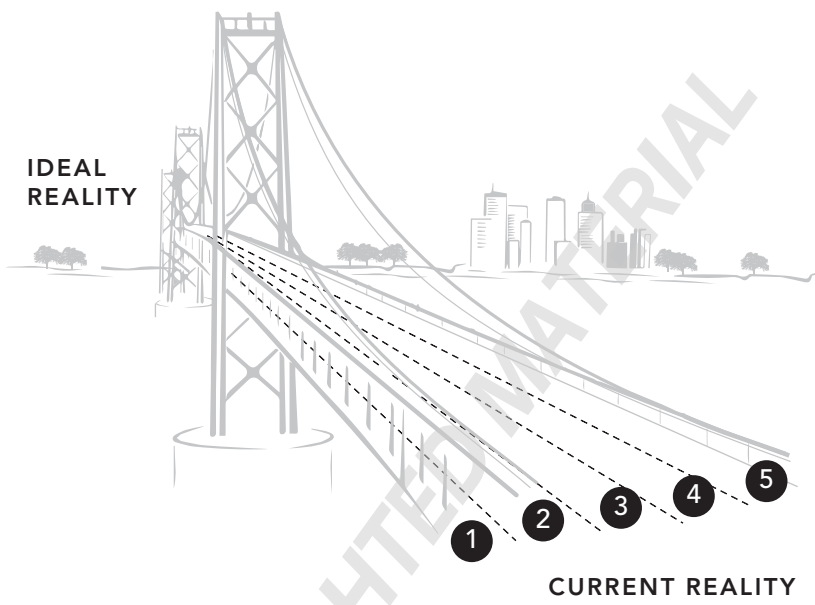




- 1 Resilience
- 2 Teams
- 3 Equity
- 4 Leadership
- 5 Instruction



CHAPTER 1

Transformational Coaching: A Model for Change

The difficult I'll do right now. The impossible will take a little while.

—BILLIE HOLIDAY

When you fly over it, the Golden Gate Bridge appears to be an impossible feat of engineering suspended over the Pacific Ocean. If you take a boat beneath it, you'll see the extensive sets of cables, the planks of the deck, the guard rails, the steel joints—the many components that make up the system. You'll also appreciate the strength of the pillars that emerge from the ocean to support the structure. You'll gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the bridge. Without a structure, a bridge cannot span a chasm.

This chapter provides an overview of the model of Transformational Coaching and of how to coach for equity within this model. If you learn better by looking first at the parts, by reading an example, and then coming back to the whole, as it's explained here, consider reading Chapters 2, 3, and 4 first.

Structures to Span Chasms

My transition from teaching into my first coaching role was abrupt. Six months in, I begged my principal for a change in assignment. “I can’t do this,” I wailed after leading a series of professional development (PD) sessions in which I’d felt constant pushback.

My primary thought for the first several years that I coached was, *What am I supposed to be doing?* When I asked my administrators for direction, I was told to “support teachers.” *How?*, I wondered. *Toward what end?* Teachers would ask, “What is it you do?” When I pushed back on making photocopies or putting up a bulletin board for a teacher, I’d hear, “But you’re a coach.” I’d want to say, *A coach isn’t an assistant.* And then I’d think, *But what IS a coach!?* I didn’t have an answer. There was no shared definition of coaching or of the work of a coach, and there was no agreement on the purpose of my role, or how I was expected to show up, or what I was working toward.

My school held a vague commitment to educational equity—but what that meant for coaching and PD was undefined. This meant that when I sat down for a coaching session with teachers, I didn’t feel empowered to direct the conversation toward issues of equity. It meant that when teachers blamed students for their academic struggles, I felt that all I could respond with was my opinion—which made our conversation feel like a debate. I felt isolated, confused, and disempowered. And I was ineffective.

In my second year as a coach, the old house I rented had plumbing problems. Strange noises came from the pipes. The water pressure dropped dramatically. Then no water came from the faucet. I called a plumber—20 minutes later, he’d figured out the problem, and within a few hours, it was fixed. I watched in awe as the plumber worked. “How did you know what was wrong?” I asked in amazement. He described a simple, straightforward diagnostic process to identify the problem, and then a sequence to repair the problems. To me, the situation had seemed overwhelmingly complex and possibly insurmountable. But the plumber had a process. What was the equivalent, I thought, for me as a coach? How could I go into a teacher’s classroom with a sequence to guide what to do? Teachers are not pipes, of course, and classrooms aren’t usually old houses—a technical fix won’t work in schools. But I knew that had the plumber randomly looked at pipes in my house, it would have taken a very long time to solve the problem.

For the last 10 years, as I’ve consulted on coaching programs, the primary obstacle I see to effective coaching is a lack of structures. I’ve seen organizations that have resources, will, and PD for coaches—but almost no organization I’ve worked with has in place an explicit, articulated coaching model. A coaching model lays out the mechanisms along which we’ll get somewhere—it outlines a process; it lowers risk; it provides common language; and it assures that although we are suspended above a beautiful and frightening thing like the ocean, we will go somewhere together. Without structure, we cannot span a chasm.

Imagine now that we are standing on one side of a chasm where the ways of doing school are currently practiced. This is the side where Jabari, the student I described in the Introduction, attends school. It's the side where black and brown kids are suspended for rolling their eyes, where security guards patrol the halls, where teachers say, "These kids can't . . ." On this side, Jabari will rarely see his experiences reflected in the curriculum, many teachers will have low expectations of him, and it's unlikely that he'll have access to advanced math and science classes, or after-school programs, or project-based learning. On this side, school is an instrument of oppression. It serves to reproduce the status quo, which grants access and privilege to some groups (white, middle- and upper-class, English-speaking) while other groups are further marginalized.

