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choice

the magazine of professional coaching



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Where coach and client meet in the now

VOLUME 24 • NUMBER 3
choice-online.com

PRESENCE & CAPACITY



Designing human connection in the AI era

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Against the backdrop of continuous change precipitated by accelerating AI, economic pressures and ongoing uncertainty, a phrase shared with with me more than 30 years ago by my graduate supervisor continues to echo: "Embrace the chaos."

It's a phrase that has anchored my work since then. First as a facilitator and leader working globally in complex systems and later as a pioneer in the fields of group and team coaching.

Today, the phrase feels more relevant than ever. With today's context we are longer navigating one disruption at a time. Rather, we are navigating overlapping layers of complexity simultaneously.

As coaches, leaders and facilitators, a significant question is: How do we help people move through it? Old approaches to problem solving no longer work — bring in the expert, search out the information or develop a strategy. Today, our abilities to support emergence and presence is critical.

In a world of rapid-fire communication, constant notifications and AI-generated content, presence has become increasingly rare. Yet presence remains one of the most important conditions for creating meaningful coaching conversations and human connection.

Presence shapes the quality of reflection. It shapes trust. It shapes whether people feel safe enough to think out loud, explore possibilities, challenge assumptions and engage in real dialogue. Presence slows the pace so we can hear ourselves think again.

As coaches, presence has always been at the heart of masterful coaching and connections. In our conversations, people may not always remember the exact question we asked, but they often remember how they felt in conversation with us. Did they feel heard? Did they feel rushed? Did they feel like they had space to think? Did they feel judged? Did they feel connected?

The spaces co-created with our clients, shaped by presence, have become some of the most important spaces for exploring emergence, complexity and the world of multiplicities. These cannot be automated by AI.

As more transactional tasks become automated, deeply human capacities become increasingly important. These include our ability to build trust, collaborate effectively, think creatively, navigate complexity together and engage in conversations that move ideas into action.

One of my longstanding beliefs is that conversation is the currency of change. And in the AI era, this may become even more important.

The future of work will not simply belong to those who can move faster. It will belong to those who can help people think together, adapt together and create together.

Over the years, I've often spoken about what I call the Five Group & Team Coaching Superpowers. These are not simply techniques or competencies. They are ways of working and partnering with our clients, especially in times of complexity and change. Masterful coaches are adept at adjusting their presence according to the needs of the client, or clients they are working with, just like a chameleon.

Let's take a look at these five superpowers.

1 THE ECOSYSTEM CONNECTOR

This superpower helps us see patterns, relationships, interdependencies and what may be missing from the conversation.

In a time where people are often overwhelmed by information but disconnected from meaning, the Ecosystem Connector helps individuals and teams step back and ask: What's really going on here? What patterns are emerging? How are these issues connected? How are we connected?

2 THE GROUNDED LABYRINTH

One of the greatest tensions in today's environment is the pressure to respond immediately. Coaching often invites something very different: pause, reflection, discernment and inquiry. The Grounded Labyrinth reminds us that growth and change are rarely linear.

Presence allows us to slow the pace enough to notice what is actually important. The Grounded Labryinth superpower invites us to breathe and get grounded.

3 THE SPIRAL LIGHTHOUSE

This superpower creates a space for trust, safety and connection, just like a safe harbor. It's a space where individuals, groups and teams navigate complexity with greater awareness, intentionality and possibility. It's an approach where we can explore multiple perspectives, one stair at a time, from the ground or from the 360 vantage point of the top of the lighthouse.

In an AI-enabled world, the ability to explore the subtle but important perspectives around issues is critical.

4 THE CATALYTIC FIRECRACKER

Coaching conversations can create momentum. A single question, insight or courageous conversation can shift the trajectory of a team, a relationship, or even a career. In my own work, I continue to see how powerful it is when people reconnect to commitment. The energy of this presence is activation, action and sometimes even combustion.

Even with the movement this presence invites us to explore: What's possible right now? What matters most? What are we committed to, no matter what? What conversation needs to happen?

5 THE CREATIVE TOOLMASTER

This superpower reminds us that conversations can take many forms. Visual practices, experiential approaches, metaphor, movement, story, reflection and dialogue all help people move beyond intellectual understanding into embodied learning.

In increasingly digital environments, experiential and human-centered approaches become even more important because transformation rarely happens through information alone. Learning and insight happen through awareness, experimentation, reflection and meaningful experience.

In an AI-enabled landscape, enhancing our focus around presence allows coaches to expand their capacity and use "self as instrument." It also creates the conditions for reflection, trust, discernment and awareness — essential elements for coaching to occur.

Presence slows the pace enough for people to hear themselves think again. It creates space for individuals and teams to reconnect

> As more transactional tasks become automated, deeply human capacities become increasingly important.

to what matters, surface assumptions, notice patterns and explore possibility. In many ways, presence becomes one of the anchors for meaningful human connection in an increasingly distracted and accelerated world.

In an era of ongoing disruption and continuous change, people also need the ability to sustain themselves through complexity over time. This is where capacity becomes so important.

