# Effective Coaching and Sustainable Behavioral Changes for Clients

Experiencing the ICF Core Competencies Through the Lens of a Change Model

Most of us are familiar with the phrase, 'tip of the iceberg', especially as it relates to self-awareness and behavioral changes. The majority of what is brought by a client to a coaching conversation is but a small portion of the entire scenario currently known about any situation, topic, or relationship. Until a coach dives below the surface with the client, they can remain stuck in an ever-repeating cycle of similar behavior and ineffective or unsatisfying choices. The ICF CCs support the coach and client in creating new perspectives, making different choices and integrating sustainable changes to the scenario or behaviors in which they are feeling challenged or stuck.
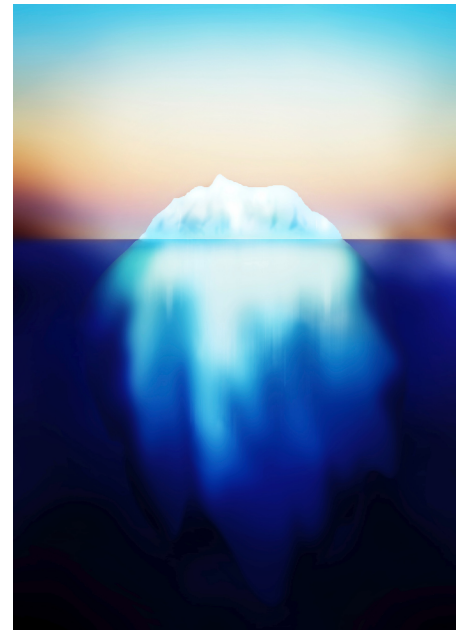

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A LOOK BACK FOR CONTEXT

As the ICF model of coaching has evolved since 1997, its pioneering practitioners intuitively and organically birthed the effective change process we practice today. This process developed largely out of philosophies within the human development movements of the 60s through the 90s blended with ongoing intuitive adaptations by its growing number of practitioners. Over the last 20 years, practitioners have gathered anecdotal examples of sustained client behavioral changes made using the coaching process described by the ICF core coaching competencies.

The first articulation of these competencies emerged between 1997 and 1998 as 'yardsticks' by which ICF could assess the efficacy of newly-developed coach-specific training programs and grant 'vetted' credential designations to practitioners. With the addition of the Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential designation around 2001, the articulations of the core coaching competencies once again expanded in scope, allowing ICF clearer yardsticks by which to grant certification.

In 2009 or 2010 an ICF-sponsored job analysis survey validated all the competencies, with another survey planned for 2015. Ongoing member support efforts by the ICF include frequent research to provide scientific validation of efficacy and documentation of ROI specific to this coaching process. In addition, during the last decade, scientists who study human behavioral change, as well as neuroscience, provide us with 'evidence' that is beyond anecdotal about 'why' this coaching process is effective.

Further research about how sustainable change occurs includes Richard Boyatzis, whose simple yet insightful "Cycle of Change"[1] model, aligns seamlessly with the ICF coaching competencies. It begins with a focus on identifying the *ideal self* (the client's next best version of self). The process then compares the *ideal self* and the *real self* (who am I now?), identifying strengths and gaps (where the ideal and real selves are similar or differ). From there, it
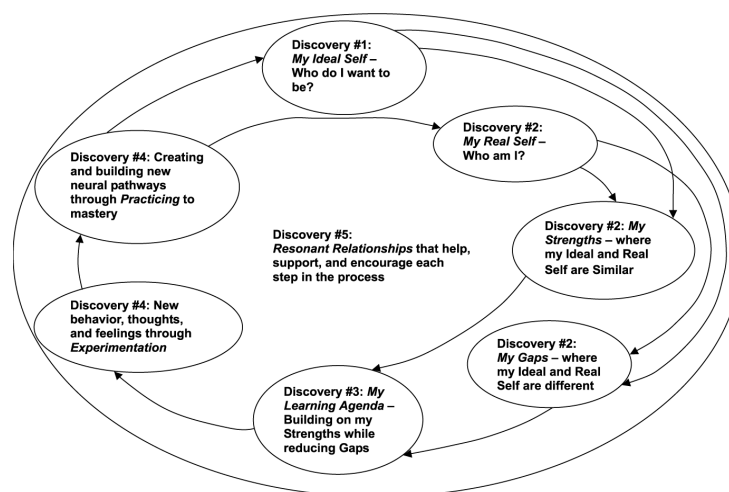

