

# *Chapter Four*

## THE ESSENTIAL INSTRUMENTS



In this chapter we will explore how the analytical, appreciative and creative eyes each have a characteristic instrument that is vital to the work of the coach – the lens, mirror and compass, respectively. These are the elements that comprise the essential inner toolkit of the masterful coach.



Each of the eyes provides a specific instrument that is essential to the work of the coach. By identifying these inner instruments we can better apply each eye in practice and show how, in combination, they can lead to the discovery of mastery. Let us examine each instrument in turn, and its particular role and value to the coach.

## • DISCOVERING THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE •

Having decided to become a coach, it is very tempting to immediately begin to try to find ‘tools of the trade’. This may include lengthy questionnaires, tools that assess your clients’ preferred style, or different coaching models. When I decided to become a coach, I remember asking Joan Roberts, an established coach, whom I admire, ‘What is the best coaching model?’ I recall, to this day, how Joan drew two circles on a page, with some arrows between and we talked for almost an hour about how people relate. I still have this piece of paper and can openly admit that I never fully understood the model. But keeping the piece of paper brought sufficient calm and confidence for me to continue on the journey of becoming a coach.

While we have to find compassion for the part of us that needs the structure of such models, we are invited to trust that the essential toolkit of the coach is actually very light and, most importantly, does not need to be externally carried.

### THE INNER TOOLKIT

Though we automatically look outside for our tools, becoming a masterful coach involves the discovery and cultivation of an inner toolkit.

The search for external tools can disguise the fact that the essential tools of coaching await our discovery within. It is the compulsion of the analytical eye to search outwardly for answers and tools. This, in turn, inhibits what is vital to your coaching – your ability to keep your tools ‘light’. By keeping things light, you free yourself up to truly relate and be present

in the coaching space with your client. The need to use something specific takes away the chance for you and your client to experience the generative mystery of the coaching relationship. This is not to deny the value of employing some external coaching tools. My suggestion is that we employ these tools specifically and sparingly, while remaining conscious of how they can limit as well as serve the masterful work of the coach.

### CLIENTS' EXPECTATIONS

It's not just new coaches that are anxious to gather and use coaching tools: you will find that some clients expect you to bring coaching tools into the frame. The example below demonstrates the scenario you may often confront.

Alan is a very bright senior manager, leader and finance specialist, and is held in high regard with a good deal of responsibility. He works in a major complex multinational organisation. One of the first questions he asked of me in our initial meeting was:

Alan:       What tools will you use and bring into the coaching?

*Rather than responding immediately by offering a short list of what I might employ, I smiled and said:*

Coach:     How important do you think tools are?

Alan:       Very. They'll give us something to focus on in the coaching. What's your view, Andrew?

Coach:     I think tools can get in the way of the true work of the coach, which is to understand you deeply and help you to make the changes that you desire and can commit to make.

*My curiosity was engaged and I wondered whether Alan's need for external tools might cover a resistance to developing a coaching relationship, so the next question followed quite naturally.*

Coach: How comfortable are you to enter into a coaching relationship right now?

Alan was able to voice a real hesitation about beginning coaching and added a touch of cynicism that we explored together. It was a fruitful discussion that helped him to make conscious his own fears and doubts about the value of coaching – our work together had already begun.

We will now explore in more detail how the essential inner instruments of the coach, individually and collectively, inform our practice and help us to achieve mastery.

## • THE LENS •

The lens is the instrument of the analytical eye. Its role is to bring clarity and focus to current reality. This lens processes information by selecting, sorting and analysing. It continually contracts and focuses our field of awareness. Without the lens we would live a blurred existence, never fully in focus.

In the coaching process, the lens plays a vital role in:

- setting and agreeing the expectations and boundaries of the coaching frame;
- clarifying the client's desired goal;
- focusing and selecting what is key and of interest to the client;
- agreeing outcomes and learning;
- identifying the principal choices that clients wish to make and the actions they wish to take.

The full potential and value of the lens to the work of the coach is realised only when it is combined with the other instruments, which we will explore. When it is employed on its own, through the vision of the analytical eye, it allows us to sample only a small portion of the energy field in which we interact and participate – the visible and factual. This confines our vision and all that we may sense beyond the visible, as illustrated in Figure 10, below.

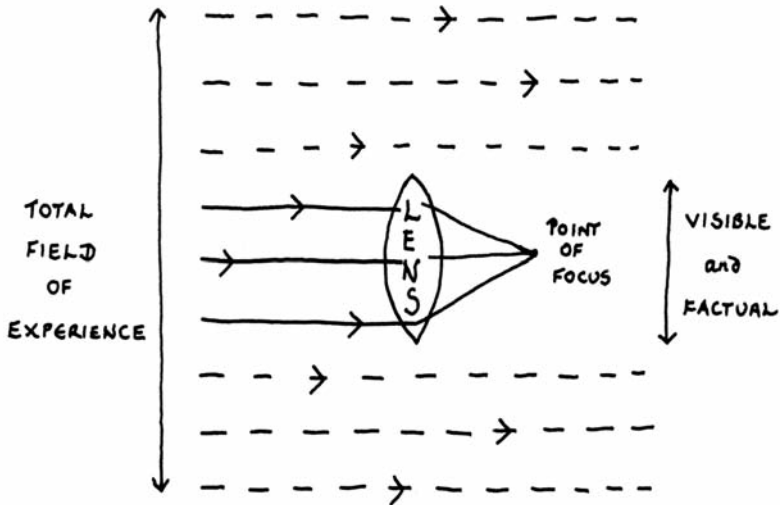


Figure 10

The lens of the analytical eye is blind to what may be hidden or unconscious and would strongly dispute the existence of anything other than the material, visible and factual. It is only when a different eye opens, offering us another instrument, that we can see the limitations of the lens.

