It has become an essential tool and set of processes for coaches and anyone who works with people, helping them to change and develop. The field of neuroscience helps coaches coach with the "brain in mind", using understanding of neuroplasticity, the processes of change, and how experiences are formed. It also allows exploration of creativity and innovation, discerning between useful and destructive cognition, leveraging memory, and offering insights into the brain mechanisms involved in both coaching and being coached. These insights have profound implications for enhancing the coaching experience.
Non-directive coaching	Non-directive coaching, also known as client-centred coaching, involves coaches creating a supportive and non-judgemental environment where clients lead the conversation. Coaches refrain from giving advice and encourage self-discovery and problem-solving. Non-directive coaching empowers clients to take ownership of their growth and solutions. It fosters self-reliance, self-awareness, and self-direction.

Table 11: Coaching methodologies based on integrated theories

Note: Please note that the tables above do not attempt to cover all the coaching methodologies

These coaching methodologies offer unique and overlapping approaches to leadership development, with the scope to meet a wide array of individual needs and goals (Heinl, 2023). The preference for a particular methodology is founded in the theoretical foundation and body of knowledge from which a coach operates. Many coaches qualify in the use of more than one methodology to be able to cater to different client preferences, goals, and learning styles. The theoretical foundation is often evident and methodologies in turn again inform certain coaching approaches.

Having covered both theories that inform coaching and the primary methodologies in coaching, it is worth saying something about coach training. Coach accrediting bodies and training institutions have made progress in recent years in forging a consensus around two broad levels of coaching practice and training: (1) practitioner accreditations; and (2) postgraduate qualifications (master's level degrees). Practitioners should have a sound basis in theory. However, the main emphasis is on coaching practice and experience through obtaining a significant amount of practical coaching hours. Postgraduate qualifications, as you would expect, have a far greater emphasis and depth in academic theory and would cover a range of theories, as well as linking that theory to practice. Regardless of which training option one takes, the indicators of rigour are a route that is grounded in well-established, empirically evidenced methodologies. Many believe that a strong indicator of practical rigour is training accredited by a professional body.

8 Coaching frameworks and models

In the field of coaching, the terms frameworks and models are used interchangeably. In coaching processes, frameworks and models are used to guide the progression and interactions based on a structured set of principles, tools, and techniques. Coaching frameworks and models used in leadership development can be taken from well-known coaching models, such as the GROW model, or adapted from other disciplines like psychology (e.g., Egan's 1987 skilled helper model), neuroscience (e.g., brain-based models), or business (e.g., the business model canvas). Often, coaches will utilise a combination of models, or develop their own coaching framework based on their personal philosophy, values, and style. The reason why the terms are used interchangeably in coaching is due to the structural nature provided by both models and frameworks.

What is a framework?

The definition and use of frameworks differ across subject areas. However, there are certain commonalities, which include a set of concepts, the relationships between them, and a process for "thinking about problems and potential solutions" (Partelow, 2023). Frameworks are helpful, because they provide a structure for thinking about a topic systematically from analysis through to interpretation and application.

What is a model?

A model is used to represent a process, a system, or another part of reality in a way that enables understanding of that which it represents. It is used to explain, predict, or replicate real-world situations (Kühne, 2004). A model generally provides more detail compared to a framework, as models often include a specific structure or set of steps.

The value in the use of a coaching framework or model to both coaches and clients rests in how it provides a clear and consistent process to follow, which assists in establishing credibility and trust, and drives engagement and advancement (International Coach Academy, 2013). Although frameworks and models provide a structure to follow, it is important to note that these effectively provide flexibility within which to explore coaching topics. Subjects brought to a coaching process may at times feel somewhat overwhelming, or even chaotic, and the coaching frame provides the space and process to make sense of the topic and gain clarity about a way forward. Coaching frameworks and models are not meant to be followed in a rigid or prescriptive way (Stout-Rostron et al., 2018).

There are a substantial number of coaching frameworks and models to choose from. Some of the most frequently used models are outlined next.