moves to the *learning agenda* (building on strengths while reducing gaps),

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[1] Cycle of Change Model, Richard Boyatzis (2011; Boyatzis, Goleman, and McKee, 2002; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005)

experimentation (new thoughts, behavior & feelings), and *practicing* (creating & building new neural pathways).

CORRELATING THE ICF CCs TO THIS CHANGE MODEL

Richard Boyatzis (2011; Boyatzis, Goleman, and McKee, 2002; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005)
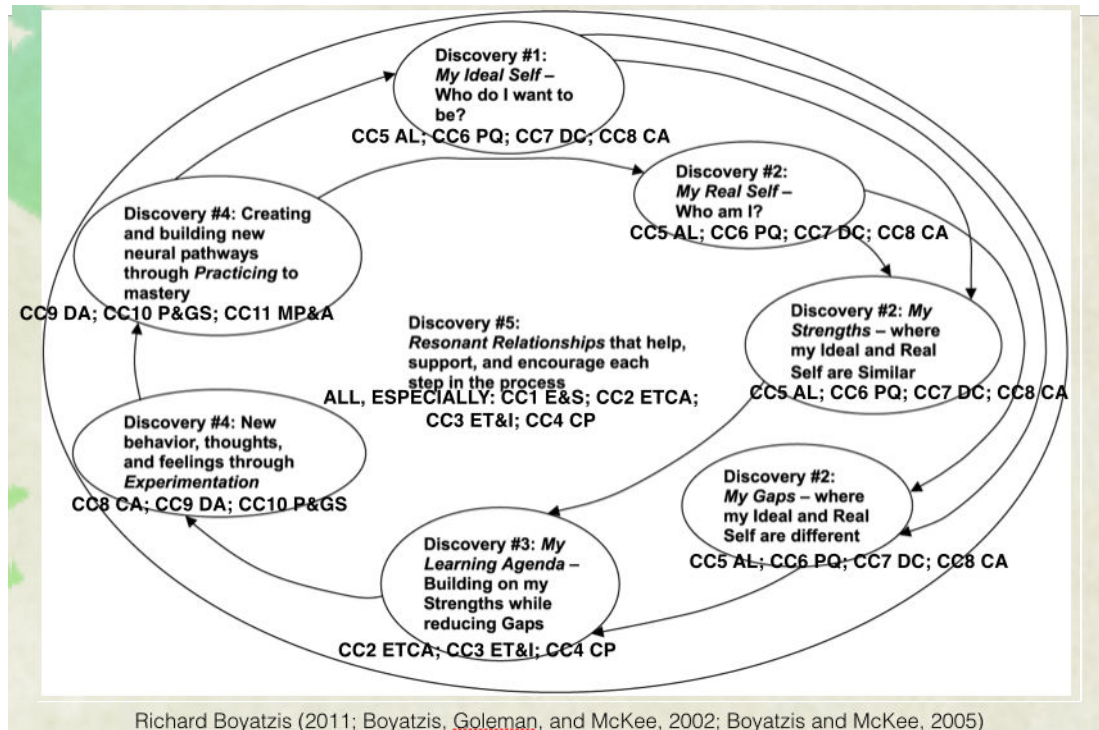
    As I look at the Boyatzis Cycle of Change model, I see a direct correlation to the 11 ICF Core Competencies. I feel it provides information about how and why the process that the CCs describe can contribute to a client's successful attainment of <u>sustainable</u> behavioral changes. Just as the competencies are inter-linked and not linear in their application, the elements of this change model fluidly encompass one another while the competencies are utilized.

