

TRANSPERSONAL COACHING PSYCHOLOGY JOURNAL

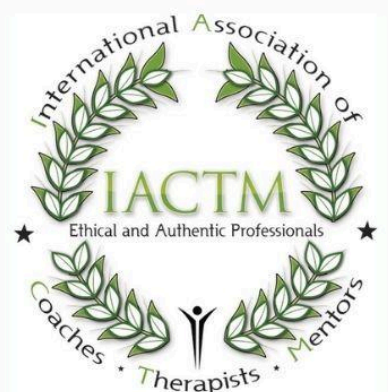
Exploring new frontiers in
professional coaching

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TCP Journal Editorial Introduction

Hennie Geldenhuys, MD

Sometimes, it feels as if we live in a world where contradictions are paradoxes, the hidden is obvious, and the complex is quite simple. Perhaps the magic of a space where all things can be true simultaneously is what draws us to the transpersonal.

Take Jules De Vitto's article on parts, for example (De Vitto, 2025). We are supposedly single entities, and yet also a wild party of sub-entities that jostle and dance and strategize, fight even, but ultimately find some sort of harmony. The article presents one of the most comprehensive and balanced discussions of parts-based coaching available.

From Jevon Dängeli's excellent piece on Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) (Dängeli, 2025) emerges the promise of growth beyond just resilience, not despite, but because of, the fracture of adversity. Jevon provides us with a framework for trauma-informed coaching that blends open awareness, compassionate client-centredness and non-pathologizing companionship. Trauma is a relatively new domain for coaching, and the sub-discipline is forming right here in the pages that follow.

How does transpersonal coaching hold that magical space where inner conflicts can be resolved, leading to resourceful outcomes? There are clues in this fourth volume of the journal.

Silvia Panella-Peral (2025) demonstrates how a reframing of perspective changes our way of being and behaving in the face of challenges. In fact, Silvia reframes the practice of reframing, moving the concept beyond just a cognitive exercise, to an effective tool of holistic change, harnessing open awareness, analogies, metaphors and imagination.

Wally Patawaran (2025) introduces an interesting concept of "intrinsic value through relating (IVR)", how the space in-between beings is in itself an entity, where relations and interactions evolve as a value-based medium. He deepens conventional models of coaching through principles of transpersonal coaching psychology (TCP), providing evidence of how our coaching philosophy can lead to more resourceful societies, governance and leadership.

Throughout this volume, the coach's appreciation of holding without pressing, listening deeply without advising, and merging without splitting, become our tools of trade.

The applications are endless. Suzanne Krance (2025) takes coaching into the mystical realm of psychedelic experiences, for example. There is an important natural synergy between TCP and psychedelic integration, the dynamics of which seep through nicely in her article. Cat Coubrough-Smith (2025) takes coaching into our sleep, with application to the frightening but potentially transformative experience of sleep paralysis. Both authors inspire the effective use of expanded awareness and soma-based ways of working.

So then, can a complex tapestry of conflicting truths, parts, frames and experiences somehow be transformed from a source of suffering to an integrated blend of flourishing growth? Yes, TCP most certainly believes it can.

Congratulations to the editorial and production team, and to the authors on another fascinating volume of our journal!

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Exploring the Self and Parts of the Psyche in the Context of Transpersonal Coaching

Jules De Vitto, MSc

Abstract

Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) facilitates personal and transpersonal transformation by working with the full spectrum of human experience, including the conscious and unconscious mind. This article defines the Self, parts, and ego in the context of TCP and explores how transpersonal coaching can help clients embody a more authentic Self so that they can work towards the healthy integration of their parts or subpersonalities. The Self in TCP is compared with models and perspectives such as those found in Psychosynthesis, Jungian Psychology, and Internal Family Systems (IFS). The article explores the application of open awareness (OA) as a modality for accessing the Self and enabling clients to work with parts of their psyche which might be preventing them from reaching wholeness or self-actualisation. A coaching process on how to work with parts is discussed, and while there are many modalities that address parts work, this article highlights the unique qualities of TCP, including the benefits of entering open awareness to access the Self to integrate different parts of the psyche.

Keywords

parts, ego, Self, trauma-informed coaching, open awareness

Recommended citation

De Vitto, J. (2025). Exploring the self and parts of the psyche in the context of transpersonal coaching. *Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Journal*, 4, 6-15. <https://iactm.org/tcpj>.

Introduction

Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) is an integrative and holistic approach to transformation that encompasses and works with all levels of one's experience, including both conscious and unconscious phenomena (Dängeli, 2021). This approach acknowledges the relationship between mind, body, soul, spirit and shadow and integrates the transpersonal domain as well as one's personal psychology into the coaching process. In addition, TCP also differentiates between the ego, parts and the authentic Self, with the goal of helping clients move beyond sole identification with parts of their ego, to embody a more expanded awareness of the Self. The Self includes transcendent or transpersonal aspects that extend beyond the individual identity (Firman & Gila, 2002) and enable one to experience a greater connection to something 'more than' - a transpersonal dimension. Operating from the awareness of Self does not negate the necessity of the various parts of the ego, and the embodiment of the authentic Self in transpersonal coaching is understood as an integrated whole that includes the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions (Assagioli, 1965). When the client and coach enter into more expansive states of consciousness by opening the aperture of their awareness, they also enter into the liminal space - this is a transitional space that emerges in between the client and coach - it is open, receptive and promotes transpersonal knowing (Dängeli, 2021). In open awareness, they also connect with the transpersonal, personal and interpersonal levels of being - including the higher unconscious (transpersonal), middle unconscious and lower unconscious - where our individual and collective history and traumas are often stored (Assagioli, 2000). This article explores how operating from this more expanded state of awareness of Self enables us to work with the contents of the ego and parts within transpersonal coaching sessions.

The Role of the Ego

The ego functions as an 'organising centre' and is necessary for self-awareness and reflection; it includes the various parts of us that are necessary to function in the world (Assagioli, 1965). However, the ego can be understood as a more limited and 'constricted' aspect of the person that contains what we are conscious of, but only makes up a part of who we are (Rowan, 2005). When coaching clients are only identified with the ego, they often remain stuck in limiting beliefs, destructive emotions and behavioural patterns - our awareness tends to be more narrowly focused, otherwise known as tunnel awareness (Dängeli, 2024). We have the potential to expand and open our awareness and become attuned to the consciousness and Will of Self. The Will of Self is not the ego's personal will, which is often driven by desires, fears, and attachments. Instead, it is a more unified and purposeful Will that is aligned with meaning, values, and a sense of spiritual direction that can lead to a far more individuated, whole, and aligned version of our potential (Assagioli, 1974).

This distinction between ego and Self is one of the key elements that makes transpersonal coaching distinct from other forms of coaching. A transpersonal coach intends

to bring an individual into closer alignment and relationship with their Self so that they can work with the contents of their ego - including the different egoic parts. More traditional forms of coaching or therapy usually try to work with the client from the same level of awareness that their problems were created, meaning only limited change may occur. In transpersonal coaching, an emphasis is placed on establishing open awareness, which enables the client and coach to enter an expanded state of consciousness as well as engage with the liminal space. The use of open awareness is deemed important because in other coaching or therapeutic approaches, which do not emphasise the necessity of entering into more expansive states, clients tend to find themselves stuck in the same cycles of internal conflict, limiting beliefs, and sabotaging behaviours. Open awareness is commonly established through a guided process, which is led by the coach and entered into by both client and coach. Once this more expansive state is entered into, typically at the start of the session, both coach and client aim to sustain it throughout, establishing a way of being that is carried through the entire session, rather than simply facilitating a process. When in alignment with the Self and open to awareness, the client is more likely to be driven by values such as unconditional love, connection, compassion, empathy, and presence, and gain new perspectives on the struggles that exist within the constraints of the ego or parts (Firman & Gila, 2002). Therefore, transpersonal coaching offers the potential to integrate and transform parts of one's psyche from a more expansive state of consciousness.

Further Explorations of the Self

The authentic Self in TCP aligns with other transpersonal models that also include a concept of Self. This includes those presented in Psychosynthesis, Jungian Psychology, and Internal Family Systems (IFS). Psychosynthesis posits the existence of a higher or transpersonal Self, which is beyond the personal ego and represents a higher level of consciousness. It is seen as a source of wisdom, purpose, and spiritual connection (Assagioli, 1965). This is very similar to the concept of Self in Jungian Psychology, which represents the totality of an individual's psyche, including both the conscious and unconscious aspects (Jung, 1953). In Jungian Psychology, the Self's teleological nature is emphasised where there is an inherent drive towards growth, development, and fulfilment of potential, leading individuals toward a more complete and authentic existence (Jung, 1953). Jungian Psychology has also introduced us to the concept of the collective unconscious, a layer of the unconscious shared by all humans that contains archetypes and universal symbols (Jung, 1959); the Self is seen as a bridge to the collective unconscious.

In IFS, the Self is also a central concept, representing the core, undamaged aspect of an individual. Developed by Richard Schwartz, IFS is a model that views the mind as a system of different parts. The Core Self, in IFS, is distinct from these parts and is characterised by specific qualities, which are often referred to as the 8 C's: calmness, curiosity, clarity, compassion, confidence, creativity, courage, and connectedness (Schwartz, 1995). The Core Self is associated with offering unconditional positive regard towards all parts of the person's internal system (Schwartz, 2020). Many people misunderstand the

concept of the Core Self, believing it to be a fixed, solid entity confined within the physical body. However, Richard Schwartz has also expressed the transpersonal qualities of the core Self (Schwartz, 2020) and it is considered a healing force — which I propose is synonymous with the authentic Self discussed within transpersonal coaching. What differentiates TCP from other modalities, such as IFS, is the emphasis that is placed on open awareness and helping the client to access expansive states of consciousness during the coaching sessions. This unique approach enables the client to stay connected to the qualities of Self and expand their window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999), rather than becoming over-identified or consumed by aspects of their egoic parts. When we operate within our window of tolerance, we make decisions and view the world from the perspective of our prefrontal cortex. We are also more connected to our intuition, empathy and attuned to others (Siegel, 1999). The ability of the coach and client to enter open awareness and expand their window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999) is what enables transpersonal coaches to work efficiently with the client's parts - this is especially important for those who have experienced trauma, as trauma and chronic stress tend to narrow one's window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999).

Parts within the Psyche

William James first conceptualised the internal parts of the psyche as 'the various selves' (Hutchins & James, 1952), and some refer to parts as subpersonalities, which can be understood as constellated patterns of behaviours, thoughts, drives, attitudes, and habits (Firman & Gila, 2002). TCP acknowledges the presence of parts within the psyche and seeks to uncover their underlying values and needs within a client's system (Dängeli, 2022). Each part carries its own beliefs, emotions, and values, often expressing themselves through distinct and sometimes conflicting behaviours. These behavioural patterns often develop in response to past traumas or difficult life experiences, with parts holding onto particular beliefs or behaviours as a way to protect the individual from further harm. While their intention is to prevent future pain, these outdated patterns can sometimes become self-destructive, keeping a person stuck in cycles that no longer serve them. This aligns with what Donald Kalsched referred to as the self-care system (Kalsched, 2013). He came to understand that it is the dissociation and regression of - what he referred to as the soul - alongside the progressive creation of the false self that results in the tragic symptoms of trauma, but is also what enables one's survival. The irony is that this self-care system eventually turns against the person it is supposed to be protecting. The parts of the self-care system that attempt to keep the divine soul aspect of the person safe becomes a force in the psyche that sustains unproductive suffering; it remains stuck in a never-ending self-generating feedback loop of destruction, acting as an inner persecutor (believing this is keeping these parts safe), but in fact, stopping the integration of these parts and preventing one from reaching a coherent whole (Kalsched, 2013).

In Internal Family Systems, this inner persecutory system may be referred to as the firefighter and manager 'protective' parts. Managers are parts that try to control and prevent the exiled (inner child) parts from being triggered through behaviours such as perfectionism

and inner critical thinking. Firefighters try to combat suffering when it arises, but usually through more impulsive, reactive and unhealthy behaviours such as addiction, numbing and self-harm (Schwartz, 2020). All parts have feelings, needs, memories, bodily feelings, movements, behaviour and identity. The younger, more innocent parts continue to be informed by the mammalian brain, which seeks safety and protection; therefore, they remain stuck in fight, flight, freeze or collapse (van der Kolk, 2015). What is powerful about this concept of parts is recognising that parts of the psyche remain stuck in the trauma or pain, but not the whole of the person. There is then a capacity to help clients connect with a Self that is rooted in the present moment and come into relationship with the parts from the place of Self.

A differentiating component between an IFS approach to parts work and TCP is that the mainstream approach to IFS has not integrated many of the transpersonal dimensions, including the acknowledgment that our minds are not isolated entities but are open to external influences, what Robert Falconer refers to as the porous mind (Falconer, 2023). The porosity of mind means that parts can emerge in sessions which don't solely 'belong to the client', but may emerge from the collective unconscious. This includes parts that are carrying archetypal energies or elements from the collective, and as transpersonal coaches, it is important to be aware that such parts do exist and can emerge in sessions.

Applications in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology: Parts Coaching Process

In the context of TCP, we work with the parts of the client that may be holding them back from their goals or sabotaging an alignment with their authentic Self. The process begins by establishing a held space where both the client and coach enter a state of open awareness. Open awareness is commonly established through a guided process, led by the coach, which often utilises a connection to the breath and expands awareness into the space within and beyond the body. However, it's important to note that there are many unique approaches for entering open awareness, which are often adapted to suit the needs of the individual client. One of the intentions of open awareness is to establish a connection to something greater than the individual ego and allow parts to emerge into conscious awareness, making it possible to engage with them directly.

The next step is to identify which part will be worked with during the session (in relation to the client's presenting issue) and discern its form - this may manifest as a bodily sensation, an image, a voice, a movement or another sensory experience. Once identified, we explore the client's feelings toward the part, aiming to establish an open and compassionate relationship. This step is crucial, as the part must feel acknowledged and understood before a dialogue can begin. If a certain level of compassion or openness is not yet present, we remain at this stage, using open awareness to create the necessary qualities for the client's Self to engage with the parts. Next, we uncover the part's emotions, core beliefs and habitual behaviours. These are usually of a limited, ego-driven perspective and may not serve the client's full self-actualisation. However, rather than trying to get rid of the part, we explore its deeper purpose, values and needs. Clients are often surprised to find that, at its core, the part

is striving for something positive and aligned with their authentic Self, but it has been acting through limiting beliefs and unhelpful behaviours.

Finally, through open awareness, we work with the part to meet its needs and explore the possibility of the part taking on new behaviours, beliefs and intentions that are in alignment with the authentic Self and are deemed to be the most ethical to Self, others and the world. In my experience, the client's part will organically (when met with the authentic Self) find a new, more aligned and ethical way in which to meet its needs and values. The original form of the part, including the image or sensation within the body, will evolve and transform in light of the process. Clients are also encouraged to integrate new insights beyond the coaching sessions and continue this compassionate dialogue, thus supporting integration and a prolonged ability to embody an expansive and coherent sense of Self. The healthy integration of a part within the psyche means that the client will be able to continue dialoguing with the part beyond the session and recognise its role within the psyche. This is instead of the part overwhelming or dominating the client's psyche without conscious awareness. When the client's Self is conscious of the part, it is more able to discern and choose whether the part is acting in alignment with the client's core intentions, values and purpose.