Perhaps your own children attend schools on this side. Some children from dominant cultures are more or less served on this side—meaning, they have decent experiences in school and graduate ready for college or career. But be honest: The quality of education on this side of the chasm has much to be desired. There's still too much bullying, kids and adults are far too stressed, and lectures, textbooks, and testing consume much of everyone's time. We can try to reform bits and pieces or grit our teeth and make the best of it, or we can look across the chasm where a different reality can exist.

On the other side of this chasm, schools can be places of healing and liberation. They can be a microcosm for a more just and equitable society, a place where adults and children learn to be together in healthy community, a place where we learn about ourselves and others. On that side, Jabari is in classes where he engages in critical thinking about complex ideas, where he has access to means of creative expression, and where he collaborates to generate novel approaches to addressing the social, economic, political, and environmental challenges that our planet faces. On that side, Jabari encounters kindness and understanding from the adults he meets; it is a place where he, and every child, thrives. It is a place he loves to be in, where his full humanity is embraced.

There are two reasons why these schools don't exist in very many places: They are hard to imagine—or we are afraid to imagine them—and even when we do hold this vision, we don't know how to get there. I believe in the power of our imagination. It might need to be loosened up, it might need to be deconditioned from a lifetime of habitual thinking so that it can be freed of the toxins of systems of oppression, and it might need to tone its weak muscles. But I know we've got imagination—and I know that in the company of others, with commitment, it can grow. We humans are brilliantly creative, imaginative creatures.

I believe that you want to cross this chasm between where we are now and a place characterized by kindness, justice, freedom, and learning. I believe you want this for yourself, for the young people you love, and for the students you serve. Look across this divide and you will see a bridge. This bridge is Transformational Coaching. This is a model for change—a model that can be used by teachers, coaches, principals, and superintendents, and by any team or organizational leader. Transformation will only happen if we learn. It will not happen by law or mandate. Coaching is a structure that supports learning. Transformational Coaching can take us from where we are now to where we want to be.

Let me be your guide right now to show you the key features of this bridge. First, you'll see multiple lanes on the deck of the bridge—these will take us from our current reality to our ideal reality. One lane is all about emotional resilience. When you walk or drive along that lane, you coach for emotional resilience. In another lane, you coach teams—creating healthy and productive groups of people. And in another lane, you coach for equity. You interrupt the practices, beliefs, and systems that are inequitable. Another lane focuses on leaders, and when you're in that lane, you coach toward leadership development. There's also a lane for traditional coaching of instructional practices—designing lessons or assessments, for example.

We'll travel in each of these lanes as we create a new reality—sometimes spending more time in one lane than another, sometimes crossing back and forth within one conversation. Maybe while analyzing student work and discussing how to support English Language Learners, the teacher you're coaching will express emotional exhaustion and you'll shift into coaching for resilience. Or perhaps as you coach for equity, it becomes apparent that decisions made in the grade-level team make it difficult to implement equitable practices—perhaps curriculum or scheduling decisions—and then you shift to developing leadership skills and to coaching teams.

Along the edge of the bridge, you'll see guardrails. One of them represents the need for you to take care of yourself. You'll need to know yourself, and to attend to your own emotions and learning needs to cross this bridge. The other guardrail represents the need to develop a trusting relationship with your clients. To cross this chasm, we need refined emotional intelligence—we need to be highly skilled at understanding our own emotions and navigating them, as well as understanding and navigating the emotions of others. That's what these two guardrails remind us of.

The bridge of Transformational Coaching crosses the water and is supported by five pillars. These pillars are the principles of Transformational Coaching. You'll

read about those in this chapter, but now I just want you to see that the entire structure is held up by these principles—these values.

In this book, I'll be leading you along the lane of coaching for equity. I'll show you the key tools and skills you'll need to guide others along the bridge—the folks you coach and lead. In my other books, I've offered additional resources for the other lanes. I hope you'll reach out for those as you make this journey across the bridge. Please know that the approaches in this book, these tools to coach for equity, won't work well if lifted out of a Transformational Coaching model. However, without explicitly addressing coaching for equity, without engaging with the tools in this book, we won't cross the chasm to transformed, liberated schools.

Walk with me along this bridge of Transformational Coaching. I'll share conversations about emotions, equity, identity, children, history, and a whole lot more. There'll be moments of discomfort, times when the fog will roll in and we'll feel a little confused, and then we'll hear the laughter, tears, connection, and courage. And on the other side is a place where we'll all feel much happier and much freer.

This chapter is an overview of the Transformational Coaching model that I've created and a close look at the lane of coaching for equity, which can only be truly implemented within a Transformational Coaching approach.

Assumptions behind Transformational Coaching

These are the assumptions behind Transformational Coaching. These are beliefs about education, about education and equity within American society, about the role and responsibility of teachers, and about schooling. By making assumptions known, we create transparency. Transparency builds trust, creates opportunities for buy-in, and reveals the ideological blueprints of a structure.

Assumptions about Education

- Learning is a basic human need, and the purpose of education is to provide students with skills and knowledge so that they become critical thinkers, compassionate leaders, and self-actualized people who contribute to the healing and transformation of this world. It is possible to create classrooms and schools that provide equitable and rigorous learning experiences for children and that result in equitable outcomes for students. Classrooms and schools can be a microcosm of what is possible.

