



# The Importance of Expanding Your Repertoire

People enter coaching relationships for a number of reasons. Often, they feel stuck in some aspect of their lives. They face a major career transition or want to create a new vision for the next phase of their lives. Sometimes they want to re-define their purpose in life or discover how to better balance career and family. Leaders may need to help subordinates develop skills for moving into the next level of the organization or to address a performance gap. Whatever the presenting issue or intention, coaching frequently goes in unexpected directions. In our experience, the initial goal, issue, or dilemma is often not the final focus of the coaching work. The purpose is frequently clarified and deepened during the coaching process as obstacles are identified and new possibilities envisioned. Having a broad repertoire based on a strong theoretical foundation enables the coach to adapt and adjust as the purpose shifts, and to offer the client increasingly richer, deeper work. Here is a story that is typical of the way the purpose changes as we work with our clients. It also demonstrates how using a clear theoretical foundation and a variety of techniques helps our clients go further.

## ANNE MARIE RESOLVES HER DILEMMA

Anne Marie entered coaching with Dale to bring more creativity to her work life. It quickly became apparent that she needed to address a lifelong pattern of involving herself in relationships in which she became an over-extended caregiver. She exhausted herself doing things for others they could and should learn to do for themselves and allowing them to become dependent on her. Through coaching, she was able to acknowledge and begin to change her pattern of rescuing others at work and at home.

Mid-way through a long-term coaching engagement, Anne Marie turned her attention to another problem. She had hired and fired four assistants in four years. This threatened the stability of the successful financial services firm where she worked. Anne Marie wanted guidance in clarifying her criteria for a good assistant, developing a job description, and constructing a time-line for hiring. Her process was complicated by her ambivalence about whether to hire her temporary assistant Jenny, rather than opening up a search.

As her coach Dale began to help her explore the situation, Anne Marie stated, “I’m conflicted about whether to hire a new assistant or retain Jenny. Jenny is mature beyond her twenty-two years and does a superb job in most respects. But Jenny is emotionally reeling from the recent death of her mother. Because of this, she frequently forgets to schedule or return phone calls, a necessity in this business. I’ve discussed this with her, but the problem continues. I really like her. She is fun and smart. My heart goes out to her. I don’t know what to do.”

Anne Marie went on to say, “My boss told me, ‘You need an assistant who is solid like a rock. Someone whose life is on an even keel.’ I realize Jenny is not solid as a rock or on an even keel.” Her boss’s recommendation was not what Anne Marie wanted to hear. “I want to work with someone who is fun, and I don’t equate ‘rock solid’ with fun,” she said.

As is often the case, there was deeper work to be done beyond the practical hiring process. A significant internal obstacle had cropped up. Dale recognized that Anne Marie was stuck in her same ineffective pattern of rescuing others (in this case, Jenny). Since Anne Marie had made great strides in learning not to rescue others, Dale reminded her of her successes and suggested she could transfer this learning. Anne Marie felt encouraged and willing to move forward.

At the same time, Dale thought that addressing this old pattern in a new context called for shifting gears and helping Anne Marie dig deeper. Doing so required some different interventions that could more fully engage Anne Marie’s senses

and access new ways of knowing. Dale proposed a new approach using visual expression and body awareness to help Anne Marie effectively choose her next assistant. Although skeptical, Anne Marie agreed to give it a try. So Dale got out a big piece of paper, crayons, and markers for Anne Marie to concretely record her visual expression and track her thoughts and feelings through the session. Here is a segment of the dialogue that occurred:

**Dale:** “When you think about your work and hiring a new assistant, how do you feel?”

**Anne Marie:** (Contorting her face) “I’m overwhelmed by the hiring situation.”

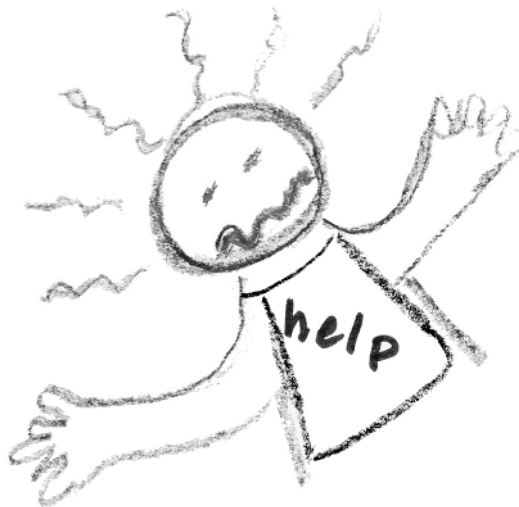
**Dale:** “Are you willing to put that feeling down on paper in any way you choose that has meaning for you?”

Anne Marie immediately responded by drawing a body from the waist up. The hair on the head stood on end and the mouth was a jagged line. Around the neck hung a sign with the word “HELP.” (See Figure 1.1.)

**Dale:** (Referring to the figure) “What kind of help does she need?”



**Figure 1.1. Anne Marie’s “Help” Drawing**



Anne Marie wrote a list with boxes to check off. The list included organization, structure, offensive thinking, intelligence, systems, personality, consistency, and fun. Then she read the list out loud.

**Dale:** “Viewing this list, it seems you know exactly the qualities you want in an assistant.”

**Anne Marie:** “Yeah, I do.” She reviewed her checklist, considering whether Jenny measured up to these qualities. She reiterated, “Jenny is not ‘solid like a rock.’ I now realize I need to open up the job search.”

**Dale:** “I think you may be ready to address the obstacle about the job search. Do you feel ready to do that?”

**Anne Marie:** “Yes.”

**Dale:** “What is the obstacle to the job search?”

Anne Marie quickly drew a big black circle and inside wrote these items: “NO TIME; DENIAL; What if I hire the wrong person again?; bad time of year; inconsistent for clients; can I afford who I want to hire; starting all over again; what do I want?” Last she wrote, “What will be best for the business?” As she wrote, she announced each obstacle. Then she added, “I feel dread and angst.”

**Dale:** “I’m thinking of two possibilities for moving forward. We can discuss these obstacles or we can look at the broader perspective by considering your overall work purpose. What do you think you need?”

**Anne Marie:** “Some perspective would be useful. My purpose is taking care of my clients. Having the right assistant helps me do that. I can’t rescue Jenny. It doesn’t help her or me. You and I have delved into the origins of this behavior pattern. I’m ready to let go and clear out the last corners.”

Anne Marie’s images helped her connect to her obstacles in hiring an assistant and to see how her personal pattern of rescuing had carried over into her work decisions. Accessing her awareness through images got to the heart of the matter quickly. Anne Marie gained perspective and validated her feelings.

Next Dale helped her move through her obstacles by focusing on her purpose statement, “taking care of my clients.” Using a body awareness exercise, Dale asked Anne Marie to think clearly about her purpose and then to scan her body from



**Figure 1.2. Anne Marie's Scales of Balance**



head to toe, noticing where in her body she felt resonance with “caring for clients.” Anne Marie’s hands went immediately to her heart. She became very clear that she cared deeply about taking care of her clients and did not want to act in ways that would compromise her ability to do so.

Dale returned to visual expression to help Anne Marie anchor and more deeply instill her experience. This time she drew a scale like the scales of justice. (See Figure 1.2.) After drawing it, she breathed a sigh of relief and said, “I feel calm, balanced. I really feel like I can do the hiring process now. It’s what I need to do to best balance my needs, my clients’ needs and Jenny’s needs.”

## **HOW OUR APPROACH DIFFERS FROM OTHERS**

As illustrated in Anne Marie’s story, our approach to coaching differs from most others in three important ways:

### **1. We Use and Share a Specific Theoretical Foundation**

We integrate three foundational theories: Mutual Learning (the basis of The Skilled Facilitator approach), the Life Learning Model (Creative/Survival Cycle), and the Drama Triangle. These theories help us as coaches adapt our tools and techniques for a wide range of clients and situations in ways that uniquely meet our clients’

needs and learning styles, yet are consistent with our values and principles. Using this foundation helps clients identify and successfully address core issues and obstacles and then develop practical applications. To do this, we explicitly share our foundational models with our clients. For example, Dale helped Anne Marie move beyond the practical logistical work of hiring a new assistant and helped her further identify and shift her ineffective habitual patterns of rescuing others. For this, Dale drew upon and shared with Anne Marie aspects of both the Drama Triangle and the Life Learning Model.