As mentioned, various modalities explore parts of the psyche, and what makes TCP unique is the emphasis on entering open awareness to work with the parts. Another distinction is that in TCP we do not overly fixate on differentiating the parts as exiles or protector parts (as is spoken about in IFS). In TCP we are more concerned about working with the presenting behaviours, beliefs and emotions of the parts in the present moment and also using the language of the client for labelling or naming such parts. Using the client's language for the parts, rather than attempting to fit the client into more rigid and fixed terminology, enables the coaching process to be more client-led and centred. Another differentiating factor is that in transpersonal coaching, we do not spend time exploring the story of the past, but we work with the symptoms, including the behaviours, beliefs and emotions the part is expressing in the here and now (Dängeli, 2024). The emphasis on the 'here and now' is supporting a trauma-informed and somatically oriented approach to coaching, which does not rely on the client's need to retell stories of events from the past, which could result in re-traumatisation (Ogden et al., 2006)

It is common when working with parts within the psyche to encounter resistance or even fear. When this occurs, we recognise that another part is emerging and coming into the coaching process. It is necessary at this stage for the transpersonal coach to steer the client towards engaging with the part that is carrying resistance, fear, judgment or even anger towards the process. Usually, the resistance emerges from parts that have been traumatised or hurt in the past. Therefore, it is really important to respect and honour these parts; we never try to push a client's system past what they are ready to handle or navigate (van der Kolk, 2015). It may also be a case of asking the part a question, such as, 'What would help you feel

safe enough to allow the client and coach to continue with the process?'. In transpersonal coaching, we also endeavour to make sure the client is anchored in Self, in open awareness, and is within their window of tolerance as much as possible. We may pause halfway through a session to take some deep breaths with the client, encourage movement, engage with their sensory environment, or find an anchor of safety within or around the body to return to a more regulated and co-regulated space with the coach.

Working with parts in the psyche means we are engaging with the unconscious, and the unconscious is often where individuals store trauma or traumatic memories, this is why as transpersonal coaches we have a responsibility to be trauma-informed and to know how to support our clients in regulating their nervous system if uncomfortable feelings emerge (Levine, 1997; Porges, 2011). When a traumatic or difficult memory emerges in a session, the client might begin to go deeper into the memory, and this can become unmanageable for the client - often called a 'trauma vortex' (Levine, 2010). When this happens, the client's nervous system may enter into a sympathetic or parasympathetic dorsal vagal state (Porges, 2011), someone in the fight, flight or freeze state is unable to process or think clearly. It's important that we can help clients return to their window of tolerance - otherwise known as the 'healing vortex' (Levine, 2010). When this happens, the client is able to stabilise and process the uncomfortable emotions and memories. Pendulation is a common approach which utilises a movement back and forth between the trauma vortex and the healing vortex, in other words, movement back and forth between the sympathetic fight or flight and the parasympathetic 'rest and digest' (Ogden et al., 2006). I propose this is akin to being in a state of open awareness and anchored in Self, where there is space to work with the parts which are stuck in the fight, flight or freeze response, that may carry memories of trauma, without becoming consumed by such states.

When working with parts of the psyche, we also need to be able to discern what is suitable for a coaching session or if the client may need intervention from a therapist or more specialised support before engaging in coaching sessions. In transpersonal coaching, we are working with the parts that are potentially blocking the client's ability to access their full potential or are sabotaging their success. It is not the intention to get rid of these parts, so they leave the more vulnerable parts of the system exposed, but to ask those parts to find alternative ways to maintain safety and move towards a future that is aligned with the Self. If a wounded inner child part is brought into the session, we hold space for that part, and we invite in resources (in the here and now) to empower that part and the client to feel safe (Firman & Gila, 2002). We never associate the client back in the 'there and then' of the trauma. We're working with parts to understand behaviour, needs and values in the present and future rather than attempting to 'unpack' what happened in the past.

In contrast, when working with parts in therapy, the therapist usually explores the context around why the part came into being and where or when the wound occurred. A therapist also explores how a part may relate to other relationship dynamics, such as in the

family. We don't attempt to analyse or understand these more deeply rooted relationship dynamics in coaching. A therapist also works with a client over a longer period, so deeper layers and depths will be explored over an extended period of the therapeutic relationship. Memories and narratives about the traumatic event might be brought into the conversation, taking the client back to the past. This means in therapy, a younger, wounded inner child part may be explored in more depth over a longer period of time.

Conclusion

This article defines the concept of Self and parts within the context of transpersonal coaching psychology and describes the process of working with parts of the psyche to support their healthy integration into the client's system. A key component of this approach is the application of open awareness, which allows clients to access a more expansive state of Self from which they can compassionately engage with their parts. It is important to emphasise that the distinction between Self and ego in TCP does not imply that the ego is inherently destructive. TCP acknowledges the ego as a necessary part of the psyche; however, it also seeks to integrate and extend beyond sole identification with the ego. Therefore, the embodiment of the authentic Self in transpersonal coaching both includes and transcends all levels of one's being. The article has also outlined a structured process for working with a client's parts in a coaching session, emphasising the importance of acknowledging, understanding, and integrating these parts rather than attempting to suppress or eliminate them. Through this process, clients can move beyond limiting beliefs and behaviours, cultivating alignment with their authentic Self in a way that supports both personal and transpersonal transformation.

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Fertilizing the Ground for Post-Traumatic Growth with Open Awareness and Compassionate Companionship

Jevon Dängeli, MSc

Abstract

The open awareness and compassionate companionship framework is proposed as a client-centered and non-pathologising means for trauma-care practitioners to support clients in fostering post-traumatic growth (PTG). This approach draws from the theoretical model of PTG (Tedeschi et al., 2018), guidelines for PTG facilitation (Tedeschi & Moore, 2020), and methods used in compassion-based trauma care (Braehler & Neff, 2020; Germer & Neff, 2013; Gilbert, 2009a,b), including applied open awareness (Dängeli, 2020) as a means to hold a safe and compassionate space. A conceptual model is introduced with which practitioners can empower individuals to transform trauma into an opportunity for growth, resilience, and a renewed appreciation for life.

Keywords

post-traumatic growth, open awareness, compassionate companionship

Recommended citation

Dängeli, J. (2025). Fertilizing the ground for post-traumatic growth with open awareness and compassionate companionship. *Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Journal*, 4, 16-30. <https://iactm.org/tcpj>.

Introduction

This article will connect theories and evidence to explore the roles of open awareness and compassionate companionship (OA & CC) in fostering post-traumatic growth. OA & CC is the fundamental approach used in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology, a trauma-informed and holistic approach to coaching. This article also describes how OA & CC aligns with the research and practice in the fields of post-traumatic growth and compassion-based trauma care, outlining how it can be applied across the disciplines of practice within trauma care.

Concepts and Frameworks

Post-Traumatic Growth

The term “post-traumatic growth” (PTG) was coined by trauma research psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in 1995, when they described this concept as transformation following trauma. Although the term is relatively new, the idea that great good can come from great suffering is ancient. This article will introduce how PTG can be facilitated and explain why transpersonal coaching is well suited to this work.

Gabor Maté describes trauma as a disconnection from the *authentic self*, which is not necessarily the result of what happened to the person in the past, but the result of what is currently happening inside them (2022). In the PTG concept, trauma is considered a painful experience that can produce transformative change because it challenges the person’s core beliefs. PTG is defined as positive changes that can occur because of the struggle with traumatic events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). The struggle referred to in the definition of PTG involves the difficulties that the person encounters in their process of reconstructing their core beliefs. The establishment of new beliefs and values is what differentiates PTG from resilience. Resilience is about bouncing back to how the person was pre-trauma, while PTG is about bouncing forward, involving a deep psychological shift that results in the person growing beyond the pre-trauma version of themselves (Tedeschi et al., 2018)

The trauma experience and the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) such as intrusive thoughts, emotional dysregulation and core belief disruption are debilitating for the trauma survivor. Research by Tedeschi and Moore (2018) has shown that while PTG is occurring, the symptoms of PTSD decline significantly. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) have found that PTG typically occurs in the following five domains:

1. **New possibilities:** PTG leads to new perspectives and a shift in how the person views themselves, others, and the world.
2. **Personal strength:** An increased capacity to cope with stress, improved emotional regulation, resiliency, self-confidence and self-empowerment.

3. **Deeper relationships:** More meaningful interactions with others, including empathy and compassion, as well as a deeper sense of interconnectedness.
4. **Appreciation of life:** No longer taking things for granted and being more grateful for what you have.
5. **Spiritual development:** PTG often involves finding a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Expert Companionship

Ever since the concept of PTG was developed, scholars have explored how it can be facilitated. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006) propose that it is best supported by *expert companionship*—trauma care professionals who listen with empathy and patience to distressing narratives. Expert companions do not prescribe growth but help survivors reconstruct their experiences into a new life narrative. This process involves re-evaluating core beliefs, embracing paradoxes (e.g. strength in vulnerability), and experimenting with new ways of living, ultimately fostering growth.

Calhoun and Tedeschi (1999, 2012) outlined a five-component framework aligned with standard trauma treatment models (Resick et al., 2008), with which expert companions can facilitate post-traumatic growth. The first component involves informing the client about how the trauma has disrupted their core beliefs and manifested in physiological trauma responses, helping them to understand their experience. In the second component, the client learns ways to reduce psychological distress, regulate emotions, and they are supported in establishing new perspectives and reflecting on how they attribute meaning to their experience. Thirdly, the client is encouraged to disclose (talk about) their trauma and share their reflections of its impact and meaning. In the fourth component the client is encouraged to reconstruct their beliefs and life narratives. Finally, the client is helped to view themselves as a resilient individual—perhaps even a hero—who has endured adversity and emerged stronger. This recognition builds a new narrative, fostering a deeper appreciation for life and a renewed sense of purpose (Tedeschi & Moore, 2020).

The expert companionship approach to facilitating PTG considers a comprehensive perspective on trauma, with the PTG facilitator playing the roles summarised in Figure 1 on the next page.

Expert Companionship

Different Roles Played by a Post Traumatic Growth Facilitator

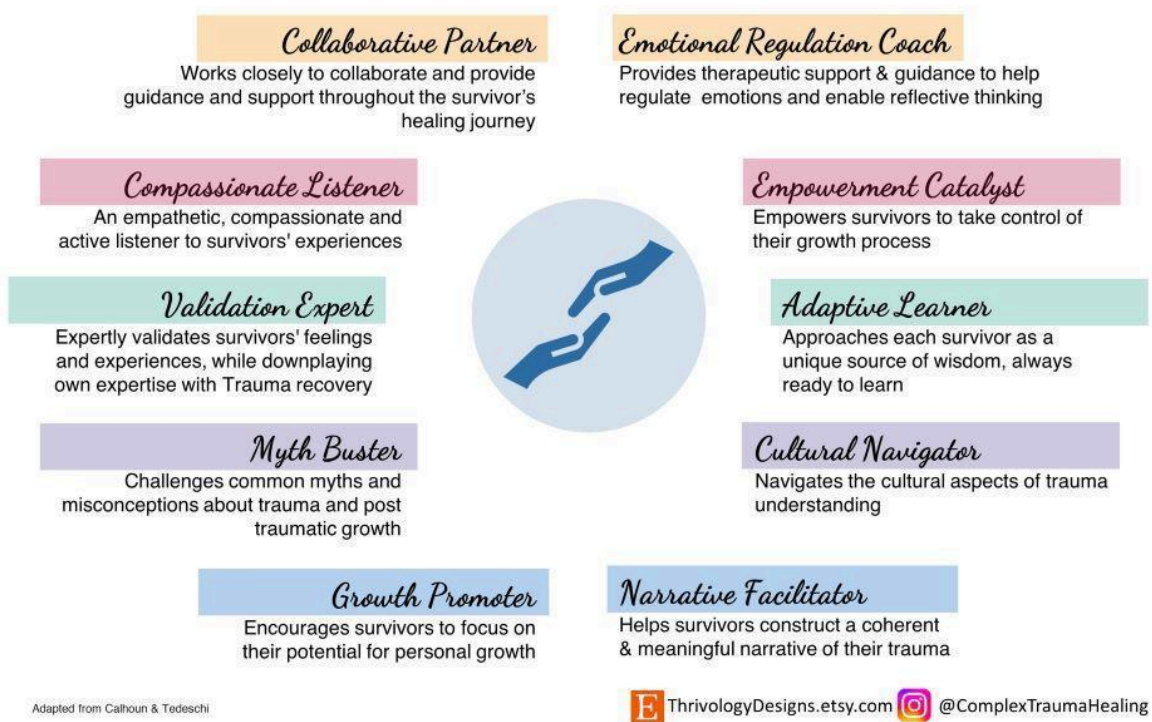


Figure 1. (used with permission: complextraumahealing.wordpress.com)

Although compassion is present in the expert companionship framework, the following section will focus specifically on the value of compassion in trauma care, approaching PTG facilitation from a different, albeit compatible, school of thought.

Compassion-Based Trauma Care

Since the introduction of an evidence-base for the value of compassion in psychotherapy (Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b), there has been an increasing volume of literature on the benefits of compassion in trauma care (e.g. Braehler & Neff, 2020; Briere, 2012). These authors make the case that self-compassion protects trauma practitioners against vicarious trauma and empathy fatigue, thereby increasing their capacity to hold a safe space for their clients, while reducing the chance of retraumatization. They also posit that integrating compassion into treatment for PTSD can help to strengthen clients' attachment systems, as well as improve their capacity for emotion regulation and interpersonal functioning (Braehler & Neff, 2020). Furthermore, compassion-based approaches in trauma care have been found to be effective for healing the shame and self-criticism that often stem from trauma (Neff &

Germer, 2024). Some studies have shown that self-compassion promotes PTG (Adonis et al., 2024; Misurya et al., 2021; Özdemir et al., 2022).

Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) utilises a model called the Three Circles of Emotional Regulation (Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b), identifying three types of emotion regulation systems – threat system, drive system, and soothing system (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. (used with permission: www.nicabm.com)

According to this model, people switch between these different systems for survival and to regulate their emotions (Gilbert, 2009b).

The threat system is activated by perceived threat and danger (Gilbert, 2009b). This system has evolved to detect threats and mobilise the person's survival mode, triggering the nervous system's fight/flight/freeze response. This state of hyperarousal can be activated by emotional and social threats, such as signals that someone is judging you, feelings of rejection, criticism, exclusion, and isolation.

The drive system's function is to motivate you to seek out resources for yourself and for those you care about, such as food, shelter, work, and social status. The drive system is focussed on accomplishing goals, reproduction, consumption and pursuing one's desires.

The soothing system is for regulating/soothing the threat system after the threat is gone, or for returning to equilibrium after pursuing a goal. This system enables you to feel calm, content, at peace, and connected with others. If the threat and drive systems are always activated, the person will be constantly pursuing, fighting or fleeing, leading to exhaustion and the potential of burnout and depression (Gilbert, 2009b). The soothing system allows you to slow down, rest and recuperate. Although this system is not for immediate survival, it is vital for long-term survival, as mammals can only survive when they are able to receive care, give care and form social connections.

Traumatized people are frequently caught in the threat and drive systems, which can lead to further distress and becoming stuck in a painful cycle of self-criticism and shame. Trauma care for these people should involve helping them to strengthen their soothing system. Not only are compassion-based interventions helpful in strengthening the soothing system, but they are also powerful for ameliorating self-criticism and ultimately in decreasing depressive symptoms (Gilbert, 2009b).

Window of Tolerance

The 'window of tolerance' concept was introduced by Dan Siegel (1999, 2022) to describe the 'optimal zone of arousal' for a person to function in everyday life. When a person operates within this zone or window, they can effectively manage and cope with their emotions (see Figure 3).

When trauma is triggered, the threat system is activated, and it becomes difficult to regulate emotions, as one's window of tolerance narrows to focus on the perceived threat, initially leading to a state of defensiveness (Siegel, 1999, 2022). The stress of a traumatic memory or trigger may push a person beyond their window of tolerance, often causing a disconnection between the mind and body, leading to states of hyperarousal or hypoarousal (Porges, 2011).

Hyperarousal is a state of threat system activation known as the 'fight, flight, or freeze' response. It is when a person's nervous system goes into high alert, even when danger

is not present. The ‘fight & flight’ aspects of this response type are well established in the literature (e.g. Porges, 2011). The ‘freeze’ aspect is a form of hyperarousal with elements of hypoarousal, as the body is in a state of heightened alertness and tension, despite being immobilized. Hyperarousal symptoms include fear, anxiety, panic, anger, overwhelm, hypervigilance, and sleeping problems (Porges, 2011).

Hypoarousal is a state of threat system activation where the person’s nervous system goes into a mode of ‘shutdown’ or ‘collapse’. Symptoms include dissociation, depression, emotional numbness, emptiness, social withdrawal, difficulty to express oneself.

