



Presence as Meta-Competency: Developing Leaders One Moment at a Time

by Doug Silsbee

Interwoven with a composite case narrative of leader development, this white paper offers the reader an intimate exploration of how to identify and address the physiological roots of meaning-making and action. The paper offers leadership coaching strategies that derive from both ancient practices and contemporary work in neuroscience, and offers an explanation of why presence is an effective and essential meta-competency for evoking speedy and sustainable leader development.



Presence as Meta-Competency: Developing Leaders One Moment at a Time

Let's begin with an exemplar of our shared human condition, a narrative synthesized from several actual client engagements. I introduce Nancy, who is not so different from you and me.

Nancy, a successful technology executive, contacted me about coaching. With her CEO's support, she had publicly committed her organization to a radically ambitious business goal, unprecedented in the industry.

Nancy was intelligent, charismatic, and visionary. She was also ambitious, driven and ego-centric, and had a reputation for getting results at any cost to herself and others. She worked long hours, didn't exercise, and expected others to be as committed as she was.

Nancy's team was not stepping up to the current challenge. She was concerned about a lack of initiative around urgent priorities, and astute enough to recognize that she needed to change something to motivate others. She simply didn't know what to change.

My initial conversations with Nancy revealed more about her history. Intensely competitive, she grew up in a working class family. She excelled in sports at a time when opportunities for women were much fewer and was the first in her family to attend college. Decades later, her professional world was populated with PhD's, venture capitalists, and wealthy executives.

Nancy revealed her anxieties that she would be "found out;" that she had somehow faked her way to the top of her field and didn't really belong. She knew it wasn't rational, but sensed that if she stopped running, her world would collapse. She could keep the illusion going only through hyper-vigilance, extraordinary personal effort, and personal involvement in every detail.

In meetings, I watched Nancy drain the oxygen from the room. When someone would offer an idea, she would grab it and imbue it with her personal twist. The originator would often sit back in his chair, fold his arms, and say no more.

I began to see how Nancy's felt sense of ultimate responsibility produced well-intentioned behaviors that disenfranchised the very people that she relied upon. However, she was absolutely unable to see this for herself, nor see any alternatives to the current behavioral strategies that made total sense, given the world she inhabited.

Nancy, of course, is all of us. We face daily predicaments in which our interpretations and behaviors seem, somehow, inadequate. No matter how experienced and competent, our responses are constrained by the very experience that got us where we are. We yearn to respond to the exigencies of the moment with optimal creativity, resourcefulness and resilience.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Buddhists discovered, through paying rigorous attention to fine nuances of subjective experience, how humans can liberate themselves from limiting thought structures. Neuroscientists equipped with the latest fMRI imaging technology are now



corroborating these understandings with explanatory mechanisms based on empirical observations of neuronal activity in real time.

Within the range of disciplines exemplified by these two communities exists a great wealth of accumulated knowledge that informs our understanding of how humans learn and grow. Contemporary integrations of this knowledge are accelerating human learning dramatically, and informing emergent understandings of what leadership and coaching can be.

As a contribution to this emergence, I offer some distinctions derived from a personal, subjective history as a committed and curious observer, and as a professional who has supported thousands of clients and students through a wide range of developmental learning processes and experiences. I will complement these experientially derived distinctions with empirically based descriptions from the literature.

The Creation of A World: Habit Nature and Embodiment

Designing for self-development, or for coaching others, requires a working model for how we came to be.

As babies, we did what worked. When we were hungry, we nursed. When we needed something, we cried. Responding to incessant and primitive urges led to rolling over, then crawling, standing, walking, and running. Each stage offered something new, while still allowing access to what we could do before.

An impulsive drive for survival gave rise to behaviors that were initially adaptive experiments within a particular set of circumstances, and then became embodied competencies. At every stage, we transcended and included (Wilber, 2000) each behavior into a more complex set of capabilities. Successful behaviors and interpretations became embodied so that they were automatically available when needed. (Silsbee, 2008; Strozzi, 2007; Siegel, 2007.)

