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Coaching Practices of Body and Mind to Support the Shift to Self-authorship Carolyn Coughlin January 2015

What constructive developmental theory tells us about how we grow

What does it mean to be an adult? Here I'm not talking about chronological age, what job a person has, how smart she is, or even whether she lives a lawful, moral, or responsible life (although those are useful adult characteristics). What I'm asking is—what is required in order to thrive in today's complex world, a world in which we no longer have village elders (see Berger, Changing on the Job, 2012) to tell us how to decide, who we should be, or who we should be it with? If you ask enough people, you'll probably come up with a description of "adult" that looks something like this—thinks for oneself, doesn't need others to tell her what to do, has an internal voice, is self-directed, knows who she is. These ideas point how one knows things and through what lens identity is formed. This is the domain of constructive-developmental theory, which tells us that there are fully three distinct versions of adulthood, each characterized by a more complex way of constructing knowledge, identity and relationships than the previous version.

Constructive developmental theory further suggests that growth from one form to the next isn't something we get simply as a reward for being alive. This offers two pieces of good news---first, that we don't have to feel defective for not having arrived at a particular developmental place even when our bodies look like we should have, and second, that each of us, with the right circumstances and some effort, is capable of constructing a form of mind that is most aligned with the modern world's definition of adulthood.² According to constructive developmental theory, a human life is a series of equilibria (when our way of making sense of the world is well-aligned with our circumstances and context) and disequilibria (when it's not), and that growth tends to happen when a disequilibrium is met with some sort of support (could be a person or a set of ideas or even an institution) that enables us to grow into a meaning making system more in line with the new reality of our lives (Kegan, 1982 and 1994; Baxter-Magolda, 1999 and various). Therefore, during those periods when we find

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¹ The three forms of mind associated with adulthood are the Socialized, Self-Authored, Self-Transforming. This chapter deals only with the transition from socialized to self-authored, but that is not to suggest that there is no useful form of adulthood beyond that—in fact, there is increasing evidence that more adults are growing a Self-Transforming form of mind and that our increasingly complex world is calling for more adults in this place.

² I'm proposing that the modern world has, at least in the last several decades, called for self-authorship, although there is increasing evidence that the world needs self-transforming leaders as well (see Robert Kegan's RSA talk, May 2013)

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we are in over our heads³ there is hope. Seeing that there is a well-traveled and reasonably well-understood journey before us, we can enlist the sorts of supports that are likely to help us grow a new form of mind, enabling us to can thrive in a world that has outgrown the form of mind that previously served us so well.

Marcia Baxter Magolda's 27 year study (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2009) found that the traditional college experience does not consistently prepare students for what the world demands of them afterward. As she followed her study subjects beyond the college years and into adulthood, she further found that their growth into self-authorship depended in large part on the sorts of partnerships they had in their lives—those with critical relationships that supported them to grow (she calls them Learning Partnerships) tended to grow a self-authored capacity more quickly and more easily than those without such supports. How then can coaches with an understanding of constructive-developmental theory and skilled at listening for the structure of a client's meaning-making, support their clients to grow a more self-authored self?

Coaching to support the journey

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when supporting someone in the shift from the Socialized to the Self-Authored Mind is that bigger is not always better; rather, bigger is bigger. Bigger may be useful when the client seems to be in over her head vis a vis her environment, but it is my belief that before seeking to accompany someone on a journey of growth, we should first understand if that is what she wants. Leaving any form of mind, while generally moving toward a place of greater alignment between environmental demands and internal capacity, also comes with costs (see Perry, 1970, 1998). Asking a young person to leave the place that has provided him not only comfort but great success (say, a college student who is wellliked, seen by adults as mature and thoughtful, and who consistently gets good grades) is a big ask and may well feel to him like an unattractive move. A person who has managed well into adulthood by constructing her environment to reinforce her habit of looking outside herself to know how she's doing, while likely in over her head, may well have invested heavily in the structure of her life so that growing her meaning making will seem difficult and risky. On the other hand, the recent college graduate who has just been turned down for his 10th job interview because he "isn't self-directed enough" may well be eager to grow and simply in search of the right supports to do so.

