

Integrating Rigor, Compassion, and Creative Design

The Promise of Integral Coaching® and New Ventures West's Professional Coaching Course

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What becomes possible in coaching when we treat clients as marvelously complex beings who live in language and moods, inhabit bodies and physical environments, and possess both wisdom and blind spots? What opens up when we coach them at the appropriate depth and can appreciate multiple streams of their competence? In short, what would it be like if our coaching included everything and everyone? And who would we need to become to fulfill this audacious aspiration? These questions can serve as an entry point to studying Integral Coaching, and they model the type of inquiry that is at the heart of New Ventures West's Professional Coaching Course.

Every so often in life we pause and make note of the person we have become and the one we are becoming. Sometimes this reflection is prompted by professional circumstances, like a promotion, performance review, job change, or firing. Just as often it emerges from the “rest of life” – as through an illness, death, or the beginning or ending of a relationship. Whatever the origin, these experiences can feel like an opportunity or a burden, a chance to develop or a painful lesson...and often both. How we make sense of these experiences often determines what actions we take, and this, of course, influences our competence and fulfillment in life. Wouldn't it be wonderful, in these moments, to have someone by our side to ask skillful questions, listen deeply, be fully present with who we are and what we say, point out our blind spots, and custom-design practices to help us move forward? And wouldn't it be marvelous, too, to be this person for others?

New Ventures West exists in large part due to the primacy of these questions for ourselves and the people we serve. Both our founding in 1987 and the creation of our *Professional Coaching Course* (PCC) in 1994 happened because these questions moved us (James, in particular) to action. As the PCC passes its fifteenth year, we are honored by this opportunity to share what it is we do, how we do it, and why we think it is powerful.

As the designer of the PCC (James) and one of its graduates (Amiel), we are naturally biased. In addition, this article represents the first time we have articulated most of these ideas in published form. Thus our excitement – and even pride – about what we do may shine through the page. Such is the consequence of loving what you do and writing about it infrequently!

Who is New Ventures West?

Founded in 1987, New Ventures West offers public training programs in Integral Coaching, customized coach training for organizations, executive coaching, advanced courses for experienced coaches, and a referral network to certified Integral Coaches. Our *Professional Coaching Course* has over 1000 graduates, and we currently offer it in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, and internationally.

What is Integral Coaching?

Integral Coaching is what arrives when two people develop a professional relationship that is grounded in mutual trust and respect, directed toward a set of clear outcomes, guided by presence, and informed by broad models about what it means to be a human being. It is a methodology. It is an integration project. It is a moment when you feel deeply connected to yourself and others, with a deep acceptance of everything, *and* you take practical steps to move forward in life. It is both simpler and more complex than it sounds. And, at heart, Integral Coaching is not just an “it” we can see and hear from the outside but also the “I” that lives in our thoughts and emotions and the “we” that connects us to each other in language and culture.

What are the outcomes of Integral Coaching?

Every Integral Coaching purpose statement includes a list of three to five outcomes stated as improvements in competence; for example, “Manage difficult conversations more skillfully,” “Speak in a way that moves people to action,” or “Develop a sense of calm amid life’s turbulence.” The statement provides a clear focus and sense of direction. It also creates a standard by which the coach and client (and, in some cases, the client’s organization) can assess the effectiveness of the work.

You may notice that the first two of these outcome examples are competencies and the third evokes a feeling of fulfillment. This is not accidental. Two major outcomes of Integral Coaching are greater competence and fulfillment. What do we mean by these terms?

- **Competence** is distinct from a goal. A goal is something you achieve, like getting a promotion or losing ten pounds. Competence is a capacity that endures. It helps us achieve particular goals *and* stays with us afterwards. For example, speaking in a way that moves people to action can contribute to a promotion. It can also open up new possibilities for our friendships, family life, and health.
- **Fulfillment** is a deeply felt experience that what we are doing, how we are living, and who we are becoming are meaningful and worthwhile. We are fulfilled when we are held deeply by life, when what once burdened us has lifted. From an individual perspective, the value of fulfillment is self-evident. For organizations, it makes a difference when people are fulfilled because they stay longer and generate better results.

When we speak of the outcomes of Integral Coaching, two additional terms are important: self-correcting and self-generating. What do these words mean?