Assumptions about the Problem

- Educational inequities are pervasive: racism plays out in schools in a myriad of ways. African American, Latinx, and other marginalized students are more likely to have limited access to high-quality curriculum, to be subject to harsher discipline, to encounter multiple forms of structural and interpersonal racism, and to attend schools in neighborhoods that have been systematically under-resourced (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014; Losen & Skiba, 2010). Racism has permeated how white people and people of color respond to student behavior, select curriculum, hire and promote staff, and partner with parents—among many things.
- Unjust structures and institutions are the problem—not the kids, not their parents, not their families, and not their communities. Educational inequity has sometimes been viewed as a problem of “achievement gaps” or teacher quality, but there is no “achievement gap.” Structural racism is at the root of educational inequities (Trujillo et al., 2017). People created inequitable systems and, intentionally and unintentionally, we perpetuate unjust systems. Inequitable systems were constructed by ruling powers to subjugate large populations and keep people enslaved, disempowered, disenfranchised, and marginalized. *Educational inequity is the result of intentional design.*
- The problem we face is a problem of change, and problems of change are problems of learning. We must consider the conditions in which learning happens, how learning is organized and structured, who facilitates learning, how the learning facilitators learn, and how we design, guide, and measure learning.

Assumptions about the People

- Every child can learn and self-actualize. *Every single child.* Children who are born in poverty, who don’t speak English, who have learning differences or physical challenges, who may not be raised by their birth parents, who have experienced trauma, who did not come to school knowing numbers or letters—all children can learn. In addition, all children come to school with their own knowledge, insight, experiences, passions, and ideas; they are not repositories for us to fill with our ideas and opinions (Freire, 1968).
- Educators exist to serve children. Students deserve educators who are skilled and knowledgeable about teaching and learning, and who are self-aware and resilient. In addition, educators need the support of leaders in their school buildings, districts, and local, state, and federal governments. For us to truly transform schools into equitable places where every child learns, stakeholders need to align on the root causes of the problem and on solutions: The task of

building equitable schools can't fall entirely on the backs of teachers. While we face a real lack of resource in schools, we also have extensive internal resources including our creativity, will, commitment, resourcefulness, perseverance, compassion, patience, and courage. When we engage our internal resources, we'll be more resilient and able to build equitable schools.

- Coaches working in education were excellent teachers who acquired skills to guide adult learning and lead change. Coaches require ongoing opportunities for their own learning so they can master the skills listed in Appendix C: Transformational Coaching Rubric 2.0.
- Supervisors and administrators can use Transformational Coaching strategies to guide staff to grow and to transform schools.

Assumptions about the Process

- We find time and money for what we prioritize. Resources are limited in many schools—however, *if we prioritize dismantling systemic oppression, if we prioritize the needs of our most marginalized students, we can find the time, support, money, and resources that we need.* Claiming a lack of resources as a reason to not address equity is a poor excuse that preserves the interests and privileges of those who have been in power for hundreds of years.
- Coaching must be holistic and must address an educator's behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being. Coaching that relies heavily on technical strategies is transactional and replicates inequitable power dynamics. Educators need prescriptive coaching that focuses on instruction, and they need coaching that attends to the emotional experiences of our work. Especially while exploring issues of equity, educators will experience strong emotions including anger, grief, and shame. And in organizations that have a commitment to hiring and retaining educators from marginalized communities, this emotional experience will likely be more intense. Furthermore, coaching must address underlying mental models and the biases we hold, because without awareness of those, we risk reproducing inequitable schools. An effective coach can guide a teacher to explore biases and also design a rigorous lesson and use data to drive instruction.
- Human beings have emotions, and it's our right to experience them, engage with them, and learn from them on the journey of change. At times, emotions may be unpleasant, but they are part of the process. We are stronger and wiser when we attend to them. Avoiding emotions or getting stuck in them can be counterproductive to equity, but we don't need to suppress or repress emotions. Transformational, sustained change happens when we integrate emotions into learning.

- Everyone has suffered under white supremacy—every individual and every ethnic and cultural group. By acknowledging our common suffering, we find ways to heal. *And:* The genocide and attempted cultural erasure of the Native people of the continents we call North and South America, and the enslavement of African peoples, are the original sins and festering wounds in the United States and in most developed nations in the world. Without reconciling with this history, we will struggle to come together as a nation. Without reparations, there can be no justice (Coates, 2014). Without justice, there can be no healing. Our journey must include opportunities for healing—for healing from the collective trauma that is our nation’s (and our world’s) recent history. Healing happens through individual processes and in community (Menakem, 2017). Educators need opportunities to process and heal together.
- Healing requires an ability to have conversations. If we learn to have powerful conversations, we can have powerful learning experiences. If we have powerful learning experiences, we can change our teaching practices. If we change our teaching practices, we can create equitable schools. If we create equitable schools, we’ll take great strides toward justice—and toward healing. *Conversations are bridges to justice, healing, and liberation, and we can make every conversation count towards creating a just and liberated world.*

Transformational Coaching

Before we explore Transformational Coaching, let’s take a step back to create a shared understanding of what coaching is, and what a coach does.

The title *coach* has been loosely and widely applied in the field of education. New teachers are sometimes assigned a coach who might be a mentor and confidant, or simply someone who stops in every other week to fill out paperwork for compliance purposes. Many mandated curricula initiatives deploy “coaches” to enforce fidelity. Some schools have “data coaches” who gather and analyze data, prepare reports, meet with teachers to discuss the results, and suggest actions to take. Some organizations assign a coach to an underperforming veteran teacher as a step in the termination process. Some districts have “school improvement coaches” for schools that have low test scores. This is why it’s critical to define what coaching is, and what a coach does. Let’s start with what coaching isn’t. Coaching *is not*:

- A way to enforce a program. Coaches should never be used as enforcers, reporters, or evaluators. This approach demeans the field of coaching and makes teachers rightfully suspicious of coaches.

