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Team &  
Group  
Coaching  
in an  
Evolving  
World



# Team & Group Coaching in an *Evolving World*

What are the differences between virtual, in-person and hybrid team and group coaching? What are the unique needs of the different types of team or group sessions? What assessment(s) are beneficial for use in this type of coaching? How do you effectively measure the impact of a successful team or group coaching engagement? How to create engagement, foster inspiration, boost motivation and enhance accountability for participants? Uncovering the secrets of successful group and team coaching in an evolving world for both coach and clients.





# STATE *of the* UNION

Team and group coaching 3.0

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In a 2018 article for *choice Magazine*, titled “The Landscape of Coaching Many,” I wrote: “Against the backdrop of ongoing change and digital disconnection, team and group coaching is likely to continue its expansion, given their relevance of support for topics including virtualization, teaming, and cross-cultural issues.”

Since then, group and team coaching have continued to grow in popularity, defining their place in the spectrum of coaching approaches. The last few years have further etched out space for these two sub-disciplines of the coaching profession.

As a group and team coaching researcher, author, coach trainer, supervisor and coach practitioner myself for more than two decades, it has been a privilege to see how this part of the profession continues to evolve.

The expansion and relevance of group and team coaching continues to grow, making these coaching modalities mainstream, rather than a fringe of the coaching profession. This article explores nine evolutions in the group and team coaching space.

With complexity having become the norm versus the exception, and the myth of the isolated individual being smashed by recent events – pointing to the reality and importance of our collective connectedness – group and team coaching has “come into its own,” recognized alongside executive coaching and other approaches.

This article explores six influences that have jettisoned the need for group and team coaching collaborative partnerships, namely:

1. **Paradigm Shifts**
2. **Systems Approaches**
3. **The need for Belonging**
4. **Trust, Safety and Connection**
5. **Teaming**
6. **Adaptive and emerging models**

Alongside these influences, our profession has undergone three very practical evolutions:

1. **The introduction of the ICF Team Coaching Competencies**
2. **The piloting of the new Advanced Credential for Team Coaching (ACTC)**
3. **The case for Coaching Supervision**

While I’ve asserted that group and team coaching are some of the fastest-growing areas of the coaching profession for more than a decade in my own writing, several pressures have led to the explosion and mainstreaming of group and team coaching approaches in recent years. These pressures have included economic changes; geopolitical tensions; the shift to more flex work arrangements; and of course, the pressures exerted by the virtualization of work, which brings

together team members from varied locations and requires collaborative partnerships across industries, locations and spaces, to solve our most pressing challenges.

These influences have created the perfect storm for one of the greatest shake-ups in the workforce in our lifetime. They each have implications for how we live and work. As Emerson once wrote, “The mind, once stretched by new ideas, never returns to its original dimensions.”

Let’s look at the six recent and significant influences on group and team coaching, or what I coined as “coaching many” in my writing going back to 2013.

## 1 PARADIGM SHIFTS

Multiple layers of paradigm shifts have been happening across the industries and spaces coaches work within, many of these accelerated in the pandemic years. Pre-pandemic, more team-oriented and evolutionary approaches to work were emerging. These created amazing opportunities for team and group coaching to start creating footholds. From agile workspaces to global teams catalyzed by economic and environmental pressures, along with enhanced focus on inclusivity and diversity, workspaces and communities are being redefined by new ways of working and being.

What are some of the paradigms we’ve seen shift? Consider how our notion of place has been replaced by space, recognizing that we can connect and work on deep levels without “having to go INTO the office.” Or how relationships can be built across space and time both synchronously and asynchronously, where leaders AND teams are responsible for results and enhanced relationships.

Team coaching provides the space for valuable conversations to take place on an organizational level, while group coaching has become a “go-to” at the individual and community level for many to come together around shared interests, to pause, learn and take action together.

At present, the friction in both the workplace/workspace and the world is evident. From employers demanding a return to the status quo of the in-person office, many other organizations and systems have embraced hybrid and evolving ways of working for social, political and environmental reasons.



### Implications for Team and Group Coaches:

- The coaching space provides a pause for both teams and groups to come together with others to pause, look to the future and explore the varied options, and perspectives which exist in their unique pathway.
- What are you doing to create a pause and work with vision, assumptions, options and perspectives?

## 2 SYSTEMS APPROACHES

Anchored in most team and group coaching approaches and models is a systemic approach. As I have shared in my own writing, “No person is an island.” It’s what’s below the waterline – forces seen and unseen – which influence and impact our world every day. Systems, cultures and context form an integral part of any coaching conversation for groups and teams. In group coaching, it is important to notice how each group member is bringing their own set of systems, culture and context to the conversation.

The power of group and team coaching gets activated when we explore with our clients the systems in which they are part of.



FIGURE 1 - Layers of Culture. © 2021, Jennifer Britton, Reconnecting Workspaces.

### Implications for Team and Group Coaches:

- What are you doing to explore the various layers of systems and culture which exist around the work we do?

## 3 TRUST, SAFETY AND CONNECTION

At the heart of “coaching many” is the triad of Trust, Safety and Connection. Without this interweave of three factors, the conversations are likely to remain at the surface level. When all three are present, conversations can take us into the realm of change, or transformation, as we dive into the rich space for dialogue around beliefs, mindsets, values and perspectives.

In both team and group coaching it is important to note that the trust, safety and connection is not a one layered relationship between coach and client. It’s a multi-layered web, connecting clients with coach, and clients with each other.

