

# Ontological Coaching

**BACKGROUND:** According to the International Coach Federation, "Professional Coaching is an ongoing partnership that helps clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life."

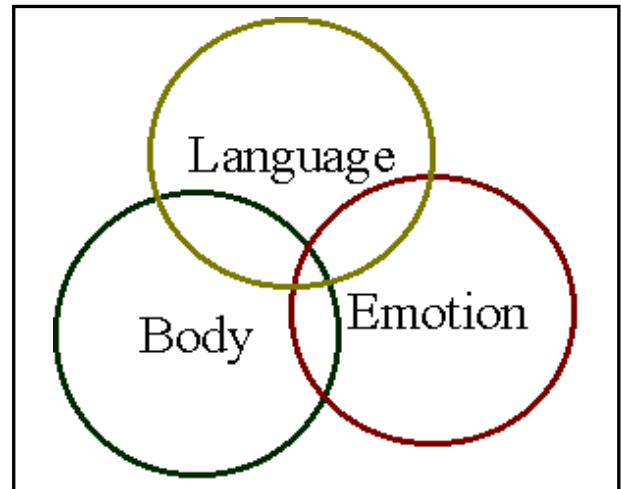
In recent years coaching, in the form of Organizational and Life Coaching, has emerged as a value added professional practice. The long-term public acceptance and commercial viability of any professional practice means that it must be grounded in a substantive discipline and time-tested methodology, which produces positive results for people.

The discipline of Ontology of the Human Observer provides the substantive basis for an ontological approach to coaching. The discipline represents an improved understanding of human beings and human interaction. According to Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline*, "Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves."

The word "ontology" means "study of being". Ontological Coaching then is about coaching to a way of being, as a means of producing major shifts in perception and behavior. In Ontological Coaching, way of being is regarded as the driving influence of behavior.

Our way of being can be described as a combination of our observations and perceptions, as well as the habitual behaviors which unconsciously hold us back from living to our potential and having a more satisfying life. Our way of being sculpts what we believe is possible or not possible.

Ontological Coaching aspires to transform our way of being through how we understand and interpret ourselves as well as those around us. This transformation in our way of being generates significant positive changes in performance and effectiveness.



In Ontological Coaching way of being is seen as three interrelated spheres of human existence. These three spheres are language, emotions and physiology (body posture). Our way of being can be thought of as the internal reality we live in, which especially includes the relationship we have with ourselves. It is from this internal reality that we form our reality about the external world and how we participate in it.

The Ontological Coaching methodology contains a set of tools for observing and shifting a persons way of being. These can be divided into the three "tool kits" of language, emotions and body.

**Language:** This methodology is based on a new understanding of language and communication developed in the latter part of the twentieth century. The essence of this new understanding is that (a) language consists of listening and speaking and (b) that language is fundamental in creating reality.

Language is regarded as the way people produce outcomes and generate realities. Their behavior is based on what comprises reality for them. Reality depends heavily on how people use language.

The key to this methodology is a new interpretation of the process of listening. This

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method provides a deeper and more effective way of listening that enhances communication and relationships. Listening is regarded as essential for establishing trust and rapport. With trust and rapport effectiveness can be generated, without it one cannot.

Of course, speaking is also a key business process. The methodology contains six precise linguistic tools (called basic linguistic acts) that people use in everyday conversations. People are typically not aware of how they use, and misuse, language. These tools increase one's awareness and produce more effective ways of conversing, relating, and performing in workplace settings. The methodology provides distinctions for recognizing different types of conversations and how to utilize them in different circumstances. This includes a precise, practical and highly effective linguistic model to develop collaborative behavior.

**Emotions:** Moods and emotions permeate everything people do. Moods and emotions always predispose people towards certain behaviors and not others.

Speaking, listening, and engaging in conversations, are indispensable forms of human behavior. How effectively people speak and listen reflect their moods and emotions. The methodology contains tools for recognizing, managing and shifting moods and emotions.

Unfortunately, moods and emotions have not been seen as a crucial area of learning for performance improvement. They are an integral part of the use of language for effective communication in leadership, management, coaching and team building. In short, they form a crucial dimension of morale and organizational performance.

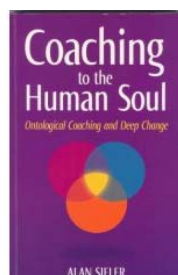
**Body:** Like moods and emotions, the body has largely been ignored as a key area of learning that impacts on individual and organizational performance. The importance of the body on the growth and development of an individual cannot be over emphasized.

The body is an integral part of our total communications mechanism. Speaking is not limited to the sound we produce - it occurs from the body. In many subtle and powerful ways, posture can keep people trapped in negative moods, and adversely impact on listening and speaking.

### APPLICATIONS

Coaching is a field that is very closely related to group facilitation. There is a great affinity between group facilitators and coaches even though group facilitators usually work with groups while coaches tend to work with individuals. As a facilitator I find that my clients need coaching to advance the goals that they established during the events I facilitate for them. Understanding and practicing coaching skills can therefore provide additional skills to service our clients. If we don't have the time to learn these skills then it would be prudent to find a well trained coach to partner with.

### RESOURCES



#### Coaching to the Human Soul Ontological Coaching and Deep Change, Vol. 1

by Alan Seiler,  
Newfield Australia, April 05  
ISBN: 1876677414 \$60

Newfield Australia article -

<http://www.newfieldaus.com.au/articles/MethodologyOfOntologicalCoaching.htm>

The Change Zone.com article on Ontological Coaching -

<http://www.changezone.co.uk/coaching/ontological%20coaching.html>

Talkingabout.com.au article on Ontological Coaching -

<http://www.talkingabout.com.au/Documents/OntologicalCoaching.htm>

My coaching partner –

<http://www.collaboratedecisions.com>