ABC model

The ABC model stands for Awareness, Belief, and Choice. It is a framework that helps individuals explore and understand their reactions to events. It encourages individuals to identify the triggering event (awareness), understand their beliefs and interpretations about the event (belief), and choose how they want to respond (choice).

Application: ABC is valuable for addressing negative beliefs and emotional reactions as well as promoting emotional intelligence and resilience.

CLEAR model

The CLEAR model stands for Contracting, Listening and Exploring, Action, and Review. This coaching framework emphasises building a strong coaching relationship through clear expectations (contracting), active listening and exploration (listening and exploring), setting and implementing action steps (action), and reflecting on progress (review).

Application: CLEAR is beneficial for building strong coaching relationships, ensuring client involvement, and facilitating progress through clear steps.

GROW model and variations thereof

The GROW model (Whitmore, 1992) stands for Goals, Reality, Options, and Way Forward. It is the most widely used coaching framework worldwide and guides individuals through a structured process of setting and achieving goals. Variations of the GROW model may include additional steps or variations in terminology, but the core concept remains the same: clarifying goals, assessing the current situation, exploring options, and committing to action steps.

GIBS has expanded this acronym to V-GROWTH, with the addition of V for Vision (to broaden emphasis beyond a session goal to the overall goal for clients, as well as the context in which the clients operate: their personal context and the context for their various roles, such as work for an organisation. GIBS also added a TH for Try and Hone, the latter bringing in the incremental experimentation approach necessary to develop one's behaviour and mindset, which also emphasises the development work beyond a coaching session itself and again emphasise practical context.

Application: GROW and its variations are versatile and widely applicable for goal-setting, problem-solving, and action planning. It is effective for skill development, performance improvement, and personal growth.

OSKAR model

The OSKAR model stands for Outcome, Scaling, Know-How, Affirm and Action, and Review. This framework focuses on solution-building and forward momentum. Clients identify their desired outcomes (Outcome), rate their current progress on a scaling system (Scaling), explore their existing skills and resources (Know-How), identify affirmations and strengths (Affirm and Action), and review their progress (Review).

Application: OSKAR is ideal for solution-focused coaching, encouraging clients to explore their strengths, resources, and positive progress.

PERFECT model

This model, developed by Harvard's Carol Kauffman assists coaches in scanning through seven levels, each of which represents both a potential resource and a source of potential obstacles. The levels are physical and biological, environmental, relational, feelings, effective thinking, continuity, and transcendence.

Application: Coaches can use the PERFECT model as a mnemonic device to remind themselves of the wide array of possibilities at their disposal. It in an integrative framework that can help coaches tap into diverse approaches.
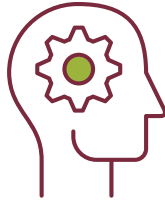
STEPPPA model

The premise of the STEPPPA model is that behaviours are driven by emotion, which means that action is motivated by the emotional commitment. The acronym comprises of Subject, Target, Emotion, Perception, Plan, Pace, and Act. This model allows for investigation of the goal from the perspective of the emotions linked to the ultimate outcome, the target, and the question would be "Is the goal worth it?", before moving on to the meaning and action planning aspects (International Coach Academy, 2013).

Application: STEPPPA is particularly useful when there is potential for or already evidence of difficult emotions related to the subject and the target (goal), which need to be overcome.

These coaching models provide structured approaches to guide coaching conversations and goal-setting processes. Each model offers a unique lens through which clients can gain clarity, explore possibilities, set goals, and take action towards positive change and growth. Coaches can select the most suitable model based on clients' needs and preferences.

9

Coaching techniques

What is a technique?

A technique is defined as a way of doing something, including a task, a performance of an artistic work, or a scientific procedure (Hoque, 2016). In coaching, technique refers to skill, ability, competence, and expertise (Stout-Rostron et al., 2018).

Valuable coaching techniques include:

- **Active listening:** A principle and a technique, active listening is the ability to pay attention to both spoken and unspoken cues. This helps coaches understand clients deeply, ask relevant questions, and guide discussions effectively.