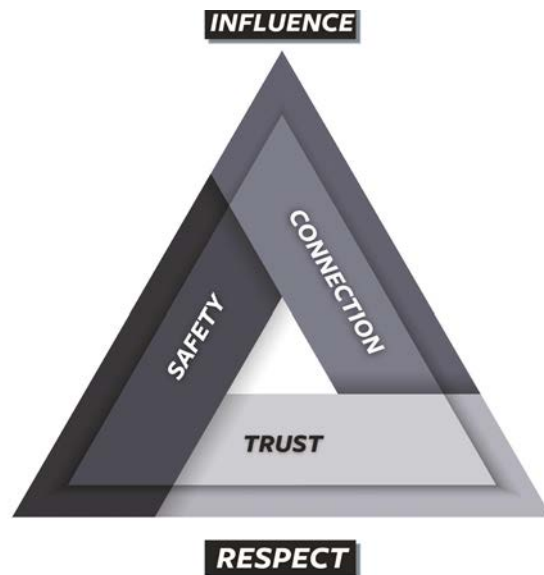


FIGURE 2 - Triad of Trust, Safety and Connection ©2017 - 2022, Jennifer Britton, Reconnecting Workspaces.

### Implications for Team and Group Coaches:

- Strengthening the triad of trust, safety and connection may practically involve amplifying the peer component to this work.
- This involves fostering peer partners as well as making pre-calls a standard practice to check for coaching readiness, and supporting clients to identify their coaching goals.
- It also includes an enhanced approach to capacity development, and a focus on helping clients develop their coaching skills

## 4 THE HUMAN NEED FOR BELONGING

One of the challenges of the last few years has been a weakening of the “social fabric” of life and relationships. Months of remote work and social distancing have challenged individuals in the area of belonging. With much of the world finding ways to come together after pandemic distancing, group and team coaching both provide a vehicle for a greater sense of community.

It is likely that the fundamental human need of belonging will continue to drive clients to turn to the collaborative conversation spaces of group and team coaching providing our clients with an enhanced sense of belonging, and understanding that we are not alone on our journey, even if our pathway is unique.

### Implications for Team and Group Coaches:

- What are you doing to foster a sense of connection and community in the groups and teams you work with?
- When working with groups, what is the balance between helping individuals find their collective interest, and their individual focus?

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## 5 TEAMING

In 2013, Amy Edmondson introduced the notion of teaming. In her 2013 *Harvard Business Review* article, she notes that teaming is about “identifying essential collaborators and quickly getting up to speed on what they know so you can work together to get things done.”<sup>1</sup>

The lifecycle of teams has dramatically shifted in recent years, accelerated by the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting, where team composition is rapidly changing, sometimes on a weekly basis.



### Implications for Team Coaches:

- Supporting teams around the foundations of team coaching, including team norms, team charters and/or Ways of Working (WOW), which can evolve in a fluid way when team members come and go.
- Helping clients lean into the establishment of team culture, which often remains static when well-established, even if team members change.

## 6 ADAPTIVE AND EMERGING MODELS

The changes, pressures and evolution of the world and conversations today are all calling on the continued expansion of adaptive and emerging models across all industries, including our own.

The models of team and group coaching are multi-fold and are always meant to be a guidepost rather than a prescriptive approach.

For example, in my 2018 *choice* article, I introduced the modelling around results and relationships. This is also at the core of my latest series of writing, *Reconnecting Workspaces*, grounded in the notion that teams and groups that thrive focus on both results and relationships.

On the results front, this includes a focus on vision; goals; roles; measurement and success factors; habits and mindsets. Along relational lines, it focuses on styles; the ability to work across differences; and supporting the exploration of skills, strengths and collaborative opportunities.

These are many of the elements that have become mainstream for team and group coaches today. We have further enshrined it in our Team and Group Coaching Superpower Quiz™ here at Potentials Realized.



### Implications for Team and Group Coaches:

- Consider the various models, skills and frameworks you want to learn about and incorporate into your work.
- As I shared last year in Volume 19, Number 3 of *choice*, curiosity, vision, experimentation and connection are skills we can foster with our clients for their benefit.

## INDUSTRY EVOLUTIONS

The context of our work continues to evolve, and in addition to the six evolutions listed above, there are three other evolutions in the coaching profession that warrant discussion, including:

1. The introduction of the Team Coaching Competencies;
2. The introduction of the new Advanced Certification in Team Coaching (ACTC);
3. The emergence of coaching supervision as a core activity for teams.

### Evolution #1

#### Introduction of the Team Coaching Competencies

After significant research and review, the ICF introduced Team Coaching Competencies in late 2020. Reflecting a deepening of the core coaching competencies, these will form the foundation for team (not group) coaching training, mentoring and supervision going forward.

This clarity will help to further define team coaching across the spectrum of other team development approaches, enabling team coaches to ensure that they are leading from a coaching approach and philosophy, being clear when they are also going to activate training and facilitation approaches in service to the clients needs.

### Evolution #2

#### Introduction of the new Advanced Certification in Team Coaching

After a successful pilot which wrapped up in August 2022, ICF members will now be able to add a specialization to their ACC, PCC, and MCC, reflecting a rigour of practice, and enhanced specialization. Rollout is expected in late 2022 or early 2023.

### Evolution #3

#### Coaching Supervision for Team Coaches

Given the complexity of coaching teams and wider systems, the emergence of coaching supervision as a foundational part of our professional practice for team and group coaches to create the ongoing space for pause, reflection and learning from their work.

As the ICF has indicated in Competency #2: “Engage in coaching supervision for support, development and accountability when needed.” As a coaching supervisor, I have seen the impact of the pause for team coaches with their work on multiple levels.

There has never been a more exciting – or essential – time to get involved in these conversations. What contribution do you want to make? •

#### REFERENCES:

- 1 Amy Edmondson, The Three Pillars of a Teaming Culture, *Harvard Business Review*, December 17, 2013, accessed at <https://hbr.org/2013/12/the-three-pillars-of-a-teaming-culture> (August 31 2022)