Our habit nature is constantly being shaped. Influences include our genetic makeup, *in utero* experiences, genetic dispositions inherited from others, our race/gender/sexual orientation, the social context into which we were born, the attachment patterns of our parental relationships, our education and career paths, and everything that happens to us!

Our embodied identity is further strengthened by a complex web of relationships and commitments that are actively shaped by our own habit nature, and then simultaneously serve to reinforce and ossify that same habit nature. (Flaherty, 2005.)

Conditioning becomes physiology. Habit nature becomes semi-permanent in our physical shape, held in the structure of our bones, sinews, fascia and musculature. (Strozzi, 1984.) Unconscious neurological patterns, with sufficient repetition, become defaults: habitual behaviors, thoughts, and narratives about the world (Gazzaniga, 2011; Cozolino, 2006.) Embodied cognitive filters actually select what we are able (or not) to even perceive. (No wonder the narrative that “change is hard” seems so inarguable! Hmmm... perhaps we can become more compassionate with ourselves?)



The product of this conditioning is... us! We are an embodied constellation of physiological defaults, expressed as a unique personality, an identity shaped by the contexts in which we developed. As in the Buddhist concept of *karma*, we are the perfect reflection of our history... the only person we could possibly be.

The Bell Jar

A useful metaphor for our conditioned habit nature is the “Bell Jar.” Picture a large, inverted glass jar under which we each metaphorically live. It is a smaller, more predictable world: cozy, familiar, and a little tight. It is the world that our conditioned ways of perceiving and interpreting construct and maintain on a moment-by-moment basis.

Our views of what is absolute and true are constructed phenomena; part of the Bell Jar. Every perspective is a subjectively shaped artifice of interpretation that precludes other possibilities. Like a fish in a pond, we are unable to see the limitations of the water, our subjective world of experience.

While the Bell Jar is comfortable, it is also limiting. For example, tendencies that we learned as adaptive responses to a particular context inevitably limit creativity, resourcefulness, and resilience when the context changes. Think of some unhelpful behavior that you frequently do with a loved one when they do something you don’t like. Remember the definition of insanity? Doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different result? That’s the Bell Jar. Do you ever think to yourself after doing the same insane thing again, “There must be a better way?” Yes, there is! However, it’s outside your Bell Jar, and you just can’t quite seem to find it, so revert to the same unhelpful habit under stress.

The symptom of this conditioning is also cause. Inside a Bell Jar, we automatically create explanatory mechanisms for our experience that may be wildly inaccurate, but which fit and reinforce our existing structure of interpretation (Gazzaniga, 2011.) While our self-perpetuating worldview is inherently limited, it seems to us an inarguably true description that justifies and requires specific responses.

Torbert (2004) describes “action logics” as the behaviors and actions that inevitably result from a particular interpretation. Living, as we do, in an interpretive Bell Jar, the actions we take are the ones that make sense, and often the only ones we can imagine. Gazzaniga (2011) argues that the deterministic nature of brain function means that most behaviors are, in essence, selected unconsciously by the nervous system. At a biological level, each choice serves the organism.

We are all doing the best that we can. Or, at least, we are doing the best that our nervous systems will allow us to do at a given moment of time.

Fortunately, our embodied defaults are continually being revealed as narratives, behaviors, urges, and interpretive processes. As we become skilled at observing the manifestations in



consciousness and behavior of our underlying physiology, we begin to discover the capacity to intervene in their automaticity.

States, Executive Control of Attention, and Presence

We use our inconceivably complex neural network to study itself. As Lyall Watson wryly points out, “If the brain were so simple we could understand it, we would be so simple that we couldn’t.”

While anything we might assert is but a crude approximation, subjective experience reveals certain distinctions which research bears out, and which inform our developmental enterprise.

States

We daily experience many “states:” fleeting subjective experiences and their physiological correlates, co-arising in a given moment of time. (Siegel, 2012.) We can distinguish states as, for example, the sleepy, not quite oriented feeling when we first wake up, or the fragmented, not-enough-time feeling as we address our backlog of urgent emails. The tenderness we feel as our eyes meet those of a beloved is a state, as is our elevated energy level, coupled with anxiety, in a difficult conversation.