## **2. We Model The Skilled Facilitator Approach**

We model The Skilled Facilitator core values and practices in every session. (See Chapter Two and Appendices B, C, and D for an explanation of this approach). This means that our process and our thinking are not hidden from the client and that we do not make choices for our clients. It also means that, through our actions, we are demonstrating how clients themselves might use this approach in their day-to-day interactions to improve their effectiveness as they move toward their goals.

Throughout the session with Anne Marie, Dale shared her thinking and asked Anne Marie what she thought she needed to attain her goals. For example, at one point Dale said, “I’m thinking of two possibilities for moving forward. We can discuss these obstacles or we can look at the broader perspective by considering your overall work purpose. What do you think you need?” Dale was modeling The Skilled Facilitator mutual learning values of transparency and informed choice and using the ground rules of advocacy and inquiry and jointly designing next steps.

## **3. We Use Multiple Ways of Knowing**

Our approach engages clients through first-hand experiences with a broad repertoire of modalities or ways of knowing the world. We use writing, visual expression, verbal expression and body awareness, for example, to engage the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. This helps clients address their purpose and their fears, opening new possibilities for effective responses to their circumstances. Using different modalities rapidly deepens and moves the process along because clients have a real, in-the-moment experience that shifts their mindsets.

Different ways of knowing—connecting with her body sense, visualizing and creating images—provided Anne Marie in the story above with a way to contact her innate wisdom and strength. She achieved a sense of integrity and congruence with her purpose. This enabled her to hire an assistant who fulfilled the criteria, was fun, and did not need rescuing. It turned out, by the way, that Jenny did not want the permanent position and went on to a career in the health services field.

Our focus in this Toolkit is primarily on sharing a full range of interventions that incorporate multiple ways of knowing. And we believe that the foundation theories and our ability to model a facilitative approach make significant contributions to these interventions and to the results we achieve through them. We encourage you to look carefully at the guiding principles and guidelines for using our approach that we share in Chapters Two and Three. Consider adopting or adapting these for your own work in ways that help you and your clients build transparent, curious, and compassionate relationships that foster shared accountability and informed choice. In doing so, we think you will increase your likelihood of using our interventions to successfully expand your repertoire.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF USING A FULL RANGE OF INTERVENTIONS**

People are complicated. Learning is a complex process. A coach who knows only a limited number of practices may not be able to go where a client wants and needs to go to maximize growth and development. Anne Marie may have reached a similar place with only one type of intervention, but it may have taken much longer and required a great deal more struggle. Often what starts out as a seemingly straightforward behavior change, like remembering to update colleagues more frequently, turns out to be blocked by deeply embedded values, assumptions, and old patterns. Clients may commit to follow through on a new practice or take a particular action and then repeatedly not do so. The problem may not be their commitment to coaching or change, but an underlying driver that operates outside of the client's awareness. Getting at these deeply embedded issues is often the only way to generate successful growth and change, and yet doing so often requires a variety of approaches and techniques.

## Working with Our Adaptive Unconscious

Most of us, particularly those of us educated in the traditional schools of the West, are trained to think of “knowing” as cognitive, rational intelligence. Our society and our educational system emphasize logical, analytical, conscious thought. In the process of this education, and through our early psychological responses to life’s situations, we tend to under-develop or cut off a large part of our brain’s capacity. Neuroscientists tell us, in fact, that cognitive, rational processing uses only a small portion of our brain—as little as 5 percent (Szegedy-Maszak, 2005). Underneath this rational processing brain, we have layers of unconscious awareness that process our feelings and sensations. What psychologists refer to as the “adaptive unconscious” drives many of our internal processes, including feelings, emotions, how we deal with real or imagined danger, initiate actions, and set goals. It is also the source of the intuitive intelligence that allows us to recognize seemingly unrelated patterns, develop creative solutions, work with metaphors and images, and to “know without knowing why.”