³ As Bob Kegan describes in his 1994 book by the same name

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The second important starting point is, if possible, to have a sense of how far the client has already travelled on the journey and in what ways. Some questions you might ask include

- Is she solidly Socialized?
- Is she beginning to see the ways in which her current form of mind is insufficient?
- Has she for years seen the limitations, perhaps possessing the capacity to construct meaning beyond the socialized but has actively avoided the potential losses associated with growth in some way?
- Or is she perhaps nearly at the place of full self-authorship but has one or more tethers (see below) holding her back from fully living into self-authorship?
- And are there ways that one of the three aspects of meaning making (construction of knowing, identity, and relationships) seems to be further along than the others?

These are questions that might help the coach as learning partner know where to begin.

The remainder of this paper outlines in some detail a set of developmental practices coaches and learning partners might use to help people grow when a new form of mind is needed.

Habits of Mind that support development

We've all heard the complaint that coaching and leadership interventions are often interesting and even feel life changing in the moment, but beyond the walls of the training room, the impact has a tendency to dissolve quite quickly. Partly in response to this frustrating but persistent phenomena, Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston⁴ have identified three habits of mind that, if practiced consistently and with the support of Learning Partners, significantly increase the chances of enabling near term developmental shifts and create reinforcing feedback loops that serve to sustain and grow development over time. Here are some ways those habits of mind can be used in coaching to support clients in the shift from the Socialized to the Self-Authored Mind.

⁴ The author's business partners at Cultivating Leadership (<u>www.cultivatingleadership.com</u>), written about at length in <u>Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World</u>, Stanford Business Books, 2012)

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Asking different questions

People tend to ask the questions they know how to ask, and those they know how to ask mostly come from the form of mind that gave rise to them. The Socialized Mind readily asks questions that come from and reinforce a socialized perspective. One of the most powerful interventions a coach can make is to (a) help the client notice (hold as more object) the questions they habitually ask of themselves and others and (b) offer questions that might be more familiar to a person who makes meaning at the next form of mind. Here are some possibilities:

Questions from the	Stretch questions	Questions for the Self-
Socialized Mind		Authored Mind
What will others say/think?	Why does that matter to	What do I say/think and
	me so much?	how is it informed by but
	What would be at risk	not the same as what
	for me if I didn't	important others say/think?
	automatically ask this	
	question?	
Why are others making me	What is it costing me to	What do I feel and what's
feel this way?	assume others have	possible for me as a result
	such influence over my	of being able to own my
	feelings?	feelings?
	What do I feel	
	(specifically)?	
Am I doing the right thing?	Who gets to decide	How is what I think is right
	what the right thing is?	informed by, but not the
	What is the cost of	same as what others say is
	letting X decide?	right?
How can I make the best	Why do assume I have	Is what I'm doing moving
choice given all these	to respond to all of	me toward the things that
competing demands?	them?	most matter to me?
	What would happen if I	
	didn't attend to all of	
	them?	

Taking multiple perspectives

A person making meaning at the Socialized stage can readily imagine and see the perspective of others—in fact, sometimes they find it all too easy to take on the perspectives of important others. Too many differing perspectives can feel overwhelming for this person. One major achievement of the socialized/self-authored transition is the ability to hold more and more perspectives that differ from both one's own perspective as well as from one another while not being overwhelmed or subsumed by them. There are many ways to support the increasing ability to hold multiple perspectives, but my favorite is one that I routinely use in my coaching as well as in nearly all of our Cultivating Leadership programs—we call it Hero

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Perspectives.

Have the client think of a person in her professional or personal life with whom she has the most trouble seeing eye to eye (call him *Nemesis*). Ask your client to write down her reflexive (automatic, uncensored) interpretation of what *Nemesis* is up to. It's likely that story will in some way have *Nemesis* being wrong, stupid, or up to no good. Now, introduce the idea that most of us imagine ourselves as the Heroes of our Own Stories—in other words, we know that even when other people disagree with us, we in fact have heroic intentions; we are trying to do the right thing even if it doesn't feel that way to other people. Ask your client to imagine, just for a moment, that Nemesis is the hero of his own story. Your client doesn't have to believe it, just pretend she believes it. Ask her to think of a Hero Story from *Nemesis's* perspective; what story might he be telling about himself? Now think of another possible hero story that is substantively different from the first. Now another. Then ask the client to read those stories to you. Are they really heroic in nature? Stay with it until they are. Now ask your client "ok, which one of those is true?" She will likely have to admit that she doesn't know...so what's to learn from this? It helps the client begin to really embody the idea that, while it's easy to assign conscious negative intent to another person, and possibly even easy to come up with one Hero Story, we tend to get attached to the stories that occur most readily to us. When forced to think of multiple perspectives, we begin to ask ourselves different questions and imagine a world that isn't quite as simple as the one that first occurred to us.