- When we are **self-correcting**, we have the capacity to observe discrepancies between what we intend and the actual outcomes, between our espoused values and our actual actions, and then bridge the gap. When clients are self-correcting, they are not dependent upon a coach.
- When **self-generating**, we have the ability to continuously renew ourselves by drawing upon resources from without and within. When clients are self-generating, the development of competence becomes not a final end state but a continuous process.

These competencies are essential when our life takes a new direction or when we are thwarted in our intentions.

What makes Integral Coaching powerful?

In reflecting upon our work and comments made by clients and colleagues, we have observed that there are several specific features of Integral Coaching that give it power: (1) including everything and everyone; (2) customized distinctions, practices, and self-observation exercises; (3) creative and elegant design; (4) blending inquiry and advocacy within the cauldron of relationship; (5) the power of presence and

mindfulness; (6) assessing what will be useful for this person now; and (7) the two tracks of Integral Coaching.

We now explore these attributes in more depth.

1. Including everything and everyone

Human beings are infinitely complex creatures. Collectively, we are the product (but not the end state) of millions of years of evolution. On the individual level, each of us inherits unique narratives from the family and culture in which we were raised. And each of us has a body that carries these narratives forward in time. This complexity raises two pivotal questions:

- First, what domains of human experience must coaching include to handle this complexity in a practical way? In our experience, coaching fails when we leave out domains of a person's life. For example, some of us coach our clients as though they don't have bodies. And then we get surprised when insights fail to produce the intended outcomes. (We would say that this is because clients have not embodied them.) Or we specialize in a single focus – like “life purpose” – and assume that this is the core issue for every client. And then we discover one day that what's most core for our client is not a lack of purpose but an underlying emotional mood of resentment or a paucity of sleep. Or we only feel comfortable coaching people who look and sound like us, because everyone else is “uncoachable” or “difficult.” In all of these examples, that which we leave out gets us into trouble. This realization has led us at New Ventures West to wonder: What would open up if we consciously incorporated into coaching as wide a frame as possible? (For an overview of this, see “What are the core models of Integral Coaching?” below.)
- Second, what implications does “including everything and everyone” have for coaches' learning and development? Isn't it foolish to expect coaches to become experts at everything? The answer, of course, is yes. Integral Coaches are not experts at everything, but they do gain both competence in a wide range of approaches and at least some understanding of the philosophy and research underlying them (e.g., linguistics, somatics, adult developmental psychology, and twentieth-century philosophy like the integral theory of Ken Wilber). Just as importantly, they develop the capacity to integrate these myriad disciplines into a coherent methodology that can be adapted to each circumstance.

Our emphasis on inclusion and integration is not the result of a grand theoretical design. Much to the contrary, it emerged as a creative response to the experience of working with thousands of infinitely unique individuals and the organizations they inhabit. Every time we encountered a client who confounded us or a coaching program that felt like one detour after another, we were forced to confront the limitations of our own approach. We asked ourselves: What else must we understand about human beings in order to appreciate this person in all her uniqueness and thereby reorient coaching so that it produces the intended outcomes?

2. Customized distinctions, practices, and self-observation exercises

Because each person is unique, Integral Coaches design coaching programs that are highly customized. For example, let's say we are coaching two directors within an organization who are both learning to "speak in a way that moves people to action." Even though this outcome is the same for both, we will coach each person in a very distinct way. In particular, each director will focus on her own new distinctions, practices, and self-observation exercises. What do we mean by these terms?

- A **new distinction** is a novel way of seeing. When we make a distinction, we are shedding light on something that our clients could not previously see. This allows our clients to observe themselves and the world differently and thereby take action toward the intended outcomes. For example, a new distinction for one of the directors might be "Have you ever noticed that people listen to you differently when you connect what you are saying to their commitments and concerns?" A new distinction for the other director might be "Powerful speech does not come just from your words. It also comes from how you hold your body."
- A **practice** is a behavior that is repeated over and over again with the intent of developing competence up to some standard. The reason clients undertake these practices is the same reason that tennis players spend hours on their backhand and pianists play the scales (both traditional practices in these domains): to incorporate new distinctions into their bodies. For example, the first director might undertake a practice of preparing for meetings and talks by making lists of others' concerns. Because the second director is focused on a different distinction, her practice wouldn't be the same. She might take yoga classes to open up her posture or receive regular therapeutic massages to relax her muscles. In both cases, the practices are (a) designed by the coach in dialogue with the

client, (b) customized to the individual, and (c) intended to support the client in embodying the new distinction.