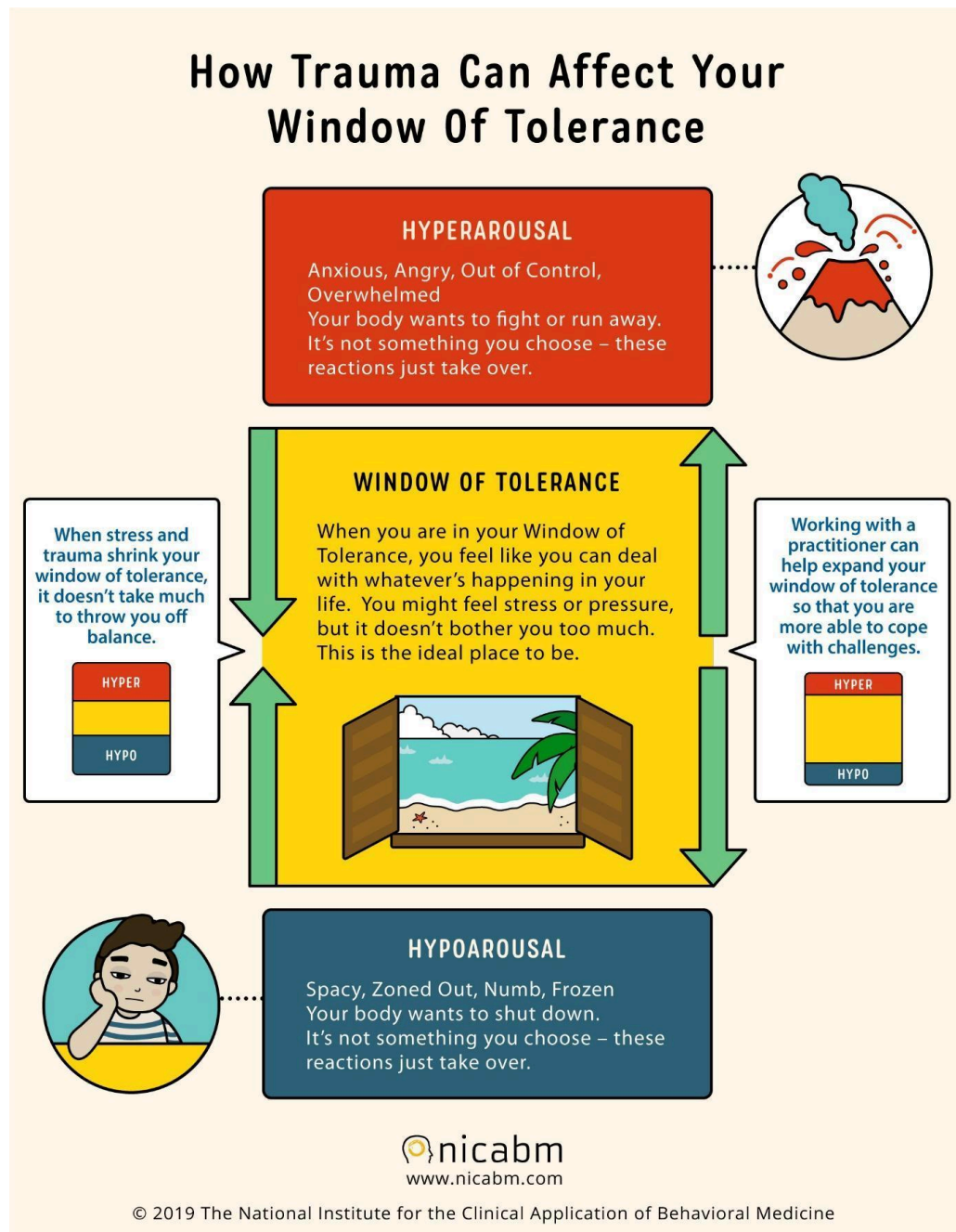


Figure 3. (used with permission: www.nicabm.com)

De Vitto (2025) posits that accessing open awareness expands one's window of tolerance. This is helpful in trauma care, as trauma and chronic stress tend to narrow one's window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999, 2022), reducing it to the limited sphere of tunnel awareness (see Figure 4.). Not only may open awareness help the practitioner and the client to stay within their window of tolerance and strengthen their soothing system, but it also enables them to open their 'shutters of consciousness' and let light in, illuminating the dark/shadow parts of the psyche and fostering a more interconnected and compassionate mode of perception (Siegel, 2022; Yates, 2015).

Open Awareness

Open awareness is a holistic and relational perceptual position that expands one's self-concept and fosters a sense of interconnectedness, thereby promoting self-compassion and compassion toward others (Siegel, 2022; Yates, 2015). Building on research which found that open awareness cultivates compassion, develops resiliency and helps to prevent burnout (Dängeli, 2020), here I will outline its role in trauma care.

Unlike most of the well-known practices to develop compassion which stem from religious principles, open awareness can be accessed through simple mind-body practices suited to each individual (Dängeli, 2019). Open awareness skills can help people to down-regulate hyperarousal through slow cyclical breathing and grounding exercises such as Jumi Tree Breathing techniques (<https://jumi.live/jumi-tree-breathing-technique>), as well as help people to up-regulate hypoarousal through embodiment practices such as Jumi Awarenessing (<https://jumi.live/awarenessing>). Numerous ways for individuals and groups to access and use open awareness are covered in the Open Awareness Handbook (Dängeli, 2019) and in the Open Awareness Hub (<https://jevondangeli.com>).

Figure 4 indicates that as a person's 'aperture' of awareness opens, their 'spheres of connection' expand, leading to compassion and unconditional love. This quality of self-expansiveness cultivates emotional regulation, counteracting the hyperarousal and hypoarousal of trauma activation (Dängeli, 2020).

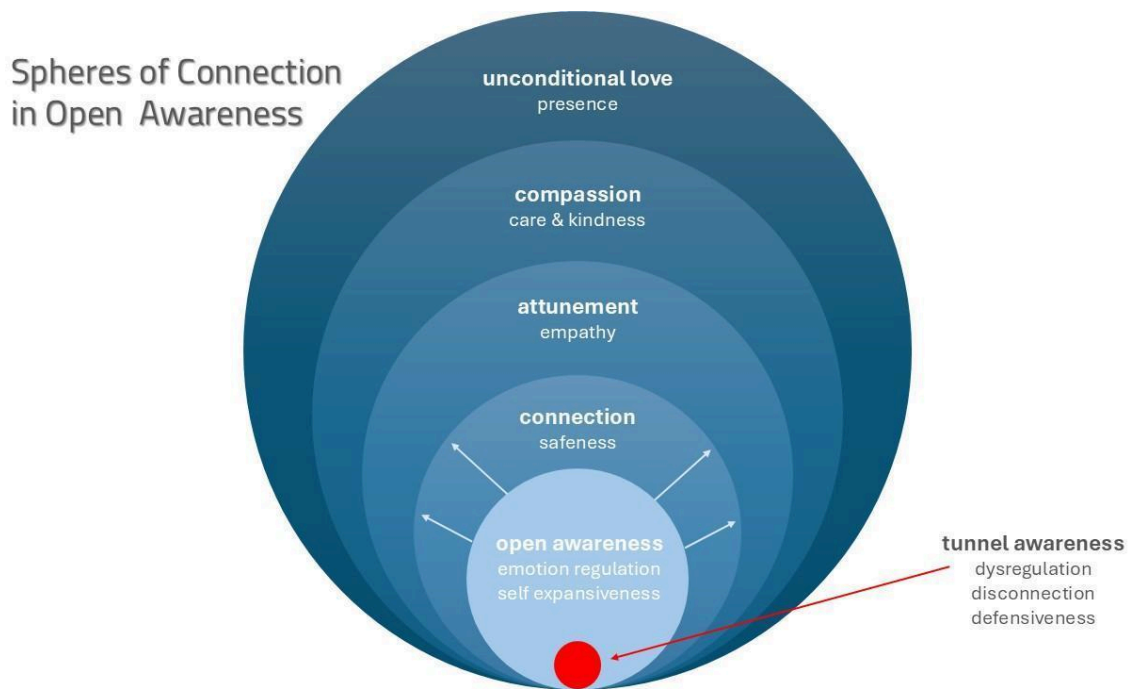


Figure 4. (developed by Jevon Dängeli)

My observations over two decades of transpersonal coaching and open awareness facilitation with individuals and groups are that each presenting issue or trauma trigger ‘locks’ the person’s attention on the problem, described as tunnel awareness in Figure 4. This occurs when the person’s attention becomes narrowly fixated on the trigger, whether it’s an external stimulus or an internal reaction, e.g. trauma memory, resulting in hyperarousal or hypoarousal. This is an understandable defence mechanism to a perceived or real danger when the person’s threat system becomes activated beyond their window of tolerance. However, when the current situation is not life threatening and tunnel awareness causes the person to overreact (hyperarousal) or underreact (hypoarousal), typically followed by negative rumination or self-criticism, then the person can benefit from being able to reopen the aperture of their awareness in that situation, thereby diffusing the trigger’s effect and enabling the person to access a more resourceful state (Dängeli & Geldenhuys, 2018). With the support of a practitioner or companion who knows how to facilitate open awareness and empower their clients to anchor/embody open awareness in the contexts where trauma might be triggered, their potential for post-traumatic growth may be enhanced.

Compassionate Companionship

Compassionate companionship (CC) synthesises the companionship expertise proposed by Calhoun and Tedeschi (1999, 2012) and key elements of compassion-based trauma care (Braehler & Neff, 2020; Germer & Neff, 2013; Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b) with applied open awareness. The focus of CC is in the present, working with the person's current triggered experience in the 'here & now'. Compassionate companions do not lead their clients into the past, digging up painful memories in the 'there & then', as all the information that the CC needs is contained within the client's response to present triggers, which are met with open awareness through the guidance of a compassionate companion.

In a previous article (Dängeli, 2023) I introduced the SAFE protocol, which serves as a guideline for practitioners to hold a safe and compassionate space for the client's process. The SAFE protocol (see Figure 5) begins with co-regulation, followed by supporting clients in self-exploration, leading to self-agency, while optimising the conditions for the potential of self-transformation. This four-phase guideline utilises the medium of open awareness for clients to identify and integrate the parts of themselves that have fragmented due to the pain of trauma, while supporting the client in creating a new, integrated and purposeful life story. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the parts integration aspect of this approach, however, Jules De Vitto describes parts of the psyche and a process for their integration in her article on pages 6-15 of this journal.

The SAFE protocol provides a framework for compassionate companionship and following this protocol the role of the CC also includes supporting clients in embodying open awareness in the contexts where trauma may be triggered. Therefore, engaging clients in suitable open awareness embodiment practices (e.g. <https://jumi.live>) is a key aspect of CC too.

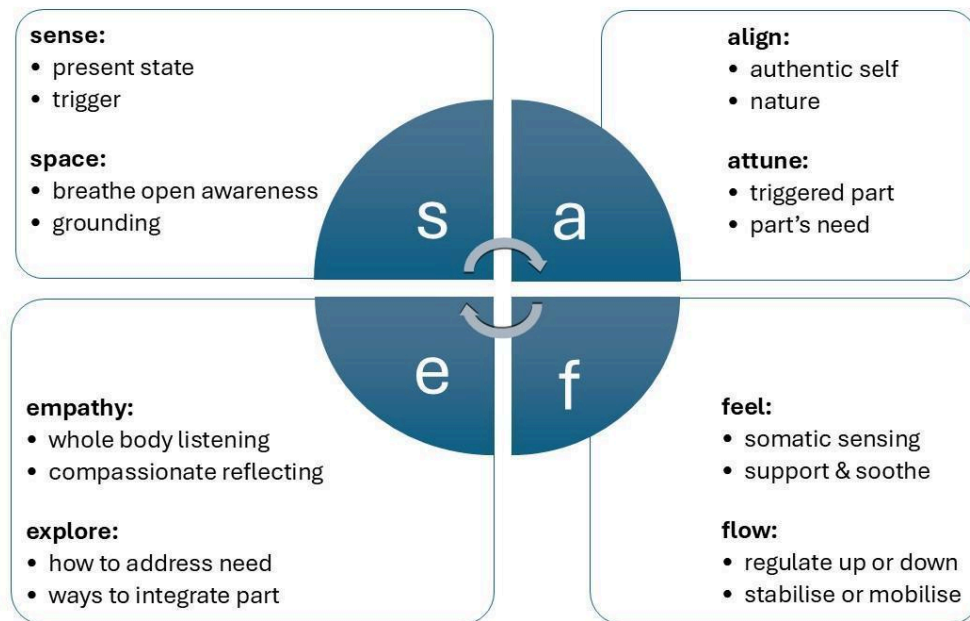


Figure 5. (the SAFE protocol, developed by Jevon Dängeli)

CC takes a growth-based perspective on how practitioners and companions can support healing and transformation. Fundamentally, CC is the practice of holding a compassionate and nurturing space for ourselves and for others through the spacious container of open awareness. The practice of CC involves using open awareness to attune with the client, fostering psychological safeness and co-regulation, while supporting the client to integrate the lessons from their experience, which in turn, may promote post-traumatic growth.

Summarising discussion

The potential for PTG may be enhanced when facilitated by compassionate companions who use the open awareness skill set to help people navigate life in the wake of trauma. By enabling somatic and cognitive processing of the person's shattered assumptive world (core beliefs), drawing from the expert companionship framework and theoretical model of PTG (Tedeschi & Moore, 2020; Tedeschi et al, 2018), as well as compassion-based trauma care (Braehler & Neff, 2020; Germer & Neff, 2013; Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b), practitioners and companions can empower individuals to transform trauma into an opportunity for growth, resilience, and a renewed appreciation for life. While trauma is distressing, it can catalyse a reconstruction of one's worldview and lead to a more purposeful life.

Through combining an understanding of the theories and frameworks that have been introduced in this article, open awareness and compassionate companionship (OA & CC)

provide a client-centred, non-pathologising, growth-oriented and holistic approach to fertilising the ground for post-traumatic growth. With the holding of a compassionate space at its core, the SAFE protocol in conjunction with open awareness embodiment practices form a framework for the facilitation of OA & CC. Not only can OA & CC be applied by trauma care providers in their work with clients, but it can also be applied by oneself as a way of identifying and integrating the parts of one's psyche that have fragmented because of trauma.

OA & CC forms the foundation of the Transpersonal Coaching Model (Dängeli et al, 2022), therefore transpersonal coaching can be considered an integrative approach to facilitating PTG.

Conclusion

Traumatic experiences typically trigger a fear response as the person perceives a direct threat to their physical or emotional well-being. Traumatized people who are supported with open awareness and compassion can transform their relationship with fear, which can contribute to their recovery and growth.

Trauma may be a part of life, but it does not have to define it. We can contribute toward collective trauma healing through engaging in open awareness, cultivating deeper connections for a more compassionate and loving world.

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Reframing as an Open Awareness technique for transformation

Silvia Panella-Peral, PhD

Abstract

This report describes my experience as a transpersonal coaching psychology student working with four pro bono clients and using reframing as a vehicle for Open Awareness (OA). I invited clients to explore alternative perspectives beyond narrow awareness viewpoints, facilitating the emergence of Open Awareness (OA), which enabled clients to consider other meanings to embedded beliefs, emotions, and/or patterns of behaviour. Qualitative data from the session notes and feedback forms were used to formulate common themes arising from the coaching sessions. The results suggest that reframing can be an effective tool to help clients access a state of Open Awareness, as it enables them to reinterpret their problem from a more empowered and interconnected perspective, facilitating inner transformation.

Keywords

Open Awareness, reframing, narratives, metaphors, transformation.

Recommended citation

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<https://iactm.org/tcpj>.

Introduction

Transpersonal Psychology integrates psychology, spirituality, and metaphysics to explore and facilitate self-actualization (Haryanto & Muslih, 2024; Rowan, 2005). Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) is a modality of holistic practice that aims to promote clients' growth and transformation through embedding a sense of purpose and meaning (Dängeli, 2022).