Your client will need further support after this exercise, as it can be tempting to reject this more complex world as too overwhelming and retreat to the simpler version. When practiced consistently and with support, however, this kind of perspective-taking exercise can be incredibly powerful for people at any stage of development.

Seeing Systems

Developmental growth is frequently referred to as "growing complexity of mind" (Berger, 2012) and that is because, as we grow the capacity to reflect on, rather than be fused with, more and more of our world (first we mainly see our own desires—Self Sovereign, then we see the perspectives of others—Socialized; then see the perspectives of others as part of a larger system in which we are a key player—Self-Authored), we also grow the capacity to see larger and more complex systems without being overwhelmed by them. So supporting others to see and hold larger systems is key to supporting their development. How do we do that?

The person with a Socialized Mind can see patterns. The person with a Self-Authored Mind can see those patterns more easily and is able to translate the patterns in one domain of her life to other domains. For example, the Socialized person may be able to see the patterns in the way his team interrelates, but this might not seem like an obvious way to learn about how his team might interrelate with their customers. The Self-Authored person is much more likely to make this connection quickly and easily.

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One of the most helpful things a Learning Partner can do for someone in this transition is to help her see patterns in her daily life. Giving herself-observation fieldwork can be really helpful here. As she begins to more readily see patterns and to see them in more places, you can then support her to see how similar patterns show up in different domains and even challenge her to notice patterns from one domain, like work (e.g., "I notice that when my boss asks me to do something and doesn't give me what feels like ample time to complete it perfectly, I procrastinate and then I feel bad about myself"), in other domains, like social or family relationships (e.g., "when I see that I've done something causes my partner to be angry, I tend to ignore it hoping it will go away rather than address it, and then it becomes a downward spiral"). Importantly, I am advocating a "noticing" practice, rather than a "fixing" practice. Moving immediately from "oh my goodness, I notice this pattern everywhere now" directly to fixing it can be counterproductive (see Kegan and Lahey Immunity to Change, 2009).

Growth Edge practices⁵

Developmental coaches trained to listen for distinctions of meaning making are able to not only get a sense of a person's form of mind⁶ but can often uncover other patterns in her meaning making that, if made explicit, could unlock growth. Following are three patterns we find both relatively common and also very helpful to notice.

Seeing the equals

When two ideas are "equal," it means our client can't see the difference between what feels true to her (e.g., "success equals owning a house by the time I'm 30") and what is necessarily true. But her mind, the two ideas have become so much the same that she isn't able to reflect and ask herself "is this really true? And is it true in all cases? And what if it weren't true?" As this person's coach, tune your ears to those things that are synonymous to your client and not to you. Trace the logic and ask: Why did you come to this as the obvious answer?

Noticing and working with tethers

Sometimes people have one small piece of themselves that holds them back. This isn't as widely contextual as the big self/ little self, but is more specific to a single idea, relationship, definition (I had one coaching client who appears to be fully self-authored but continues to call herself a people pleaser, a little thing that has quite big consequences for her leadership). When that tether gets named and explored, it can loosen up quite quickly and this backwards pull can lose its power. As her coach, look for a single idea (or relationship, etc.) that seems to have an unusual pull on her

⁵ These ideas were co-developed by Jennifer Garvey Berger and Carolyn Coughlin and are used in Cultivating Leadership's Psychologically Spacious Coaching workshop, one of the two advanced workshops in our Growth Edge Coaching Certification Series.

⁶ Particularly by using the Growth Edge Interview, but also by asking questions that tend to uncover form of mind during a coaching conversation.



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meaning making. See if there's one of these definitions that lives in many different contexts, name your hypothesis that there might be this small idea or definition that is having a big consequence, and see if it's open for exploration.