- A mechanism to fix people. Coaching is not something to do to ineffective teachers. It is not a box to be checked so that a district can move toward disciplinary measures. Coaching should be optional—we can't force people to learn.
- Therapy. A coach does not probe into someone's psyche or childhood. Emotions arise in coaching—and a coach can acknowledge emotions and help someone process them—but a coach also knows the line between what she can and should do for a client and the role of a mental health professional.
- Consulting. A coach is not necessarily an expert who trains others in a way of doing something; a coach helps build the capacity of others by facilitating their learning.

Coaching is professional development. It's a structure through which we can reflect, grow, and refine our practices; it's a way we can learn to use new tools and to incorporate new approaches; it's a method for improving teacher and leader practices and improving student outcomes. Coaching is one way that educators can engage in professional development, one form that is ideally complemented by other experiences which could include Professional Learning Communities, critical friends, weekly PD sessions, and an occasional conference.

Coaching is effective because it is job-embedded, it is ongoing, it's one-on-one, and it can be differentiated to meet the needs of an individual learner. Being job-embedded, ongoing, and differentiated are three top criteria for effective professional development. Research has found that coaching is the most effective form of PD for teachers: when teachers engage in infrequent and decontextualized trainings, less than 20% of new practices were implemented in the classroom; *when coaching is combined with training, implementation of those new practices rises to between 80 percent and 90 percent* (Joyce and Showers, 1982).

Coaching is a vehicle through which we can reflect on our practice, understand ourselves better, surface and shift our own beliefs, and build new habits, because coaching is just a way to learn and grow—everyone deserves a coach for as long as they want. Life is a learning journey, and the only thing we can count on is change. Educators can benefit from working with a coach throughout the entirety of their career.

Traditional approaches for coaching teachers emphasize addressing instructional practices, curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy. As a new coach, I used these approaches. I gave teachers heaps of resources and lots of feedback, I told them to do certain things differently, I directed them to see what wasn't working in their classroom, and I modeled new practices. Some of this coaching worked in the sense that teachers tried new things and saw different results. Much of this

coaching didn't work. Teachers pushed back, or implemented the strategies with limited impact, or they complied while I was around and then returned to their old ways when I was out of sight. Some teachers engaged with this coaching, but after a year or two, claiming burnout, they quit. Traditional approaches to coaching didn't transform teaching and learning.

The Three Components of Transformational Coaching

These are the three components that a Transformational Coach must attend to:

- *The Coach: With an emphasis on the coach's attention to their own learning.* A Transformational Coach attends to their own behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being.
- *The Client: With a holistic approach to working with a client.* Transformational Coaching addresses a client's behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being.
- *The Systems: With a commitment to transform systems and the individuals within them:* A Transformational Coach identifies and understands the larger systems in which we live and work and takes action to transform them. This element makes Transformational Coaching unique as a model to address equity—we work with individuals while surfacing the often-invisible and often-inequitable systems in which they work. Models that focus only on individuals have limited impact and run the risk of reproducing inequitable systems.

Let's explore the skills of a Transformational Coach.

The Coach: Starting with Ourselves

A Transformational Coach has an extensive set of abilities that include specific coaching skills and knowledge of instructional strategies, pedagogy, specific content areas, and educational equity. What makes Transformational Coaching more comprehensive than other forms of instructional coaching is the emphasis on *beliefs* and *ways of being*—the client's and the coach's. A *way of being* includes high emotional intelligence, an ability to form trusting relationships, refined identity awareness, and deep will and commitment. An effective Transformational Coach is self-aware and reflective, is anchored in a set of ways of being (which we'll look at soon), and is regularly engaged in his own learning. A Transformational Coach is clear on his beliefs about himself, about racism and justice and freedom, about his

role and responsibility as a coach, and about how change happens. Finally, a Transformational Coach has deep knowledge of instructional and leadership practices and of educational equity.

When I was getting started as a coach, my coach, Leslie Plettner, offered an invaluable lesson when she said, “No one can learn from you if you think that they suck.” My mind was blown as I realized that I’d been coaching from a place where I did indeed believe that everyone around me sucked. I felt disdain for the teachers I coached. I did not believe in their potential to be effective teachers. I believed that these teachers wanted to harm the black and brown children in our school. When I showed up to coach these teachers, I was angry at them, I didn’t trust them, I didn’t like them, and I didn’t even want to be near them. You can’t learn from someone who feels this way about you.

Even after I stopped coaching from a place of disdain, some of my coaching conversations were successful and others flopped. One week, a client would have meaningful insights into their teaching, and I’d feel good about my coaching. And then the next week, with the same client, the conversation would limp along, and my questions didn’t result in insights. Initially, out of frustration, I’d externalize responsibility and blame the client—*it was because of how they were showing up that day*, I’d think. While not every single conversation we have will result in immediately visible transformation, I sensed there was more I could do to ensure we were on the right trajectory.

After a while, I noticed that the success of coaching conversations had everything to do with how *I* was feeling, with *my* attitude, and with how *I* was showing up. When I was tired, irritated, despairing, hopeless, and so on, the conversation did not go very well. When I was open, curious, compassionate, humble, and so on, the conversation went well. I’d noticed this same dynamic when I was a teacher. It was what the Israeli educator Haim Ginott referenced in this quote: “I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather.”

Around the time that I had that realization, I began coaching other coaches. I would listen to their coaching conversations and observe them with their clients. My emerging theory was validated over and over: It was the coach’s disposition—the coach’s attitude and emotional state, *the coach’s way of being*—that made the difference between a powerful and a weak conversation, between a transformational conversation and one that may or may not impact kids. I scrutinized the variables in a conversation—the quality of the coach’s questions, the coach’s knowledge of the teacher’s content, the coach’s plans for the conversation, and the teacher’s mood and disposition—and over and over, I came to the same conclusion: The key factor was

the coach’s way of being. How the coach showed up, how they engaged with their own emotions, and how they communicated made all the difference.