The phenomenology of our moment-by-moment experience is exquisitely mirrored by intricate, complex, and subtle physiological changes. At fine levels, each moment’s experience reflects a unique configuration of neuronal firings, unlike any other state. Each fleeting state, both familiar and new, is unique and has considerable subtlety and texture of experience, most of which we miss when we are not present to it.

Vortices: Default States

We might well ask, on behalf of ourselves and Nancy, how to account for the propensity of intelligent and creative individuals to get stuck, incessantly repeating actions and thoughts that re-create conditions we seek to change?

Some states have what we might describe as a gravitational pull. Long term potentiation, often described as “neurons that fire together wire together,” (Schwartz and Begley, 2002) stores successful patterns as implicit memory. Our neural networks rehearse and encode patterns in our neuronal operating system, to lie latent in our circuitry, perpetually poised for activation. Implicit memory (Seigel 2012) gives rise to our subjective experience as recurring memories, behaviors, and thoughts.

Firing patterns, experienced as states, arise in response both to stimuli from the outside world and to unconscious processes within the vast subterranean machinations of our neuronal wilderness. For example, critical comments from a spouse or boss easily trigger the amygdala’s reaction, followed by defensive behaviors and language, in spite of our resolute intentions to



be open and receptive (Goleman, 1995.) Despite our cognitive understanding that our best response is otherwise, automatic survival circuitry trumps our good intentions.

Implicit memory itself is not conscious. That said, it gives rise to physiological reactions, subjective experiences, and actions that have actual consequences that are as real as it gets. (Levine, 1997; Gazzaniga, 2011.)

Automatic pulls towards, and away from, particular experiences and habits are states themselves, and are described by Buddhists as attachments and aversions. (Das, 1997.) We can directly experience these pull states: the desire for chocolate, the urge to interrupt, or the avoidance of a difficult conversation. These urges are like the little tornadoes that form when water is draining out of your bathtub. For a little toy boat, these vortices are easy to get into, and hard to resist. Our capacity to witness the vortices of our default states is key to escaping from their gravitational pull, or avoiding them entirely.

Action Potential

Actions and behaviors arise from attachments and aversions, require physical movement under neuronal control, and are chosen through sometimes conscious but usually automatic processes. Every action is logical from within the Bell Jar of the actor.

Someone who is depressed, for example, will interpret circumstances as confirming their powerlessness. Another person will interpret all feedback as hostile, reflexively defending. Another, like Nancy, sees all obstacles as opportunities; her energy level will increase as she rises to each challenge. Yet, this driven person will eventually suffer as she runs into the limits of her capacity to rise to every challenge.

To the extent that our interpretative processes are limited by embodied defaults, then the actions and behaviors that result from those processes will be similarly restricted in range and creativity. A primary goal of development is to expose interpretive Bell Jars, freeing ourselves and our clients from their constraints, in order to respond with optimum flexibility and resourcefulness to what life throws at us.

Executive Control of Attention

Neuroscientists (Gazzaniga, 2011; Siegel, 2007) distinguish top down and bottom up streams of awareness. The top down stream is the typical mental chatter we experience in conversation, meetings, email, daily life, as the seething unconscious processing of the brain, given sufficient urgency, gives rise to specific thoughts, images, and urges. These experiences arise from conditioned, implicit memory. They represent our past experience, embodied, struggling to predict and control the future.

As you read these words, your consciousness is primarily in the top down stream, interpreting, arguing with, or making meaning.



The bottom up stream, alternatively, is moment-by-moment raw experience, unmediated by conditioning and interpretation. Bottom up experience is most easily accessed through sensation. Experience this. Stop reading. Close your eyes, and bring your attention to your breath. Feel the sensation of coolness at the tip of your nose with an in breath; the sensation of rising and falling in your chest. Really allow your attention to directly experience your breathing, without mentally labeling it in words. This is a taste of the bottom up stream.

Executive control of attention (Siegel, 2007) is the capacity to choose where to direct our awareness. We can practice this in little ways. For example, we can let a small piece of dark chocolate slowly dissolve on the tongue, noticing every nuance of flavor and texture. We can practice attention with how we listen to music. Or, a loved one telling us about her day.