Building bridges

Often our client has a piece of herself that tends to "stand on a higher balcony" and a piece that is more habitually "down on the dance floor" in some way. This often happens when a person is in transition from one form of mind to the next. If you see this happen consistently across issues or domains, you can help a client put the big and little selves in conversation, or build a bridge between what the big self can do and what the little self can do. As a coach, you can paint a picture of what these two selves can do: your big self can do X and here's some evidence of that (e.g., hold a variety of competing forces in her head, notice that two opposites might both be right, carry the perspective of someone with whom he disagrees violently). Your little self doesn't seem to be able to do X, and here's some evidence of that. What would your big self say to your little self in this circumstance? How could we make a bridge from the little self piece of your life across to the bigger self piece?

Practices that engage the body

I propose that all of the above coaching interventions can be enhanced by deliberately including awareness and engagement of the client's body in the process. Although the prominent constructive-developmental theorists (Cook-Greuter, Kegan, Berger, Torbert, Perry, Baxter Magolda, Josephs and Joiner) do not seem to have written explicitly about the role of our bodies in the developmental process, many of them have alluded to it. Bill Torbert (2004) suggests that necessary to deepening our action logics is, first, to begin to recognize how limited our ordinary attention and awareness is and, second, to begin exercising our awareness in new ways in the midst of challenging situations. Joiner and Josephs (2006) suggest that the quality of a person's attention becomes keener and more present-centered around their physical senses as they move into the post-conventional stages (in and beyond Self-Authored); indeed, in their study of leaders, they noticed that nearly 100% of those who scored at the most advanced stages of development had some sort of committed awareness or body-based practice.

The process of moving our physical self from subject to object is a developmental practice; the more we hold our physical being—the myriad sensations that are normally invisible to us—as object, the more we can enlist those sensations to

⁷ Borrowing language from Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, I use this term to describe a person's ability to and habit of seeing the larger perspective vs. inhabiting a narrower piece of the whole system. Developmentally, the capacity to stand on a higher and higher balcony grows as a person's form of mind grows, but sometimes a person has the capacity to be on a higher balcony but cannot readily seem to do so in certain contexts.

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consciously shape how we know, how we define ourselves, and how we construct our interpersonal relationships. Our bodies increasingly become a source of wisdom, and we can make choices about the sorts of actions we take, which in turn inform our knowing (Strozzi-Heckler, Silsbee, Cuddy, and others).

Below, I offer a number of somatic practices that I believe are supportive of the transition to Self-Authorship (indeed, they can be developmental at any stage, but here I've explicitly organized around the Socialized-Self-Authoring transition). Many, but not all, of these practices are were inspired by my training with Richard Strozzi-Heckler and others at the Strozzi Institute, and I've organized them around what Strozzi-Heckler describes in his new book, The Art of Somatic Coaching, as the Somatic Arc of Transformation.

Noticing and honoring the current shape⁸

It is important to remember that our client's current shape, congruent with and reflective of the Socialized mind, has very likely served him well. It's like an old pair of jeans, comfortable even when they have become full of holes and cold air falls on your bare knees in the winter. The developmental coach who supports her client to see and honor the current shape—a shape that is loyal to and defined by dearly held people, ideas, or institutions—offers her the gift of a firm foundation from which to grow rather than a defective self to reject and throw away as though it had never been valuable.

- Basic attention practice. Ask your client to close her eyes. After a few seconds, ask her to touch the top of her head. Where is her attention? Now guide her to other places on her body, asking her to lightly touch her nose, mouth, shoulders, hips, knees, and feet in succession. As she does this, she will likely notice that each time she touches a place on her body, her attention goes to that place. Now ask her to close her eyes and be as present as she can to your voice as you mention her head, nose, shoulders, and so on, asking her to bring her attention to each place as she hears you say it. It will be more difficult for her to direct her attention with only your voice to follow, but with practice, she will learn to do it without either touch or your voice, because her own inner voice will guide her. Attention practice helps your client build an observer self—a self that will come in handy as she engages in other somatic practices.
- Centering. Once your client had done the attention practice a few times and knows how to move attention to different parts of her body, she has all the tools she needs to do a centering practice. You can center with eyes open or eyes closed, but if she is new at this, eyes closed can help minimize

⁸ The term "shape" refers to the way our bodies tend to be both shapers of and shaped by our emotional, spiritual, and cognitive selves. Strozzi-Heckler and others tell us that to separate mind, emotions, body, and spirit is a false separation because each of them is both creates and is created by the others. The word "shape," then, in this paper, means the way we hold our bodies (posture, tension, movement).