- A **self-observation exercise** differs from a practice in that it does not involve performing new behaviors. Instead, it involves becoming more aware of oneself and others by rigorously observing these behaviors, as well as one's thoughts, feelings, and body sensations and others' responses. A coach might ask the first director to observe what happens in herself and others when she consciously connects her statements to others' concerns – and to contrast this with what happens when she does not make these connections. The second director might focus her self-observation on her body posture by, for example, stopping three times each day and observing the position of her shoulders and the relative concavity of her chest. In both cases, the idea is for the client to (a) become more self-aware and (b) check out for herself whether the new distinction offered by the coach has validity.

3. Creative and elegant design

Designing practices and self-observation exercises is a creative act. This aspect of Integral Coaching often resonates deeply with both clients and coaches. Clients describe how special it feels to receive a program conceived specifically for them. An elegantly designed practice is like a carefully picked holiday gift; it conveys that one has been seen and heard deeply. For many coaches, the design stage is the most challenging and fun part of the process. It evokes one's artfulness and ingenuity. It also provides an impetus for exploring situations from a multitude of angles, initiating new courses of study, and pausing to marvel at the weird ways of the world happening around us every moment. All of these feed our creativity and therefore our capacity for high-quality design.

4. Blending inquiry and advocacy within the cauldron of relationship

Some coaching approaches emphasize the power of inquiry. They make the case that clients have all of the answers to life's questions within them. The coach's task, therefore, is to ask the right questions and then get out of the way. Other coaching approaches value most highly the power of advocacy and directiveness. The assumption is that the answers to life's questions reside within the coach. The coach's job, therefore, is to provide expertise and direction.

Integral Coaching strikes a middle path. We find that the true power in coaching lies within neither inquiry nor expertise alone, but in what our colleague, Pam Weiss, calls “the cauldron of relationship.” For it is relationship that allows the marvelous complexity of the client and coach to mesh, and it is through this meshing that new distinctions emerge. Clients arrive to coaching with both wisdom and blind spots, gifts and limitations. Coaches show up with their own blend of these two *and* a capacity to shine light into clients’ blind spots. When there is mutual trust and mutual respect, what unfolds is a conversation in which both the coach and client inquire, learn, and advocate at every stage of the process. Here are some examples of how this process can unfold:

- A new distinction is powerful only when it (a) truly helps the client see something new and (b) connects in the client’s mind to the intended outcomes. Thus, the next step after making a new distinction is always to check in with clients. The coach asks, “How does this land for you?” and “What does this open up for you?” In a relationship of mutual trust, clients feel free to communicate that a distinction does not resonate with them – or that they fully embrace it. They do this through both words and body language. The coach then has the option of reframing the distinction, offering a new one, or pursuing further inquiry. Which route she takes depends upon how she views the client’s response, as well as her assessment of how the client listens. With some clients much persistence is necessary. Others open more with a gentle approach. It all depends on the person. The more coaches are tuned in to their clients, the more skillful the response.
- A similar conversation can happen around practices and self-observation exercises. Between when a coach first suggests these and when a client begins them, a great deal of mutual inquiry often occurs. The coach asks, “What could get in the way of doing these practices?” or, more bluntly, “So, you think any of this will happen?” Once again, the client’s response determines what happens next.

5. The power of presence and mindfulness

It is difficult to coach effectively unless one can listen. And it is hard to listen when one is not fully present. Being present means being right here and right now, rather than in some other place or at some other time. So much gets in the way of being present: distracting thoughts, closed body postures, emotions held in tightly (or released carelessly), and even the physical and natural surroundings.

Being present is possible when we become mindful of all the ways we are not present and then, rather than being captive to a distracting thought, we recognize it and release it. Rather than locking in our emotions, we feel them fully and then let them pass. Similarly, we notice when our shoulders are slumped – or when our office layout is a hindrance – and take corrective action. These actions free us to relax into the present moment and to listen deeply to our clients.