### PAUSE POINT

Consider when and how you employ the lens in your practice as a coach.

## • THE MIRROR •

The second instrument of coaching that emerges together with the opening of the appreciative eye is the mirror. The role of the mirror is to expand awareness of both the coach and client, by reflection. This is a mysterious instrument whose nature and workings extend beyond our rational comprehension. It has an enigmatic quality, so to understand how this instrument works it is useful to consider how its mystery and power have been explored in well-known stories, myths and fairy tales.

## PAUSE POINT

**What is the value and nature of the mirror of the coach?**

## MYSTERY AND MYTHS OF THE MIRROR

Alice, in *Alice in Wonderland*, was fascinated by the workings and promise of the mirror, and so she stepped through the looking glass. What she discovered was a strange new world – crazy, yet also wonderful and magical.

It is through the mirror that we can enter into a wonderland of sorts – a new world of inner experiences. This realm is feared by the rational mind because it is unknown, yet its discovery and exploration is an essential part of the journey of the coach and client.

## MIRROR, MIRROR . . .

One of my earliest childhood memories was coming face to face with the talking mirror in *Snow White*. I still recall the ‘mirror, mirror on the wall’ scene, when the mirror appears for the first time. As a six-year-old child, I was scared to death by this

mirror, largely because it had a face and could talk. Little was I to know then that I would spend my professional life cultivating such a mirror that not only had a face and could talk, but also ears, a heart, and a receptive mind, body and spirit!

### THE AUTHENTIC MIRROR

The single most important aspiration of the coach is to cultivate a mirror that is authentic – one in which the client finds trust, and where, through such a mirror, the client is discovered, defined and created.

Do you search for an authentic mirror? Do you long to meet that rare person you can trust to accurately and compassionately reflect who you truly are?

My childhood experience of the mirror is a good reminder that it is not always easy to look into the mirror. Despite our longing to be discovered, we also fear the possibility.

**The mirror of the coaching relationship  
has the power to reveal the clients to  
themselves; this is the gift, and the skill,  
of a masterful coach**

Fairy tales and stories that feature the mirror remind us that coaching is a voyage to facilitate self-discovery. This journey cannot be forced – the coach must check their client’s commitment to enter into this journey and seek to understand the client’s guiding wishes and needs. All this must be done sensitively, with pacing, while encouraging the client’s prospect of self-discovery, development and learning.

## EXPANDING AWARENESS AND OUR CAPACITY TO RELATE

The purpose of the mirror is to expand awareness – in both the coach and the client.

The coach expands awareness in four possible interrelated dimensions:

- self-awareness
- awareness of the other
- awareness of the influence of the collective of culture
- awareness of the larger energetic field in which we participate – the universal field.

An important relationship exists between the capacity of the coach to self-reflect and our ability to relate. One, in fact, necessitates the other. The mirror is a self-calibrated instrument. The extent to which you are able to self-reflect and self-accept is the same extent to which you can relate. What we accept in ourselves, we can unconditionally meet in others. Our capacity to self-reflect and accept therefore defines both the scope and quality of our coaching practice.

### THE NATURE OF THE MIRROR

Some time ago I decided to accept an invitation to speak to a group of senior human resources professionals based in a large pharmaceutical company who wished to know how coaching actually works and what value it might offer to their staff and business. While presenting to them about the importance of the work of the coach in business, I explained the essential value of the coaching mirror. While I was explaining this, an image of Janus, a Roman god, came to mind. Janus was the god of door-



ways and gateways, who presided over beginnings and endings. His unique ability was that he had two heads aligned in opposite directions and could see in two different directions simultaneously.

I see the coaching mirror, like Janus's two heads, as two directional. Let me explain more fully why this is so. Have you seen in films or on television where someone who is being interviewed is unaware that there is a second presence behind the glass of a two-way mirror? Though this presence commonly goes unseen, it is ever watchful and observing. The mirror of the coach is similarly composed of these two elements: a capacity to reflect and an ever-watchful observing presence existing from somewhere behind the glass. We will revisit this aspect more fully in the next chapter.

**The living mirror is paradoxical in that it  
can both reflect and observe  
simultaneously**

THE MIRROR IN PRACTICE

To demonstrate how we employ the mirror in the coaching frame, let me share a case study with you from some recent coaching work I have done.

The client, Colin, is a senior business manager in a new role with a new boss, and issues are emerging that are troubling him.

Colin: I don't know what's happening. The behaviour of my boss has been strange.

Coach: How has it been strange?

*I am inviting Colin to expand his awareness through reflection.*

Colin: I have felt as though I am being watched.

Coach: Anything more?

*Are there any further deeper reflections?*

Colin: I'm making more mistakes.

Coach: You look a little sad, Colin.

*I notice sadness in Colin's eyes and decide to mirror this back. I am curious why he may be feeling this way.*

Colin: I fear failure and I'm making more mistakes than I normally make.

Coach: I see – is there anything more?

*This is a further chance to see if there are deeper reflections.*

Colin: Yes, I think I'm reaching the end of my line.