Through reflecting on my practice and observing other coaches I’ve landed on six key dispositions or ways of being of a Transformational Coach. When working from these ways of being, we are primed to coach for equity. Transformational Coaches are compassionate and curious, have trust in the coaching process, are oriented toward learning, embody humility and mutuality, and are courageous. I’ll describe these in Chapter 6, but as you read the stories about coaching for equity, I hope you’ll keep an eye out for where you saw me demonstrating them.

The Client: Coaching Behaviors, Beliefs, and Ways of Being

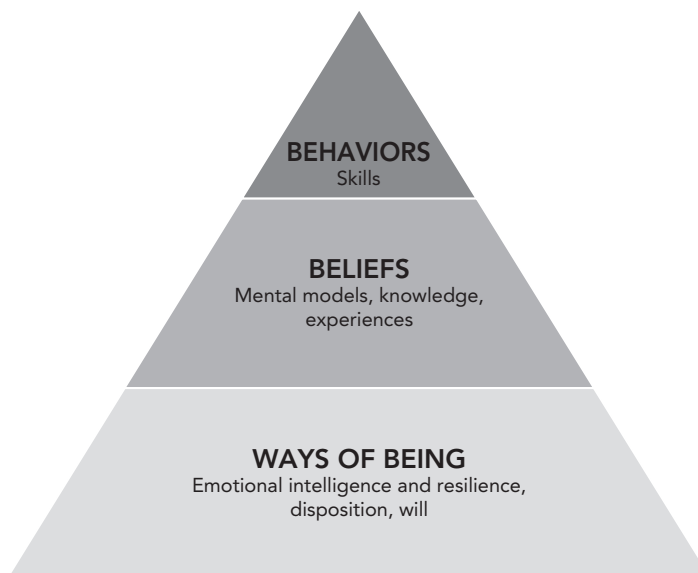
If we aspire to create sustained, transformational change, and if we aspire to coach for justice and liberation, then we must coach our client on their behaviors (designing lessons, delivering instruction, analyzing data, creating assessments, and so on) as well as on their thoughts and beliefs, and also around their way of being (their emotions, identity, and will). Transformational Coaching is a holistic method because it attends to these three domains of who we are—to our behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being—“The Three Bs.” You can read an overview of this model in Table 1.1: What Are the Three Bs?

In Figure 1.1: The Three Components of Transformational Coaching, the pyramid represents the idea that behaviors emerge from beliefs, and beliefs emerge from ways of being. However, the boundaries between beliefs and ways of being,

Table 1.1 What Are the Three Bs?

	What it is	How we see it
Behavior	What we do. In schools: ability to design lessons, deliver instruction, create a productive learning environment, analyze data, etc. What can be captured on video.	Evident in our skill set.
Beliefs	What we think and believe. Comes from what we know and from our experiences.	Reflected in our decision-making, the assumptions and conclusions we make; our behaviors emerge from beliefs.
Ways of being	Who we are—how we show up and how we are experienced. A blend of our dispositions, will, and sense of identity.	Manifests in our emotions, communication, and levels of resilience.

Figure 1.1 The Three Components of Transformational Coaching



and between beliefs and behaviors are porous. Addressing *only* behaviors without surfacing, evaluating, and shifting the underlying beliefs and ways of being will not result in transformation or even in sustained change.

Coaching the Three Bs is a holistic method that in and of itself is an affront to systems of oppression. Systems of oppression strive to disconnect action from our hearts, minds, spirits, and bodies, while Transformational Coaching invites connection between realms of existence. Transformational Coaching is a response to industrialist, efficiency-obsessed systems that focus on and prioritize changing actions and behaviors. When you acknowledge emotions in a coaching conversation at work, you destabilize a larger system of oppression.

The Three Goals in a Transformational Coaching Conversation

In any coaching conversation, there are three goals: to increase the client's emotional resilience, to strengthen the client's reflective abilities, and to build the client's skills. Let's look at the connection between these goals in a conversation and the larger commitment to coach behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being.

- **Resilience:** When we coach to build resilience, we coach a way of being. Resilience increases when we acknowledge and explore our emotions; when we deepen self-knowledge and self-awareness; when we tap into positive emotions

including hope, purpose, curiosity, and empathy; when we are focused on our sphere of influence and control; and when we feel like we're learning. When we build resilience, we feel energized. Resilience shifts and expands our way of being.

- **Reflection:** When we coach to build reflective abilities, we coach around beliefs. Reflective abilities are strengthened when we unpack our thoughts, understand the processes through which we make decisions, and recognize the underlying mental models that form our beliefs. Strengthening reflective abilities can shift our beliefs.
- **Skill:** When we coach to build skill, we create new behaviors. Skill is built when learning is scaffolded, when the desired or needed skill is within our Zone of Proximal Development, and when the skill we're building is the right size and the right piece. Sometimes in order to buy into building skill, we need to see evidence that we need to build that skill set. Building skills results in more effective behaviors.

It is possible that in a coaching conversation focused on resilience, you guide your client to develop new skills to build their own resilience, or you might guide them into deeper understanding of how their mental models undermine their resilience. In another conversation, you might focus on beliefs about students, which will likely raise emotions and therefore provide an opportunity to coach around resilience. Sometimes we might provide what seems like straightforward instructional coaching that builds skill, and we might wonder how we're coaching around resilience. If we close that conversation with an opportunity for the client to name what they've learned and how they feel at the end of the conversation—and they say, “I'm excited to try this tomorrow with my students!”—then they bring a moment of awareness to the positive emotions that come up from learning, and they've increased their resilience. The art of coaching is the ability to weave together coaching of behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being in a way that doesn't feel contrived.

