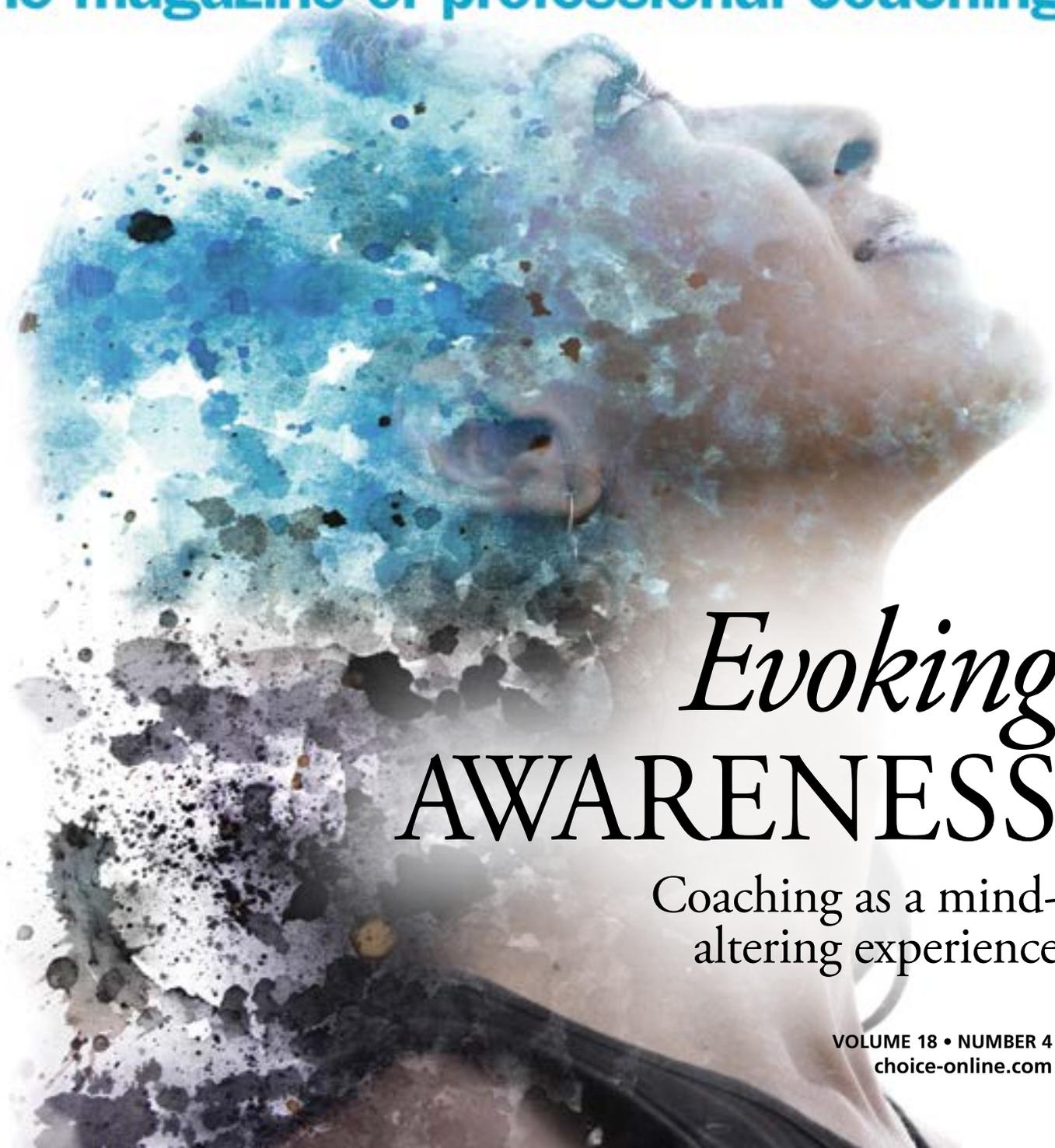


choice

the magazine of professional coaching



Evoking AWARENESS

Coaching as a mind-
altering experience

Evoking **AWARENESS**

Coaching as a mind-altering experience

What does it take to expand and shift your clients' perspective? How does the coach use presence to facilitate the discovery process? What are the mental habits of master coaches? In addition to asking questions, what are the essential practices used in awareness-based coaching? Join us as we explore what elements are needed in a coaching model that goes beyond finding answers to powerfully evoke awareness.