6. Assessing what will be useful for this person now

An important influence on Integral Coaching is the philosophy of pragmatism. The basic idea of pragmatism is to do what works. Does this mean that we should do what worked yesterday or in a similar situation with someone else? No, because every situation is truly unique. Pragmatism asks us to instead do what works right here, right now, and with this person. This may seem obvious, but that doesn't make it easy, because we often and easily fall into habits. What it calls for is an ability to be a keen observer of oneself, others, and the context. For an Integral Coach, it means being conscious enough to ask – and skilled enough to answer – the question: What will be useful for this person now?

7. The two tracks of Integral Coaching

We like to say that there are two tracks in Integral Coaching. The obvious one is the development of our clients. We support them in becoming more competent and fulfilled over the long term in a self-correcting manner. The less obvious but equally important track is the development of the coach. Why is this important? Because if we don't embody harmony and integrity, our clients will find out pretty quickly. If they're seriously deluded, it takes about 20 minutes. But if they're present, they will see it much sooner.

Not only that, if we are inattentive to our own development, it also weakens our assessments. For example, when a client drifts in his coaching program (e.g., not doing the practices the coach suggested), most of us have a tendency to think either *It's the client's fault* or *It's my fault*. A coach who is not tuned into himself will fall into this trap and produce an inadequate assessment of the situation. A coach who is aware of his bias will see it showing up and take corrective action. This may seem like a small matter, but it can make the difference between a coaching relationship that realizes its intended outcomes and one that does not. This is why in both our public classes and our organizational programs we not only insist that coaches invest

in their own self-development, but we also design structures everywhere in our programs to support this.

What are the core models of Integral Coaching?

The clearest expression of the principle “include everything and everyone” can be found in the three core models we use to assess what’s happening in a client’s life and then design coaching programs that address this.

1. Including all dimensions of a person’s life (the Four Human Domains)
2. Coaching at the appropriate depth (the Ten Ways)
3. Appreciating all forms of competence (the Six Streams)

We now explore these core models in more depth.

1. Including all dimensions of a person’s life (the Four Human Domains)

Integral Coaches use a model adopted from Ken Wilber (1996), called the Four Human Domains, to help people integrate the major dimensions of their lives. As shown in the following table, this model provides a practical means for identifying where people place their attention in life – where they think “the problem” is – and what they neglect.

The Four Human Domains

<p>III. Culture and Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language ▪ Ritual and customs ▪ Morals 	<p>I. Individual Experience and Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thoughts and feelings ▪ Emotions and mood ▪ Body sensations
<p>IV. Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Natural ▪ Human-made ▪ Technology and tools 	<p>II. Body and Behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Body chemistry ▪ Neuromuscular system ▪ Genetic inheritance

Several aspects of the Four Human Domains model are worth describing:

- The human domains are not separate phenomena but four different windows on the same phenomenon. For example, the act of writing involves the thoughts in our minds and the emotions we feel (human domain I); our body posture and movements (human domain II); the language of writing, such as grammar and syntax (human domain III); and the actual physical locations where we write and the instruments we use (human domain IV).
- To develop competence in something, it is important to pay attention to all four human domains. Yet we tend to emphasize some domains and ignore others. The ones we ignore get us into trouble. To continue our example, have you ever noticed that the quality of your writing is connected to your emotional mood (human domain I) and your mood is influenced by the openness of your body posture (human domain II)? And have you observed that shifting your posture can open up new possibilities for your writing? Try it sometime.
- There are skillful means for each human domain. For human domain I, the skillful means are self-observation and sincerity. For human domain II, we emphasize exercise, diet, and various somatic disciplines. For human domain III, we build networks of support and communities of practice. Human domain IV involves attending to the physical spaces where we spend our time (office furniture, nature, and so on).
- At the organizational level, it is important for initiatives to address all four human domains. Those that don't are likely to fail. For example, there are programs like reengineering that are heavy on policies, structural incentives, and flow diagrams (human domain IV) yet ignore individual people (human domains I and II). In another example, a company may preach the value of teamwork (human domain III) and then say, "Oh, by the way, at the end of the year we're going to rank you against each other" (which reflects an omission of the value of teamwork from human domain IV). Once again, what we leave out trips us up.