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distractions. Ask her to stand (this enables maximum freedom to feel all parts of the body and to fully feel length, breadth, and width.) Begin by asking her to focus on her breath—where does it locate automatically (high in chest? shallow? is it hard to even notice?) Then let the breath drop to the belly. Just below our belly button is the gravitational center of our body—focusing there re-enforces the sensation of center. Ask her to first feel her feet and then the top of her head, imagining there is a string pulling pulling it gently upward, enabling her to lightly stretch up toward the sky while also feeling her feet. This enables her to feel the full length of her body, creating maximum space between the vertebrae and permitting maximum airflow. This is centering in our length; it is about embodying the whole of who we are, our dignity. Now ask her to center in her width by gently creating a bit of space (so little it wouldn't be visible to someone watching) as though she were making herself wider, reaching out to connect with the world outside her while also feeling her center so as not to lose track of herself in the process. From this place, she is both grounded and connected. Now ask her to center in her depth—front to back. Ask her to imagine that everything behind her is her history—the people she has known, the experiences she's had, everything that has shaped her thus far. Everything in front of her is a future that has not yet happened it is possibilities. In this centering process—length, width, and depth judgments are bound to come up. Am I enough? What might I lose if I connect deeply with others? Is my history so deeply flawed that it won't be sufficient to carry me into the future I want to create? Ask your client to just notice and take a pass on each of these judgments, by encouraging her to return to her body (noticing tension and releasing it; re-focusing her awareness on a part of her body) as they come up.

Grab practice. This practice is really useful for helping clients get a sense of how they react to stress. My clients and I use the word "grab" to describe the literal action of the practice and also as a metaphor for what happens when something throws us off center—like a last minute request to stay late at the office when we had plans with our family, a colleague once again questioning the direction you're taking on a shared project, your boss looking at you sideways. If we're to understand our current shape, we must understand what it looks and feels like not only when we are operating from our pre-frontal cortex, but also when we are operating from our amygdala (or another part of our more primitive self). To begin, ask your client to stand with her back to you and with her arms hanging at her sides but not touching her sides. Without telling her what's coming (nor when it's coming), reach out and grab her wrist firmly while simultaneously saying a sharp and loud "hey!" This is not the time to be tentative or gentle; you are trying to activate her startle reflex in order to enable her to see how her fight, flight, or freeze instinct shows up. I and others (Strozzi-Heckler, 2011) have done this practice hundreds if not thousands of times, and we see only three types of responses. The "grabbed" person will either **flee** (instinctively move up and/or away from

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the grab), **freeze** (noticeably tighten up her body but not move), or **fight** (move toward the grab). If you do this several times in succession, you may find that as the client tries to manage her reaction, it becomes subtler, but it is not likely to fundamentally change. Ask the client to simply notice this grab response.

When you have engaged with these three practices, and if you are taking a developmental approach with your client, ask her to think and feel and talk about two things regarding her current shape:

- 1. In what ways is her current shape "designed" to be strongly pulled by people, ideas or institutions outside herself?
- 2. How does seeing her current shape in this new way (as more object) create new possibilities that didn't exist before?

Moving from old shape to unbounded shape

Leaving the old familiar shape behind can feel like being unmoored. The external reference points have begun to lose their appeal before new internal ones have appeared, let alone become reliable and familiar. Here, the coach can offer practices that simultaneously enable her client to feel the emotions that accompany a feeling of being at sea while also creating a self that can tolerate these emotions.