- **Challenging assumptions:** Part of the coaching experience is to be challenged. One of the roles of coaches is to invite their clients to stretch beyond their comfort zones to challenge assumptions, limiting beliefs, and perspectives to provoke new insights and possibilities without judgement or criticism.

- **Creating trust/safety:** Coaches build trust with clients by building a strong container for the coaching conversations and upholding confidentiality. Confidentiality forms part of ethical conduct and it facilitates the coaching process. When clients feel safe, they can open up about insecurities and limiting beliefs, which allows the coaching process to move towards action and goal achievement.

- **Empathy:** Empathy is the skill of being able to understand another's perspective without judgement. In coaching, empathy supports trust and safety, which helps clients explore their goals, challenges, and emotions. Empathy also helps coaches understand clients' needs, values, and motivations, and to tailor their approach accordingly. Empathy shows clients that coaches care, respect, and believe in them.

- **Goal-setting:** This is a collaborative process between coaches and clients to identify and define the coaching objectives. The SMART framework is commonly used: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. The goals serve as the central points for development, guiding the coaching journey, and providing a structure for measurable progress and success.

- **Questioning:** The ability to ask appropriate and insightful questions is a key coaching skill. Well-articulated questions bring clients into the dialogue. Open-ended questions inform individuals that they have the freedom to choose the content and to shape the flow of the conversation. Questioning keeps the coaching conversation dynamic.

- **Relationship-building:** The first step in any coaching process is relationship-building, and it is dynamic throughout the process. Building rapport, establishing trust, and encouraging commitment forms part of relationship-building. In addition, credibility, reliability, and showing care are elements that support relationship-building.

10

Coaching tools

What is a tool?

Tools are specific instruments, resources, or materials used to facilitate or support a particular practice or process. Tools can include tangible objects, software applications, assessments, or any other means that assist in carrying out a task or activity. They are practical aids used to deliver specific outcomes or results (Stout-Rostron et al., 2018).

Referring back to techniques, techniques are the ability to use the relevant tools. For instance, if open questions are a tool, the ability to ask well-articulated questions is the technique (Stout-Rostron et al., 2018). Some well-known coaching tools are outlined next.

Assessments

Assessments are often used as tools to surface self-insight and self-understanding and assist in identifying and clarifying coaching goals. It can assist in measuring progress throughout a process or after completion of a coaching programme. These may include formal psychometric assessments or 360-degree feedback questionnaires, and less formal self-assessment exercises.

Experimentation

In a coaching context, experimentation refers to partnering with clients to devise new steps to address something they want to change, a fresh way of behaving or being. Experimenting involves trying something out and seeing what happens in a safe space and then going out and practising the new approach or set of actions beyond the coaching session.

Journalling

Journalling exercises are helpful ways for clients to raise their awareness of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, to process and crystalise thinking and feelings, and to track progress.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness exercises or meditative processes are useful to help clients cultivate positive strengths and mindsets, such as compassion, positive self-talk, and visioning. Mindfulness practices have also proven to be useful in managing health and well-being.

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are questions that require a broader and deeper response than a "yes" or a "no". These questions begin with who, what, where, when, why, or how. It is generally better to ask "what" questions, rather than "why" questions, because "why" may come across as interrogative and surface defensiveness in clients. Open-ended questions bring out feelings and opinions, which add depth to the coaching conversation.

Reflection

Reflective practices are often valuable when helping clients build self-awareness or learn from their actions and behaviours.

Role-play

Role-play in coaching is "real" behaviour acted out in a non-judgemental environment, whilst still having the potential to trigger authentic reactions that must be dealt with. Coaching allows this to take place without rushing it and with opportunity to debrief the role-play and learn from the experience.

SMART goal-setting

SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. It is a tool for setting effective goals and emphasises that goals should be well-defined, quantifiable, realistic, aligned with objectives, and have a clear time frame.

