

# Mentoring for Change

leadership, coaching, mentoring, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

- The CEO's Trusted Advisor
- Sentic States – Expanding your Range of Emotional Expression
- The Coach as Shaman

With best wishes

*Mike the Mentor*

## The CEO's Trusted Advisor

CEOs' jobs are like no-one else's in the organisation. No-one else:

- is so starved of unbiased information
- so needs to hear hard truths
- is such a target for criticism of the business
- is the final arbiter in so many vital business decisions and thus so vulnerable to self-doubt
- has no true peers and is so intensely alone.

For these reasons and others, CEOs need close, long-term relationships with trusted professionals. In "Confessions of a Trusted Counselor" in the September 2005 Harvard Business Review, David Nadler identifies the six most common dilemmas facing such advisors and suggests resolutions to them. These are issues which coaches and mentors face every day in coaching executives as well as CEOs:

1. **Is my ultimate loyalty to the CEO who pays for my services or to the institution which pays for his?** Nadler wonders whether, if he unearths doubts about the CEO's competence or character, he has a responsibility to share the information with the board? 20 years ago he would have answered no; today he would say yes. To diffuse such loyalty issues, he raises them at the start of the relationship.
2. **How much and what kind of information should I convey between employees and the CEO?** Nadler refuses to act as a messenger because otherwise he weakens or circumvents the organisations' management processes and relationships – even though being a prized source of information might be an attractive way to demonstrate his worth!
3. **Can I share my opinions about individual**

**employees without inappropriately inserting myself into the assessment process and internal politics?** Nadler has 3 rules: never rush to judgement; do not take decisions lightly; and always remember that my job is to help the client make the right decision, not to make the decision for them.

4. **How do I immerse myself in the CEO's view of the world without making it my own?** In working effectively with CEOs Nadler seeks to balance empathy with objectivity. Easier to start with, this becomes increasingly difficult over time as the relationship deepens. He suggests speaking regularly to people of different minds ranging from mild doubters to outright dissidents to keep a grip on reality.
5. **How do I prevent my privileged position going to my head?** For Nadler, the simplest treatment for an inflated ego is to self-administer regular doses of humility. He reminds himself that his access to the CEO is a function of his job. It is not a sign of power.
6. **If the CEO and I like each other personally, can we – should we – become friends?** Nadler suggests that the best consultant-CEO relationships are characterised by candour and a clear recognition of each other's frailties, tempered by genuine affection and easy rapport. They balance strong personal bonds with strong personal boundaries – but they never lose sight of the purpose of the relationship.

Nadler's experience clearly has important lessons for coaches. Probably the most important resource we have as coaches to help us address these and similar dilemmas is coaching supervision.

## The Coach as Shaman

*The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram (Vintage Books 1996) is an extraordinary book about our disconnection from the natural world and our

## Sentic States – Expanding your Range of Emotional Expression



Effective coaches are good at building rapport with a wide range of people. They do this by matching language, posture, breathing etc – and, in particular, by utilising emotional rhythm.

If a coach is not able to use the full range of rhythms, then there will be some people with whom they struggle to build rapport. But building rapport is not sufficient for effective coaching. The effective coach needs also to mismatch the current rhythms and introduce the appropriate discordant rhythm that emotionally unsticks the client and

moves them into a new place. It is therefore important for coaches to be able to access the full range of emotional rhythms.

There are 7 of these basic rhythms, named by Manfred Clynes Sentic States, which have been widely studied. They exist across cultures and appear to be shared by all humanity. Peter Hawkins of the Bath Consultancy Group uses the model in training and has linked it to the different energy chakras. Each of the Sentic states has a positive and a negative side:

- **Anger:** (experienced at the base of the spine) sets clear boundaries. Expressed negatively anger can be destructive and frightening but when expressed without aggression it is the energy that commands attention, says “No”, and protects us and ours.

- **Hatred:** (the gut) ends things, destroys the old. It helps us get rid of what is over and confront stuck situations that are being denied.
- **Grief:** (lower chest & diaphragm) the rhythm of sadness, of letting go, of surrender – it is what allows us to empathise with another’s pain.
- **Love:** (the heart) accepting, welcoming and inclusive, it is the rhythm of concern and caring.
- **Eros:** (mouth and hands) expressing sensual pleasure and excitement. This rhythm excites interest, entices and engages others.
- **Joy:** (mostly expressed through the eyes) celebrating and affirming the positive, goes right through the body as in jumping for joy
- **Awe:** (top of head) breath-taking, revering, going beyond ourselves, the rhythm of what transcends, being in touch with something we cannot name.

Each of us tends to develop one or two dominant modes of expression and have other rhythms we find it harder to express. To work more effectively with our Sentic States, we need to expand our range of emotional expression, use each emotional rhythm more cleanly and incisively (ie be able to express each emotion without suffering or enjoying the emotion – as actors are able to), and increase our awareness of the non-verbal emotional expression of others.

You can download an article on Sentic States from <http://www.bathconsultancygroup.com/html/articles/emotional.htm>

fundamental dependence on that world.

I was particularly taken with a chapter on The Ecology of Magic where he describes his research into the activities of Balinese shamans. What he came to see was that the role of the shaman is to mediate between the tribal community and the larger society of beings upon which the village depends for its nourishment, sustenance and health. Here is how David Abram describes this role:

The tribal shaman, I came to discern, acts as an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field, ensuring that there is an appropriate flow of nourishment, not just from the landscape to the human inhabitants, but from the human community back to the local earth. By his constant rituals, trances, ecstasies, and "journeys," he ensures that the relation between human society and the larger society of beings is balanced and reciprocal, and that the village never takes more from the living land than it returns to it - not just materially but with prayers, propitiations, and praise. [...] The medicine person's primary allegiance, then, is not to the human community, but to the earthly web of relations in which that community is embedded. (p7)

There is a call to us as coaches to fulfil a similar role - to help those we work with to recognise their relationship to the wider community and planet. Historically, no individual, tribe or even nation could alter the global climate, destroy thousands of species, shift the chemical balance of the atmosphere and risk destroying the physical basis on which our societies and even lives stand. Yet that is exactly what is happening today as our individual and corporate actions are mediated and magnified through the growing network of global institutions. We can collude with this or challenge it – if we challenge it and help our clients deal with the leadership issues this new reality presents, then we can truly call ourselves “leadership coaches”.

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