2. Coaching at the appropriate depth (the Ten Ways)

Occasionally, when we meet someone for the first time, they say, "I hear that Integral Coaching is pretty deep. Is this true?" Our response is the ever-popular "Yes and no." Our methodology contains depth in the sense that we are capable of working in very profound ways with people. But the other side of the coin is that not everyone is ready or able to "go deep." Indeed, "going as deep as possible" is often an inappropriate response to a client's situation. At New Ventures West, we instead advocate for scaling our work to fit the individual person. A recurring question for

Integral Coaches is: Can I be sensitive enough and open enough to meet this person on the level where I can best serve them? Herein lies the irony: just being able to ask this question requires a level of depth and awareness that most of us have only begun to develop.

What do we mean by “level”? This is one of those words that causes people consternation. Many of us don’t like the notion of levels; it sounds hierarchical and judgmental. Yet, in our courses, we have found that incorporating an awareness of developmental levels into coaching actually makes us more compassionate. It does this by providing an approach with which we can appreciate where people are in their lives and the distinctive ways that they make meaning.

To illustrate this point, consider a model we have developed called the Ten Ways. Each “way” represents a perspective about what is important in life, and each corresponds with a developmental level. (Over 95 percent of clients dwell within the first Five Ways, so this is where we focus.)

- **The First Way: Addressing Immediate Concerns.** “My performance review is next week, and I want to be prepared.” Ever hear this? Or “I’m going to the annual holiday party on Friday night and need something to wear.” If we don’t address these immediate concerns, people will think we’re not paying attention to them. And, in truth, we’re not. Integral Coaching can go much deeper than this level, but it always starts here.
- **The Second Way: Balance.** Many books and classes focus exclusively on this level. They provide sophisticated instruments to help people determine when they are out of balance. This can be enormously helpful. Many of us are so involved at work that we forget that we have a body, that we are involved in a relationship, that we have families.
- **The Third Way: Conversations.** A major reason for being out of balance is lack of skill at conversations. We habitually say “yes” to requests to stay late for meetings or don’t make time for getting-to-know-you conversations with new colleagues and friends. Coaching at this level involves becoming competent at conversations for relationship, possibility, and action. It includes learning how to make powerful offers and requests – and how to respond to offers and requests emanating from others.
- **The Fourth Way: Power.** Great conversational moves are flat if we don’t have power. Our definition of power is being able to make happen what we intend to have happen. Clients find resolution at this level by focusing on timing, yielding, discipline, and leakage of emotions from the past.

- **The Fifth Way: Vocation.** At levels 1 through 4, we are preoccupied with getting what we want. Our primary question is “What do I want out of life?” At the level of Vocation, we begin asking a new question: “What does life want from me?” As we spend time with this question, we start to realize that the real source of power is not ourselves but our relationship with life.

We encourage coaches to follow several principles in working with the Ten Ways.

- Start from the top. Don’t coach a client at the Conversations level unless you are convinced the client has resolved the key issues of Immediate Concerns and Balance.
- Work one level deeper than where the issue shows up. For example, the way to develop more power is to focus on Vocation.
- Don’t coach someone at a level in which you have not developed competence yourself.
- Issues that are not addressed at the top sink toward the bottom. They will still be around if you decide to work at a deeper level. This is another reason to start from the top.

3. Appreciating all forms of competence (the Six Streams)

Have you ever wondered how it is that some people are brilliant intellectually yet completely out of touch with their emotions? Or why others are extraordinarily adept with their bodies yet unable to sustain satisfying relationships with others? Although the Four Human Domains and Ten Ways are both powerful models, they don’t address these questions. It is for this reason that Integral Coaches also use a model called the Six Streams. The premise of this model is that humans develop along multiple lines or streams of development. In *Integral Psychology*, Ken Wilber identifies several dozen streams that have been experimentally validated. We find it helpful to focus on six that show up most often in coaching and are central to clients’ effectiveness and fulfillment.

- **Cognitive:** the ability to make observations in a particular field (e.g., business, philosophy, cooking) and then synthesize these observations into a coherent understanding.
- **Emotional:** the ability to discern our own emotional states, our feelings in this moment, the background emotional tone of our lives, and our emotional responses to particular events (e.g., being challenged). Also, the ability to discern the emotional state of others, even when they themselves are oblivious to it or denying it.