The Systems: Transforming Systems

To practice Transformational Coaching, you need to understand systems and explore how to change systems. A first step is to know the systems to which we belong and have some understanding of them. By recognizing the broader institutions, structures, and organizations in which we work, we can evaluate our spheres of influence and control, identify entry points for making change in those larger systems, and appreciate the interconnectedness of all things.

What happens in a classroom is affected by what happens in the larger organizations in which it is embedded and by what happens in the larger socio-political and economic levels. Let's consider an example. The civil war in Myanmar (Burma) has displaced tens of thousands of people. Between 2002 and 2019, the United States accepted about 178,000 Burmese refugees. In California (and other states) where refugees were resettled, resources were allocated to meet the refugees' needs, including their educational needs. In some school districts, interpreters were hired, classes for Newcomers and English Language Learners were expanded or created, and counseling services for traumatized children were provided. Teachers and staff were hired, trained, or re-trained to understand and meet the needs of their Burmese refugee students, as well as to communicate with their parents. Teachers and staff expanded their cultural competence and ability to work with English Language Learners.

Oakland, California, where I've lived and worked for over 25 years, has large numbers of immigrants including hundreds of Burmese refugees. Some years ago, I coached Alison, the teacher of a self-contained, middle-school class of Newcomer students. Alison had experience teaching English Language Learners, but in PE, the teacher didn't have this experience. In PE, the Newcomer students didn't understand the teacher's instructions, they had never experienced basketball or running around a track, and they were fearful of the way the PE teacher shouted. As a result, they couldn't access the learning and often asked to be excused from PE. Alison raised this situation when she asked if I could coach the PE teacher. I responded by asking her if PE was the only place where her students experienced difficulty. She explained that they experienced fear and frustration in many spaces in the school and community including when they went to the cafeteria for lunch and when they were stopped by the security guards. I invited Alison to assert her leadership and take action.

Alison saw the layers of systemic issues and decided to address them. First, she led a couple sessions with the whole staff (including the cafeteria workers and the security guards) on strategies for communicating with English Language Learners and Newcomers. She shared the backgrounds of a couple of students who had lived most of their lives in refugee camps in Thailand and for whom shouting activated the trauma they'd experienced. In response to this, the PE teacher shared that he felt terrible that he'd frightened the students. "I was just trying to make sure they could hear and understand me," he said. Alison shared simple strategies to ensure that her students could understand directions, and the staff were grateful and receptive. As the staff practiced these new strategies, Alison also invited them to surface and name their beliefs about working with immigrants. This conversation

allowed a staff that was primarily people of color to unearth some biases about immigrants, which became a powerful conversation about the different kinds of privileges that we hold.

During these sessions, Alison also heard teachers expressing a desire to communicate with her students' parents. She reached out to a refugee resettlement center to engage the services of translators for parent-teacher conferences. The principal of the school had heard that there were tensions in the neighborhood between the Burmese immigrants and their Mexican and Guatemalan neighbors, and organized an event to bring families together to learn about each other. By doing so, the principal addressed social systems on the level of the city and neighborhood.

A Transformational Coach who holds an awareness of systems and the interconnectedness of events can help a frustrated or struggling teacher engage resources and outside partners, and take actions that support students. A coach can also help a teacher recognize what is outside of their sphere of control, which can bring comfort and an ability to prioritize. Holding a systems-thinking approach helps a coach empower the client to transform systems and their own practices.

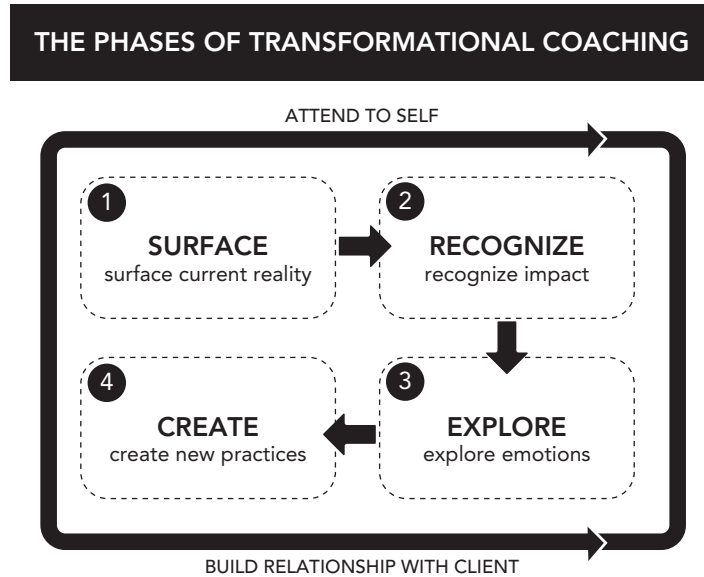
In the next section, I'll reference Appendix C: the Transformational Coaching Rubric 2.0. This rubric is more detailed, concrete, and explicit about equity practices and emotional intelligence than the one published in *The Art of Coaching*. It's most useful to guide reflection and learning. Although it's massive, when digested one domain at a time, it is invaluable for coaches. You can also download it from my website, <http://brightmorningteam.com>.

The Four Phases of Transformational Coaching

There are four phases in a Transformational Coaching model, as shown in Figure 1.2. These phases are more or less sequential, although at any moment, we may draw strategies from other phases. These four phases describe the process regardless of what lane of Transformational Coaching we're in—whether we're coaching teams, coaching for emotional resilience, focusing on coaching for equity, or providing prescriptive instructional coaching. Here's an overview of the phases:

- **Phase 1: Surface.** We surface the state of affairs in a classroom, school, or organization by seeking understanding of the teacher or leader, students, community,

Figure 1.2 The Phases of Transformational Coaching



institutional history, and current reality. We learn about what's going on, the problems, and the challenges.