One key component of TCP is Open Awareness — a state of non-judgemental, perceptual expansiveness that enables clients to move beyond conditioned, narrow beliefs and emotions into more integrative perspectives (Dängeli, 2022). Open Awareness (OA) is particularly relevant in transpersonal coaching, as it allows clients to engage with their problems in a more open and reflective way, fostering deeper insights and understandings.

This report explores how reframing – a technique used in various forms of psychotherapy – can serve as a vehicle for creating Open Awareness. Reframing invites clients to shift their emotional and/or conceptual perspective of an event from a state of narrow awareness to a state of expansiveness (Dängeli, 2022) by relabelling the experience to provide an alternative meaning (Watzlawick et al., 1974, as cited in Mattila, 2001). While reframing is traditionally applied as a cognitive tool for shifting perspectives, in the context of TCP, it can also serve as a means of cultivating Open Awareness, providing clients with the space for transformation. Thus, the process of reframing can be understood within the framework of liminal space. Liminal space, as described by Dängeli (2019), represents a transitional process where individuals feel safe to explore and discover, and ultimately, to heal. Reframing facilitates this liminal space by allowing clients to temporarily step outside their conditioned beliefs and explore alternative meanings.

Clients often enter coaching in a state of tunnel awareness, a mode of perception that is characterised by a fixation of attention stemming from limiting beliefs and negative interpretations (Dängeli, 2022). Goodwin and Duranti (1992) use the term “focal event” to describe the tendency of individuals to focus on selected elements of their experiences while disregarding broader contextual factors. According to Searle (1980), beliefs lack the logical link between cause and effect necessary to produce meaningful action. To shift from narrow awareness to Open Awareness through reframing, clients need to identify and co-create an alternative perspective beyond the dominant, narrowed story. This process, known as re-authoring, is a central tool within Narrative Therapy (White & Epston, 1982). Re-authoring is based on the premise that no single, dominant story can fully encapsulate a person's experience (Carey & Russell, 2003).

To explore the relationship between reframing and Open Awareness, this report adopts a thematic analysis approach to coaching sessions where reframing is applied as a tool for

shifting narrow awareness. Thematic analysis is a systematic method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting meaningful themes within qualitative data (Clark & Braun, 2017).

Method

I coached four clients consistently over three months, from November 2023 to January 2024. All clients were aged between 25–55 and were heterogeneous in terms of nationality, culture, and gender. Two clients were referred by a peer whereas the other two clients were recruited through colleagues and friends. Two of the clients self-identified as neurodivergent. Sessions for two clients were conducted virtually using Google Meet and Teams, respectively, whereas the sessions with the other two clients were conducted face-to-face. All the sessions lasted between 60–90 minutes. Prior to starting the transpersonal coaching sessions, clients signed consent forms covering confidentiality, ethical considerations, and information about Transpersonal Coaching Psychology.

At the start of every session with the clients, I asked them what intention (desire) they had for the coaching session. Searle (1980) states that desires often lead to the formation of intentions, which in turn cause individuals to take actions. The practice of setting intentions permitted clients to explicitly affirm a desire, facilitating the emergence of open awareness by widening the aperture for possibilities. Thus, understanding the client's intentions allowed the coach to provide the necessary scaffolding for curiosity, exploration, and ultimately, providing a space for Open Awareness to unfold (Dängeli, 2023).

During the sessions and as part of the reframing process, I usually offered the clients reflective questions to invite them to examine their own belief systems and inner narratives. Within OA, I included visualisations and narration to integrate the client's new perspective into their awareness as a vehicle for re-authoring (White and Epton, 1982). By a process of deconstructing and examining the client's 'problem' story (tunnel awareness), a shift toward an alternative story occurred (re-storying), allowing the client to reframe and, ultimately, re-author a different perspective on the problem.

Results and Discussion

Applying a thematic analysis approach, the session notes, coach's reflections, and the clients' verbal and written feedback were analysed to identify patterns, this is a unified statement or idea that captures the essence of a theme (Lochmiller, 2021). The results highlighted an emergence process of reframing, described below.

1. Context and Contextualisation

At the beginning of each coaching session, clients typically described events that they found triggering. These initial dominant narratives often reflected a narrow focus,

significantly influenced by their belief systems and past experiences. Stories are the fundamental way we make sense of the world, shaping identities, beliefs, and experiences (Carey & Russell, 2003). Mattila (2001) suggests that how clients contextualise such events influences their interpretation and understanding of the situation. Narratives, however, are not static accounts; rather, they are evolving constructs of self and reality that can be reshaped.

In their sessions, all four clients expressed a desire to peel away layers of learned behaviours, particularly in the context of family dynamics, and to connect with their authentic selves. During the coaching sessions, it became apparent that many of these patterns were created from early attachment experiences, leading clients to develop protective mechanisms that, although they recognised helped them manage their triggers around their families, hindered their ability to engage with themselves more authentically.

For example, Client 2 and Client 3 shared their difficulties in maintaining emotional regulation during visits with their parents. Client 2 described feelings of anxiety and dread stemming from her parents' constant arguments, which she felt compelled to mediate to "keep the peace". Similarly, Client 3 shared feelings of shame and guilt triggered by her parents' critical remarks, which she had internalised for most of her life. Despite the negative effects, both clients felt the need to maintain regular visits with their parents, driven by deeply ingrained beliefs about respect, duty and - as described by Client 3 - self-sacrifice (e.g., "it is the right thing to do"). During our initial coaching session, Client 2 shared how she always mediated between her parents' arguments as she felt she needed to "*keep the peace*" and it was "*respectful*"; Client 3 visited her parents despite her feeling anxious as "*that is what a good daughter does*".

These narratives revealed clients' state of narrow awareness (Dängeli, 2022). Often, narrow awareness creates a selectivity problem in that the client's interpretation of that situation neither can be fully understood nor meaningfully integrated (Mattila, 2001). For these clients, their selective focus on duty and self-sacrifice prevented them from creating an open awareness state to consider alternative possibilities, reinforcing their emotional distress.

During sessions, reframing was not just a cognitive tool for shifting perspective; rather, it acted as a bridge into OA. This was achieved through offering clients reflective questions as invitations for belief exploration such as: "what does 'being a good daughter' mean to you?", or, "if your role as a mediator were a character in a story, what would you call it?". These prompts invited clients to examine their beliefs and to begin detaching from their formed rigid beliefs.

For instance, Client 2 identified herself as the "Peacemaker", a role she realised was deeply connected to her feelings of obligation and respect toward her parents, resulting in her need for always mediating in between her parents. This insight helped her recognise how the "Peacemaker" role often impacted negatively on her sense of safety and well-being. This

realisation brought a greater sense of self-compassion in her interactions with her parents, which resulted in Client 2 setting healthier emotional boundaries.

Client 3's reflections on what it meant to be "a good daughter" allowed her to explore that role in a way that reconciled her love for her family as well as her own wellbeing.

As clients began to deconstruct their problem stories, it became evident that their actions were deeply tied to core personal values—values that, while meaningful, often reinforced limiting narratives. Recognising these values was important in the reframing process, as it allowed clients to recontextualise their behaviours in a more self-compassionate way, embedding newly acquired perspectives (re-authoring) through changing how they relate to and acted differently in those triggered situations.

2. Discovering Core Values

One of the components that became evident during the coaching sessions was how the clients' behaviours were rooted in deeply held values, despite their negative connotations. For instance, Client 2's commitment to keeping the peace stemmed from a strong cultural value of respect for elders. Similarly, Client 3's sense of duty and self-sacrifice reflected a genuine desire to give to others, even at her own personal cost. These deeply held values became the focal event (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992) in the clients' narratives, shaping how they interpreted their experiences. For both clients, a sense of social responsibility framed their actions, often at the expense of their own emotional needs.

Within the field of cognitive science, there seems to be a consensus that narratives and words expressed during therapeutic contexts are normally "tips of icebergs", and what remains underneath is background knowledge that clients are not able to see that still needs to be explored. As part of the reframing process, one of my roles as a coach was not solely to create a liminal space for the clients, but also to listen actively to the client's stories to make the implicit (iceberg) more explicit. By exploring these values, clients were able to reframe their behaviours not in a narrow manner, but as symbols of their strengths and integrity. By opening the aperture to alternative possibilities, clients were able to reinterpret their actions within a more compassionate and empowering framework, which facilitated the emergence of open awareness as a vehicle for inner transformation

3. Reframing through analogies and metaphors

During the process of Open Awareness (OA), analogies and metaphors emerged as powerful tools to help clients reframe their dominant stories into alternative perspectives. Metaphors serve as a bridge between the abstract and the concrete (Malkomsen et al., 2021).

For instance, Client 1 described her frustration and sadness at being misunderstood by members of her family, which resulted with her acting in an unauthentic manner to avoid being criticised. During one session, I introduced the metaphor of “tinted glasses” to illustrate how individuals filter reality through their unique perspective (lenses). I invited Client 1 to imagine what colour her glasses might be, encouraging reflections on how her perceptions shape her experience. Client 1 embraced the metaphor, describing her glasses as analogous to “*pink coloured glasses with round frames, like those that Harry Potter wears as I love Harry Potter*”. This playful yet meaningful use of metaphors allowed Client 1 to reflect on her own interpretative filters as well as considering how others’ perspectives, particularly those of her family members, might be different, allowing for a more inner and interconnected perspective. In the following session, Client 1 shared the impact that this metaphor had in gaining a greater understanding of herself and others, approaching interactions with greater empathy and understanding. She expressed a newfound sense of inner calm, which she described as “*a field of sunflowers*”.

Metaphors, as Mattila (2001) notes, enable clients to encapsulate complex emotional and behavioural patterns, fostering a shift in awareness and perspective. By integrating these symbolic elements into the coaching process, clients were able to re-author their experiences in a manner that aligned with their deeper values and aspirations. From a Transpersonal Psychology coaching perspective, the use of metaphors facilitated a shift from conceptual reframing to embodied OA, allowing clients not only to intellectually understand a new perspective but to feel and integrate it on a deeper level.

The metaphor of ‘tinted glasses’ provided Client 1 with a tangible way to access a broader perception, reinforcing OA as an experiential, embodiment process rather than being purely a cognitive shift. Thus, Dängeli (2019) states that shifting our mode of perception of an issue allows individuals to divert their attention from the content of that issue to a state of awareness that is conducive to healing. Outside the coaching sessions, some clients used affirmations (e.g., *I am safe, I am okay, I am here*) as statements to access OA and to shift their behaviours from reactivity to safety.

Discussion

This study explored how reframing served as a tool for clients to shift from narrow awareness to Open Awareness (OA), highlighting the importance of creating a space where clients could explore their beliefs and patterns. This process allowed clients to shift to a wider perspective, leading to more integrated actions. As a result, clients reported not only changes within themselves, but a shift in their behaviour within family dynamics, becoming less reactive and changing some of their dominant patterns. Despite the results, the study does have some limitations that require consideration.

The study had a small sample with no comparative group analysis of clients that did not engage in reframing as a transformational tool, therefore, the validity of the results are not generalisable. A comparison group could have provided a better understanding of whether the transformations observed could specifically be attributed to reframing.

While clients reported a shift in perception and behaviour —such as greater self-compassion and more integrated emotional regulation—it is not possible to definitively attribute these changes solely to the reframing process. Other factors such as clients' readiness for change or the therapeutic relationship, may have also contributed to clients' transformation. Further research is needed to better establish how reframing facilitates the emergence of Open Awareness.

Nevertheless, the study provided preliminary evidence of the positive impact that reframing had in clients, expressing greater emotional regulation, self-compassion, and empathy. Further research is needed to understand the depth of reframing and its effects in creating open awareness within the context of coaching.

Conclusion

Through reframing, clients accessed open awareness as a dynamic state of perception, allowing them to re-author narratives in alignment with their authentic selves. This shift was not simply a cognitive exercise but an embodied transformation as clients reported significant changes within themselves (e.g., greater self-compassion) as well as shifts in how they approached and interacted within family dynamics — reinforcing Open Awareness as a fundamental mechanism for deep psychological and spiritual growth within Transpersonal Coaching Psychology.

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Developing Skills for Psychedelic Navigation and Integration Using Open Awareness and Somatic Parts Work

Suzanne Krance, PhD

Abstract

There is currently a lack of models that elucidate key competencies necessary for psychedelic-supported transformation. This report explores the skills developed by clients during the application of open awareness and somatic parts-based approaches within a transpersonal coaching framework, and the role of these skills in psychedelic preparation, navigation, and integration. Clients sought coaching support for the preparation and integration of psychedelic experiences. Client feedback forms were analyzed to identify key skills that emerged and developed during the coaching sessions. The three capacities identified — self-compassion, somatic awareness, and self-agency — are highly impactful for skillful psychedelic navigation and integration. The results from this report support the relevance and justify the continued exploration of transpersonal coaching methods in skill development required for psychedelic-assisted transformation.

Keywords

psychedelic integration, psychedelic navigation, somatic parts work, open awareness, self-compassion, somatic awareness, self-agency

Recommended citation

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Introduction

As interest in psychedelic-assisted self-development grows, tools to engage in this work must do the same, to minimize harm and support the stabilization of holistic shifts of being. Integrating expanded state insights is required not only for psychedelics' transformative potential to be realized, but also to mitigate significant negative personal and collective impacts which include fostering: reliance on external substances to experience desired states of being, the illusion of conscious evolution (Aixelá, 2022), addiction to intensity, and confusion between the spiritual and physical worlds (Romero, 2019).

Although psychedelics hold the promise of healing through the medicine of expanded states of consciousness (Bourzat, 2019), it is not the experience itself, but how one integrates and finds meaning in it, and anchors impactful insight(s) into everyday life (Loizaga-Velder & Pazzi, 2014). In this way, the significance of the experience lives and breathes through the journeyer, resulting in behavioral changes, instead of fading away (Richards, 2017).

So what allows for the embodiment of insights, giving rise to altered traits? There are at least 10 diverse models for psychedelic integration, spanning more goal-oriented frameworks such as the Acceptance Commitment Therapy (Sloshower et al., 2020) and Psychological Flexibility (Watts & Loma, 2020) models to those that focus on nature-based ritual practices (Gandy et al., 2020). Common integration model domains include: mind/emotional/contemplation, bodily/somatic, spiritual/existential/ritual, lifestyle/action, relational/communal, and natural world (Bathje et al., 2022).

Though much interest has been focused on psychedelic integration, there is a lack of models that detail key competencies necessary for this process. Though preparation typically includes exploring useful topics such as intentions, psychedelic education, support plans, expectations, and psychological preparedness (McAlpine et al., 2024), it also presents precious opportunities for tool development. This report focuses on a coaching model combining a type of non-directive meditation called open awareness (OA) (Dängeli, 2019) with a process of accessing and interfacing with sub-personalities through the body, derived from somatic parts work (McConnell, 2020) in a transpersonal coaching container. This report explores the skills developed by clients during the application of open awareness and somatic parts-based approaches, and the role of these skills in psychedelic preparation, navigation, and integration.

Method

An advertisement for pro-bono psychedelic preparation and integration coaching sessions was posted in a psychedelic society group chat. Introductory calls were made to understand the potential client's needs, answer questions, and ensure a commitment to at least three coaching sessions and the completion of feedback. I disclosed that session content and

feedback might be used anonymously in a report and received client consent to these terms. Clients submitted a signed coaching agreement provided by Alef Trust.

Of the six clients (assigned pseudonyms in this report) selected based on the criteria above, one sought integration support only; two sought preparation support (with integration support planned for after their journey); and three sought both preparation and integration support. All clients have a history of prior psychedelic use and were seeking a more conscious approach to their psychedelic engagement. Sessions took place online over Zoom and lasted 45 to 90 minutes.

Client sessions utilized OA (Dängeli, 2019), aspects of somatic parts work (McConnell, 2020), and select question prompts from the ‘Feeding Your Demons’ practice (Allione, 2008). See Appendix A for an outline of client sessions and prompts used during the session. The parts (unincorporated aspects of the self or sub-personalities) explored during sessions were related to: the intention that the client planned to bring to their psychedelic journey, an experience during or just after his/her journey, or a fear associated with the journey experience itself during the session.

Data were gathered from client-submitted feedback forms and coach’s notes using thematic analysis to identify themes related to emergent or developing capacities after sessions.