Visualisation

Visualisation exercises are used to help clients consider a way forward, identify goal-orientated actions, or envisage achievable success.
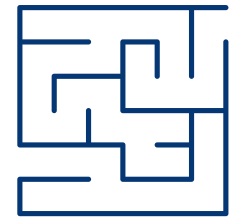
Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life is a visual tool that assesses individuals' satisfaction and balance across different life domains. These domains could include areas like career, finances, health, relationships, and personal growth. Clients rate their level of satisfaction in each area and then work on creating a more balanced and fulfilling life by setting goals and actions in the lower-rated areas.

Worksheets

Coaches have access to a multitude of worksheets to utilise for specific needs arising from coaching clients and/or processes ranging from identifying areas of strength and development to setting goals and developing action plans. Worksheets encourage active and deeper learning, as well as skills application in between sessions.

There are many other tools and activities used in coaching practices, such as the Johari window, the "magic box", Still Life activity, brainstorming, dilemma reconciliation/resolution, and many psychometric tools.

11
Potential challenges

Several challenges could surface when a coaching process is implemented, including:

- **Balancing structure and flexibility:** Striking the right balance between following a structured programme with specific learning outcomes and being responsive to individuals' unique situation can be a challenge.
- **Complexity for clients:** Highly complex frameworks might overwhelm clients, hindering their ability to fully engage with the coaching process. Simplification and gradual introduction might be necessary.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Some frameworks might not align well with the cultural values and beliefs of clients. It is important to consider and respect cultural diversity when selecting techniques and tools to work with.
- **Over-structured approach:** Working in an overly structured way may stifle natural conversations and exploration. Striking a balance between structure and organic interaction is key.
- **Resistance:** Clients might be resistant, particularly if they have preconceived notions about coaching. It is important to address their concerns and explain the benefits clearly.

- **Resistance from organisations:** Coaching might be met with resistance from leaders or human resources departments. Clear communication about the coaching process benefits can help overcome this challenge.
- **Time constraints:** Some coaching processes require more time for in-depth exploration. This can be challenging if clients have limited availability for coaching sessions or coaching programmes have a time boundary.
- **Tracking progress and results:** Measuring the impact of coaching processes can be challenging, especially when it comes to behavioural changes or subjective improvements. It is important to discuss and agree measurement criteria upfront.

Overcoming these challenges requires a combination of effective communication, continuous learning, adaptability, and a client-centred approach. It is important to be aware of potential hurdles and to be prepared to adjust to ensure a positive and effective coaching experience.

12
Benefits of coaching

Coaching can add value on both a personal and an organisational level (Jarvis, 2004). Client reports generally cover the themes of career growth and increased self-regard due to outcomes related to identifying and achieving goals, becoming more confident, gaining job and life satisfaction, improved contribution to their team and organisation, taking responsibility and accountability for commitments, improved relationships, and more effective communication.
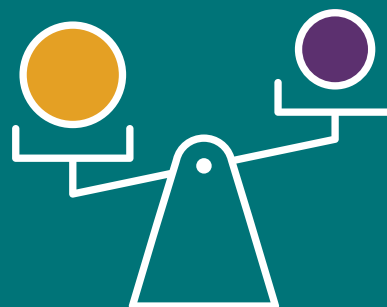
Organisationally, coaching results in increased engagement, motivation, empowerment, high performance, and healthy leadership practices, and assists in the identification of both organisational and individual strengths and development opportunities. Research indicates that there is an 88%

improvement in impact if a leadership development programme includes both classroom teaching and a form of personalised learning, such as coaching. Organisational needs are often related to performance and behaviour change and coaching typically focuses on behaviour change and personal transformation. Coaching makes learning tangible and applied, because coaches work with leaders to actively embed knowledge and personal changes in their roles, which leads to positive leadership impact. It is well known that over 20% of learning is proven to occur through coaching relationships and on-the-job coaching, compared to the 10% of retained learning that occurs as a result of classroom training. Blending coaching and teaching assists in meeting the organisational needs of high performance and positive leadership behaviours.