Center and ground. Ask your client to center as described above. This time, however, you are asking her to specifically feel into her own ground. As she moves away from her previous shape, one that was largely grounded in external measures, she can begin to notice that she, in fact, can ground herself. Everything she needs is right there in her own body if she learns to become aware of and embrace it. We begin by bringing attention to the feet, the place where we connect with the earth; our feet are small relative to our bodies, but they are perfectly designed not only to support the weight of our bodies but to carry them into action. As your client focuses on her feet, ask her to feel the connection with the floor—toes, balls of feet, outside of feet, heels. On the next in-breath, ask her to feel the breath coming up from the floor, through her feet and her legs, filling her body up to the top of her head and then let the outbreath travel back down through her belly, legs, feet, into the ground. Feeling the weight of herself in the lower part of her body, she feels her foundation, and it is enough to support her even when pushed. To demonstrate this, ask her to stand normally, not grounding, and give a firm push to the center of her chest. Then ask her to center, ground and do it again. Both you and she will notice it is much harder to move her when she is grounded. This grounded self provides a place of stability in the midst of developmental transition and a growing awareness of the internal voice that will guide the emerging selfauthored self.

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• Grab-center-face. The grab practice enabled us to more clearly feel our reactive self; as we move beyond the old shape, it is helpful to have a practice for not only noticing the grab, but being able to author our response to it. Do the grab practice as described above. This time, just after the grab, ask your client to notice her reaction, then breathe and re-center, and then turn slowly but deliberately to face directly into the person who grabbed her, feel her feet, and center one more time. Practice again and again and if you like, instead of saying "hey" with the grab, say something of the client's choice such as "You're doing this wrong!" or "Mommy, Suzy is picking on me again!" This is a practice anyone can do physically with a coach until it is embodied enough for them to call on in the moment of a day-to-day grab.

Creating a new shape

If our client has tolerated the phase of unbounded shape and not retreated to the old, it is now time for her to envision and create a new shape that is aligned with the self she wants to become. The client's new shape will be one in which meaning is created internally, a shape that both reflects and simultaneously creates her belief that she can construct her own knowledge claims, author her own inner psychological life, and regulate her relationships with others to maintain her own identity from within.

- Ground in purpose and declare a future. By now, centering and grounding should be second nature for your client. At this point in the developmental transition, she is no longer so much moving away from the old shape as she is moving toward the new. What is this new shape she's moving toward? It might be anything from a new set of capabilities to a higher purpose to something in between. As her coach, you will have done this work with her—it doesn't matter so much what it is as that it is something she truly cares about and she would care about even if important others (or ideologies) didn't care about it. Something she would do even if there were no external rewards. Once she has something in mind, the next step is to support her to truly own that something, not just cognitively but with her whole being. Ask her to center, ground, and say her commitment ("I am committed, with my whole self, to...") or declare her future ("I am living into my future in which..."). The key is for her to say it in a way that is not tentative and to own it with her whole being.
- **Ground and extend.** From the Self-Authored Mind, a person has the capacity to see and hold multiple perspectives while not losing her own. From an embodied standpoint, this means inhabiting one's own ground while *extending* energetically outward to see, hear, and touch the needs, desires, and knowing of others. The ground and extend practice helps build this developmentally challenging capacity. Ask your client to put one arm straight out in front of her at a 90 degree angle to her body, then not to resist as you try to bend her arm at the elbow. You'll find it easy. Now ask her to do whatever she can to not let you bend her elbow. You'll find she uses her muscular strength for this

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and that you as the partner not only feel that resistance quite strongly, but when you let go of her arm, she lurches forward, losing her own ground as she no longer has you to push against. Now, ask her to center and ground and, at the same time, with her arm out straight, to imagine a line of energy extending from her heart center through her arm and to a point in the distance way beyond her. Perhaps she might imagine extending her energy outward to a loved one or the thing she cares about. Now try to bend her arm. You and she will notice that it's hard to bend her arm and yet she is not forcing or pushing against you. She is simply extending her energy from her own ground. This is one of the most powerful somatic practices I know (one of my own daily practices) for feeling into the self/other polarity (cite Barry Johnston and footnote with a brief explanation?) or any other polarity your client may be working with (doing/being; internal/external.

• Meditation practice. At this point, if your client has not already developed a meditation practice, she may well be ready. Meditation guides and practices can be found elsewhere, so I will not attempt a detailed description here; almost any approach (sitting, standing, moving, guided or not guided) can work. The most important elements of a meditation practice to support the socialized- to self-authored transition are that it (a) enables your client to notice and gently dismiss the thoughts that flood her mind and (b) creates a place where she can practice *noticing but not reacting*.