Results

The aim of this report was to identify skills developed by clients during the application of open awareness and somatic parts-based approaches, and the role of these skills in psychedelic preparation, navigation, and integration. This coaching model supported the emergence and development of three capacities needed for skillful psychedelic navigation and integration: self-compassion, somatic awareness, and self-agency.

Self-Compassion

Self-Compassion is offering oneself acceptance, understanding, and non-judgment while acknowledging personal suffering or fallibility. It provides a nurturing framework, enabling the processing of difficult emotions.

Both Sander and Owen had a strong judging/judged part that arose during sessions. During integration sessions, in OA, Sander was able to hold space ‘like a father’ and explore challenging sensations that first arose during his journey which allowed him to process emotions of ‘helplessness and being judged’ and gain insights into his own way of being in important relationships that he was previously unaware of. He remarked in his feedback:

“Bringing awareness to my shadows helped me improve relationships by speaking more lovingly”.

Owen had a ‘full dissolution’ experience during a recent psychedelic journey. He began sessions with a desire for “permanent enlightenment”, and to “kill the ego to end my suffering”. During sessions, he formed a more cooperative relationship with the part that judged his ego as an adversary. He reflected: “My greatest insight is to make peace with my ego. Acceptance, kindness, and forgiveness are the keywords for me. I’m working toward strengthening the part of me that is wise to manage with kindness the child-like parts of my ego”. Accessing “spacious loving awareness” during OA supported the felt experience of non-judgement and self acceptance which are important prerequisites for deep self-exploration.

Somatic Awareness

Somatic awareness is the conscious perception and interpretation of internal states and sensations (Mehling, 2011). It is intrinsically linked to emotional awareness, allowing one to perceive emotions more accurately and explore or regulate them.

Clients reported that sessions helped them form a deeper connection with and sensitivity to their bodies. Generally, they came to appreciate the body, not only the mind, as a powerful means to connect with their experience. Sander remarked, “The biggest change was to have the goal to connect with my body in moments of uncertainty, and overall to start sensing signals that refer to unspoken emotions”.

Maury commented that “the connection between emotions, intuitions, and physical sensations” was among the most impactful aspects of the sessions, and that he is now “better able to manage” his “habitual and obsolete channels of thought”.

Ali “learned the importance of approaching a topic not just from the mind but also through the bodily experience” even though at times it was challenging. She also appreciated working on connecting her intention to the body which made it “easier to connect with during the journey”. Engaging in somatic parts work during OA supported clients in connecting their emotions to their body sensations and self regulating which are important capacities for working with psychedelics.

Self-Agency

Self-Agency is the ability to make choices aligned with one’s will, which requires taking responsibility for one’s actions, thoughts, emotions, and needs.

Omar's intention for his psychedelic experience was to gain insight into his "lack of discipline to keep commitments". His work during the coaching sessions improved his ability to identify and connect with his own needs and link them to committed action. He wrote that "Coaching gave me more confidence and understanding of my emotional state". Omar recognized the main benefit of his experience as being "open to receive and ready to commit".

As Stella was preparing for a journey she was "going through a really rough moment" and sought clarity. She felt the most important aspect of the coaching was leaving with "clear next steps" which helped her "become unstuck". Her work exploring her 'me's' that hadn't been out to play before — that are main characters in my own character" combined with her commitment to practices that addressed these parts' needs resulted in the following: "In two sessions I felt an incredible (and I must say unexpected) shift both inside and out". Connecting needs to committed action during sessions supported clients in experiencing tangible life shifts through cultivating self-agency, which is a key factor in meaningful psychedelic integration.

Discussion

The aim of this report was to identify skills relevant to psychedelic preparation, navigation, and integration developed by clients during the application of open awareness and somatic parts-based approaches. Thematic analysis revealed three capacities that this coaching model helped to develop: self-compassion, somatic awareness, and self-agency.

OA supports clients in developing self-compassion and an ability to hold themselves, which is a key skill for psychedelic-assisted transformation. Through OA, Sander was able to form a relationship with a painful part that he had been unable to meet during his journey. In addition, during OA, Owen developed the capacity to disidentify with a challenging part and begin to experience the qualities of Self (Schwarz, 2001) within. A key aspect of the OA process is grounding in "spacious loving awareness" or Self. Approaching parts with curious, compassionate energy allows clients to lean into difficult places, creating an opportunity to relate in new, supportive ways (De Vitto, 2024). As clients become more familiar with this Self-energy they can access it independently when needed (McConnell, 2012). Developing the capacity to meet challenging parts is a requisite skill for psychedelic journeying, as repressed material often emerges. Additionally, the integration process may include revisiting challenging experiences. It is impossible to fully engage with the difficult elements of a journey or integrate them without access to a compassionate, accepting presence. OA not only strengthens self-compassion, but also provides a safe space to explore sensations and emotions in the body.

The combination of OA and somatic parts work supports clients' connections to their emotions and bodily sensations while enhancing interoception and self-regulation. Sander

identified the body as a new resource that he uses to work more collaboratively with his emotions. Through the sessions, Maury was able to connect his emotions to physical sensations in his body, which allowed him to self-regulate with greater ease. Most activated parts or triggers manifest through sensations in the body (Levine, 1997). Therefore, sensing the body is a prerequisite for self-regulation (Price, 2018), enabling one to assess their current state of being (Vator, 2018), take appropriate action to calm the system, and remain present. The more developed this sensitivity is, the more able one is to avoid reactionary states.

Phases of psychedelic journeys can be overwhelming, making self-regulation a key skill in maintaining presence and engaging with the process. A developed somatic awareness allows one to enter the journey and hold intention through the body. Additionally, bringing focus to the body during positive peak experiences allows sensations to be stored and revisited in the future (MIND Foundation, 2020) for integration or further exploration. Furthermore, the body allows one to ground after a psychedelic experience, the more sensitivity one has in the body the more effective the grounding. Grof (1998) posits that body engagement is imperative to reach the depths of the psyche, therefore developing somatic awareness supports deeper relating to the unconscious. It is paramount to translate these somatic messages into intentional action to transform old patterns. Self-agency makes this possible.

The completion of the client's voluntary practices based on the parts' needs builds trust and confidence, and supports the emergence and development of self-agency. For Stella, taking responsibility and committing to making different daily choices catalyzed practical shifts in a short period. Additionally, after Omar took responsibility for his needs, he was able to take committed action. Committed action is an impactful aspect of psychedelic integration (Bathje et al., 2022). Choosing actions aligned with expanded-state insights and a high ethical standard provides tangible evidence of psychedelics' potential to support conscious evolution (Aixalá, 2022). However, this is dependent on an existing capacity for self-agency. Therefore, fostering self-agency before the psychedelic experience is an integral skill for integration. Additionally, self-agency empowers journeyers, allowing them to more actively engage with energies and content during psychedelic experiences, resulting in more skillful navigation, and deeper processes and insights.

It is not the experience itself, but the way we relate to it that ultimately determines its transformative value (Jesso, 2013). The quality of relating depends upon the tools and level of aptitude one has in using them. Self-compassion, somatic awareness, and self-agency equip those seeking psychedelic-assisted transformation with abilities to more fully meet, form relationships with, and take responsibility for what they find during their experiences. This work raises the question: Can a model be developed whereby skill acquisition is the goal of coach-accompanied psychedelic use?

Conclusion

As interest in psychedelic-assisted self-development continues to grow, tools to engage in this work must do the same to minimize risk and maximize transformative potential. To summarize, transpersonal coaching psychology approaches such as somatic parts work and OA support the emergence and development of self-compassion, somatic awareness, and self-agency. These serve as crucial tools for psychedelic preparation, navigation and integration, and help define specific skills necessary for psychedelic-assisted transformation. This report highlights the unique application of a transpersonal-based method in psychedelic coaching to support clients' acquisition of tools and competencies that are impactful not only during psychedelic journeys and integration, but also in life more broadly.

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Appendix A

Coaching Session Outline & Question Prompts

Grounding Exercise	
Identification of trigger/part in need of exploration	
Description of part including “where it lived” in/around the body	
Open Awareness (OA)	
While in OA:	Connection to spacious loving awareness
	Locate the part in the body
	Share intention with the part
	Ask permission to connect to the part
	Give space for communication with the part:
Question Prompts:	Why are you here? (purpose)
	What do you want?
	What do you need?
	How would you feel if you got what you need?
	If you got what you need, how could you support me?

	How can I best support you to get what you need?
	Express gratitude to the part & remind the client of its availability outside of the session
Create a practice to support the part getting its need met	

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The Transformative Potential of Sleep Paralysis as a Gateway to Out-of-Body Experiences: A Somatic Open Awareness and Micro-Phenomenological Evocation Approach

Catherine Coubrough-Smith, MA

Abstract

Within the framework of transpersonal coaching, this case study explores sleep paralysis episodes (SPEs) as potentially transformative, holistic thresholds to out-of-body experiences (OBEs). It focuses on the lived experiences of two pro bono clients who engaged in coaching to address personal challenges rooted in their past SPEs. Employing an innovative coaching intervention that combined somatic open awareness practices with micro-phenomenological evocation, clients were guided into a state of optimal open awareness within which they were invited to re-evoke and somatically explore their past SPEs. This re-evocation process facilitated a profound transition: clients moved from an initial state of fear and paralysis to an inviting, embodied interconnected state of awareness. A synchronic micro-phenomenological data analysis of their feedback generated two key themes: the softening of a perceived separation boundary, and enhanced self-awareness, compassion, and acceptance. Fully engaging with the clients' past SPEs during the coaching sessions enabled both client and coach to collaboratively navigate and reframe the liminal nature of these experiences. Previously unnoticed, subtle dimensions of the clients' past SPEs were revealed, leading ultimately to personal growth, holistic 'mind-body-spirit' transformation, and the creation of conditions conducive to naturally occurring OBEs.

Keywords

transpersonal coaching, out-of-body experiences, sleep paralysis, micro-phenomenological evocation, somatic open awareness, threshold, holistic body-mind-spirit transformation

Recommended citation

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Introduction

“A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up to a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something.”
(Meyer & Land, 2003, p. 1)

This case study explores the profound and often misunderstood phenomena of sleep paralysis (SP) and out-of-body experiences (OBEs), asserting their interconnectedness as a unique pathway for conscious exploration and personal transformation. While both experiences are widely reported across diverse cultures and historical periods, their full potential for human development remains largely untapped. Whilst being both intriguing and unsettling, they can also be terrifying for some individuals who experience them. This case study report introduces an innovative coaching intervention, integrating somatic open awareness and micro-phenomenological evocation within the context of transpersonal coaching psychology (TCP) as a means to understand, navigate, and leverage these experiential states for holistic well-being.

Sleep paralysis, a neurophysiological phenomenon occurring in a transitional phase between wakefulness and sleep, is marked by a temporary and partial disconnect between brain and body (Terzaghi et al., 2011). This can result in dream imagery and muscle atonia spilling over into full conscious awareness leading to sensations of bodily paralysis and a distressing sense of being trapped within one's own body, along with the inability to speak. These sleep paralysis episodes (SPEs) are often accompanied by vivid hallucinations and intense somatic experiences (Cheyne et al., 1999).

In contrast to feeling ‘trapped’ within one's body, the core phenomenology of an OBE is a first-person perspective in which the self or centre of consciousness is temporarily experienced as having spatially ‘separated’ from the physical body (Carruthers, 2018; Campillo-Ferrer, 2024), allowing an extracorporeal, often elevated, perspective of the world

(Levitin, 1999). OBEs may arise within diverse contexts, including sleep-related phenomena such as hypnagogia and SP, where the sensation of this mind-body separation can occur - partially or fully (Hurd, 2016; Herrero, 2024).

According to some prominent neuroscientists (e.g., Blanke & Arzy, 2005), OBEs may result from disruptions in the brain's multisensory integration system, potentially reflecting an underlying neurological dysfunction. However, interdisciplinary studies indicate that OBEs are not merely neurological anomalies but can facilitate emotional healing, heightened self-awareness, and profound spiritual insights (Sellers, 2019; Shaw et al., 2023), particularly during times when individuals are seeking inner guidance and deeper understanding (Shaw et al., 2023). Reframing OBEs as evolutionary phenomena (e.g. Hurd, 2016) reinforces the perspective that OBEs may represent a '*unique human capacity*' rather than a processing flaw (Kessler et al., 2016). Whilst neuroscience research on SP and its potential connection to OBEs is still an evolving field, many experienced OBE practitioners (e.g. Nicholls, 2012; Hurd, 2016) propose that '*passing through*' a SPE may be either necessary or at least contributory to achieving a complete OBE separation - often referred to as a '*full-blown OBE*'. This suggests the possibility that SPEs can serve as a transitional gateway to an OBE (Emslie, 2014; Mallett et al., 2022).

Despite such recognised potential for personal growth and transformation, there has, however, been little research on their application and integration within a therapeutic coaching context (De Foe, 2012; Sellers, 2019). This case study addresses the gap by integrating SPEs, specifically as potential thresholds to OBEs, within a transpersonal coaching framework. It combines micro-phenomenological evocation, which enables vivid re-evoking of past experiences beyond active conscious inquiry (Petitmengin et al., 2023), with somatic open awareness practices that receptively attend to bodily sensations, emotions, and subtle energies, allowing subconscious material to emerge without judgment (Dängeli, 2022). The study demonstrates how this coaching intervention can facilitate holistic transformation within a '*threshold space*' between a perceived sense of a self 'trapped in body' and a self 'detached from the body'. Furthermore, such somatic re-evoking of past SPEs can potentially lead to conditions conducive to achieving natural full-blown OBEs, if one so wishes.

Method

Participants

Two pro bono female clients, aged 29 and 83, sought coaching to specifically explore current challenges and issues relating to their past SPEs. Whilst Client A undertook her own research on SPEs and OBEs in between the coaching sessions, Client B fully understood the nature of both SPEs and OBEs prior to the sessions and specifically wanted to explore how to

achieve a full OBE, as opposed to the ‘partial’ SPE type separations she had previously experienced (refer to Appendix A).

Procedure

Coaching sessions were conducted over a consecutive three-month period and combined face-to-face and online formats, totalling 12 hours. Each 60- to 90-minute session followed a flexible client-led approach, with the coaching intervention tailored to meet their specific needs:

Phase 1: The preliminary sessions focused on completing a ‘Needs and Values’ form (Dängeli, n.d) and collaboratively establishing personal growth objectives.

Phase 2: Various techniques were used to transition the client into an optimal state of awareness, allowing the creation of a co-held space between the coach and client in which to re-evoked the client’s past SPEs and explore related sensory perceptions, emotions, and thoughts relating to their presenting issues (refer to Appendix B).

Phase 3: Post-SPE reflections included dialogue and journaling to capture and integrate insights gained into their daily life.

Data Analysis

Clients were invited to share both verbal and written feedback on their re-evoked SPEs and the impact of each session. To generate key themes, a synchronic micro-phenomenological data analysis was conducted - a qualitative method that focuses on eliciting the fine-grained structure of lived experience at specific moments in time (Petitmengin, 2019). This approach enabled a focus on capturing the moment-to-moment details of the clients’ re-evoked SPEs as they unfolded in real time during the coaching sessions.

Ethical Considerations: Before their first session, the clients signed a Coaching Agreement (Dängeli, n.d) which included engagement terms, anonymity, confidentiality and IACTM ethics (2024). Acknowledging the profound nature of both SPEs and OBEs and potential arising psychological challenges, the sessions prioritised ethical boundaries, client well-being, and a safe, non-judgmental, supportive environment. Each session ended with slow breathwork to re-ground the clients.

Results

A synchronic micro-phenomenological analysis of session feedback and reflective journal entries generated the following two key themes, each elucidating key experiential

elements which helped the clients reconcile aspects of their presenting issues with greater equanimity and understanding.

Softening of a Separation Boundary

This theme reflects the clients' perception of a shift from a rigid body-mind divide to a more fluid, spiritually guided dissolution of this boundary.