If you have ever found yourself overreacting to a situation, losing your temper, or getting emotionally hooked or grabbed (and who among us have not?), you are experiencing some of the power of the adaptive unconscious. Dr. Timothy Wilson (2002) argues from his research on the adaptive unconscious that we develop unconscious traits and tendencies that are like habits, ingrained because we practice them over and over. The process he describes for becoming consciously aware of these tendencies and habits parallels the process Chris Argyris described (and that underpins The Skilled Facilitator approach. Argyris (1982) delineated the difference between our espoused theory and theory in use: we have to look at our actions and infer our unconscious feelings and motives from what we do. We may describe ourselves as honest, for example, but notice when we take a hard look that we are using many complex strategies to avoid saying exactly what we are thinking. We seldom see the gap between what we espouse and the values and assumptions embedded in our actual behavior until we analyze the behavior itself.

Wilson argues that trying to introspectively, rationally determine the unconscious motives and “stories” that drive much of our behavior is not productive. He found that much of what people say about their feelings and attitudes is misleading because people focus on reasons that come to mind but that might not reflect the truth behind their feelings. They filter the intuitive, adaptive unconscious through the rational mind and, in the process, distort what is actually going on.



## Including Multiple Ways of Knowing

In our experience, the most productive way to work with the values and beliefs that hold the seeds of unfulfilled possibilities or that create problematic obstacles is to change modalities or ways of knowing. There are many models of human intelligence or information processing. You may be familiar, for example, with some of the research on left and right brain processing, or on brain quadrants as approaches to sorting how we come to understand the world and ourselves in different ways. The 4Mat System poses a model with four distinct learning styles based on whether people have a preference for perceiving with sensing and feeling or through thinking and whether they process information reflectively or actively.<sup>1</sup> The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator presents a similar model that offers two distinct ways of taking in information (intuitive versus sensate) and two distinct ways of processing information (thinking versus feeling). And Gardner (1983, 1999) in his research suggests that we have at least seven different forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.<sup>2</sup>

Psychologists and researchers do not agree about how to describe human intelligence. The human brain is still one of the greatest frontiers known—or unknown—to mankind. Yet we all know from our own school experiences and from watching the growth and development of our children, colleagues, and friends that we have different ways of understanding and interacting with the world. Most of us seem to have a small set of preferred modalities or preferences that we gravitate to when we seek to learn something new or change our behavior. These become habits of the mind that serve us well and help us use our natural gifts. At the same time, our preferences can blind us to valuable information that is more easily accessed in other ways.

Many coaching breakthroughs are achieved by using exercises and techniques that bypass the rational mind. Visual expression, body awareness, and reflective writing are some of these. Other breakthroughs come from working directly with

<sup>1</sup>An explanation of the 4Mat model and related research is available at [www.aboutlearning.com](http://www.aboutlearning.com).

<sup>2</sup>For information about the learning style differences described here, see *Frames of Mind* (Gardner, 1983), *Intelligence Reframed* (Gardner, 1999), *The Creative Brain* (Herrmann, 1989), *The Whole Brain Business Book* (Hermann, 1996), *Left Brain, Right Brain* (Springer & Deutsch, 1985), & Myers-Briggs Type Indicator resources available at [www.cpp.com/products/mbti](http://www.cpp.com/products/mbti).

the rational mind by exploring our deeply held values and beliefs through inquiry and cognitive reflection and practicing conversation skills. No one way is right. Recent research in human intelligence clearly points to weaknesses in both intuitive and rational decision making (Myers, 2007). More often than not, work done in several modalities, when combined, achieves powerful results. Keep in mind as you work that we need both conscious rational decision making and intuitive, unconscious processes to live as fully integrated, effective beings. Avoid setting up an either/or dichotomy with your clients that further feeds the mind/body/heart schism.