Conclusion:
Building the coaching profession through transparency, ethics, and choice

The concepts and principles fundamental to the coaching discipline are valuable for both coaches and clients to understand, as they provide a shared foundation for effective practice. However, the choice of bodies of knowledge and theories that inform coaching approaches often varies based on the coaching context. For instance, in a life coaching scenario, a coach might be trained within a psychological framework and draw on person-centred and positive psychology theories. Conversely, in leadership development coaching, a coach's training might be grounded in business and economic sciences, supported by human science theories, such as organisational behaviour, high performance psychology or psychological theories on developing creative consciousness.

As coaches continue to develop their competencies, deepen their knowledge, and expand their practice, they may incorporate insights from diverse theoretical perspectives. Nonetheless, maintaining a clear focus and the ability to transparently articulate one's orientation are essential for ensuring alignment and effectiveness in the coaching relationship.

To provide coaching clients – both organisational and individual – with a clear view on what their options are, it is important for coaches to be transparent about their coaching approach. This allows clients to make informed choices about their leadership development processes and ensures alignment to development needs and identified learning outcomes.

In essence, this means that a coach can clearly articulate and provide evidence of the bodies of knowledge, theoretical influences, methodologies, models, techniques, and tools that inform their coaching practice. Sources of information related to this may include:

- Coach education and training;
- Practical hours of experience;
- Continuous professional development;
- Personal preferences; and
- The impact of and type of coaching the coach uses.

Providing this information will ease decision-making due to clarifying alignment and experience via the coach profile, which will list education (bodies of knowledge and theoretical influences), training (methodologies, models, techniques, and tools), experience (practical application over time and within context, and impact), and discussions. Coaching has grown from a relatively unknown and indistinct discipline practised without clear foundations and boundaries to a practice grounded in theory and with a rich emerging body of knowledge of its own. The development of coaching has been strongly informed by the social sciences, business and economic sciences, adult learning and change, and philosophy. Coaching within leadership development has advanced into an integrated application driven by the needs of a rapidly evolving business environment.

The discipline and practice of coaching provide organisations, groups, and individuals with opportunities to continuously adapt and develop over time, thus leading to positive change. Coaching help people attain their potential through self-awareness and shared idea generation, promoting personal responsibility and contribution within their immediate context. The contextual impact moves coaching beyond the individual towards positive group and organisational change and adaptiveness. The following vignettes illustrate how coaches can adapt their approach to meet clients' unique needs, combining foundational principles with specialised knowledge and methodologies.

Vignette ①

"Executive coaching in action – navigating a leadership crisis"

Background

Olivia, a seasoned business coach with a diverse and extensive professional background, meets her new client, Siphiwe, the recently appointed chief executive officer of a mid-sized technology company struggling with low morale and high turnover. Olivia brings her decades of experience to this engagement, seamlessly integrating her training, knowledge, and methodologies to address the challenges at hand.

The initial meeting

Olivia begins the coaching session by building rapport with Siphiwe, adhering to the core principles of coaching: active listening, empathy, and confidentiality. Drawing from her accredited coaching training (aligned with the WABC standards), they set clear goals for the coaching process and ensure alignment with Siphiwe's expectations.

Siphiwe shares his struggles: a rapid transition into leadership, a fractured leadership team, and pressure to deliver results. Olivia's 5 000+ hours of post-accreditation coaching practice support her in navigating this high-stakes conversation, encouraging Siphiwe to reflect on his leadership style and identify underlying issues.

Applying knowledge and theoretical orientation

As Siphiwe opens up, Olivia draws from her clinical psychology background to explore deeper psychological dynamics influencing his leadership and team relationships. Her understanding of psychological theories enables her to notice patterns:

- She uses cognitive-behavioural techniques to help Siphiwe reframe negative thought patterns about his ability to lead;
- Humanistic principles guide her approach, focusing on Siphiwe's potential for growth and self-actualisation; and
- Olivia introduces elements of positive psychology, encouraging Siphiwe to leverage his strengths as a leader.

To address the broader organisational challenges, Olivia taps into her expertise in strategy and leadership. She uses insights from organisational development theory to help Siphiwe analyse the systemic issues within his team and their alignment with the company's strategic goals.