Client A initially referred to her past SPEs as being violently pulled into a 'black void' in which she immediately felt trapped and scared. However, over the course of the sessions, she perceived a transformation during her re-evoked SPEs, describing this void as now revealing, in her peripheral awareness, an exit boundary. As she somatically felt into this boundary, it softened, transforming into *"a myriad of energetic vortices of swirling colours"* that seemed *"to be beckoning me to enter as a way out"*. She further elaborated, *"I felt the separation beginning to dissolve, as though I was being gently pulled towards something more expansive than just myself"*.

Similarly, Client B, initially experienced a sense of being trapped, describing the fear arising from her immobilisation as being *"in a prison of my own mind"*. Reflecting on the sessions, she identified two key practices that facilitated the softening of a boundary surrounding her. The first was guided meditation which led her to a state of expanded awareness which she described as helping her *"bridge the gap between my thoughts and physical sensations"*, fostering a greater sense of interconnectedness; and second, body scans, which she described as enhancing her awareness of each body part, ultimately providing *"a profound sense of presence and harmony"*.

Enhanced Self-Awareness, Compassion and Acceptance

Exploring their re-evoked SP threshold experiences acted as a catalyst for deeper introspection and emotional engagement.

In her past SPEs, Client A confronted dark ominous presences surrounding her which she described as *"shadows, oppressive and frightening"*. Through the guided practices, she entered a calm state within her re-evoked experiences and observed these presences transform into inviting colourful geometric shapes. She reflected, *"They are now inviting me in, as if they are a gateway"*. Somatic practices, especially body scans and soma centred awareness, helped her listen to her body and gain what she referred as deeper wisdom: *"It's like the body was always trying to tell me something, but I wasn't listening before"*.

Client B, who initially also perceived threatening dark presences, remarked that this evolved over the sessions into a deeper understanding of her own internal reservations: *"I'm beginning to see them as reflections of my own doubts"*. She connected these fears to her

childhood upbringing, which was marked by strict discipline and control. She observed, *“I think my childhood taught me to be rigid, to control everything. Maybe that’s why I can’t fully let go during the OBE, why I feel stuck”*. By the final session, her visual imagery shifted significantly, with the previously menacing presences becoming welcoming. She expressed this shift as *“Instead of fear, I now feel a sense of peace and acceptance. They were inviting me, calling me to enter with curiosity — not fear”*.

Discussion

The findings reveal how somatic open awareness and micro-phenomenological evocation facilitated holistic transformation by guiding the clients into optimal self-awareness within which they were able to re-visit and somatically explore their past SPEs, leading to meaningful, integrative breakthroughs.

Both clients had reported experiencing a ‘partial’ OBE type separation in their past SPEs which led to feelings of fear and a sense of bodily entrapment. However, during the coaching sessions, the clients discovered transformative, previously hidden, subtle dimensions of a holistic ‘mind — body — spirit’ awareness through the recalling of their past SPEs and engaging in somatic practices. This process elicited transformative visual imagery that symbolised emotional and sensory shifts, fostering a deeper connection to self in terms of mind, body and spiritual presence. Their journeys marked a transition from limitation to possibility, accompanied with a profound sense of interconnectedness.

A key element of the coaching intervention was recognising that addressing my clients’ feelings of entrapment in their re-evoked past SPEs necessitated a compassionate, sensitive coaching approach (Dängeli, 2019). Whilst my own spontaneous and self-induced OBEs helped me to resonate with them, I remained mindful of not letting any biases interfere with their journey of self-expansion and discovery, allowing them to express themselves freely at all times. With the technique of micro-phenomenological evocation aligning with transpersonal coaching’s focus on integrating spiritual and transcendent dimensions (Miller, 2015), I was curious to explore whether re-evoking a past SPE, combined with open awareness and somatic practices, could effectively help explore my clients’ issues. Attuning to my clients’ subtle energy shifts (e.g. relaxed facial expressions, body ease) and entering a mutual open awareness state, allowed an exploration of their present re-evoked somatic sensations through successive open questioning and active listening. Reflecting back their words encouraged deeper exploration and meaning-making, enabling nuanced responses that uncovered previously unnoticed dimensions of their SPEs.

Reframing Boundaries in Transpersonal Coaching

Prior to the coaching sessions, both clients had experienced a ‘partial’ separation during their past SPEs which led to feelings of fear and entrapment within a ‘liminal or

threshold space' existing between a perceived sense of their self 'in body' and, simultaneously, 'out of body'. During their re-evoked experiences in the sessions, both reported a softening and expanding of this boundary, and the sense of release from being trapped within their body. This shift aligns closely with a foundational principle of transpersonal theory: the dissolution of egoic boundaries as a pathway to self-transcendence and a profound interconnectedness with all (Grof, 1992). This transformation, from dualistic thinking to a more unified and holistic perspective, has important coaching implications. Re-evoking clients' past SPEs can blur perceived boundaries, fostering an expanded sense of self and reduced feeling of separation. The shift transitions from a narrow, tunnel-focused awareness, where danger is perceived, to a broader, more expansive self-awareness (Dängeli, 2019). Through this process, my clients and I worked together to facilitate mutual growth and transformation by embracing a "*participatory perspective*" (Ferrer & Sherman, 2008) that expanded our worldviews, dissolved limiting beliefs, and cultivated a deep sense of interconnectedness between our inner and outer worlds, as well as between ourselves.

Enhanced Self-Awareness, Compassion and Acceptance

When explored and integrated within transpersonal coaching sessions, heightened self-awareness, increased compassion and acceptance highlight the therapeutic potential of SPEs in fostering emotional resilience and personal growth. These findings align with coaching approaches that emphasise self-reflection and emotional engagement (Dängeli, 2022). The development of self-compassion and acceptance, for both the clients and coach suggests that SPEs can enrich both inner and outer relational dynamics. Over the three months of coaching, the collaborative client-coach journey proved profoundly insightful and transformative. In the wrap-up session, both clients reported that they no longer fear this SP 'threshold' type episode and are very curious to re-experience it within their lives, outside of coaching sessions. If they do, they aim to relax into the experience and apply somatic open awareness to help facilitate a natural, full OBE separation.

Conclusion

As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept, there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. (Meyer & Land, 2003, p. 1)

This case study demonstrates how, within the context of transpersonal coaching, the integration of somatic open awareness practices with the technique of micro-phenomenological evocation facilitated a holistic 'mind-body-spirit' transformation for the two clients. By reframing SPEs as 'open awareness' threshold spaces, the boundary between the clients' perceived sense of their self 'in body' and, simultaneously, 'out of body' became more fluid. This shift enabled them to discover and access previously unnoticed, subtle dimensions of their challenging past SPEs, empowering them to actively engage with

and navigate deep-rooted emotional patterns in the present. The coaching intervention, in this way, fundamentally helped both client and coach reframe SPEs, not as frightening liminal experiences, but as unique opportunities for healing and personal growth. This reframing opened new, accessible ways of holistically engaging with such experiences. By intuitively and somatically exploring their SPEs, the clients were also able to recognise their transformative potential in serving as natural gateways to OBEs.

With this case study focusing on a small client sample over a limited timeframe, the results cannot be generalised to all individuals experiencing similar phenomena. However, with a greater sample, future case studies combining micro-phenomenological evocation and somatic open awareness have the potential not only to further illuminate the holistic self-transformative aspects of SPEs that may, in turn, lead to OBEs, but also to advance therapeutic practices within the field of transpersonal coaching.

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Appendix A

Biography of Case Study Clients

- Client A, a 29-year-old Indian female, residing in India, has only encountered the initial sleep paralysis OBE-related stage and longs to experience a full separative OBE. She feels held back and does not understand why, which led her to seek coaching to help her release what she describes as a feeling of “*entrapment*”.
- Client B, an 83-year-old British female living in Spain, experienced two “*terrifying*” sleep paralysis experiences at the age of 60 during a significant life transition—retirement and relocation to Spain. These events left a lasting impact and continue to “*haunt*” her. She

therefore sought coaching to better understand and find a satisfying explanation for their occurrence.

Post-Note: The client shared with me that she had researched the subject of sleep paralysis between sessions which had led her to the topic of OBEs. This made her curious as to whether her past SPEs could have naturally progressed into an OBE had she relaxed into them without fear.

Appendix B

Somatic Open Awareness Practices Employed

The practices of open monitoring, body scans, soma centred awareness, and guided visualisation and meditation were used within the coaching sessions to re-evoked the clients' past SPEs. Bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts and subtle energies allowed the facilitation of deep self-exploration, healing and personal growth. Refer to the 'Open Awareness Handbook' (Dängeli, 2019) for further detail pertaining to each practice.

Micro-Phenomenological Evocation Process

The following is a brief summary of the steps taken during the coaching sessions to guide the clients into a re-evoked SPE state and support them during the experience. The aim was to access and describe these experiences in their raw, immediate form before any interpretation or conceptualisation took place. The following process was modified from the works of Claire Petitmengin (2019, 2023) to align with the above somatic open awareness practices and the framework of transpersonal coaching:

1. Preparation:

The clients were invited to focus on a specific past SPE in their life, one that felt significant but was difficult to describe or articulate clearly and involved physical, emotional, and/or sensory experiences.

2. Recollection:

The client was guided to re-enter the experience by closing their eyes, focusing on their breathing and relaxing until an optimal open awareness had been achieved. By staying centred, the focus was on re-living the experience, not thinking about it or analysing it. The goal being to allow the experience to unfold in the client's awareness, as vividly and directly as possible.

3. Descriptive Attention:

During the evocation, the client was encouraged to describe the experience in detail, focusing on any immediate sensations, emotions, and subtle feelings. The emphasis was on noticing what emerged in their perception, such as bodily sensations, feelings, or even unspoken understandings that arose during the experience.

4. Clarification:

Successive open guided questions were asked to prompt the clients to explore their past SPE further, with the intention of helping them remain in the raw experience, without falling into reflection or analysis. The questions were designed to delve deeply into the ‘how’ of the experience, not the ‘what’ — e.g., How does the transition occur? How do your bodily sensations change?, how do sounds and visual elements appear to you?. By breaking down the clients’ re-evoked SPEs into experiential details, ensured the clients’ responses remained focused on the direct, lived experience rather than on any theoretical or conceptual interpretations.

5. Revelation of Pre-Reflective Experience:

The evocation process aims to uncover layers of the experience that were not initially available to conscious reflection. This includes subtle shifts in perception, bodily sensations, and emotional nuances that were previously unnoticed or overlooked. The experience is to be re-lived in a more vivid and direct way, providing insights into ‘how’ each of the clients truly experience the world and sense of self, through their re-evoked past SPEs, before it is shaped by language, thought, and social constructs.

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Catherine Coubrough-Smith is a certified Transpersonal coach, independent researcher and currently serves as the Company Secretary for the Scientific and Medical Network. Having experienced two spontaneous, naturally arising OBEs, she has since self-induced the experience to explore and understand the less commonly reported features through a micro-phenomenological lens. Driven by a deep curiosity and passion to uncover the hitherto hidden dimensions of lived experience, she specialises in coaching individuals to experientially re-evolve past OBEs. With her guidance, individuals are able to navigate self-transformative journeys, access their inner psyche powers, and discover their unique paths to fulfilment and meaning to life. Catherine can be contacted directly at cathy.csmith@yahoo.co.uk

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TCP as a Catalyst for Inner and Outer Value Creation

Wally Patawaran, MPH

Abstract

Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) principles and practices offer executive coaches and organizational consultants a new domain of capacity-building tools and resources for leadership; strategy development; operational planning, implementation, and experimentation; and conflict resolution among multiple stakeholders. This case study employs grounded theory using reflexive thematic analysis to offer an initial, rudimentary theory of TCP as a catalyst to create intrinsic value through relating (IVR). IVR refers to the intra- and interpersonal functional benefits to an individual from utilizing their cognitive and biopsychosocial-spiritual skills and resources when relating to other individuals as well as to one's shadow parts. The value, or functional benefit, to the individual's inner and outer experience is at once personal, intrinsic, relational, and instrumental. This study describes the use of transpersonal coaching (TC) to create IVR and enable more holistic executive decision-making by empowering coachees to contextualize and reappraise the four baseline elements of Whitmore's GROW model in Open Awareness (OA). Such a theory has the potential to inform new governance, leadership, and management models in favor of an organizational culture of caring and innovation, where the development and production of goods and services respects, everywhere all at once, the care of people, planet, and profit.

Keywords

Leadership development, strategic planning, conflict resolution, multi-stakeholder innovation, GROW model, open awareness

Recommended citation

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Introduction

To dissolve social division and adversarial polarization, stakeholders on all sides should turn to Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) for its pluripotent principles and practices. TCP is an expanding body of knowledge about the modality of transpersonal coaching (TC) and the trainable embodied skill of Open Awareness (OA) (Dängeli, 2022). As Dängeli (2019) describes:

[OA] is a particular mode of perception in which individuals are attentive to both their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others, including the context that connects them. It is a type of attention that is close to being simultaneously inward and outward focused, thereby making one more conscious of the interrelatedness of phenomena. (p.10)

This qualitative case study describes the use of TCP to enable more holistic executive decision-making by incorporating OA into Whitmore's (2024) GROW model, a widely popular tool for individual personal coaching as well as for management coaching and leadership development in business circles.

Although the model flexibly allows the coach and the coachee to identify and superposition its four constituent elements – i.e., Goals, Realities, Options or Obstacles, and Ways Forward – it takes as given the quality, concentration, and aperture of awareness of both the coach and the coachee. More holistic and generative decision alternatives may thus be obscured by Tunnel Awareness (TA), that is, “a narrowed focus of attention that deletes everything in the periphery of one's field of awareness from one's personal consciousness” (Dängeli, 2019, p.19), particularly in situations felt as unpleasant, disturbing, or life threatening.

For instance, a coachee's short-term, recurring goals to feed, house, and keep oneself alive may clash with a long-term wish to avoid harm to others. Equally, personal or professional objectives based solely on one's own activities and current capabilities may neglect to envision superior outcomes made possible with the help of others. To address these tensions, OA was introduced specifically to empower individuals in either their personal or

professional roles to express, contextualize, and reappraise GROW beyond the dictates of the ego.

In this study, the activation of OA broadened viewpoints and made possible a communal relationship with genuine trust and concern. It also allowed the coach and the coachee to recognize, rank, or give greater significance to emerging, pragmatic possibilities. Thematic findings show that coachees discerned new insights into their encounters with intertwined people, places, and times. These realizations led to fresh perspectives on one's social interactions and "shadow parts," the exiled or unwelcome "parts of the self" (Schwartz, 1987, n.d.) which conflict with the ego's ideal and are thus denied, neglected, repressed, or disavowed as shameful, the core idea in Carl Jung's concept of the Shadow (Perry & Tower, 2023).

Furthermore, coachees came to value the inherent worth of new, more beneficial intra- and interpersonal relationships. To shift and reframe their perception and experience of shadow parts, difficult individuals, and challenging social or professional situations, coachees used integral practices to cultivate aspects of their whole-person physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and interpersonal development. With new or enhanced skills, resources, and capacities, coachees were able to transcend imagined limits and subjective constraints, and were able to discover more generative decision alternatives. A commonly reported sign of biopsychosocial-spiritual development was the feeling of being more at ease when acting out or getting ready to act out decisions (Appendix C).

This study also offers an initial, rudimentary theory of TCP as a catalyst to create intrinsic value through relating (IVR), a concept that may serve as society's compass for the creation of public- and private-sector material worth. IVR refers to the intra- and interpersonal functional benefits to an individual from utilizing their cognitive and biopsychosocial-spiritual skills and resources when relating to other individuals as well as to one's shadow parts. The value, or functional benefit, to the individual's inner and outer experience is at once personal, intrinsic, relational, and instrumental. This concept emerged from the study's thematic analysis. It was influenced by my professional experiences and prior knowledge of team and organizational psychology, and by my personal experience of TCP through in-group learning, direct contact with tutors, recorded teaching modules, and peer-to-peer training.

While the study did not target workplace issues based on the coachee's job title or position, it provides a window into the similarities, shared tensions, and deep entanglement of personal and professional decision-making when individuals must earn an income to support themselves and those in their circle of care. Decisions were often prompted by internal factors and external conditions; generally required environmental scanning, scenario forecasting, brainstorming, and strategic planning with incomplete information; and usually involved anticipating gains, losses, and trade-offs for oneself and others, including allies and

antagonists. Almost certainly, decisions necessitated communication and negotiation with others.