    When applied artfully by a skilled coach practitioner, all of the CCs fluidly work in concert and serve the client's access to the entirety of self - heart, mind, body, spirit, and emotions. This entirety, according to neuroscience, is where the *ideal self* can be accessed most effectively and allowed to emerge more fully. The primary intention underlying the ICF CCs is to create new awareness or spotlight different perspectives for the client that could have the potential to open new and different patterns of thinking and behaving.

The CCs support each Discovery within the Change Model by illuminating a pathway to a client's *ideal self* - a tangible vision for what is being sought. The CCs invite the client to access "a careful understanding of the current situation (*the real self*), where the ideal self & real self are similar (*strengths*), and areas where the ideal self and real self are notably different (*gaps*)", all as keys to the *learning agenda*." (Boyatzis, 2011)

Let's look at the elements of the model in correlation with the ICF core competencies.

DISCOVERY #1: MY *IDEAL SELF* - WHO DO I WANT TO BE?

Coaching Competencies: #5 Active Listening, #6 Powerful Questioning, #7 Direct Communication, and #8 Creating Awareness.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate... Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

Marianne Williamson

All support the client to access their vision of an *ideal self* - who they want to become as a result of the behavioral changes they're pursuing through the coaching partnership.
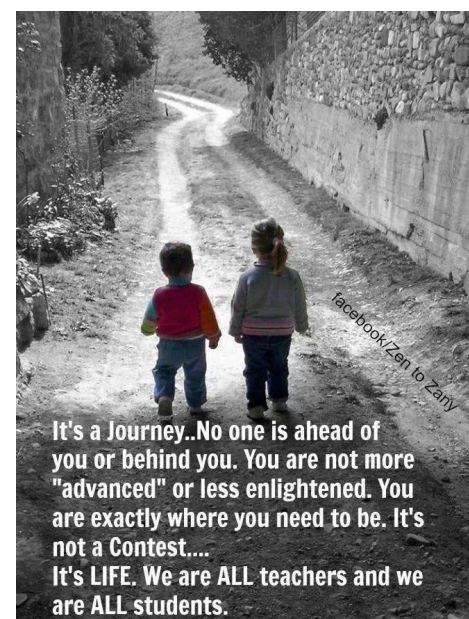
"We know who we are, but know not what we may be."
-William Shakespeare

DISCOVERY #2: MY *REAL SELF* - WHO AM I NOW?

Coaching Competencies: #5 Active Listening, #6 Powerful Questioning, #7 Direct Communication, and #8 Creating Awareness.

All support the client to access who they are right now and identify which elements of that they wish to maintain. It also highlights which elements they may want to change or release so that the behavioral changes they're pursuing can occur supported by the coaching partnership.

It's a Journey..No one is ahead of you or behind you. You are not more "advanced" or less enlightened. You are exactly where you need to be. It's not a Contest....
It's LIFE. We are ALL teachers and we are ALL students.

DISCOVERY #2: MY *STRENGTHS* - WHERE MY IDEAL & REAL SELF ARE SIMILAR

Coaching Competencies: #5 Active Listening, #6 Powerful Questioning, #7 Direct Communication, and #8 Creating Awareness.

All support the coach and client in identifying the clients' strengths and successful strategies already in place that support the emergence of their *ideal self*.

DISCOVERY #2: MY *GAPS* - WHERE MY IDEAL & REAL SELF ARE DIFFERENT

Coaching Competencies: #5 Active Listening, #6 Powerful Questioning, #7 Direct Communication, and #8 Creating Awareness.

All support coach and client in identifying the clients' gaps and any habits or strategies that do not support the emergence of their *ideal self*.

DISCOVERY #3: MY *LEARNING AGENDA* - BUILDING ON MY STRENGTHS WHILE REDUCING GAPS

Coaching Competencies:

#2 Establishing the Coaching Agreement, #3 Establishing Trust & Intimacy, and #4 Coaching Presence.