Coach: Help me understand what that means?

*I am continuing to invite an expansion of awareness.*

Colin: I have to do something – this situation has to change.

Coach: So you've been feeling watched. Being watched is making you sad and perhaps anxious. As a result of this, you're making more mistakes. You feel you've reached the end of the line and something now needs to change.

*Here I employ the help of my attentive inner observer who sits behind the glass of the mirror and reflects back to Colin the key realisations he has stated. I group them together – like grouping together key pieces of a puzzle – to give a clue to the larger emerging picture.*

Colin: Yes, it's the first time that I've considered it all together in this way.

Coach: What part do you play in this, Colin?

*I am continuing to invite Colin to reflect and to see if he can take responsibility for his part in this scenario.*

Colin: Mmm. I'm becoming negative and fearful, which may be resulting in my boss watching me even more.

Coach: That is insightful. Your fear of failure and making more mistakes is attracting the attention of your boss?

Colin: Yes.

Coach: What do you need? What might help you?

*The lens is now brought in to help to focus and clarify – a contraction rather than an expansion.*

Colin: I need to suggest that my boss steps back a little because I feel micromanaged, and that's creating the problem. I need him to trust me a little more and take the pressure off myself.

Coach: How might you achieve this?

Colin: I have my performance appraisal next week and I'm willing to speak about this. It could be a win-win situation if he's willing to trust me a little more. I can always report on my progress, rather than feeling that I'm being watched. Maybe I can agree to let him know when I'm feeling micromanaged?

- Coach: Great – that’s a courageous and responsible step. Is there anything more you may need to help you to take this step?
- Colin: I’ll need to ask if my boss is willing for me to be honest about what I feel can be improved. If things get sticky and I need to take more time, can I come back to you to explore where to go next?
- Coach: Yes, of course. I do feel this is a positive and important step for you to take. You’ve both discovered and owned your own part in this. That’s insightful and you’ve defined how you can potentially help yourself. Well done.

*Here I am helping to ground the learning by mirroring how the client has taken personal responsibility for his part and is willing to act. I am reflecting how the client has demonstrated his own personal inner resourcefulness and how I sincerely appreciate the work he has done.*

Colin began the session believing that the problem belonged to the new boss. As the session progressed he was able to see and take responsibility for his part in the larger sequence of events. Colin was then able to access his inner resourcefulness by realising the power and choice to consciously move this forward. The mirror of the coaching relationship was vital to this outcome. It helped Colin to obtain a wider scope, understanding and appreciation of the situation, and to own what had been hidden and previously unspoken.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING MIRRORED

To aid your understanding of the power and importance of the mirror in the work of the coach, let us consider how the client

experiences the mirror. Recently I invited a client to describe his experience of being mirrored:

Client: I can see a self that I didn't fully understand before. I know that sounds strange, but I have been able to discover many things about myself that I would not have seen alone. Your vision and reflections have helped me to see differently. You often repeat or reflect what I have said back to me and you even reflect my mood back. I wouldn't look at myself that way on my own. It's like the back of my head – you can't see it, but coaching can help you to see it.

The mirror can sense as well as see, extending our vision – it is the essential instrument of the appreciative eye after all – so we can mirror subjective experiences such as mood, feelings or our clients' passion, for example.

### THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MIRROR

So far we have explored the workings of what we may call the internal mirror of the coach. A study of the mirror in coaching is not complete if we do not acknowledge the importance of a second mirror: the external mirror of nature. Let me explain and then illustrate why I believe this to be important.

**There are two types of mirror: the one we find externally in nature outside and the one that is an essential part of *our* nature**

We employ the external mirror of nature when we find places where we come to rest and reflect. This process of slowing and reflecting parallels the experience in the coach–client relationship.

The places to which we are drawn in nature are personally chosen. One coaching client, Peter, who appeared in an earlier case study, has developed the habit of walking the dog on a regular basis. This represents a way of stepping out to reflect on things. He will often bring in reflections from his walks with the dog. I have a number of clients who return quite regularly to specific natural settings in order to employ the mirror, reflect and bring their experiences back into the coaching frame. Within the coaching frame these experiences can be more consciously explored and grounded, often revealing key learning for the client.

The external mirror of nature is rarely acknowledged, as little or no reference is made to the value of this mirror in the coaching literature. Similarly, if your initial reaction is to reject its use and value in coaching, before you do, please read on. I will provide illustrations taken from my own experience that support the importance of the external mirror to coaching.

If we immediately dismiss the value and importance of the external mirror, then we can miss how it may serve the growth of the client. On a very practical note, we may not be willing to free our clients to explore why they feel drawn to nature. Might we, unwittingly, limit the growth of our client by ignoring this dimension of our coaching practice?

### COMBINING THE MIRRORS

Although I am separating the internal and external mirrors in order to examine them, they are, in fact, closely interrelated. When we reflect in the external mirror of nature, we remember and discover our deeper nature, the source of our passion and motivation to develop, learn and grow. The mirror of nature reminds us of our deeper authenticity and our truest and most natural self.

## Nature may play an important role in helping us to rediscover our 'naturalness'

Larry is an experienced coach. In coaching supervision Larry describes how he regularly visits his favourite place in nature: a coastal walk in the UK. Wanting to understand how and why this natural setting is so important to Larry's well-being and life style, I invited him to describe what happens when he returns to this place.