Embodying the new shape

At this phase our client moves from *understanding* the new shape to *being* the new shape, from moving toward self-authored to inhabiting it. Embodiment requires that we literally reshape ourselves, re-form our neural pathways and re-configure our very muscles and tissues. It therefore requires experimentation and action.

Coordinating action consistent with the new shape (requests, offers, accepts, and declines). Richard Strozzi-Heckler describes what he calls "the standing practices" at length in his various writings (2003, 2011, 2014). The subset of these I find particularly helpful in the socialized to self-authored transition are those that pair physical practices with speech acts 10 used for

9

⁹ Barry Johnson, in his groundbreaking book, <u>Polarity Management</u>, introduces the idea that many things we tend to view as problems to be solved are really polarities to be managed, meaning that if we choose one at the expense of the other (he illustrates with breathing in and breathing out), bad things will happen. A polarity exists when, in order to optimize the situation over time, we need both. In order to manage polarities, leaders need to, first, recognize something as a polarity and not a problem and then, partly be developing presence, monitor the situation to see if things are getting out of whack. And when they do, nudge things so that the overall balance between poles is tipped in favor of desirable outcomes (in the case of breathing, that's life) vs. undesirable outcomes (in the breathing example, that would be death).

¹⁰ Sometimes collectively referred to as Speech Acts, the idea is that language is not only a vehicle for communication, it is also generative (or performative). This set of ideas has its roots in linguistics and philosophy, but was popularized in management and leadership studies by, among others, Fernando Flores and also Brothers Chalmers in his 2004 book, Language and the Pursuit of Happiness.

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coordinating action. These embodied practices enable us to make object the ways we *physically* show up as we coordinate action with other people; and then we can use our physical bodies to construct new ways of acting—ways that are more grounded in a self that is internally, rather than externally defined. I offer basic descriptions below. For more thorough descriptions, please see The Leadership Dojo, by Richard Strozzi-Heckler.

- Requests. Ask your client to stand with one arm extended in front of her at a 90 degree angle to her body. With you standing about 30 feet from her, she says "I'd like to make a request." And you say, "I'd like to hear your request." She then walks toward you, and when she has reached you and is touching the center of your chest, the request is complete. Ask her to notice what was going on for her as she made the request. Was she hesitant? Hard driving? Determined at first but then hesitating as she got close to you? Was her heart beating quickly? Palms sweaty? What about her voice? Once she has made her own observations, offer her yours. How is the physical experience representative of what happens in her daily life when she makes requests (or alternatively, avoids making them)?
- O Accepts. Now switch positions. You make the somatic request of your client, and her practice is to accept your request. As you get close, she extends her arm to meet yours, pivots 180 degrees and joins the full length of her arm (the left if you are using your right or vise versa) with yours and walks with you. Again, ask her to notice what was going on for her. What happened as she was anticipating your incoming request? Did she come forward to meet you eagerly or wait until you arrived? Did she fight against your request or succumb to it? Or simply join? Debrief as you debriefed requests.
- O Declines. You are still the requester, but this time your client's practice is to decline your request. As you approach, she extends her arm to meet yours, but this time she pivots you around 180 degrees and together you walk back, full length of opposite arms touching, in the direction from which you came. Debrief in the same way.
- O Variations. You can also practice with the client being on the receiving end of a simple request and with her being on the initiating end of requests that are accepted and declined by you. There is plenty to be noticed from that vantage point as well. To support the embodiment of a new shape, repeat these practices, asking your client to experiment with inhabiting the shape she declared in the previous stage. Keep practicing until she begins to embody the new shape.
- Centering in the new shape. Ask your client to center in the way she has learned, remembering to breathe and ground, and to simply notice, feel, and embody this new shape.

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It is no accident that centering as a practice shows up at all stages of the somatic transformation. Knowing and inhabiting our center, being present to whom and what we are now, is an act of self-compassion in which we see, embody, and, as best we can, love the self that we are. This idea says that no matter where we are on the developmental journey—whether our capacities are or are not well aligned with the demands of our current context—we are at every stage both enough and also fully resourced to grow to the next place if we choose. The journey is made easier and is likely to be constructed on a firmer foundation if we have one or more Learning Partners who can help support us through developmental practices of both body and mind.