These competencies fit within the cycle of change model as the *learning agenda*, defined by Boyatzis as the work of identifying and then building on the client's strengths while reducing gaps. It includes the overarching goals for which the client entered coaching as well as the agreement [CC #2] fleshed out as each session begins.
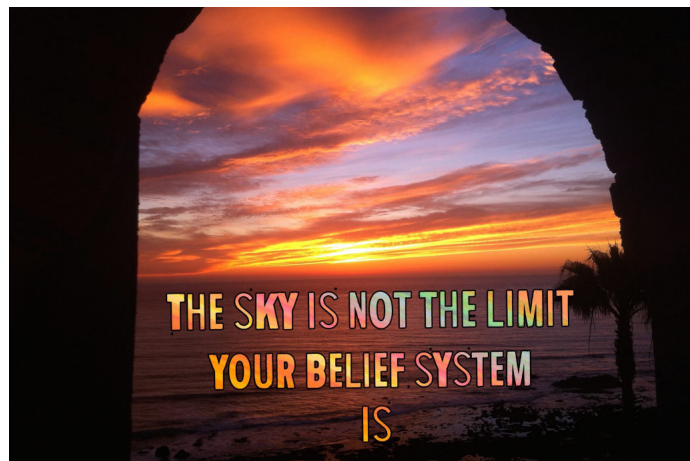
The session agreement creates that conversation's *learning agenda,* supporting both coach and client to set the parameters for their focus and 'dive deep' during the session. The process of clarifying the topic under discussion, the outcome that the client desires, the client's success measure for the outcome, and exploring how this topic is affecting or impacting them, requires trust, intimacy, intuition, and the deep listening available only in full presence.

For the coach to access their intuition and remain curious about the client, embodying a centered, and grounded coaching presence [CC#4] is vital. And to effectively uncover and explore any underlying issues behind the client's desired outcome, trust and intimacy [CC#3] must be palpably present.

In her excellent book, "The Completely Revised Handbook of Coaching"[2], Pamela McLean relates this Cycle of Change to coaching in this way (please note that the italics are mine):

"The power of an aspirational goal rooted in the heart and mind of the client is essential in order to create sustainable change. Too often coaches develop a coaching agreement tied to a to-do list or a series of behaviors that need improvement. Boyatzis's research confirms the importance of an *aspirational* goal that resonates at an *emotional and cognitive level* for the client and *inspires* him or her with the hope of a *slightly better version of self* through the coaching work."

From within trust, intimacy, agreement, and coaching presence, the coach facilitates exploration of the *learning agenda.* This exploratory process engages the client in visualizing their *ideal self*, an aspirational goal, and serves the coaching partnership "…as the most important driver in creating sustainable change…". (Boyatzis, 2011).

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[2] "The Completely Revised Handbook of Coaching", Pamela McLean, page 172

DISCOVERY #4: NEW BEHAVIOR, THOUGHTS, & FEELINGS THROUGH *EXPERIMENTATION*
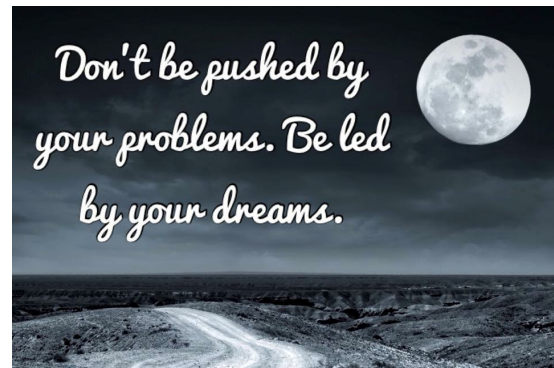
Coaching Competencies: #8 Creating Awareness, #9 Designing Actions, and #10 Planning & Goal Setting.

Experimentation is necessary to begin anchoring any new awareness gained within a coaching conversation. These steps move the client more fully toward

behavioral changes, especially when the action plan includes a specific timeline.

Remember that the primary intention of an ICF-model coaching conversation is illuminating new awareness or different perspectives (CC#8). These perspectives open new and alternative patterns of thinking and behaving to the client. Within the Cycle of Change

model, creating awareness organically spotlights next step(s) and the timing of these (CC#9 & CC#10). The timely action then engages the *experimentation* phase of the change process.

DISCOVERY #4: CREATING & BUILDING NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS THROUGH *PRACTICING* TO MASTERY

Coaching Competencies: #9 Designing Actions, #10 Planning & Goal Setting, and #11 Managing Progress & Accountability.