Indeed, mainstream executive decision-making can often be individualistic, static, disembodied, and egocentric at once. With this baseline as the environmental context, TCP's integration into university and graduate management training schemes has the potential to equip future leaders to reappraise material value creation in service of intra- and interpersonal flourishing. TC and the concept of IVR can be taught and trained as components of leadership; strategy development; operational planning, implementation, and experimentation; communications; human resources; and conflict-resolution. In particular, the activation of OA to formulate GROW in organizational contexts may contribute to practical breakthroughs by enabling emergent patterns, connections, or possibilities not immediately obvious through traditional analysis and brainstorming. TCP principles and practices can balance material and spiritual needs and values in ways that dissolve conflict and unite individuals, communities, ecosystems, and the planet.

Methods

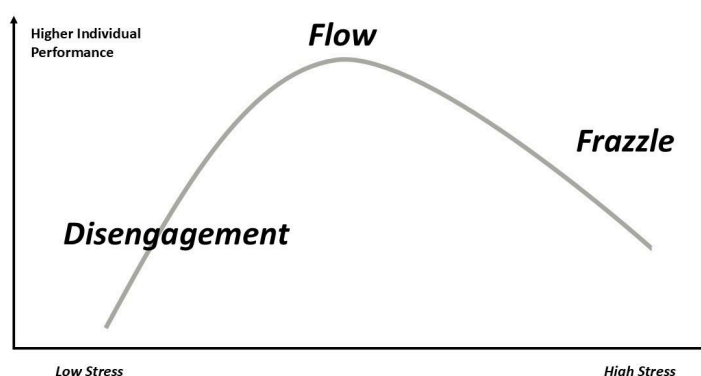
Research Design and Motivation

This qualitative research study employs grounded theory (Chapman et al., 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to develop the concept of IVR with reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Naeem et al., 2023) focused on latent and semantic meaning as the strategy to interpret data and observations collected from coaching sessions and coaching feedback forms. IVR was motivated by the Yerkes-Dodson theory of an inverted-U relationship between stress and performance (Ungvarsky, 2023) and by the theory of optimal performance, known as “flow,” developed by Csikszentmihalyi (2008). Goleman (2012) describes their connection as follows:

There are three main states depicted in the Yerkes-Dodson Law: disengagement, frazzle, and flow. Each of these has powerful impacts on a person's ability to perform at their best: disengagement and frazzle torpedo our efforts, while flow lets them soar. (Goleman, 2012)

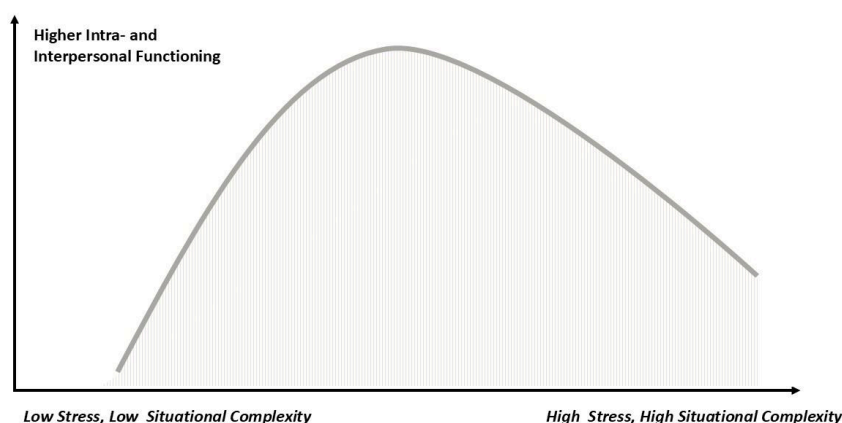
These relationships are illustrated on the next page in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Flow and the Yerkes-Dodson Curve
(Goleman, 2012)



The concept of IVR was also motivated by my observations in peer-to-peer training that OA enhanced intra- and interconnectedness, and enabled coachees to identify opportunities to help or enlist the help of other stakeholders, including shadow parts, to resolve presenting issues in ways that aimed to avoid harm. Ongoing reflection led me to reframe Goleman's observation and consider the possibility of an inverted-U relationship between intra- and interpersonal functioning as a composite measure of individual performance, and situational complexity as a composite measure of individual stress, effort, or anxiety. The experience of being frazzled by complex situations, in the sense discussed here, relates to the feeling of a lack of understanding of the [intra- and interpersonal] dynamics underlying what is taking place (Vigneaux, 2020). These relationships are illustrated below in Figure 2. The area beneath the curve represents cumulative IVR created when the individual engages in a range of situations of varying complexity.

Figure 2. Intrinsic Value through Relating (IVR)



These ideas motivated the question investigated in this study, namely whether and how TCP might help coachees attain a new, superior level of optimal intra- and interpersonal functioning by creating or discovering opportunities for new, superior goals involving the

participation of other stakeholders. Put differently, this study asked how new insights, and fresh perspectives, might lead coachees to help or enlist the help of others, including one's shadow parts, to facilitate goal-attainment with benefit to multiple stakeholders.

Framework

I drew on Law's (2021) reformulation of the GROW model as it incorporates narrative coaching techniques to identify, analyze, and interpret GROW's four elements from the standpoint of the coachee's personal values. However, as discussed above, the model takes an individual's quality of awareness as a given. I sought instead to elicit and explore these expressions in OA, following Dängeli's (2022) insight and cautioning:

Approaches that don't incorporate the expanding of perceptions on the part of the client may still serve to improve certain conditions, but might not necessarily lead to an evolution in consciousness or personal and transpersonal growth. Transpersonal coaching interventions lead to more integration of the aspects of consciousness that have become obscured or disconnected due to trauma or by overwhelming and persistent stress. (p. 23)

To activate OA, I drew on Dängeli's (2019) full repertory of OA modalities, including resourcing and grounding through breath, meditation, movement, body scanning, and visualization. I also introduced different versions of yogic breathing and movement, yogic practices to enhance the five senses, yogic vocalization as a form of ultrasound stimulation, and meditations to cultivate both mindfulness and compassion. To help enhance awareness of their shadow parts and interpersonal relationships, I invited coachees to tailor these practices together with me in accordance with TCP guidelines.

Participants and Procedures

I collected data in the form of hand-written notes and transcripts from 28 virtual coaching sessions conducted over 35 hours from October 2024 to January 2025. Four pro-bono coachees and one peer TCP-trainee, two men and three women in all, ranging in age from their mid-twenties to their sixties, were recruited from the author's and Alef Trust's networks. Each participant sought to address issues involving people in immediate social circles, including family, workplace, and community. All five continued their education while juggling employment and other obligations. Four had prior knowledge or experience of transpersonal psychology or integral practices, or both. At least five and up to nine sessions were provided for each coachee. Weekly sessions lasted anywhere from sixty to ninety minutes. I gave coachees the option to continue coaching if they desired at the conclusion of each session.

I also maintained a research journal to track my observations, insights, and introspections. To perform thematic coding and analysis, I read notes and transcripts repeatedly; developed and refined codes to identify concepts, categories, and themes; reviewed initial findings with participants; and collected a final round of feedback to check for corroboration or contradiction. The final outputs draw on relevant literature, my learnings and observations, and participant quotes and feedback representative of the themes.

Ethical and Trauma-informed Considerations

To maintain confidentiality, participant identities—Avery, Aubrey, Alex, Ashley, and Aspen—have been pseudonymized. I followed Geldenhuys' (2024, p. 20-25) ethical framework, choosing tools, techniques, and approaches in my repertory and avoiding those for which I lacked training or appropriate experience. In general, to help the coachee guide the conversation, I used invitational non-violent language to elicit opinions, observations, reflections, questions, and insights. To avoid retraumatization, I previewed and customized somatic and contemplative practices to assure the coachee's physical and emotional safety as well as their empowerment, control, and cooperation.

I also followed Dängeli's (2024) SAFE Protocol and (2023) T-Model to co-create a “participatory space” for trauma-informed practice. For example, to help a particular coachee neutralize a trigger, I invited them to cultivate a compassionate stance toward oneself and others by imagining and visualizing a helping incident involving three characters in turn, each marking the boundaries of one's “circles of care:” that is, a “dearly loved” person, a “stranger,” and an “antagonist.” To assure their sense of safety and control, I assisted them in constructing the scenario and choosing characters to titrate the degree of emotional effort evoked in contemplation. I then invited them to share reflections about their somatic experience. For example, were there discernible signs of hypo- or hyperarousal when witnessing the pain or suffering of each character? and where were these felt most? Finally, I invited them to contemplate the possibility that these labels may apply equally to ourselves when viewed from the perspective of others, the possibility that we are all versions of one another seeking to be free from pain or suffering, and the possibility that our nominal boundaries may change.

Results

Theme 1: In OA, coachees can access multiple intelligences of the mind, body, heart, spirit, and soul to identify deep purpose and mission when framing GROW.

Transpersonal Psychology (TP) offers an enhanced view of multiple intelligences that builds on and is distinct from Gardner's (2011) theory, initially proposed in 1983, which recognizes cognitive and biopsychosocial functioning but denies a spiritual source that

comprehends non-ordinary states of consciousness, however mild. According to Cunningham (2022, p. 130), TP “has consistently recognized that there are intuitive comprehensions and emotional realizations regarding the transpersonal nature of human psychology and the basic reality of subjective life that are beyond the reach of sensory-based language and linear logic.” From this standpoint, an individual may draw on multiple sources of knowing, multiple ways of working with and understanding data, and multiple ways of expressing and communicating one’s findings to “open up channels of awareness previously overlooked that allows a person to look outside established framework and go beyond previous learning and accomplishment to perceive reality in a new way” (Cunningham, 2022, p. 130).

I observed enhanced multiple intelligences in OA and their role in shaping belief, action, and moral conduct. For instance, Avery reported that they were able to draw on past-life experiences as a “monk” and as a “warrior” to empower others and overcome obstacles with hope, pragmatism, and tenacity (Appendix A). For Aubrey, the wisdom of the body and the heart provided a compass for planning; signs of discomfort and anguish, such as a “knot in the stomach,” indicated that they needed to “slow down” and reconsider their thoughts (Appendix B). Other coachees reported similarly being guided by intuition, felt sense, gut feelings, and a connection to others and the planet, which led them to discern a greater calling that matched their deeper understanding of life's purpose and mission with a stronger feeling of hope and interconnectedness.

Theme 2: In OA, coachees recognized new, entangled relationships with their shadow parts and with people beyond their immediate circle of care.

I offered several somatic and contemplative approaches, techniques, and practices to active OA and simultaneously enhance coachees’ awareness of intra- and interconnectedness. In addition to the helping incident described above, I offered an interoceptive and exteroceptive practice involving the passing of a simple object, such as a pen, back and forth from one hand to the other. In the first round, I led the coachee to attune their awareness and concentration to the physical movements. In the second round, I invited them to imbue the activity with a “heartfelt intention of giving and receiving” from one hand to the other. After a few minutes, I asked for observations and interpretations about any changes in feeling or sensation. As a separate practice, I offered a gratitude meditation where the coachee identifies an object of value in their surroundings and then considers “who and how many are involved in the object being here?” In other instances, I asked coachees in OA to visualize, imagine, and name “who’s on your team?” and “whose team are you on?” and also “who’s on their team?” and “what other teams are they on?”

Overall, coachees reported that these practices attuned them to entangled relationships with shadow parts and with people beyond their immediate circle of care. I observed that these insights could sometimes be expressed with facial expressions of joy and sometimes with sorrow. Coachees also reported greater value in their interactions and dealings with

people they helped and with those who served them. For example, a gratitude practice led Aubrey to appreciate all that life brought, and to see the Earth as an organism within which their life was deeply interconnected with the lives of public servants, who were as human as they were, rather than “strangers” with a functional role in society. Other coachees reported similar shifts in recognizing the unique and common humanity of the dearly loved, the stranger, and the antagonist, each of whom could be identified not just as other people but also as parts of the self. In their individual contexts and circumstances, coachees could imagine or relate to these characters as versions of one another, whether past, present, or future. These relational insights were instrumental in formulating new choices and reappraising plans.

Theme 3: TC empowers coachees to confront uncertainty and suffering in ways that transform distress and actual, or anticipated, conflict into a motivating force for caring and empathy.

My practice of TCP was influenced by live case demonstrations and peer-to-peer training, which led me to appreciate that the contextual interaction between the coach and the coachee in the “here and now” could be the substrate for a compassionate response, and for the emergence of fresh insights into one’s interbeing with others and the natural world. I also appreciated that skillful guidance could help the coachee witness inner phenomena from multiple simultaneous perspectives, whether framed in relation to the self’s disparate parts or to the many ways in which the mind, body, heart, spirit, and soul manifest knowledge.

Overall, I found that somatic and contemplative practices enabled coachees to identify and move through feelings of being stuck in their mind, body, or heart. In OA, coachees reported new thoughts and ideas alongside a shift in attention. Such shifts, I observed, were often accompanied by subtle changes in breathing. A focus on compassion appeared to help coachees move forward resolutely with other people, confront an uncertain future, or transform distress into constructive engagement with oneself and others.

For example, Avery reported that, by “connecting the dots” in OA, they discovered that their strong desire to help others overcome stress, hardship, and pathology stemmed from their difficult early childhood experiences of adversity, which pushed them to be resilient and resourceful in life. Similarly, in OA, Alex and Ashley overcame their fear of being judged by others. Alex reported that in place of this fear was the resolve that “we must learn to love one another,” including one’s shadow parts. Lastly, Aspen reported improved emotional resilience, stress management, and inner peace after four coaching sessions to address doubts about academic and career prospects.

Theme 4: Through TC, coachees recognized and committed to more constructive intra- and interpersonal boundaries and discovered more beneficial ways to react appropriately when they are crossed.

During peer-to-peer training, I came to realize that to be an “authentic” and “transformational” coach, I would have to surrender expectations, models, and templates, and allow our interaction to unfold organically with no prescribed rhythm, as the path to help one another co-discover a resolution to the presenting issue. I attempted to foster a similar quality of presence and caring within the participatory space during the study. Overall, coachees responded favorably. One coachee shared the following feedback:

I enjoyed working with [the author] tremendously. He was highly intuitive and insightful. The somatic and contemplative approaches were a useful method for enhancing self-awareness and realization. I enjoyed being recognized and understood as the person I wanted to be. I felt I was being listened to. I felt reassured in my experiences and able to perceive in a way I could choose. I learnt more about who I was. I was able to be myself on a good day. There was more of a confirmation of my understanding of who I am and how I engage with other parts of myself and others generally. (Appendix D)

Similar feedback from other coachees led me to believe that the quality of authenticity within the participatory space was shared and co-created simultaneously, allowing coachees to discern their own more constructive intra- and interpersonal boundaries. I concluded that their ethical discernments in OA were a manifestation of their authentic selves, enabling them to transmute negative feelings and emotions (e.g., fear, anger, and resentment) into positive, constructive energy and action.

For example, in OA, Avery reported that “disciplined routines” and “healthy force fields” provided a sense of security and dependability when engaging with others, enabling Avery to “deepen connection” to others’ viewpoints and experiences. Similarly, Aubry reported that they felt directed “to home in on what interests you” by distinct limits that “balanced [intrapersonal] masculine and feminine energies” (Appendix B). For Ashley, healthy interpersonal boundaries allowed them to empower other people they needed to engage in ways that were mutually beneficial. Alex likewise reported a newfound sense of inner peace and confidence as they experienced shifts in their intra- and interpersonal patterns toward greater wisdom, patience, humility, and discernment. Alex developed a mutual respect for conflicting parts they called “Logic” and “Sentience,” and found that doing so dissolved an internal conflict affecting their relationships with others, yielding healthier pragmatic choices.

Theme 5: TC helped coachees expand their zone of proximal development.