- **Somatic:** the ability to observe what is happening in our bodies (e.g., energized, tired, heavy, open, tight) and to tap into this somatic wisdom as we respond to the present moment.
- **Relational:** the ability to initiate and sustain mutually satisfying relationships. This includes the ability to listen deeply, communicate profoundly, and support others' intentions while maintaining one's own dignity.
- **Spiritual:** the ability to create a life dedicated to the benefit of everyone – not only ourselves or our families, companies, or tribes. This includes active engagement in a community dedicated to serving others with wisdom and compassion.
- **Integrating:** the ability to undo all the ways we compartmentalize our lives so that our commitments and values show up in all of our words, actions, and relationships.

What circumstances are calling for Integral Coaching?

Like other social phenomena, Integral Coaching exists not because anyone has willed it into being but because of historical and cultural circumstances that give rise to it. It is a creative response to all of these circumstances:

- **Global transition and disruption.** We live in an age of rapid social, technological, and environmental change. The disruption this creates in people's lives is not something that technology alone can resolve. It calls for competencies like new ways of speaking and listening, as well as the cognitive capacity to integrate multiple perspectives (e.g., the value to countries of both profitable companies and a healthy biosphere). These are two of the intended outcomes of Integral Coaching.
- **The challenge of sustaining organizational transformation and the call for wise and compassionate leadership.** A significant percentage of Integral Coaches work in or with organizations, and their clients are often leaders at different levels. Why is this? The explanations we hear most frequently are that (a) organizations appreciate a structured methodology focused on clear outcomes and (b) leaders value a relationship characterized by mutual trust and respect and a program that is customized for them.
- **An unprecedented constellation of wisdom and knowledge...and the need to take it into action.** To paraphrase Ken Wilber, never has so much wisdom from so many different sources been available in one place at one time. We are incredibly fortunate to be alive in this moment. This privilege is also a challenge:

How do we take what we have learned and put it into action? Integral Coaching is our response.

What are the intentions of people who enroll in the *Professional Coaching Course (PCC)*?

People enter the PCC and become Integral Coaches for several reasons.

- **Integral Coaching is a core professional competence.** A diverse range of people enters the PCC. About 60 percent have worked in large organizations in managerial, executive, and professional capacities. Many others have backgrounds in consulting, psychotherapy, science, or the arts. A significant number have master's or doctoral degrees or the equivalent in life experience. And their ages range over a nearly fifty-year span, with the majority in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. What all of these people have in common is a curiosity about what it takes to support people's development and a commitment to developing the competence needed to do this.
- **Integral Coaching is a calling.** Sometimes people applying to the program tell us that their primary hope is to "transform myself" or "give myself a gift." We reply that these are worthy intentions yet not sufficient by themselves. An important premise of our work is that we cannot do coaching just for ourselves, just because "I want to." We can only do it for other people. We invest in our own development not only for our own sake but also for the sake of others. In other words, we intend Integral Coaching to be a calling.
- **The *Professional Coaching Course* meets people where they are.** Many educational programs describe themselves as the "beginning" of one's learning and development. We like to talk about the PCC as the "middle" of one's development. This is not just a cute linguistic move, but a reflection of an important principle: people are always in the middle of their lives. When they begin our program, they do so not as "blank slates" but as people with existing commitments, immediate concerns, networks of support, and personal histories. All of these shape both what happens in the program and what learning paths they pursue beyond it.

Having said this, regardless of which "middle" they are in, many graduates find the core models of Integral Coaching to be useful frameworks not only for working with clients but also for designing curricula for their own ongoing learning. They not only participate in our master classes, reunion weekends, and

(beginning this year) advanced courses, but they also invest in programs offered elsewhere. We encourage this. Because *integral* means to include everything and everyone, there is value in pursuing high-quality learning from any source. Indeed, when graduates take classes through other organizations (e.g., in somatic coaching, “difficult conversations,” or the Enneagram), they are obviously learning “outside of” New Ventures West, but they are not leaving Integral Coaching. Instead, they are enriching it.

What is the design of the *Professional Coaching Course*?

When people enroll in the PCC, they join a program of 20 professionals who study, learn, and practice together for an entire year and quickly form a supportive learning community. The curriculum blends a rigorous course of study with hands-on practice and attention to participants’ own individual development. Some elements of the program, like the reading and written assignments and use of small group learning, remind students of other educational experiences they have had. Other elements, like the creation of individual development programs for each student and the breadth of the core models, strike many as new and unfamiliar. Our intent is for the design of the program to reflect the principles of Integral Coaching. It should not surprise you to learn that each time we offer it, we discover ways to do this more effectively.