This is why we encourage you, in your coaching role, to master techniques that access multiple ways of knowing and being. We think that the more fluid you are in moving among ways of making sense of our human experience, the more you can help your clients move into the purposeful, creative action that is best for them.

## **Using Our Techniques to Get Started**

So in this Toolkit, we offer you a mix of techniques that use a variety of modalities. Our offerings are by no means comprehensive. We selected activities and approaches that have worked well for us and our clients. They can start you on the path of expanding your repertoire.

Much of our focus is tapping into wisdom that resides outside of most people's daily awareness. We know that in both rational and intuitive thinking our deeply held values, beliefs, assumptions, and fears frequently function like invisible operating systems that drive our behavior.

Our interventions offer methods for people to quickly get to the heart of what is going on internally as they face life's issues and opportunities. Sometimes we do this through bypassing defenses and rationalizations to work with rich data "on the other side" of the barrier. At other times, we use interventions to surface people's defenses so that we can address them directly. In either case, the activities we share serve as a catalyst to work through difficult issues that are often challenging to express. They provide concrete and tangible data that enables people to show others what they are thinking and feeling. These interventions are a powerful way to share valid information and can often lead to increasingly deeper awareness and learning.

## RESULTS FROM EXPANDING YOUR REPERTOIRE

Specific results you and your clients can attain through the techniques in this Toolkit include:

**Deeper learning.** These experiences seem to increase people's internal commitment to learning. This occurs in part because a number of learning modalities (visual, verbal, kinesthetic, and auditory, for example) are involved. The more modalities we engage, the more likely we are to create a powerful, memorable experience that increases commitment to follow through on insights. When we work with different ways of knowing, we have a direct experience that deeply engages us in the moment. We are not just talking about or around an issue; we are in it and addressing it in the moment.

**Building a common language.** Sharing images, writings, stories, deeply held beliefs, and experiences develops a bond and creates a shared language of metaphors and definitions that are rich and specific in their meaning. These special shared meanings often become shorthand to which a group or a coach and client can refer and use to understand many situations.

**Improving communication and decision making.** More relevant information becomes available by clearly defining ideas and feelings, by contrasting them through visual metaphors, and by writing about and experimenting with issues. This information can improve communication and more fully inform both personal and group decisions.

**Fostering innovative thinking.** By enabling people to view a situation from a fresh perspective, we help them make new connections and generate creative ideas. By surfacing, reframing, or letting go of old stories and defensive routines, we free mental and emotional energy to work toward new possibilities. Many of our clients discover artistic or creative aspects of their nature that they never suspected.

**Strengthening personal awareness and compassion.** The results of deeper coaching interventions give us a reflection of ourselves at a given moment in time. They exist outside of ourselves. Individuals can gain perspective, objectivity, and acceptance about themselves through these approaches. Compassion toward self expands and leads to increased compassion toward others.

**Increasing risk taking.** The techniques we offer are an invitation to experiment and take manageable risks. When people take risks, the unexpected often emerges.

Practice with venturing into unknown territory and gaining new insights builds capacity for greater risk taking in other arenas.

**Moving toward, through, and beyond difficult and undiscussable issues.** We find that identifying difficult issues and working through them is more productive than avoiding them. But frequently issues that are not brought out into the open are poorly defined. Attached to such issues are unidentified feelings, unrecognized personal hot buttons, and irrational fears growing out of previous experiences. They unconsciously lead us into ineffective thinking and behavior. Working with interventions that access and more clearly identify the territory around difficult and undiscussable issues may make it easier to raise and process them.

**Fostering group understanding and unification.** Connections between people tend to deepen when writings, images, stories, and experiences are shared. People feel seen, witnessed, and heard by others. When this occurs, people usually feel increased compassion for others and for themselves.

**Building trust.** Trust develops because clients make themselves vulnerable in the process of engaging in the exercises we suggest. When that vulnerability is handled compassionately and respectfully, clients become increasingly trustful and open in your presence and with one another. They also become increasingly trustful of themselves.