Selecting methodologies and frameworks

Olivia determines that a systemic coaching approach will be most effective in addressing the interconnected challenges Siphiwe faces. Through a combination of team coaching and solution-focused coaching, she facilitates an exploration of the leadership team's dynamics and their shared objectives.

In follow-up sessions, Olivia employs frameworks, such as:

- Transformational coaching to guide Siphiwe through the personal growth required to lead with authenticity and inspire his team;
- Management strategy tools to help Siphiwe design actionable plans for organisational change; and
- Systems coaching models to explore how individual behaviours and team structures interact within the organisation's larger context.

Olivia's training in organisational development strategy and certifications in team coaching provide the credibility and rigour to address these complex challenges.

Outcomes and reflection

Over several months, Olivia's evidence-based approach helps Siphiwe transform his leadership capabilities. He rebuilds trust within his team, sets a clear vision for the company, and fosters a culture of collaboration and accountability. Olivia integrates regular feedback sessions into the process, ensuring Siphiwe feels supported, while also staying accountable for his progress. Her dedication to continuous professional learning and evidence-based practice (through Continuous Professional Development and research) keeps her coaching sharp and responsive to emerging trends, benefitting both Siphiwe and the organisation.

Vignette ❷

"Coaching for leadership development – unlocking team potential"

Background

Thabo, an accomplished leadership development coach, is engaged by an international pharmaceutical company to work with Emily, a mid-level manager transitioning into a senior leadership role. Known for his depth of experience and theoretical grounding, Thabo combines his expertise in coaching and adult development to guide Emily in developing her leadership identity and fostering her team's potential.

The coaching engagement

Thabo begins by establishing the coaching contract, drawing on his ICF-accredited training to ensure clarity on goals, confidentiality, and accountability. With over 3 000 hours of coaching practice, Thabo's presence exudes confidence, creating an immediate sense of trust.

Emily expresses concern about balancing her technical expertise with the need to lead strategically and inspire her team. Thabo integrates his knowledge of adult learning theory and leadership development to reframe Emily's challenges as opportunities for growth.

Applying knowledge and theoretical orientation

Through careful questioning, Thabo helps Emily uncover thought and behaviour patterns that may hinder her effectiveness. He applies:

- Gestalt theory to increase Emily's self-awareness, helping her understand how her past experiences shape her leadership style;
- Narrative coaching to encourage Emily to explore and rewrite her "leadership story", transforming limiting beliefs into empowering narratives; and
- Adult development theory to highlight the importance of transitioning from a technical mindset to a strategic, growth-orientated approach.

In exploring Emily's team dynamics, Thabo incorporates psychological theories, such as:

- Positive psychology, focusing on Emily's strengths as a communicator and problem-solver; and
- Psychodynamic principles, helping her recognise how unconscious bias or fears may influence her interactions with team members.

Using methodologies and frameworks

Thabo tailors his approach, blending methodologies to address both individual and team development:

- Depth and transformational coaching: Emily is guided through deep self-reflection exercises that uncover her values and align them with her leadership goals. This helps her articulate a clear vision for her role.
- Team coaching and systemic approaches: To address the team's challenges, Thabo uses his certification in Systemic Team 360 to assess dynamics, strengths, and blind spots. He facilitates sessions with Emily and her direct reports, helping them co-create a vision for collaboration and success.
- Personality indicators and feedback tools: Thabo administers Insights Discovery® and The Leadership Circle (TLC) assessments to provide Emily with insights into her leadership style and areas for improvement. Together, they design an actionable plan for Emily to leverage her strengths and address developmental gaps.
- Narrative and sustainability coaching: To help Emily think long-term, Thabo introduces sustainability coaching techniques, encouraging her to consider the lasting impact of her leadership on both her team and the broader organisation.

Outcomes and reflection

Over six months, Emily grows into her leadership role with confidence and clarity. She develops a strong strategic mindset, inspires her team to achieve ambitious goals, and fosters a culture of collaboration. Through Thabo's continuous professional learning and expertise, the coaching process not only elevates Emily's leadership capacity, but also sets a new standard for leadership development in her organisation.