- **Phase 2: Recognize.** We guide a client to unpack the root causes of the challenges they're facing and explore the underlying mental models that contribute to the problems. We guide the client to identify and reflect on how those problems impact students, their communities, and themselves.
- **Phase 3: Explore.** We coach our client to acknowledge, name, accept, and understand emotions. This allows the client to release emotions and access deeper levels of courage, commitment, and confidence.
- **Phase 4: Create.** We coach to create new beliefs and ways of being, which in turn create new behaviors.

While these four phases characterize the overarching arc of the coaching process, we continue to hold three goals in each conversation: to build resilience, reflective abilities, and skills. It's by staying focused on these goals that we ensure that we're coaching behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being. Sometimes strategies overlap. In Phase 2, we engage strategies to unpack beliefs. When we're in Phase 3, we emphasize resilience-building strategies. When we're in Phase 4, we draw heavily on strategies to build skill. In this book, you'll read a couple of stories, each of

which spans several chapters, to see how a Transformational Coach moves through these phases.

Throughout this process, coaches must constantly attend to our own needs—to our emotions, learning, and growth. We know that we can't engage in Transformational Coaching without being reflective and self-aware. We also constantly attend to building and maintaining a trusting relationship with our clients. We know that “without trust, there can be no coaching” (Echeverría and Olalla, 1993).

What makes this model of coaching unique is the emphasis on attending to emotions and interpersonal relationships. An entire phase is devoted to considering and processing emotions, and the whole model is wrapped in a reminder for the coach to attend to their own emotions and to attend to building a trusting relationship with a client. This is what makes this model transformational.

Let's take a closer look at the four phases. In Appendix A: Phases of Transformational Coaching, you'll find a guide to remind you of the key elements and resources in each phase (you can also download this from my website, <http://brightmorningteam.com> and you'll find it in *The Art of Coaching Workbook*).

Phase 1: Surface Current Reality

In this first phase, we aim to understand the lay of the land, the client's current reality including challenges, strengths, and opportunities. We need to clearly see the client's teaching or leadership practice, beliefs, way of being, and organizational context. A coach seeks to understand who the client is, why they got into education, their vision for themselves as an educator, and their strengths. A coach draws on masterful listening and questioning strategies.

In this phase, the coach observes the client in action (teaching or leading). The coach also listens for and identifies mental models that originate in oppressive ideologies and that result in inequitable experiences, access, and outcomes for students. The coach draws on their knowledge of racism and white supremacy and of how systems of oppression manifest in our classrooms. Without this knowledge base, the coach might not see inequities in a classroom. (This knowledge base is discussed in Chapter 3).

It's critical that the coach attend to their learning and emotional needs in this phase. A coach needs support to process their observations and stay grounded in a Transformational Coach's way of being. In this phase, a coach engages skills in Domains 2 and 3 of the Transformational Coaching Rubric, 2.0. In this first phase, a coach builds a foundation for coaching by building a strong relationship with a client based on a solid understanding of who they are.

Phase 2: Recognize Impact

In the Recognize Phase, the coach helps the client see how their behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being perpetuate systemic oppression. The coach gathers data that reveals the impact of the client's practice on students and that deepens the client's willingness to make changes in their practice. It's important that the coach gathers a variety of data—including observations, student survey/voices, and video. The purpose of the data is not to shame the client: it is to help them see the impact on students. The coach helps the client confront discrepancies between their vision for themselves and the impact of their actions.

In this phase, the coach guides the client to increased awareness of their underlying mental models. The coach can offer the client resources to learn more about racial and gender identity development and white supremacy, and how these manifest in our systems, beliefs, and practices. It's essential to explore how dehumanizing ideologies harm everyone—including the client.

The coach must continue cultivating awareness of their thoughts and feelings during this phase and recognizing when they need support from others. During this phase, clients often push back and seem resistant. A coach can feel stretched in their coaching skills, understanding of the situation, and capacity to respond to their own emotions and their clients' emotions. This can impact the coach's ability to stay in relationship with the client, and the coach may unintentionally undermine trust. The coach might also have new insights about the ways in which they have perpetuated white supremacy and systemic oppression and may need coaching to reflect on their own behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being.

Phase 3: Explore Emotions

In the Explore Phase, we engage emotions to help the client solidify a commitment to changing their practices. We coach to surface, acknowledge, accept, explore, understand, process, and release emotions.

Strong emotions can surface in this phase in both the client and coach. It's common for clients to experience grief as they recognize aspects of their identity that they need to transform. Clients may also experience remorse, shame, and anger as they come to new insights about themselves and their practices. The coach provides space and time and creates the conditions for the client to come to these insights.

It's critical that the coach has a strong knowledge of emotions and how to coach emotions—this is a knowledge base that is discussed in Chapter 6. The coach must also recognize the boundary between coaching emotions and the work of a mental health professional: a coach doesn't probe into the origins of the emotions in

the client's childhood. In addition, a coach needs to know the indicators of depression and anxiety, and when to encourage a client to seek professional medical or psychological help.

In the Explore Phase, the coach consistently communicates an acceptance of emotions and a belief that wisdom and resilience can be accessed by experiencing emotions. The coach recognizes that this phase is critical to healing and liberation.

Phase 4: Create New Practices

In the Create Phase, we coach the client to enact new practices. By the end of this phase, the client demonstrates different behaviors from what they were before the coaching—behaviors that create an equitable classroom.