Larry: When I arrive there I immediately feel free of everyday constraints that clutter my mind. I find a new and fresh perspective to things and time to reflect. This helps me to put my life and work into perspective. Time changes – it becomes quality time. I no longer rush and there seems to be more of it – time, that is. Time to reflect. It is quality 'me time' and I realise how much of my time I give away to everyone else. I somehow feel more alive and more in touch with myself. I get in touch with what is really important – what my life and work is all about. This time helps me coach. I remember why I chose to become a coach and feel as though I am on the right path and quite satisfied.

The external mirror of nature appears to provide Larry with a larger context in which the things that were previously troubling him melt away. Larry feels more in touch with his true self as a result of this experience. Nature reminds and reconnects us with our own deeper nature and helps us to recall our purpose and prospects.

Recently I coached a senior business leader of a large multinational organisation. Ian's main reason for coaching was to

improve his effectiveness within a complex new role. As we worked together, Ian included his wish to process the loss of an important relationship and the feeling that something was missing from his life. Through coaching, attention was given to each and all of these areas of client interest.

As the coaching work progressed, we both noted how Ian was repeatedly bringing in strong images of nature, particularly mountains and coastlines. When we explored further, we found that these places held a deep longing – a calling to venture out into nature. Ian permitted himself the choice to take time away alone and took the initiative to have a break, choosing a particular mountainous setting. I was curious what role this might play in his coaching.

In the following session, I invited him to share his experience of this journey and what he found there that could be important to his coaching journey. This was his response:

Ian: It's the vastness (*pause*). I can see the horizon (*pause*), the sheer vastness (*pause*). Here in London it is flat and there are no mountains. It's the wonder and possibility of climbing a mountain. There's limitless opportunity.

*The external mirror of nature provides Ian with a renewed sense of perspective, a chance to reflect and a sense of limitless opportunity.*

Ian: It's pushing the boundaries of who I am, what you can feel and sense. At one level, my insignificance (*pause*). How the power of me can influence that vastness. It's a little mind-blowing.



*With this larger perspective, Ian reflects and considers his own significance.*

Ian: I would hate to have zero impact. It's about my legacy. When my bones become dust, what's important is a fulfilled life. For me, it's about relationships – staying in and building relationships. Also, what I pass on to my children and what I can influence here, through my work. There is a difference that I would love to make. This is what's important – that you have lived your life.

Note how much Ian had realised through his trip to the mountains. Ian reconnected more strongly than before with what was truly important in his life and work. He brought back into the coaching frame a new and deeper awareness of his passion and his motivation to change – an energy he can utilise in his working life.

The result of a series of trips into nature was a wish to make a difference and a need to give something back. As a result of stepping out, when he stepped back into organisational life his energy and vitality were greater. This newly discovered motivation culminated in a wish that, in some way, his work could help the developing world. Ian considered the possibility of taking a period of time out, getting directly involved in projects helping to build schools in the developing world. Ultimately a strange twist in circumstance was presented. An opportunity arose where he was able to shift the focus of his current role in the organisation to one that provided supplies of new medicines to the developing world.

Nature had reminded Ian of his deeper aspirations that he now wished to fulfil through his occupation. As our coaching concluded, Ian spoke about being more motivated, less overwhelmed and having a clearer sense of direction to his working life. I could not deny the value of the external mirror in his development through coaching.

My take-home message here is not to overlook or ignore the significance of the external mirror of wider nature to the work of the coach. In my experience, the external mirror of nature and the internal mirror of the coaching relationship combine quite naturally and fruitfully.

#### PAUSE POINT

**Do you have a place in nature? What role does nature play in your work?**

If we summarise how the mirror serves the work of the coach and combine the value of the internal and external mirrors, we discover that this instrument:

- expands our awareness, helping us to discover something more;
- helps us to conceive of a larger context that places our working lives in perspective;
- opens up the mind and heart to help us to remember the source of our innate motivation and desire to change.

Let me share how the external mirror of nature has been of value to me. Repeatedly I am drawn back to the mountains of Andalusia and village life. There I find a natural beauty that inspires and rejuvenates. The majestic landscape of mountains

and sea provides a larger context. While viewing the great expanse of nature I reflect and put my own life into perspective. It was while enjoying my favourite seat (Figure 11, p.90) that I first had the idea to write this book. I returned to the same place to continue writing some of its chapters in situ.

## • THE INNER COMPASS •

When the creative eye opens, two important things seem to happen: the lens and the mirror intimately combine and a further essential instrument to the work of the masterful coach emerges – the inner compass. Let us consider the importance of both of these events and how they influence and impact on your capacity to coach.

### THE MIRROR AND THE LENS, IN TANDEM

With the opening of the creative eye, the limitations of both the individual lens and mirror are compensated as they combine. When the mirror is employed singly, you will recall how its limitation is an inability to structure and ground experience. The mirror greatly expands awareness, but, without a means of contracting, awareness is left open and ungrounded. The inclusion of the lens means that growing awareness can be clarified and brought into focus. In combination, the lens grounds and interprets the experience of the mirror.

Recall how the lens of the analytical eye is quick to react by processing the factual and visible. This represents only a small, limited fraction of the total energetic field. When combined with the mirror, the lens is able to process a much larger fraction and potentially the whole field of information. The inclusion of the mirror greatly increases the input of data to the



Figure 11

lens and produces a higher quality output. A representation of how the lens and mirror combine and work in tandem is shown in Figure 12, below.

