It’s the 15th anniversary of choice, the magazine of professional coaching! We dedicate this issue to looking back at how far coaching has come since its inception, spotlighting key milestones, and the many facets of coaching today. We also look ahead to where coaching is going as a profession, as a business, and as a community. Coaching is alive, strong and growing! Join us as we celebrate the past, present and future of professional coaching in this exciting issue of choice.
Have you ever wondered what the ‘real’ purpose of coaching is? Why it got started when it did? And what is next for coaching? In this article, I share my perspective on these questions.

In the 40 years following the two world wars, technology was brought into people’s business and personal lives, people began to relocate geographically away from their support systems, and a sense of separateness began to grow.

There was also an obsession with the outer world that was rational and “head” based. This was countered by growth in the 1960s and ’70s of humanistic psychology and personal development, which ushered in a yearning for more “heart” connection and fulfillment. Before coaching emerged in the 1990s, there was nothing available that would meet this need.

We were not conscious that what was missing was our humanity, yet I maintain this was what was behind the emergence of coaching. Rediscovering, or reawakening, is about waking up to what we have forgotten or unearthing new dreams – it’s about returning to awareness of something set aside in lack of time or motivation.

This concept of coaching’s true purpose came out of a conversation Sept. 30, 2016 with
coaches in Hong Kong – the gist of which was that rediscovering our humanity is the purpose for coaching. In speaking with coaches around the world, this purpose resonates. In fact, many shared how their own humanity was reawakened through coaching, punctuated with a dose of nature.

You might ask, why a “dose of nature”? Many people, including myself, rediscover and/or sustain their humanity through nature. For example:

- Nature shows us that our choices in life have natural consequences.
- When we’re out in nature, investigating life from a place of curiosity, we’re led to amazing discoveries and gain practical skills.
- Nature teaches us how to stay healthy, happy and connected.
- Learning to experience the gift of life through our senses in nature helps us to feel thankful for all the incredible beauty we have in our world, offering us the time to appreciate the grandeur of life.

When we’re given space to freely enjoy the natural world, letting go of what preoccupies our mind, we discover a freedom that isn’t attached to anything external, and a joy for life itself.

How does coaching align with this? The guiding principles of coaching honor the uniqueness of individuals, while supporting harmony and co-existence, just like in nature. A quote by Zen Shin describes this: “A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it – it just blooms.”

This is coaching – we don’t compete, we strive for success by our own definition. There is beauty in the differences that come from our uniqueness. The natural world understands that we are meant to live in community. This means cooperation and collaboration, just as nature is based on mutual aid and not competition.

**The Journey of Rediscovery**

I came to coaching in 1995 from a 20-year corporate career that championed logic, analysis and problem solving – all head-based pursuits left over from the industrial revolution of the 1900s. I yearned for more connection, wanting to help others be successful according to their own definition of success.

I had been very successful by society’s standards. However, I didn’t know who I was or what defined success for me, and I had become separated from my heart. I even chose the coach training program that was head-based rather than heart-based.

Unbeknownst to me, by becoming a coach I would walk the same journey I wanted to walk with others – discovering who I was, what was important to me, what I wanted to contribute (my purpose in life), and then having the courage, or guts, to show up in the world that way.

My own humanity needed to be rediscovered before I could be of service to others in the way I wanted to be. My purpose in life became “to raise awareness so each is at conscious choice,” and that is also my definition of coaching.

I imagine that each of you has rediscovered your own humanity as a result of becoming a coach and/or receiving coaching – linking your “head” logic with your “heart” emotions and “gut” courage. Coaching brings a balanced head-heart-guts perspective – including alignment and flow to the whole person.

With your humanity rediscovered, you are poised to share this same journey with your clients and with everyone they connect with from this day forward. This is the multiplier effect that is core to coaching. We influence the influencers, who in turn influence other influencers, and so on.

I have been blessed to experience the rediscovery of my own humanity and the humanity of others. So how does our humanity become rediscovered sustainably? As co-creator of your own reality:

- Give your ‘head brain’ a rest – logic and reason can only take you so far.
- Engage your heart – know who you are and what’s important to you – your heart can influence others through an energetic field. ([www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org))
- Determine your own point of view – a strongly held belief system that serves as anchor and driver.
- Have the courage (guts) to show up in the world authentically.

In other words, live your legacy actively and in the moment through your choices and actions, according to your values and beliefs. Your behavior is your legacy. You effect change and influence others by knowing who you are, by having a point of view, and by having the courage to show up in the world authentically – possibly without even realizing that is what you are doing.

I will leave you with this thought from nature: imagine yourself as a drop in the ocean of life, like a pebble you create ever widening circles influencing others – surface circles
expand outwardly and return consistently beneath the surface in the form of blessings and wisdom.

What's Next for Coaching?

In time the majority of people in the world will have rediscovered their humanity. What then will be the next focus, or purpose, for coaching? Coaching has already become woven into the tapestry of life on a global scale, as was envisioned by coaches at the 1997 PPCA Conference.

The world is different than when coaching burst on the scene during the mid-1990s. Today there is much complexity and ambiguity in our lives on a local and global scale that will impact the future of coaching. In spite of this, over the next 10 to 15 years coaching will progress and evolve, I predict, as follows:

1. Continued global growth with no evidence of decline. Mature markets such as Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom will see market consolidation and shake-out. Emerging markets such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia will see rapid growth.

2. Forms of coaching will become more diversified. We will continue to see one-to-one, group, face-to-face and virtual coaching. To meet the needs of different generations, markets, cultures and situations, we are beginning to see coaching using software and apps, and others not yet identified will likely follow.

3. Continued coaching industry movement toward a self-regulated, recognized discipline. This movement will be led by the professional associations, large coaching companies, and to a lesser extent by companies with internal coaching programs. However, with this there is also the possibility of institutionalization and rigidity, where coaching could lose the nimbleness, agility and flexibility that defined its early days.

It is imperative that coaches and the coaching industry be poised to adapt to whatever the complexity and ambiguity the world brings, or we risk being overtaken by a new or existing discipline that can meet the needs of the future world. Remember that coaching emerged to help us rediscover our humanity. With awareness and agility, coaching can remain a social phenomenon for the 21st century and beyond, and the catalyst to the next stage of human evolution.