Across pro-bono sessions and peer-to-peer training, I found that TCP uncovered actionable steps to resolve presenting issues in ways at once practical, realistic, and therapeutic. As the coach, I invited coachees to test the consequences of imagined next-steps.

As both the coach and the coachee, I observed an improved ability to go beyond one's comfort zone by developing and harnessing new inner skills and resources to engage in challenging situations with greater discernment and awareness.

Toward the end of the study period, coachees reported changes in their personal growth and development, including improvements in self-efficacy, self-confidence, and resilience. For example, each of the five coachees looked forward to marketing their new skills and initiatives. They also committed to initiate, maintain, or intensify integral practices, such as yoga, meditation, and shadow work, so they could further cultivate qualities they had experienced in OA, including patience and wisdom. Alex reported that their repeated exposure to TC led to "a more compassionate openness to perceived errors by oneself and others; [I became] more aware of how to redirect energy to what [I] can improve without spending so much of it on what [I] cannot" (Appendix C). Similarly, Ashley reported that they had learnt how to better regulate themselves throughout the school day to prevent burnout and fatigue, as they had experienced in the past.

Individually and collectively, these reports suggested an expanded "zone of proximal development," a term associated with Vygotsky's theory of childhood learning as a social process, but may also be applied to adults when they pursue the development of new skills and capabilities with the support of "more knowledgeable others" and without any feeling of being overwhelmed (Anbar, 2023).

Discussion

My observations and analysis of participant self-reported findings suggest that TCP principles and practices enabled coachees to reappraise GROW with greater discernment and a newly discovered sense of ease with others, oneself, and shadow parts. The participatory space fostered shared learning and reflection, where multiple intelligences flowed freely. In OA, coachees suspended criticism, judgment, and the urge to accept or reject unconventional ideas or perspectives. The activation of OA through somatic and contemplative practices promoted exploration, development, and discovery of new integral capabilities. In OA, coachees could free themselves from fear of their inner critic and begin to view prior "mistakes" and "failures" as opportunities for personal development rather than as irreversible setbacks (Appendix C).

Additionally, my use of techniques and approaches to cultivate compassion appeared to help expand coachees' circles of care inwardly toward their shadow parts, outwardly toward others, and holistically across time and place. This expansion was associated with their enhanced sense of ownership and commitment to deep purpose and mission. Through gratitude practices, coachees also appreciated the value of shadow parts and their protective mechanisms. Coachees redrew intra- and interpersonal boundaries to avoid harm to oneself

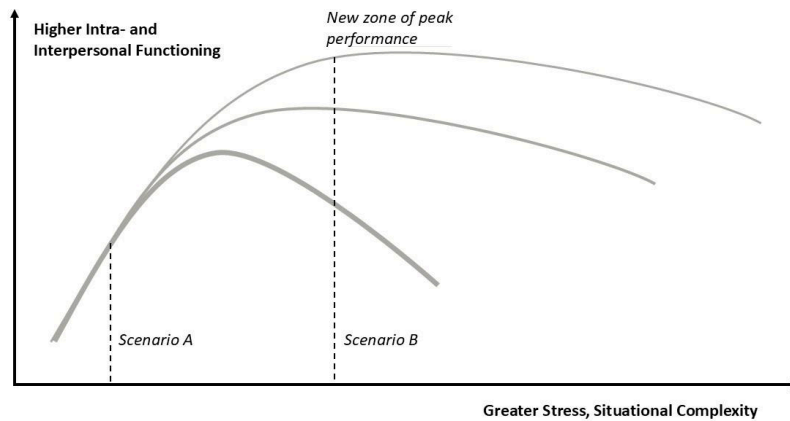
and others and to ensure their own resilience during times of adversity. Moreover, coachees identified new interconnected ties to proximal and distal stakeholders and came to recognize their unique and common humanity regardless of the amiability of relationships. In their own ways, coachees learned to better navigate the entanglement of individual and group well-being in more complex situations that were previously triggering, as they moved forward with life.

The study findings have several methodological limitations that require caution and may not be easily generalizable to the larger population. First, the small sample size and in-network recruitment process favored individuals with an existing knowledge of TP as well as somatic and contemplative practices. As such, the study sample is neither representative of the general working adult population nor free from the influence of self-selection bias. Second, the study relied on verbal reports and direct observation of participant behaviors and may have been biased by my own subjectivity. Moreover, because there was only one analyst, I was unable to validate intercoder reliability. Contrasting or countervailing themes could have been produced by another researcher's positionality, reflexivity, and sensitivity to conceptual paradigms.

Lastly, as a student exercise, this study was not designed to corroborate or contradict self-reported data and analyst observations with validated tools and instruments. Thematic analysis to develop latent and semantic meaning pointed in aggregate to psychological resourcing, identity and personal development, and enhanced intra- and interpersonal functioning. Indeed, validated tools and instruments have been developed for different populations, settings, and contexts to measure concepts such as self-awareness and insight; resilience and emotional regulation; empathy and perspective-taking; self-compassion (Neff, 2003); self-transcendence (Ackerman, 2018); self-efficacy and confidence; perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988); interpersonal communication; and situational stress appraisal (Crosswell & Lockwood, 2020; Peacock & Wong, 1990).

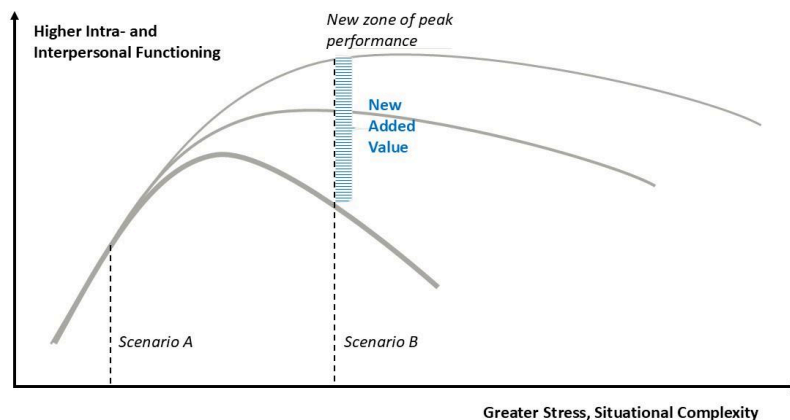
The emergence of these concepts from the data led me to propose, as a first-approximation, that prolonged TCP exposure may enhance cognitive and biopsychosocial-spiritual skills and resources and transform an individual's IVR, as represented by the theorized inverted-U relationship between intra- and interpersonal functioning on the one hand and situational stress and complexity on the other. These transformations are illustrated on the next page in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Transformation of IVR



The transformation of IVR to overcome previously frazzling situations represents new added value, as depicted below in Figure 4.

Figure 4. TCP as a Catalyst for Value Creation



Notwithstanding the methodological and epistemological concerns noted above regarding subjectivity and external validity, the challenge for the coach posed by the IVR concept is to tailor their application of TCP to enable individual transformation; that is, to co-determine with the coachee what works best for them, when, and under what conditions.

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to find the concept of inner value creation described here articulated elsewhere. Similar concepts of value are predicated on the perspective of an unchanging human observer and are framed as either principally relational (i.e., the value derived with), intrinsic (i.e., the value inherent in), or instrumental (i.e., the value obtained from) (Hagen & Gould, 2022; Henriques, 2012).

The same transformations described in this study suggest that TCP may also function as a catalyst to create IVR within and across large organizations. This idea opens the door for a new research agenda that integrates TCP principles and practices into leadership and management training. For example, the transformation of frameworks such as the business case method (Nohria, 2021) and the Thomas-Kilmann conflict management model (Kilmann, 2024) has the potential to enable richer, more holistic brainstorming alongside multidisciplinary collaboration and the inclusion of diverse, even divergent, perspectives. The transformation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes through TC may also support deliberate innovation and constructive risk-taking (White et al., 2022) to prevent and alleviate suffering at a greater scale and scope than currently feasible (Patawaran, 2024a).

Indeed, TCP principles and practices have been deployed by an institutional philanthropic foundation in the U.S. to foster conditions for iterative learning and experimentation within the early childhood healthcare sector to advance individualized treatments, enhance the quality of outcomes and cost-efficiency, promote long-term profitability with more inclusive and diversified social benefit, and prevent harm to remote ecosystems and distal stakeholders (Patawaran, 2024b). TCP principles and practices may further augment organizational efforts (a) to develop embodied leadership qualities by cultivating inner awareness (Szelwach, 2020); (b) to advance prosocial multidirectional learning (Koehne et al., 2022) with a sense of deep purpose and trust in teams by activating caring and cooperation (Zak, 2018); and (c) to improve problem-solving creativity and insights by modulating the stress response (De Dreu, Bass, and Boot, 2015) through approaches such as OA. Finally, the integration of spiritual cultivation into professional development designed with TCP principles and practices may enable governance and leadership to adopt a more discerning global perspective on ethical conduct and integrity (Kok & van den Heuvel, 2018), a superior safeguard of reputation and long-term viability.

At its core, the concept of IVR posits that intra- and interpersonal relationships are inherently worthy of mutually beneficial coexistence, whether felt as pleasant or unpleasant, or neither. Mutually beneficial co-existence means that the individual assigns inviolable dignity to other individuals as well as to one's shadow parts. The individual regards these relationships to and among one another as sacred and precious because they have meaning and purpose in themselves by virtue of their dynamic interdependence, no matter their valence, desirability to others, or situational complexity.

Conclusion

This study offered a glimpse of TCP principles and practices as capacity-building tools and resources for personal and professional leadership development as well as for individual and organizational strategy and conflict resolution among multiple stakeholders. The study also offered an initial, rudimentary theory of TCP as a catalyst to create IVR, an

idea that opens the door for a new research agenda. The study's limited findings suggest that TCP and the concept of IVR have the potential to inform new governance, leadership, and management models in favor of an organizational culture of caring and innovation, where the development and production of goods and services respect, everywhere all at once, the care of people, planet, and profit. To propel this cultural transformation, every quarter of society must encourage and facilitate cross-sector strategies of innovation through interdisciplinary dialogue, learning, and collective caring, where society confronts technical uncertainty as well as the suffering of distal stakeholders to bring into tomorrow's world the good only imaginable today.

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Appendix A – Coaching session extract

The coachee complained that internal organizational politics were interfering with “honesty” and “truth.” They felt excluded and viewed as an outsider in the group, as with several past incidents in their lives and careers involving internal political dynamics. They conveyed a strong mistrust of those in authority who use force to intimidate or coerce others into doing their bidding and following arbitrary rules and regulations designed solely to project power over others. During this next stage of life, the coachee “would like to get through this without repeating past patterns I've observed in my history.”

In OA, the coachee found “a great deal of meaning and purpose in helping people to improve their lives, not just in climbing the career ladder.” To deal with the “anxiety creeping in” and to know when to “keep my head down” in order to prevent becoming “involve[d] in madness” that could “hurt me,” they relied on their “experiences in previous lifetimes as a monk and as a warrior.” They found “purpose” and the possibility of “success” with the “culmination of a lifetime” through their pursuit of professional training and more education.

Appendix B – Coaching session extract

The coachee conveyed a wish to embody new, healthier patterns of gratitude, self-acceptance, and self-empowerment. They wanted to abandon their previous identities and habits of being a “people pleaser.” When “giving from your cup when the cup isn't full,” they would often become worn out. In addition, they would frequently find themselves trapped “doing things that don't feel right” out of concern for other people's opinions. They said they “knew” that symptoms of fever and restless nights meant that “unease is telling you to slow down,” and that “doing a million things is not necessary.” They talked about their current dedication to integral practices of “resourcing” that allowed them to “be honest with oneself, true to oneself” and to develop “gratitude [for myself], giving credit where credit is due.”

In OA, the coachee used the metaphor of “ice on the shed” to represent that “underneath” was a “new me and a brand-new everything.” In the shared space of OA, they were able to “speak [to themselves] with a lot of compassion and to coach yourself.” As though “walking on ice,” they observed themselves “balancing masculine and feminine energies” in order to “accept the gifts of the universe” and “realize it's okay to receive [what feels right].” By listening to the “virtue of resolve,” they looked forward to rewriting those patterns.”

Appendix C – Qualitative coachee feedback

- I have definitely found benefit from the practices. They have helped to set a firmer intention to stay in open awareness.
- I enjoy the conversational tone and the feeling that this is a sharing experience. I tend to be quite open in my self-reflection, so it is important to me that a coach meets me as an equal in a space of discovery.
- I notice that the state of open awareness provides a much more expansive way to meet difficult situations, especially now that I am trying to understand and reverse old patterns. The difficulty and the reactivity are still there, but I spend less energy paying attention to them.
- I have two main fears: fear of irrelevance and fear of inertia. I get judgmental when they are reflected on other people. The sessions are helping me to recognize those projections. I think I have quite a bit of work to do on integrating these fears.
- I think [the coaching] worked very well. The [TCP] approach and focus on meditation was complementary and very useful for my current needs.
- [TCP] coaching helps us find a place to self-reflect safely without the continuous belief that we are doing something wrong. It helps us to address how we create healthy boundaries and how we respond to others when they are not met. There is a more compassionate openness to perceived errors by oneself and others. We become more aware of how to redirect energy to what can improve without spending so much of it on what it cannot.

Appendix D – Qualitative coachee feedback

- I enjoyed working with Wally tremendously. He was highly intuitive and insightful. The somatic and contemplative approaches were a useful method for enhancing self-awareness and realization.
- I enjoyed being recognized and understood as the person I wanted to be. I felt I was being listened to.
- I felt reassured in my experiences and able to perceive in a way I could choose.
- I learnt more about who I was. I was able to be myself on a good day.
- There was more of a confirmation of my understanding of who I am and how I engage with other parts of myself and others generally.
- I am finding it difficult to find any improvements or anything that could be said to be missing. There is always a desire for greater, deeper, and more profound insights.
- [This type of coaching was] Easy, relaxed, informative and insightful.

Author: Wally Patawaran, MPH

A practitioner of TCP, Wally advises non-profits and philanthropic foundations on strategy, operations, implementation, communications, impact measurement, evaluation, and systems and design thinking for product and service development. He has written on the practice and cultivation of ‘caring’ as a driver for organizational flourishing, staff development and recruitment, humanized systems workflow, strategic foresight, and team learning and innovation. A certified meditation, compassion, and yoga instructor in the Tibetan tradition, Wally began his career as an organizational consultant as well as a business researcher and financial analyst for several Wall Street firms. Fun fact: as a student in London before books were digitized, he spent many days and nights in the C.G. Jung Club Library. He can be reached at wpatawaran@cobourgadvisors.com.

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Supplements

TCPJ Editorial Team & Peer Review

The Transpersonal Coaching Journal (TCPJ) is an open access peer-reviewed journal that publishes coaching case study projects conducted by graduates of the one-year Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Certificate Programme at Alef Trust.

Submission

Authors of transpersonal coaching case study reports that have been assessed by the respective trainers and supervisors and considered to be a valuable contribution to the advancement of the coaching field, may be invited to submit their reports for potential publication in the TCPJ.

Peer Review

Accepted reports undergo peer review by at least two reviewers from the TCPJ Editorial Team. We employ the standard single blind peer review process, where the reviewers may know the identity of the report author, but the authors do not know the identities of the reviewers.

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Alef Trust's one-year Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Certificate Programme provides a collaborative online environment to study the science, art and practice of transpersonal coaching psychology (TCP).

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The Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Journal has been granted the IAC TM Stamp of Approval and this journal is hosted on IAC TM's website - <https://iactm.org/tcpj>

The Transpersonal Coaching and Therapy Network (TCTN)

The TCTN is a free membership group of coaches and therapists, as well as educators and students of coaching and therapy who value and integrate transpersonal perspectives in their work.

The TCTN exists for the purpose of:

- Exploring the value of transpersonal perspectives in coaching or therapy.
- Investigating the usefulness of transpersonal interventions in coaching or therapy.
- Engaging in conversations to inspire and motivate a transpersonal vision among coaches and therapists.
- Introducing and discussing transpersonal models and processes that can be applied in coaching or therapy.
- Sharing ideas, knowledge, experiences and resources that are useful to transpersonal coaches or therapists.



For more information, visit:

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