The PCC is organized around four face-to-face sessions. Each session lasts from Thursday to Sunday. Days run from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with a long afternoon break to eat lunch, do a short assignment, walk, and relax. In between sessions, students read books from the “Coach’s Bookshelf” (see below for details), complete written assignments, coach clients, and undertake their own individual development programs. As they engage in these activities, they draw upon the support of small learning groups called pods. Each pod works with a pod mentor, an experienced graduate of the program. Students also receive periodic coaching from the course faculty.

Here is an outline of the PCC:

- **Session One** focuses on building a strong and supportive community. The talks, exercises, and discussion involve cultivating students’ capacity to be present, mindful, and skilled observers of themselves and others. On Sunday, the course leader coaches participants and designs individual development programs for

each of them. (See “Individual development programs” below.) This begins their initiation into the “two tracks” of Integral Coaching.

- **Between Sessions One and Two**, students, by engaging in their own personal development program, begin to develop the body of a coach (human domain II) and the capacity to witness how distinctions and practices can impact someone’s life.
- In **Session Two** we turn our attention to the three core models and their use with clients. We discuss the stages of a coaching relationship, the elements of a proposal, and how to design and conduct an Integral Coaching program. Students begin to get a taste of what it means to “include everything and everyone.”
- **Between Sessions Two and Three**, participants’ attention expands to include not only their development and that of their classmates, but also the practice of coaching. As they work with three to five clients, their pod, pod mentor, and other faculty all support them in making grounded assessments, offering powerful distinctions, and designing practices and self-observation exercises. It is here that they begin gaining first-hand experience in “blending inquiry and advocacy in the cauldron of relationship.”
- **Session Three** emphasizes practice. By working with their classmates, a “guest client” from outside, and coaches acting as observers, participants learn to simultaneously be present with clients and draw upon the rich models and frameworks.
- **Between Sessions Three and Four**, students continue to work with clients, writing up case descriptions in which they reflect on their experiences and what they have learned. They also receive feedback from the faculty on tape-recorded conversations with clients and continue to focus on their individual development.
- The heart of **Session Four** is the certification process, which takes place on Friday and Saturday. This involves live coaching in front of a certification committee and the discussion of coaching cases. Again, the focus is on the “two tracks”: both students’ development and their work with clients. Sunday is a day of closure, on which all participants offer gratitude to each other, one by one.

Two features of the course mentioned above are worth describing in detail:

- **Individual development programs.** The program that students receive from the course leader in Session One sets a tone and structure for the year. Being coached about something that matters to them provides a visceral experience of Integral Coaching from the client’s perspective. In addition, the practices they

receive and undertake help them become the kind of people who can create such relationships with others – so this is not only personally powerful, but also very practical in enhancing their ability to coach.

- **“Coach’s Bookshelf” and written assignments.** Students receive a “Coach’s Bookshelf” of ten books that span widely across different disciplines and knowledge bases. One month they may read a book about the physiology of breathing; the next, a work of twentieth-century philosophy; and the next, a guide to being present and mindful amid life’s turbulence. The intent is to spark curiosity by delving into subjects that are essential to coaching *and* outside their “normal” range of learning – a.k.a. “including everything and everyone.” In addition, they complete written assignments such as the application of the core models to a coaching case, essays about how everyday life informs their coaching, reflections on their readings, and the development of a vision of their future. These assignments further help them embody the “two tracks” of Integral Coaching.

The *Professional Coaching Course*, like all of our programs, is a living system. It changes, adapts, and responds to ongoing circumstances, students’ needs, improvements in technology, and our own development. What will emerge next? We’re as curious as you are. Stay tuned.

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About the authors

James Flaherty is the founder of New Ventures West and author of *Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others*, which Peter Senge claimed “will come to stand out as a definitive work” in the field. He designed the *Professional Coaching Course* in 1994 and has led it for fifteen years. He also coaches senior executives and provides coach training within Fortune 500 companies and other large organizations.

Amiel Handelsman is the founder of CuriousLeader, LLC, an executive coaching firm that helps smart, principled leaders rise to new challenges. He is a certified Integral Coach and a former employee of New Ventures West. He holds an MBA from the University of Michigan and an B.A. in Public Policy Studies from Duke University. For his writings about coaching and leadership, please visit www.curiousleader.com.

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