

Ashridge Masters in Executive Coaching
2020

Dissertation Summary, Dominique Munz

How do I, as a coach, create an environment that supports a client's transpersonal learning and meaning-making?

Introduction

I am exploring the question: *„How do I, as a coach, create an environment that supports a client's transpersonal learning and meaning making?“*

For many years, I have been engaged in exploring a traditional meditative path. Simultaneously, I have upheld a barrier against an integration of this practice into my work and into my public persona. The dissertation unfolds my quest into the nature of this barrier and traces it's (partial) dissolution. Whilst this personal story unfolds, my coaching style and skills undergo a change to match my evolving meaning making. Eventually some hypothesis emerge that might be useful for other coaches.

This dissertation is structured as first person action research report (McNiff, 2016) containing a preparatory cycle and three action research cycles.

The preparatory cycle allows me to get to grips with the theoretical issues my research question raises. I explore how the research question is meaningful to myself, and how I hope it is also relevant for the coaching community and our clients. I describe my use of key terms („transpersonal“, „spiritual“) and discuss issues raised by venturing into transpersonal territory such as the selection of an appropriate epistemology and the influence that my taoist ontology has on my perceptual system. I have opted for the phenomenological epistemology that I deem most appropriate for working with the Transpersonal.

The remaining three research cycles describe my engagement with the research question whilst accompanying six clients over a period of roughly six months.

Learnings in research cycle 1

In cycle 1, I have moved away from a classification into „transpersonal“ or „not-transpersonal“ topic towards a more fluid approach stating: „When a client/person shows interest in the transpersonal, you can go and probe how far they are ready and willing to go.“

Learnings from research Cycle 2

In cycle 2, I have started to develop coaching style and approach that is coherent with my transpersonal beliefs. It translates in deeper, yet funnier and more spontaneous sessions. It seems that becoming more accepting of my need for attachment and transpersonal experiences, I have learned to focus more on the ground, the relationships.

Learnings from cycle 3

In cycle 3, I find myself frequently engaging in phenomenological work. Working phenomenologically and horizontally works well for the transpersonal. Many people do have visions, intuitions or other ways of accessing an intelligence greater than themselves - but I have found that most edit these experiences out. That might be influenced by „society (that) does not, however, help us into the transpersonal.“ (Rowan, 2005, p.145), or even pathologies such experiences (West, 2000).

I am also finding, that the answer to „how to help develop into the transpersonal“ is much simpler than I had anticipated. Simply staying with the client, „horizontally“ and phenomenologically brings the transpersonal into awareness and allows clients to solve tensions they were not aware of.

Client feedback

Both my clients and my recollection of both critical and transformative moments circle around the transpersonal interventions. This seems to support my initial hypothesis that transpersonal interventions do indeed leave clients with a more profound change in personality and behavior. More research, possibly with Ashridge's critical moments method, would be needed to make a strong claim.

Integrative Reflections

I have learned that my scripts about the transpersonal, about relationships and meaning-making have made me hesitant to engage in transpersonal work. I have also discovered how a deeply held avoidant attachment pattern played out in coaching and limited my ability to work relationally.

I have become increasingly aware that meditative experience strengthened my ability for transpersonal work. Meditating before a session seems to increase my ability to hold the space for exploration of transpersonal topics. I am better able to contain my drive towards „solutioning.“

5 insights from my research seem applicable to other coaches.

1. The single most defining factor for the success of a transpersonal coach is his/her ability to keep phenomenological awareness on what is happening in the transpersonal.
 2. The transpersonal coach needs the courage and the ability to stay with these counter-cultural figures and treat them as just as important as anything else.
 3. This inner freedom is best built through felt experience of the transpersonal. A transpersonal coach needs to go through a solid training in meditation. That might take different forms. I have also found that Gestalt offers many ideas very much akin to many ideas I point out here.
 4. The coach should have his/her own (transpersonal) worldview clear. Thus, he can examine his/her beliefs against what they promise and is less in danger of imposing them on others.
 5. A (transpersonal) coach would benefit from having a basic understanding of adult development.
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