Over the last several years, I've found myself returning again and again to the idea of capacity development as central to coaching, leadership and the future of work. Capacity, not just skills. Capacity, not just competencies. Capacities are often likened to the deeper human infrastructure that allows individuals, teams and systems to navigate challenge, uncertainty, growth and change in sustainable ways.

In many ways, capacity is our expanded ability to think clearly, relate effectively, adapt intelligently, create intentionally and sustain performance over time. Capacity is what allows people to remain thoughtful under pressure, collaborate across difference, recalibrate when conditions shift and continue moving forward even when the path ahead is not entirely clear.

While technology continues to accelerate, many human systems are stretched. Attention is fragmented. Energy is depleted. Teams are carrying multiple layers of change simultaneously. Many people are no longer asking, "Can I do this?" but rather, "Can I sustain this?"

This is why capacity matters now more than ever.

Skills may help us perform in the short term, but capacity determines whether those skills can be integrated, embodied and sustained over time. Capacity shapes whether people can hold complexity without becoming overwhelmed, remain connected during uncertainty and continue creating, collaborating and leading in environments that continue to evolve.

In my work around coaching, human connection and the evolving landscape of work, six interdependent capacities continue to emerge as especially important for the world of tomorrow.

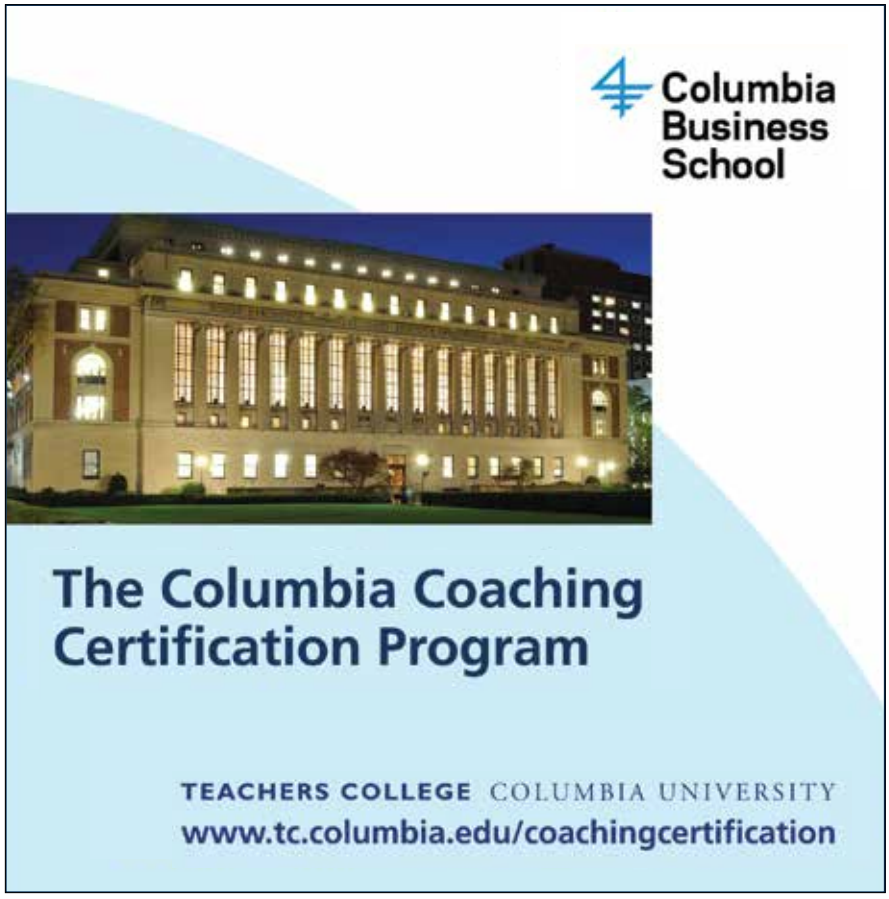
1. **Relational Capacity** supports trust, connection and meaningful collaboration.
2. **Emotional Capacity** helps us regulate under pressure and remain grounded during uncertainty.
3. **Cognitive Capacity** strengthens our ability to discern patterns and make sense of complexity.
4. **Adaptive Capacity** helps us recalibrate when conditions shift.
5. **Creative Capacity** supports innovation, imagination and possibility thinking.
6. **Sustainable Capacity** helps us sustain energy, focus and performance over time.

Presence strengthens every one of these capacities. Without presence, conversations become reactive. Without presence, teams disconnect. Without presence, burnout accelerates. Without presence, people stop listening to themselves and each other.

Presence helps people reconnect on all layers — to themselves, to purpose, to each other and to possibility.

As coaches, leaders and facilitators, the conversations we are designing right now matter deeply. For many writers, researchers and educators, coaching becomes part of the human infrastructure of the future of work.

In the ongoing world of change our ability to remain deeply human will help us navigate complexity together. This includes the spaces where presence and capacity help to foster trust, cultivate reflection, strengthen collaboration and support creativity. •



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