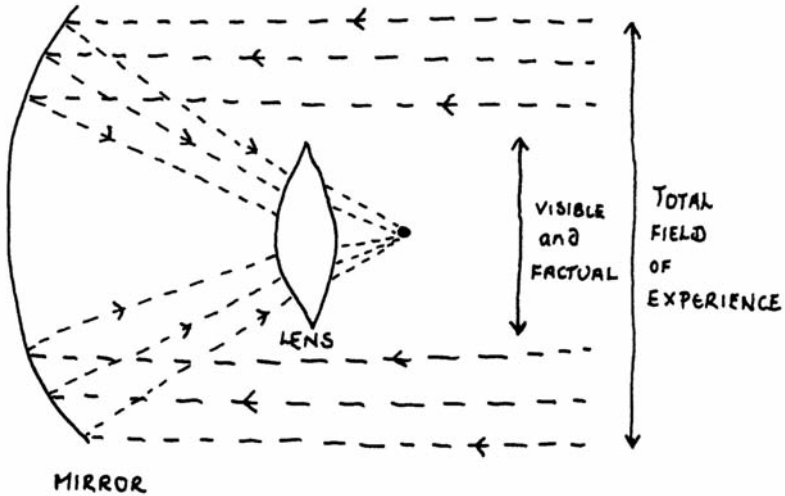


Figure 12

In the creative eye the receptivity of the mirror and its capacity to expand awareness is now grounded by the ability of the lens to contract, clarify and focus. In coaching practice, through the vision of the creative eye, the urgency of the lens to get to the answer is balanced by the curiosity of the mirror to contemplate and question.

Whereas the mirror of the appreciative eye is receptive to the possibility of the future, the lens of the analytical eye makes reference to memory and the past. In combination, the past and the future are both brought together into the prospect and possibility of the present moment. This combination offers the coach a remarkable flexibility and freedom to consciously respond.

## A VARIFOCAL LENS

The lens of the creative eye becomes much more adaptable and flexible than that of the analytical eye. A recent visit to the optician gave me a better way of understanding and imagining this lens.

My own eyes appear to be changing as I age. My near and distant vision is not now totally clear. I asked the optician how he could help. He told me to try a varifocal lens. This, he explained, is a type of lens that many people now use in their spectacles that can naturally accommodate and compensate for a wide scope of possible visual limitations. This single lens has the capacity to compensate for both near and far-sightedness and so accommodates a much more unlimited vision.

I have found it useful to think of the creative eye as having a sensitive mirror and a type of varifocal lens. The lens of the creative eye can sample and process a much wider field of information, including what is sensed as well as seen.

## TOWARDS THE INNER COMPASS

When combined, the mirror and lens result in the emergence of the third essential instrument of coaching – the inner compass. Somehow the dynamic flexibility of the mirror and lens to expand and contract awareness results in the emergence of a stable inner reference and guide. This is a deeper centre of identity and source that we are each invited to discover. Figure 13, opposite, is an illustration of the inner compass that shows how its discovery serves the coach.

Imagine that the inner compass highlights a point within where we are able to pivot – a place we can move from or to, allowing the coach to rebalance, reorientate and realign.

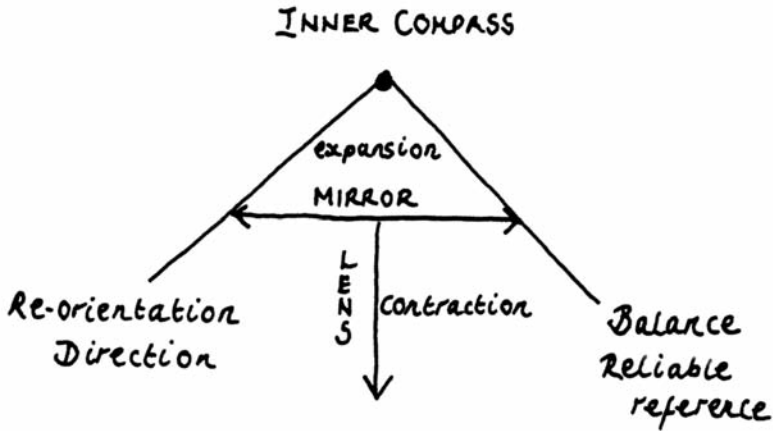


Figure 13

### The inner compass is a place where we can completely come to rest and revitalise

Recognising the inner compass, we can continually realign with our source of hidden potential and power and remember and realise our desire and motivation to change.

The inner compass serves the coach in a number of important ways:

- It offers the coach a point of complete balance.
- It is a stable centre of identity where the coach can experience without being overwhelmed.
- It is a guide, providing an inner reference and a clear sense of direction.
- It reorientates and realigns us with our inner motivation to develop, learn and change.
- It deepens the attentiveness of the coach and our capacity to concentrate.

- It can sense and consciously acknowledge the larger field in which we participate and offer this new context to further the client learning.
- It locates the natural, original self as the source of our mastery.

### DISCOVERING RESILIENCE

Let us consider more fully several ways in which the inner compass serves the work of the coach. This centre and inner reference gives the coach an increased sense of stability and calm. With the discovery of the compass, the inner distractions that commonly limit and distract our ability to coach are diminished and ultimately are silenced. Let me illustrate this in practice by using a case study of recent coaching work.

Mary is a physician, senior manager and a leader working in major industry. She has a very strong intellect. Her problem, and why she came to coaching, is a tendency to be over-critical, sceptical and judgemental.