Taking the JOURNEY

Evoking awareness starts with us

By Gavin Shaskolsky, BusSc, LLB, CCP

It is tempting to portray ourselves as optimistic, present and engaged at all times. However, the human experience and truth are far from this, at least in my experience. Being present, committed and impactful requires us to build grit, endurance, and a mindset of fulfillment in our own lives. The deeper we are willing to dig into our own truth, experience and lived wisdom,

the more powerful, authentic and effective we will be in curating our clients' journeys of self-discovery and sustainable growth.

Evoking awareness is a consistent, dedicated practice of returning to the present moment. It is a commitment that starts with me as the coach. Like planting the seeds of Chinese bamboo, which take over five years to sprout from the earth, if well-tended, and then shoot up to over 25 meters in around five weeks, so too our daily commitment to repeated habits and rituals enables us to grow a deep root structure across all dimensions of our lives.

As we care for the seeds of daily practice, we grow our own healthy ecosystem that nurtures the Chinese bamboo in each of us to serve ourselves, others, and society. Not only do we get to benefit from the fruits of the seeds we planted and cared for so carefully and tenderly; these same fruits become accessible and available to others in their leadership of themselves, their teams and organizations when we partner with them on their coaching journey.

I think of my daily practices as an oasis that I drink deeply from at the start and end of each day through my meditation, running and journaling. I then dip into the oasis in gaps in my day – through short breaks, skipping, snacking, walking outside, meditating to recharge, listening to a podcast – to refresh and replenish my resources as the day's journey unfolds.

This becomes a practice of multiplying simple daily practices into my weekly rhythm and my embodied lifestyle. It helps me to be rooted in my practices, the rituals that enable me to oscillate the expenditure of my energy and the recovery of it through pausing, engaging, retreating and leaning in as my rhythm unfolds in my daily life.

Each client engagement builds muscles of endurance, vitality, presence and confidence that enable me to guide another person's intimate journey through uncomfortable climbs,

uncertain valleys, rocky terrain and powerful moments when the visibility ahead is crystal clear and the north star guides the way forward.

I believe that to be at our best as coaches requires consistent commitment and effort. The dedication to choose to rest rather than respond to another email, to take 30-60 seconds between activities or in meetings, at traffic lights, walking between meet-

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ings, to put our hands on our stomach and notice the rise and fall of our breath rather than flicking ineffectively through our social media feeds; or to turn our devices to 'flight mode' between certain hours after work (e.g. 6 to 8:30 p.m.), then extend this time to buy back our down time and reclaim our bedrooms as a sanctuary, keeping devices out!

It is our small, simple practices that create the depth of presence for our clients to do their best thinking in, not whether we are pushing hard all day in 'doing mode.' The more we repeat the small things, the more powerful the container we create for others to grow and thrive in.

Our culture keeps tempting us to do more, to be more, yet it is our ability to resist these seductive whispers that sets us apart as coaches. It is up to us to choose to recover, to befriend silence and deepen our connection to something greater than us that evokes awareness in others and enables the magic of coaching to take place.

Building on these foundations, we are better placed to evoke awareness in others. Our partnership begins with a gentle walk through the garden of their lives.

We pause to recognize, appreciate and emphasize the strengths, competencies and capabilities that flourish

in their gardens, while observing the weeds of feelings, memories, limiting beliefs and behaviors that need to be uprooted for them to lead more fulfilling, impactful and rewarding lives. Lives that will enable them and others to enjoy all the elements and features of their blooming gardens.

As our partnership with our clients deepens, we help them prune and tend to their plants of vitality and

energy through attuned observations, while getting stuck into the dirt with consistent and fierce empathy, as we help replace their ineffective narratives of struggle with a new story of a flourishing and fragrant ecosystem. As we move towards the closure of our partnership with them, we pause at the gate, look back with joy and recognize that we have guided yet another human being to be more comfortable in discomfort, more proud and embodied in their strengths and more courageous in walking a clear path ahead with deeper awareness, accountability and impact.

Containing these elements of evoking awareness is the intention and ability to connect with something greater than ourselves, to invite forces and energies beyond our conscious minds to support, hold and curate the coaching journey.

Whether we call this god, nature or something else, it is often these energies that enable the magic to take place in the coaching partnership. Whether we connect to these forces through prayer, meditation, vision quests, hiking or any other form, acknowledging the mystery and power beyond us that shapes the coaching partnership enables us to remain humble servants of the people, teams and organizations we have the privilege to guide on these sacred, life-changing journeys. •