We can practice with our own states, recognizing the emotional texture of our mood, or our predisposition to impatience or judgment as we walk into a meeting. We can learn to witness when we are falling into a default state that has a high probability of producing an action or behavior we will later regret.

Attention is the game. Executive control of attention is the developable capacity to choose, in any moment, what we place in the spotlight. It is an inherent functionality, a design specification of the organism. This biologically endowed capacity is the key to resilience and to presence, and is essential to learning and development.

Attention Shifts State

Any original thought, solution, new perspective or competency, or adaptive response to a new context is a state. Nancy's need for new behaviors requires a new combination of neuronal firings that has not had the benefit of previous rehearsals and, therefore, of ready availability. Loosening the dominance of default processes makes these new combinations more likely. This is what presence allows.

Paying attention to the bottom up stream means accessing our present moment raw experience, most easily through sensation. This relaxes the dominance of the conditioned, top down habit stream. (Siegel, 2007.) Over time, practice in turning the volume up or down on particular channels of our awareness builds capacity to self-regulate states, and to access new states entirely.

Try the breathing experiment again, eyes closed, paying full attention to the raw sensations of your breathing. After a minute or so, notice any changes in the overall quality of your experience. Most people, after this simple experiment, report that they feel more relaxed, that the mind has slowed somewhat, and that they are more alert. Attending to sensation affects the state of our overall nervous system.

Over time, through the simple practice of directing our attention, we can learn to self-regulate, manage our energy and focus, and negotiate with difficult emotions. While our nervous



system gives rise to our subjective experience, the reverse is also true: experience affects physiology.

Because our energy and actions inevitably follow attention, this functionality is of critical importance. Noticing minute details of our experience can shift our mood, our experience of ourselves, and our resourcefulness. As Viktor Frankl famously wrote, “the last of the human freedoms is to choose one’s own attitude in any given set of circumstances.” That liberating insight derived from Frankl’s experiences in a Nazi concentration camp, and stands as a profound testimonial to the possibilities of human resourcefulness through directed attention!

Between the mundane (actually tasting our food as we eat it) and the inspirational (Frankl,) our pragmatic, day to day attention to our experience shapes our capacity to choose how and when to act, and to respond optimally to what life throws at us. This capacity to choose what we pay attention to, and thereby to build mastery over our inner state, is the key to resilience and presence.

Presence as a Meta-competency

Presence includes the moment-by-moment awareness of our experience as it arises, including the awareness that we can choose what to pay attention to. Silsbee (2008) describes a number of practices and methods for accessing presence.

The subjective experience of presence is, in a sense, a view from outside the Bell Jar. Kegan and Lahey (2009) describe the shift from looking through the lens of a particular experience to looking at that experience. Presence allows us to witness our experience with objectivity and distance. No longer identified with our habits, we experience a subjective state of greater freedom and possibility. Sometimes we can even laugh at ourselves!

The state of presence has a physiological correlate. We can describe a “global workspace of consciousness,” in which large numbers of neurons are firing in synchronization, the volume of “top down” activity generated from implicit memory has slowed way down, and the “bottom up” stream of sensory data is fully available. (Hanson, 2009; Baars, 2001; Siegel, 2007.) When we are present, our automatic interpretive processes, and the urge to default action they stimulate, are diminished or absent. There is room for alternative interpretations and intuition to arise, and more possibility of original actions optimal for the context.

Presence, over time and given practice, becomes increasingly available. Research shows (Davidson, 2012) that the amount of daily practice required is quite small. In a few minutes a day, the capacities for witnessing, for self-regulation of the nervous system through directed attention, and for accessing compassion, choice, creativity, and resourcefulness reliably increase.

Through practice, these more resourceful and resilient states acquire their own stability, becoming embodied as defaults through the same processes that produced our Bell Jars in the first place. Executive control of attention, and self-regulation through attention practices, is at



the core of leadership presence, of resilience, and sustainable, physiologically supported development.