Thabo's use of evidence-based tools like Insights and TLC, combined with his theoretical grounding in psychology and adult development, ensures his approach is both rigorous and adaptive to Emily's needs. His publications on group coaching theory further establish his credibility, making him a trusted partner in her leadership journey.

Vignette ③

"Coaching for life balance – rediscovering purpose and potential"

Background

Karishma is a life coach specialising in helping individuals navigate significant life transitions. With a strong foundation in psychology and over a decade of coaching experience, Karishma combines her expertise in person-centred approaches and positive psychology to empower her clients. Her practice is deeply informed by her academic background, rigorous training, and evidence-based tools.

The coaching context

Karishma meets Maria, a 45-year-old marketing professional who feels stuck in her career and unfulfilled in her personal life. Maria expresses a desire to explore her passions, redefine her goals, and cultivate a greater sense of purpose.

Karishma establishes a safe and trusting environment, adhering to core coaching principles, such as active listening, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Drawing on her ICF-accredited training and over 4 000 hours of coaching experience, Karishma helps Maria clarify her objectives for the coaching journey.

Applying knowledge and theoretical orientation

Karishma tailors her approach using her deep understanding of psychological frameworks:

- Person-centred approach: Karishma provides a non-judgemental space where Maria can explore her thoughts and emotions freely. By fostering self-acceptance and inner clarity, Maria begins to reconnect with her authentic self.

- Positive psychology: Karishma integrates techniques like identifying strengths and gratitude journalling to help Maria focus on her existing resources and potential. She introduces flow theory, guiding Maria to identify activities that bring her joy and engagement.

- Narrative coaching: To address limiting beliefs, Karishma uses narrative coaching methods to help Maria reframe her life story, shifting from a sense of stagnation to one of growth and possibility.

- Humanistic psychology: Karishma emphasises Maria's inherent capacity for self-actualisation. She also incorporates elements of cognitive psychology to challenge unhelpful thought patterns and encourage constructive alternatives.

Using methodologies and frameworks

Karishma's methodology reflects a blend of evidence-based and client-centred approaches:

- Personal development coaching: Through reflective exercises, Karishma helps Maria identify her core values and align her life choices with those values. This fosters greater coherence and direction in Maria's life.

- Solution-focused approach: Karishma focuses on small, actionable steps that Maria can take immediately to build momentum, such as dedicating time each week to a neglected hobby.

- Transformational coaching: Karishma supports Maria in exploring her deeper fears and aspirations, facilitating a mindset shift that transforms how Maria approaches her career and personal goals.

Tools and techniques

Karishma uses StrengthsFinder to highlight Maria's top strengths and discusses how to leverage them in her professional and personal life. She administers a Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) to help Maria track emotional patterns and understand what drives her happiness. Journalling prompts encourage Maria to explore her evolving sense of purpose and reflect on her progress.

Outcomes and reflection

Over the course of the engagement, Maria experiences significant shifts in her perspective and confidence. She discovers a new career path that aligns with her passion for mentoring others, and she rebuilds a fulfilling personal life by reconnecting with friends and pursuing creative hobbies.

Karishma's person-centred approach, informed by her deep knowledge of positive psychology and humanistic theories, ensures that the coaching process is empowering and transformative. Her commitment to continuous professional development, including certifications in transformational and solution-focused coaching, enhances the rigour and adaptability of her practice.

Coaching will continue to evolve and develop, particularly based on the needs presented by coaching clients and on the changes taking place globally. Coaching practitioners and clients inform the growing body of knowledge through practical application, and academic research on the impact and outcomes of coaching helps to codify practices and provides rigour and professionalism to the discipline. May we approach this evolution of the discipline of coaching with the same mindset as we do with a coaching process.

Show up and choose to be present.

Pay attention.

Speak your truth.

Be open to the outcome, not attached to it.

(adapted from Arrien, as cited in Peltier, 2001)

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