We explored how Mary might apply the three eyes. We have shared and discussed the model in some detail and now Mary is considering how to put this into practice. This may seem easy – maybe too easy – but test it for yourself and explore consciously, stepping into the different viewpoints of the three eyes:

Coach: Take your time to connect with the analytical eye. Adopt this viewpoint. Tell me, how do you experience the analytical eye?

Mary: I know this eye well (*smile*). It's loud (*pause*).

Coach: What's loud, Mary?

Mary: It's really loud (*pause*), the voices in my head – telling me what I should do.

Coach: Tell me a little more.



Mary: They judge me. In fact they're very critical and harsh (*pause*). I think this is why my self-esteem is quite low and maybe why I come over often as critical and sceptical (*long pause*).

*Mary realises how the judging and critical inner voices of the analytical eye may account for sceptical and critical persona.*

Mary: These voices keep me down and have made me feel quite depressed in the past (*pause*). I hadn't realised how much goes on in my head and just how loud these voices are (*we smile*).

*Note how the voices negatively impact her self-perception.*

Coach: Maybe this is the first time you've met with these voices? There is a difference between realising how loud they are and being able to witness them, and being lost in their volume and driven by them.

Mary: That's true.

Coach: What would your experience be if you were to open the appreciative eye? Would you like to try?

Mary: OK.

*I step into this viewpoint within myself and recall some of the characteristics, inviting Mary to follow suit.*

Coach: Take time to step into the viewpoint of the appreciative eye. Recall the characteristics of this eye that we have discussed – its curiosity to relate to and interest in the other, its capacity to reflect – and recall how this is an eye that

- operates from the inside out and places value on your experience of things. (*Long pause, I notice her smiling.*) What's happening, I'm curious?
- Mary: (*Smiles*) This experience is so different from the first.
- Coach: (*I smile*) How different?
- Mary: No joke, it feels like sunshine (*smiling*).
- Coach: What feels like sunshine?
- Mary: My inner experience. It's so much lighter and quieter and the voices have gone – well almost (*pause*). That's amazing. I'm much more interested in getting to know the other person and not so self-centred. The voices have almost gone – that's amazing, isn't it?
- Coach: It seems that you've found a way of stepping beyond the voices in your head to a different and quieter place?
- Mary: Yes, that's true (*pause*). I think I have.
- Coach: Remember this realisation, Mary. How would it be if you could work from this place?
- Mary: I would be so much happier, lighter. More relaxed – less critical, less cynical
- Coach: An important realisation, eh? How about your experience of the creative eye? See if you are able to step into that viewpoint. Recall how this offers a place of balance, deep reflection, and a sense of direction as you align with your desire and motivation to change. It combines each aspect of the analytical and appreciative eyes and offers a continual opportunity to be directed from the inside out (*long pause*). Are you there (*smile*)?

- Mary: Yes, I think so. It's very still and the loudness has gone completely, I think. I'm still aware of the analytical part of me, but it's more in balance now – more in check. In fact I'm balanced. That's amazing – it's so quiet here, when I'm balanced – there doesn't seem to be any voices – there's no inner nagging at all (*we smile*).
- Coach: Does it surprise you that you can find a place within of balance, calm and quiet, where you can reflect and reorientate?
- Mary: Yes. It's such a surprise. Can't quite believe it.
- Coach: That's true of part of you that can't quite believe it. Remember this place, it is there for you whenever you need it. What's it like to be there?
- Mary: Peaceful and powerful – and quite new.

### PERSONAL STYLE

It was a joy to see Mary's expression change as she explored the opening of her appreciative and creative eyes. When opening the appreciative eye, her furrowed brow and serious face – a characteristic of her strong rational intellect – simply disappeared. Her face literally lit up, like sunshine.

In such moments, we realise how different reality can look by changing our inner viewpoint. Through the inner compass, we can learn how to flex our personal style. We realise the power to inwardly direct – to make choices of how we ideally wish to be from the inside out. This instrument allows us to centre and inwardly direct and master our approach.

## STILLNESS AND PRESENCE

In this case study Mary arrived at the realisation of an inner point of complete balance and choice – the inner compass. This is a place of inner stillness and quiet, without distraction. If we are able to coach from this place then we are largely free from fear, doubt, cynicism and judgement. We develop an impartial and unconditional stance. Conversely, we become still, calm, responsive, confident and accepting. It is important to realise how our aspiration to become unconditional in our work is a quality that we realise from the inside out. Through the discovery of the inner compass, we deepen the quality of our relationships.

The coach is able to give their complete attention to the activity of coaching. Their ability to see, sense, relate and resolve is increased. This describes the sensitivity, responsiveness and artistry of the masterful coach, as we will explore in Chapter 6. The realisation of the inner compass increases greatly the attentiveness and concentration of the coach. If we lose sight of the inner compass when we coach, then we are unable to be still and quiet and are easily distracted by internal and external influences and events. Your ability to concentrate and coach is diminished. Without the realisation of the inner compass we are not able to give our full concentration to the activity of coaching, or place our attention on the development of our client.

### THE INNER ORIENTEER AND RELIABLE GUIDE

The compass is a reliable inner guide. With the compass, the coach can navigate their way through unknown territory, confident of not getting lost or, put another way, being comfortable

with not knowing either the way forward or the answer. This instrument is essential when the coach enters into the unknown and is beginning to know and understand the client more fully. Paradoxically, it is only when we surrender our certainty that we can feel the presence of the inner compass, and this realisation, in turn, gives us certainty and confidence to practise as a coach.

### DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The inner compass offers the coach a place and point of deep reflection and concentration. It is through the compass that we can truly develop our psychological awareness.

From this point of stillness, the coach is able to enter deep reflection, simultaneously observing themselves and their client. Using the inner compass as a stable reference point, the coach is able to identify their behaviour, inner processes and experiences from those of the client. Also, the coach can reflect upon and consider the influence and impact of the wider culture; for example, how the culture of the organisation can impact on the client and their wish to change. As the coach stills and finds this inner reference, the larger field in which the client participates becomes conscious.

**In this way, the inner compass can help the coach to realise a more universal field and context**

Awareness of the inner compass provides a 3D vision that includes each of the different dimensions of awareness discussed earlier in this chapter.

## PERCEIVING POTENTIAL

When you recognise your inner compass, you can stop and check in with yourself and what you are experiencing right *now*. The same applies to the client – the coach can use this reflective observation point to develop a picture of where the client is and, ideally, where they desire to be. Using the inner compass as reference, the coach can see the client's potential for development, learning and growth – a key role of the masterful coach. This is a prime position to perceive potential and provides a great opportunity for 'planting seeds'. What I mean by this is to plant seeds of an idea within the client. Seeding an idea or thought in this way does not give the client the answer, but reframes the situation by offering the potential opportunity for development.

In coaching, reaching the destiny is not the only answer. It is equally, if not more important, to be able to recognise the client's potential for growth and desire to change – the process of becoming.

## THE FOUR FACULTIES OF THE INNER COMPASS

The inner compass is a place of reflection, reorientation, rest and rejuvenation. This instrument is highly receptive, in contrast to the lens of the analytical eye, which is reactive. In a way, the inner compass is a refined instrument and marks the pinnacle of the receptivity of the coach. As the coach develops awareness and increasingly employs the inner compass, four faculties emerge that are essential to masterful practice of the coach. These are intention, intuition, imagination and integrity. We will be examining the value of each of these faculties to masterful practice in Chapter 8.

## • COACHING AND THE JIGSAW •

While thinking of a way to illustrate how the essential instruments of the coach combine in the vision of the creative eye, I have repeatedly been drawn to consider the jigsaw puzzle. I will use this as an analogy to demonstrate the combined value of the inner toolkit of the coach.

My sister Hazel loves jigsaws. Recently I bought her a complex one. I watched her from a distance working on her jigsaw, choosing a piece and searching for a fit. Suddenly I realised that our life's journey is not unlike the jigsaw puzzle. However, it differs from Hazel's since we don't know the picture of our completed jigsaw. In life and work we not only have to discover the different pieces of the jigsaw, but often also build it, piecing the puzzle together without knowing the whole picture. In effect, we design the jigsaw of our life in a continuum of living and we ultimately aspire to create and complete a picture of what we uniquely desire.

We discover our desire to make and complete our jigsaw from the inside out. The picture of the completed jigsaw is unique to you. What appears to be more universal is our motivation to complete the puzzle. Might we all wish to piece together our life and work in a way that makes us feel more whole, complete and satisfied? In aspiring to solve this puzzle we can make meaning of our lives and work, and develop, learn and grow.

### PAUSE POINT

**How does your work as a coach relate to the analogy of the jigsaw puzzle?**

Our clients turn to coaching for a number of different reasons, including:

- a key piece of the puzzle is missing;
- we are not clear how, or if, our pieces fit together;
- we are feeling stuck and have lost the motivation to resolve the puzzle;
- we have little idea of where we wish to go – the picture we aspire to complete.

Coaching helps to resolve each and all of these challenges Let's explore how.

#### THE ESSENTIAL INSTRUMENTS AND THE JIGSAW

Through the lens of the analytical eye we often start off looking for the different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of life, believing that each one holds the answer and solution. What the lens discovers are many different separate pieces with no apparent connection. The lens of the creative eye is vital to the study of any one piece in detail. The lens is expert in seeing how each piece is distinct and different. It brings clarity to where the client is at the moment, the exact number of different pieces and the next step he wishes to take in helping to solve the puzzle.

Through the mirror of the creative eye, the coach can help the client to bring into conscious awareness a number of different pieces of the jigsaw to consider and potentially accept and own. The client can now discover new pieces that were hidden or previously completely unknown. The capacity to reflect allows the client to look beyond any one piece of the jigsaw and to conceive of the larger whole, remembering their motivation and desire to complete the jigsaw puzzle.



The inner compass is vital in helping to piece the jigsaw puzzle together. It provides an ideal, steady and stable base from which to compile the jigsaw. It helps the client to see all the different pieces of the jigsaw and to realise how they may fit together in a way that completes the puzzle. The coach is stilled sufficiently to help the client to see the larger context that the client consciously desires. The compass can also discern those pieces of the jigsaw that belong to the client or coach – or both in some instances. Only through the creative eye and the combination of compass, mirror and lens can the puzzle be resolved and the whole picture of the puzzle be realised.

#### A PUZZLE WITHIN A PUZZLE

For much of our working lives, our focus is on solving the jigsaw puzzle. With the help of the coach we can discover the pieces, how they may fit together and our motivation to complete the jigsaw. However, what we realise is that completion is not the answer. Each time we realise the whole picture, the whole then appears to become a part of something larger still. Unlike the boxed jigsaw puzzle, our jigsaw does not complete and is without a solution. Might we consider the prospect that our jigsaw is but one piece of humanity's jigsaw in the making?