Presence, itself, is a meta-competency. The implications are profound. The cultivated, practiced availability of a stable, resourceful, creative state from which we can think new thoughts and take new actions literally supports every other learning outcome we can aspire to.

Nancy's default was "on." Everything was an opportunity for her to inspire her troops and stakeholders. On the contrary, any perceived threat, however slight, seemed to threaten everything. Her nervous system was trained to strike pre-emptively, and she did so with such charisma and charm that her doubters were inevitably won over. It took, however, an extraordinary amount of energy to maintain this hyper-vigilance.

Nancy's instinctive interpretive processes were attuned to who was with her, and who was not. Unconsciously, she interpreted the world around her in terms of how it supported or threatened her business goals, and therefore her identity, which was inextricably linked to these goals.

After our intake process, Nancy was able to understand, in principle, that her well-intentioned interventions actually undermined ownership by others. However, the automaticity of her interpretive processes and resulting actions felt nearly impossible to change. She had, after all, practiced this way of being for a very long time.

As our work moved forward, an essential beginning point was for Nancy to begin to witness the constant state of hyper-vigilance itself, and the internal urges rooted in this state that predisposed her to particular actions. This witnessing was the beginning of present-moment awareness, and she began to see the possibility of reducing the automaticity of her actions.

Strategies for Coaching Leaders

Emergent understanding requires we address presence as an essential meta-competency that supports embodiment, resilience, and the sustainable learning of virtually anything. More than a bedrock competency for coaches, presence is also a coaching outcome central to the proposal that the development of leaders can be intentionally shaped and accelerated. This suggests a variety of gifts that a masterful coach can offer.

Real Time Witnessing of Habit Nature

The coach can ask questions that reveal the client's own narratives, filters, and interpretations. More importantly, she can couple this inquiry with present-moment awareness of other experiences, such as emotional states, sensations, and memories. These co-arise with these primarily cognitive processes, and are often coupled with the underlying urges that produce habitual behaviors. A more inclusive direct experience of attachments and aversions as they arise in the whole nervous system leads to greater awareness generally, and earlier recognition of habits before they manifest in behavior. This awareness provides choice points for experiments with new behaviors.



The unique value that a developmental coach can play derives less from seeing the client's automatic processes of interpretation, filters, and behavioral defaults, and more from helping her see them for herself. While our capacity to reveal her Bell Jar to a client is immediately useful and satisfying, the client's long term reliance on the coach's seeing builds dependency and undermines the client's capacity to develop her own witnessing. The coach's job is to support the client's seeing, and, more fundamentally, the client's on-going practices for cultivating the meta-competency of presence.

An early seminal moment in my work with Nancy was asking her to stand up, assume an aggressive "take the hill" stance, and speak the words "I really want to hear what you think." Then, I invited her to open her arms, relax her shoulders, smile, and say the same words again.

In that moment, Nancy recognized in a visceral way that her words and body had been incongruous. This moment changed the conversation, and put authenticity, trust, and congruence on the table as essential components of our exploration.

Biological Co-regulation

Lewis et al (2000) and Siegel (2007) describe the attunement processes by which one person's nervous system becomes a resource for another's. The stability of our present state can sometimes help an anxious client settle; our optimistic, humorous presence may lift the mood of a client who is stuck in a self-sealing vortex of self-judgment.

Our function as coaches is not to produce state changes in our clients: this is a recipe for unhealthy dependency. Rather, we offer the stability of our states as resources for the client's own discovery of how to access more congruent and resilient states themselves, such that they are aligned with the specific commitments that they seek to embody.

Developmental moves for the coaching conversation include:

1. inviting the client to fully experience a new state, thereby telling the hippocampus that the state is important enough to embed in long term implicit memory (Hanson, 2009,)
2. encouraging the client to detail how a state shift occurred, rendering it replicable, rather than just a fortuitous accident dependent on the presence of the coach (Silsbee, 2008,) and
3. jointly designing practices to reinforce and embed the new state in implicit memory (Strozzi, 2007.)

Nancy's hyper-vigilance was palpable in our conversations. Often, we met in the midst of crises in which Nancy was reacting to fast-changing circumstances. Her voice was high and tense; she leaned forward and her thoughts were rapid and sometimes scattered.