In this phase, a broad set of coaching strategies are used, many of which are those we commonly think of as coaching strategies: We co-plan, observe and offer feedback, analyze student work together, and so on. While engaging in these activities, we guide the client to make connections between their new behaviors and instructional practices, and their new or expanding beliefs and ways of being. This allows the client to strengthen their ability to recognize the mental models from which their behaviors emerge, and to identify which mental models perpetuate white supremacy and systems of oppression and which lead to healing and transformation. We strive to heighten the client's awareness so that when we're not around, they can recognize when they are perpetuating inequitable practices and shift their behaviors.

The Role of Relationships: The Guardrails

A Transformational Coach pays close attention to the quality of the relationship between themselves and their clients. In a space where a trusting relationship is valued, clients can take risks. Courage is required for us to traverse a chasm and create something new.

Running parallel to the lanes on the bridge are guardrails. The first guardrail represents attending to ourselves—to building a healthy relationship with ourselves as we guide others on the journey across the bridge. To take care of ourselves, we create and insist on time to learn, to collaborate with others, to process our thoughts and feelings, to understand our identity markers, to develop our skills, to unpack our beliefs, to cultivate new ways of being, and to heal from pain and suffering. We know that we can't do this work, we can't guide people in a journey, unless we're attending to ourselves. Doing so sets us up to be in healthy relationship with ourselves.

The second guardrail represents the relationships that we build with others on this journey: with our clients and colleagues. Those relationships need to be characterized by trust. Coaches and leaders build trusting relationships and then maintain them, repairing them when they are weakened or damaged. In order to build trust, we draw on our understanding of the role that identity plays in emotions and building trust along and across lines of difference—racial, gender, age, and other differences.

The trust that is built with ourselves and with our clients—trust that’s infused with an understanding of race, racism, identity, and emotions—is a guardrail on the tracks to transformation.

The Five Principles of Transformational Coaching

The vertical support structure that’s used, in part, to hold up a bridge is called a *pile* in engineering terms. Made of wood, concrete, or steel, the piles, or pillars, are hammered into the soil beneath a bridge until the ends reach the hard sublayer of compacted soil or rock below. Piles hammered to this depth leverage the grip and friction of the soil surrounding it to support the load of the bridge deck.

Principles are statements reflecting values, vision, theory, and belief; principles inform and direct the actions we take. Principles are the pillars that extend from the depths of the earth that rise up through the water and support the bridge. They uphold the integrity of the structure; they enable the bridge to remain intact regardless of the weight that crosses the deck. These are the five principles of Transformational Coaching:

- **Compassion:** We relentlessly strive to center the humanity of others. We preserve people’s honor and dignity above all. We know that kindness is our greatest power. We practice self-compassion, which includes taking care of ourselves. We know that the journey toward liberation will be long, so we rest and attend to our minds, bodies, hearts, and spirits.
- **Curiosity:** As we suspend our judgments and opinions, we seek deep understanding of other people, of ourselves, and of the situations we’re in. Our curiosity expands through our willingness to be changed by what we hear.
- **Connection:** We never lose sight of the connections between all living things. We know that the hope for our world lies in our ability to see ourselves in all living things, and to see all living things in ourselves. We refrain from binary thinking.

- **Courage:** We draw on deep sources of courage, we face our fears, and we act with courage every day. We don't wait until we know everything, or have every detail worked out to do something. We take action and course-correct when necessary. We act with healthy urgency. We know that just as people created inequitable systems and just as we have adopted the mindsets from those systems, people can create new systems and can adopt new mindsets. This gives us the energy to take risks.
- **Purpose:** Our purpose is to create a world characterized by justice, equity, and liberation. The journey is the destination. We can fulfill our purpose when we act with compassion, curiosity, connection, and courage.

To cross the chasm from our current reality to a place where schools are equitable places of learning requires that we are anchored in these five principles. We act on these in a coaching conversation, when we're making decisions about how to coach, when we're designing a coaching program, when we're leading teams, when we're facilitating professional development, when we're managing coaches, and so on. Whenever there are decisions to make about how we'll cross the bridge, we act on these principles. They keep the structure from collapsing under heavy weights or in storms.

Next, we'll dive into a story to explore coaching for equity. It's time to see what these ideas look like in action.

Before You Go . . .

Read the following prompts and select two or three that feel most valuable to you based on where you are in your learning journey. Spend meaningful time considering your reflection before moving on.

REFLECT ON THIS CHAPTER

- Which components of Transformational Coaching do you already practice? Which elements of Transformational Coaching are not a part of the way you coach?
- Which phases of Transformational Coaching do you feel prepared for? Which phases feel like they'll be most challenging?

REFLECT ON YOUR PRACTICE

- If you've ever received coaching, how would you describe it? What domain (behavior, beliefs, or ways of being) did it focus on? Is there a domain that you would have liked the coach to pay more attention to?
- How would you describe the coaching you do? Which domain do you focus on? What impact could you have on your clients, organization, and students if you coached in all three domains?
- What do you feel is blocking you (if anything) from coaching behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being? What would need to happen so that you could coach the Three Bs?
- What do you think your coaching, teaching, and leadership might be like if you had a coach who practiced Transformational Coaching?
- How might your experience as a child have been different had your teachers worked in a system that used this model of coaching for equity?

Interlude: Curiosity

Principles of Transformational Coaching

- Compassion
- **Curiosity**
- Connection
- Courage
- Purpose

Curiosity: As we suspend our judgments and opinions, we seek deep understanding of other people, of ourselves, and of the situations we're in. Our curiosity expands through our willingness to be changed by what we hear.

"Don't think about why you question, simply don't stop questioning. Don't worry about what you can't answer, and don't try to explain what you can't know. Curiosity is its own reason . . . Have holy curiosity."

—Albert Einstein

- What would it be like for you to have “holy curiosity”?
- What does your body feel like when it's curious?
- What makes it hard for you to feel curious?
- What did this chapter make you more curious about?
- Which of your behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being are you willing to change?