So what do we learn from our experience about human nature and how we develop and learn? Rather than solving the puzzle, the coach can help the client to realise that we are beings ever in the process of becoming. Self has no solution; the goal to solve and answer is not an end in itself, for there is always a new beginning. With this in mind, the need to reach an answer and to solve the problem diminishes. What becomes more meaningful is making the journey itself our destiny. The focus shifts from finding an answer to placing our attention on the current

moment and activity and the chance to live more fully each step of the journey.

### MASTERY AND THE JIGSAW

Instead of driving the client towards the answer, the masterful coach regards ‘problems’ not as something to be urgently solved, but as more sources of hidden potential with the possibility for new growth. The apparent lock becomes the client’s key.

To conclude, let’s explore how the three essential instruments of the coach are employed in practice – being mindful of the jigsaw. In this case study the coach’s client is a senior manager who has been invited to develop her leadership skills in order to step up into a more senior role. She is a coach who is in a supervisory relationship with the author. For the sake of anonymity we will call her ‘Jane’.

Jane: My client never seems to stop talking for almost all the session.

Coach: How is that for you?

*While my client is speaking, I go to my inner compass and inner reference and deeply reflect, checking in with what I am experiencing in my body – my thoughts and feelings. What I realise is that I am not feeling, in fact I am quite cut off from my feelings. I am curious why this is so and what this may be telling me about my client and perhaps her client.*

Jane: I have to wait patiently for a small window to open up in order to coach. It’s often only for a few minutes in a whole session.

Coach: How do you feel in the session with your client?

*I am very curious about how my client is feeling both now and in her sessions. So I continue to explore.*

Jane: OK. I try to stay present to my client.

Coach: Imagine you are there now. Describe your experience to me.

Jane: (Pause) I go in and out. I sometimes feel present, but then I can lose it and feel lost. Then I feel cut off and I don't feel anything.

*My client confirms my own experience – 'I feel cut off and I don't feel anything' – so how might this experience inform her work as a coach? I explore.*

Coach: That's good awareness. So your experience can change as you sit with the client. Sometimes you feel present and sometimes absent. In fact, at times you don't feel anything?

*I mirror back the key aspects of awareness that she has presented.*

Jane: Yes. That's it.

Coach: Anything more?

Jane: I can switch off. Even though I'm sitting there, I can switch off.

Coach: OK, so what does this tell you?

Jane: That I'm not being present enough in the coaching session?

*I check in with my inner compass again – and reflect inwardly, seeking guidance and clarity of my next step. My client is seeing her experience as irrelevant to her client and that she may be doing something wrong or not quite right. I reflect and consider if this is the right time to plant a seed – something that will reframe the situ-*

*ation and provide a possible new context and opportunity for learning and development for my client. I decide it is the right time.*

Coach: Are you assuming that this experience and what you're sensing is all yours?

Jane: What do you mean?

Coach: Let me plant a seed. How might your experience inform and deepen your understanding of the client? How might your experience help to describe what your client may also be experiencing?

*Seed planted – reframe made. Might her experience tell her something important about her client that may be valuable to the coaching work?*

Jane: Mmm (*pause*). That's interesting.

Coach: Let's play with this a little. Let's see if this can foster your learning and practice. What might this tell you?

*We are employing the lens to affirm, focus and ground learning.*

Jane: That my client may also be feeling in and out of relationship and quite cut off in the coaching session.

*My client is working well – the seed is already growing.*

Coach: Well done. What you're sensing and experiencing may mirror what your client may be experiencing.

*I am affirming and grounding the learning.*

Jane: That helps me to understand so much more (*pause*). I always feel in my head when I'm with this client and maybe that's where my client is?

Coach: Good. How does this new awareness inform your work with the client?

*Can this new awareness inform her practice? We are employing the lens to focus and clarify.*

Jane: When I feel cut off, I could ask how she is feeling?

Coach: How might that serve?

Jane: It gives the client a chance and opportunity to own and say how she may be feeling. She may also be able to talk about being stuck or cut off. We would be relating a little more – things would be more real, more authentic – if she were able to do that. This may be limiting how she relates and her performance.

*I check in with my compass for direction and decide to help to ground the learning while also mirroring the paradox of her client – how activity may hide a sense of feeling stuck and cut off. I sincerely acknowledge her willingness to explore working in this way.*

Coach: Good. It's interesting, isn't it? Our clients may be exceptionally busy and fill the coaching space with words, but beneath a very active intellect they might be feeling quite stuck. Possibly cut off from their feelings and out of relationship with themselves. This mirrors what you were experiencing in this session. The question is: how might this inform your work with the client?

Jane: I think I've got it. I'll practise working with this.

Coach: Great. Bring your learning back into supervision.

This case study illustrates the use of the three essential instruments and shows how the coach can work to discern unconscious processes. Such awareness and learning can deepen the practice of the coach while fostering the client's development and growth.

We have explored three essential instruments of the coach – the lens, the mirror and the compass, and how these can combine through the creative eye to allow the coach the opportunity to practise more masterfully. Through the coaching relationship we can discover, affirm and create who we are. In realising that our jigsaw is never complete, we give ourselves the permission to look behind and to recognise our true, genuine and most natural self rather than seek the answer. This is the secret to our mastery, which we will explore more fully in Chapter 6.