With conscious attention, I slowed and deepened my voice, stabilizing and directing my attention, and embodying a settled state. Over the first few minutes of the call, we would both notice her voice slowing and dropping in response to the tone of our exchange. Over time she learned to actively settle herself, accessing a more creative, less reactive state.



Moves For Presence and State Shifts

Coaches can make “relational moves” that invite the client into present-moment awareness. These include questions that, like a Zen *koan*, invite a shift in consciousness, questions that reveal the Bell Jar, requests for self-observation, or instructions that evoke a state shift, such as centering or grounding. Silsbee (2008) details many such moves.

These relational moves are offered lightly, from an internal space of presence within the coach, and designed in partnership with the client (Silsbee, 2008 and 2010.) Coaching “techniques” used unilaterally in an attempt to produce a certain experience, without the relational connectedness, trust and resonance evoked by the coach’s own quality of presence, are likely to come across as unskillful or even manipulative.

I asked about her assumptions and interpretations, as well as questions and reflections related to voice, sensation, emotions, and present-moment thoughts that could only be answered by observing herself, thereby becoming more present and resourceful.

Over time, Nancy could see that she was increasingly able to notice and intervene with her inner state, loosening the grip of her hyper-vigilance, and recognizing that she had real choice in what had previously seemed automatic.

Creating Immediacy

O’Neil (2000) describes the process of creating immediacy as noticing “a relationship between what the leader talks about ‘out there’ and what actually happens in the moment between the two of you.” Skillful coaches use what arises in conversation as data with relevance for the topic at hand. The client’s habit nature will be revealed universally, including in the safe space of the coaching conversation.

When we are present, we notice when we are affected by our client in relevant ways. We spotlight moments when her habits show up, and inquire into the client’s experience, creating the opportunity to work with habits in real time. We invite her to discover how to create real-time shifts in state and perspective that can provide the foundation for rich fieldwork after the coaching conversation.

When, in our conversations, Nancy would interrupt, defend, or manage the conversation in a way that protected her practiced identity, I reflected my experience of her as relevant data. Because there was a certain symmetry between these data and how her colleagues described her, these moments provided a rich opening both for expanded perspective and awareness, and for practicing different ways of engaging each other.

Somatic Practices for Embodied Learning

Neurological research (Schwartz and Begley, 2002; Hanson, 2009; Siegel, 2012) is corroborating what we’ve known for thousands of years. The frequent repetition of desired states, with full present-moment attention and the emotional intensity we derive from what we care about, produces reliable and eventually permanent competencies. Whether a pianist rehearsing a



Beethoven sonata, a tennis player serving buckets of balls, or a leader practicing a centered, resilient inner state, practice makes us better. Practice creates physiologically supported, embodied competency.

Coach and client can jointly design somatic practices. Strozzi (2007) states that the “human body is incapable of not practicing.” Anything that we do repetitively, especially with awareness and emotional arousal, produces experiences that will be increasingly available in the nervous system when needed. This repetition builds, over time, a default, embodied state linked to the client’s commitment, making congruent action increasingly available and probable. Engaging the entire nervous system in learning leads to embodied, physiologically-supported change far beyond what cognition and good intentions will ever produce.

A rhythmic breathing practice turned out to be very important to Nancy. Inhaling while counting to four, holding her breath for another seven, and exhaling for eight proved to be an easy and powerful way to immediately settle her nervous system and become less reactive. Because Nancy was a quick learner, and experienced clear benefits, this became an on-going practice, and she often did it in staff meetings. While nobody saw what she was doing, they reported a significant difference in the quality of her attention, a more relaxed presence, and an increased capacity to listen and ask probing questions.

Fieldwork in Multiple Domains

As a development technology, coaching is distinct because it is sustained over time, and responsive to the client’s learning and to changing circumstances. Coaching intersperses an iterative series of conversations with application, experiments, practices and actions that we can collectively call “fieldwork.”