Commitment to *experimentation* in turn engages the *practicing* element of the Cycle of Change - the client puts the new behaviors to work by defining not only the next step(s) (CC#9) but also a timeline for each step (CC#10). As coach, we invite commitment from the client that will maintain the momentum and awareness created by the coaching conversation (CC#11) so that *experimentation* and *practicing* can yield the knowledge and wisdom they contain for the client's process of change.

I think of the *experimentation* and *practicing* phases in this way: the client builds a 'body of evidence' as they engage in activities intended to close the gaps between their *ideal self* and *real self.* They step more full into the behavioral changes that truly serve them in being their *ideal self* more and more often.

Best practice dictates that an artful professional coach invites the client to take action from each session. The artful practitioner also engages regularly with their client in correlating those actions to their overarching goals, defined as the partnership began. This best practice integrates the *learning agenda*, *experimentation*, and *practicing* elements of the Boyatzis Cycle of Change model.

DISCOVERY #5: ***RESONANT RELATIONSHIPS*** THAT HELP, SUPPORT & ENCOURAGE EACH STEP IN THE PROCESS

Coaching Competencies: ALL and specifically: #1 ICF Code of Ethics & Standards, #2 Establishing the Coaching Agreement, #3 Establishing Trust & Intimacy and #4 Coaching Presence.

Sometimes we need someone to simply be there...Not to fix anything or do anything in particular, but just to let us feel we are supported and cared about.

Facebook.com/Sparksofhope.org

These 4 specific CCs thread through all of the 7 other competencies and contribute to a client's sense of safety and freedom to explore whatever it is they want to change or shift. A coaching partnership is a *resonant relationship* embodying safety and non-judgment that supports and encourages the client at each step on the road to the behavioral changes s/he desires to make.

My sincere hope is that in applying this change framework for the ICF competencies to your client conversations you will gain even more respect for your role as coach and the competencies as well. Their guidance and structure support placing power in the hands of coach and client alike. Each time I work with a mentor coaching client, I am consistently reminded of the wisdom of our profession's founders in identifying and articulating these competencies. I respect and trust them as our current body of knowledge for coaching, with more evolving all the time.

I also tip my hat to our colleagues who have volunteered their time, energy and knowledge over the years, serving on ICF committees and Boards. Through their work in fleshing out this body of knowledge and commissioning research, we have standards of excellence that inspire, ignite and invigorate.

Leadership

Each of us can serve as a leader. And one leader creates another and another, ad infinitum, just as one candle's flame light another and another, until the once-impenetrable darkness has turned to brilliant light.

AMORÁH ROSS

ICF Master Certified Coach and Certified Mentor Coach

Amoráh launched her coaching practice in 1997 after more than 20 years in the field of human resources. A passionate champion of the human spirit and its innate potential, Amoráh brings a holistic and compassionate viewpoint to her students as well as to her coaching & mentor coaching clients. Truly a 'coach's coach,' she adds an uplifting perspective and inspiration to coach training and ongoing professional development for coaching excellence. Amoráh served as a senior trainer within an ICF ACTP for 18 years and was that program's Director of Training for 6 of those years. She actively serves the coaching profession as a member of the ICF Global Standards Core Team and since 2005 as an ICF PCC & MCC Credentialing Assessor. In recent years, she has served as Director of Programs, Education & Credentialing for the ICF Washington State chapter as well as 4+ years on the ICF Credentialing & Program Accreditation Committee.

As an undaunted champion of the human spirit, Amoráh is a pioneering leader in our profession as well as a passionate professional coach, mentor coach, and coach trainer. Before becoming a coach, she was a Human Resources Generalist & Trainer as well as a leader of heart-centered journeys around the world that connected humans, sacred sites and nature through meditation, play and sacred ritual. A natural teacher, she engages you with wry wit, heartfelt connection and playful authenticity.

Contact:

Phone: +1 (425) 788-4303 ~ Mobile: +1 (425) 241-3151

Email: amorah@amorah.com ~ Website: www.amorah.com