Sustainable learning is accelerated when we jointly design complementary fieldwork in the quadrants (Wilber, 2000) of consciousness and cognitive understanding, somatic practices and embodiment, relational and social context, and the systems and environment that support and reinforce new ways of seeing and doing. Including fieldwork in mutually reinforcing domains (Wilber et al, 2008) requires different parts of the nervous system to learn, and necessitates new actions that support the commitments at stake in coaching.

Of course, sustainable change requires more than self-regulation. Over the course of many months, Nancy and I designed fieldwork that required her nervous system to engage with her world in multiple ways. Fieldwork between coaching conversations included conventional coaching moves such as requesting feedback from colleagues, relevant reading, making public commitments to new behaviors, structural changes in meetings, and team development interventions as well as less traditional moves such as the breathing practice, witnessing practices around habits and desired new behaviors, and body-centered practices that trained the nervous system to engage in partnership with others.



Summary

This is a tremendously energizing and rewarding time for the field. The contexts for leadership are challenging conventions in all kinds of ways. At the same time, we know more about how humans learn than ever before.

Coaching leaders in the 21st century and beyond requires us to take into consideration all that we are discovering about consciousness, states, and learning. We understand how our habit nature tends to impede learning and change, and we see the tragic consequences of our human propensity to collectively forget much of crucial importance. We know how to incorporate, in self-development and coaching methodologies, the power of presence to catalyze learning potential.

With this knowledge, we can design coaching conversations and fieldwork so that our innate capabilities for embodiment, designed into the human nervous system, work towards long term, physiologically supported development.

We can cultivate leaders capable of authoring a radically new story.

References

- Baars, B. J. (2001.) *In the Theater of Consciousness: The Workspace of the Mind*. New York: Oxford.
- Cozolino, L. (2006.) *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment And the Developing Social Brain*. New York: Norton.
- Das, L. S. (1997.) *Awakening the Buddha Within: Tibetan Wisdom for the Western World*. New York: Broadway.
- Davidson, R. (2012.) *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live--and How You Can Change Them*. New York: Plume.
- Flaherty, J. (2005.) *Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier.
- Gazzaniga, M. S. (2011.) *Who's in Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Goleman, D. (1995.) *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam.
- Hanson, R. (2009.) *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*. Oakland: New Harbinger.
- Kegan, R. and Lahey, L. L. (2009.) *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*. Boston: Harvard.
- Lewis, T., Amini, F., and Lannon, R. (2000.) *A General Theory of Love*. New York: Vantage.



- Levine, P. A. (1997.) *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. Berkeley: North Atlantic.
- O'Neill, M. B. (2000.) *Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart*. New York: Wiley.
- Schwartz, J. M. and Begley, S. (2002.) *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Siegel, D. J. (2007.) *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. New York: Norton.
- Siegel, D. J. (2012.) *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology*. New York: Norton.
- Silsbee, D. (2008.) *Presence Based Coaching: Cultivating Self-Generative Leaders Through Mind, Body, and Heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Silsbee, D. (2010.) *The Mindful Coach: Seven Roles for Facilitating Leader Development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Strozzi Heckler, R. ((1984.) *The Anatomy of Change: East/West Approaches to Body/Mind Therapy*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Strozzi Heckler, R. (2007.) *The Leadership Dojo: Build Your Foundation as an Exemplary Leader*. Berkeley: Frog.
- Torbert, B. (2004.) *Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Wilber, K. (2000.) *A Brief History of Everything*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K., Patten, T., Leonard, A., and Morelli, M. (2008.) *Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening*. Boulder, CO: Integral Books

Doug Silsbee is a leadership coach, author and master teacher in Asheville, NC. His most recent book is **Presence-Based Coaching**. ICF-approved training and certification as a Presence-Based® Coach is offered based on the foundational principles in this paper. See more information at dougsilsbee.com or access the resource section of the site at dougsilsbee.com/subscribe.

This article is copyrighted © 2013 by Doug Silsbee. All rights reserved. The article may be freely shared with others as long as it remains intact and unedited, including the contact information at the end, and notification of use is provided by email to ds@dougsilsbee.com. Please inquire for permission to excerpt beyond standard fair use guidelines.