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Constructive-developmental theorists have made the case that adults require at least a self-authored meaning-making system to thrive in today's world. This chapter shows how coaches literate in adult development and body/mind theory and practice can be powerful partners to adults on the journey to self-authorship.

Developmental Coaching to Support the Transition to Self-Authorship

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We have a societal expectation that adults show up at some defined point on the age spectrum, and we have a sense of what capacities they should have. By *adult* I mean not a person's chronological age, the degrees she holds, what work she does, whether she has a life partner or children, or even lives a particularly responsible life. I refer to an adult as someone who doesn't need others to tell her what to do, has an internal voice, is self-directed, and can navigate across seemingly competing ideas and perspectives without subsuming her own. This definition has to do with *how one knows things* and *through what lens identity is formed*, rather than anything immediately obvious about her, such as appearance, profession, or status.

I have been coaching leaders of different ages for the past 20 years and have gotten very curious about what supports people who are chronologically adult to become psychologically more adult. I've conducted Growth Edge Interviews over the past several years to try and make sense of this difference. The Growth Edge Interview is a derivation of Kegan's *subject-object interview* (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988) and was developed by Jennifer Garvey Berger, Paul Atkins, Carolyn Coughlin, and others. Harrison, Cody, and Stacey are three helpful examples. All have been university educated and are bright, conscientious, well-functioning members of society. And like 60% or more of adults (Berger, 2012), they have not fully grown the developmental capacity to thrive as adults in today's complex world, a world in which we no longer have village elders (Berger, 2012) to tell us how to decide, who we should be, or who we should be it with. (The names Harrison, Cody, and Stacey are pseudonyms for individuals like those I have encountered in coaching practice, and their stories are composites of those I have encountered.)

Becoming Adult

Constructive-developmental theory (CDT) has its roots in the work of Jean Piaget, who described children's intellectual development from birth to early adulthood. CDT is based on two related notions—that each person creates her world by living it (constructive) and the ways she constructs her world can, but doesn't always, change over the course of her lifetime (developmental). In the last 50 years, many theorists (Berger, Cook-Greuter, Fowler, Kegan, Kohlberg, Perry, Torbert, and others) have extended Piaget's work, offering theories that attempt to describe how people's entire sense-making systems evolve over the course of a lifetime. Both Kegan and Berger describe three distinct stages of adulthood—*socialized*, *self-authoring*, and *self-transforming* (this chapter focuses on the first two, the third being relatively uncommon), each characterized by a more complex way of constructing knowledge, identity, and relationships (Berger, 2012; Kegan, 1994). According to these theories, growth from one form to the next doesn't automatically happen with age; a person grows a new form of mind when her environment becomes more complex than her meaning-making capacity can handle, and her meaning-making capacity subsequently expands until a new equilibrium is reached. This means that each of us, with the right circumstances and some effort, is capable of growing the form of mind most aligned with the modern world's definition of adulthood.

Marcia Baxter Magolda's 27-year study of college students, in which she has traced students' development from the age of 18 well into adulthood, brings this idea to life; her three main findings were that achieving self-authorship is important, getting there is not automatic, and Learning Partners are a critical support on the journey (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2009). In recent years, theorists and practitioners more focused on knowing in other domains, such as through the sensations of the body, have also begun to inform our ideas about how adults develop and the possibilities for supporting them (Coughlin, 2015; Silsbee, 2008; Strozzi-Heckler, 2014).

Arriving at Adulthood Unprepared

Harrison is a first-year student at a prestigious university and was near the top of his high school class, where his teachers experienced him as quite mature. He is smart, knows how to study, and gets good grades. He has the capacity to see and consider the perspectives of others, something he was unlikely to have been capable of just a few years ago. By the time he was in middle school, he had probably learned that his wants and needs did not always coincide with those of others and that, in fact, others' wants and needs were allegedly as important to them as his were to him. In a self-serving way, he probably knew that meeting others' needs enabled him to get what he wanted. What Harrison's middle school self didn't have was the ability to have true empathy for others' views, nor to see the ways they might actually inform or influence his own.

Now, at age 19, the opinions of important others often carry more weight than his own. As he decides how to spend his first college summer, for example, it is his friends' and parents' wants and needs (or his perception thereof) that figure most prominently. He has entered a stage of development in which he decides what to do or believe, constructs relationships with important others, and even constructs his own self-identity, through an external lens (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Any parent who has witnessed a child completing the sort of transition Harrison has made will remember it as a relief—the culmination of adolescence and the beginning of early adulthood.

Cody is 23 and two years out of college. Like many of his peers, he is frustrated with what he has found on the other end of his college experience. On the one hand, he is accustomed to listening to authorities—his parents, his professors, and now his bosses—in order to make sense of his world. On the other hand, he has an increasing sense that the grown-up world expects him to make his own decisions, rely on himself as an authority, and be less determined by what others expect of him. Cody recently moved back home after his first real foray into adulthood—a laboratory position in a distant U.S. state—where after a year his boss told him that he was not self-directed enough and therefore ill-suited for this job. Cody is confused and angry because this same boss, just a year earlier, had encouraged him to take the job, saying she thought he “had what it takes.” While Cody is angry about his boss's flip-flopping, he is angrier with himself for relying on her advice to make important decisions.

Like Harrison, Cody is able to imagine and even describe the perspectives of others; he doesn't make decisions simply based on his own self-interest. Cody is thoughtful, considerate, and bright. But while Harrison is congratulated for being mature, Cody has just been told by his boss that he is deficient. The world he has embarked upon is placing demands on him that his (recently sufficient) worldview has not yet grown to accommodate.

Now consider Stacey, someone we might think of as a real grown-up. She has an MBA, has been a management consultant for many years, is married, and has a young child. Stacey experiences torn-ness in nearly all domains of her life. Her husband tells her she doesn't stand up for herself enough but also discourages her from leaving her prestigious job. Her parents frequently express concern that Stacey isn't taking care of herself, and while she agrees, she can't seem to stop working 70-hour weeks. She agonizes over how little time she spends with her new baby. And her bosses, while admitting she is very likeable, complain that she comes across as quite junior. Although Stacey is both older and in a more advanced life stage, she is struggling with issues similar to Cody's.

Harrison and Cody provide illustrations of how two real people are making meaning pre- and post- a *traditional* college experience. We might think it is just a matter of time before Cody develops a way of being in the world more suited to the demands of his emerging life, but Stacey has been in the adult world for many years. She returned to business school in her mid-twenties as an adult learner. She has worked in a demanding job for six years, and her

life circumstances are more complicated than Cody's. And yet, while Stacey almost certainly knows more *things* than either Cody or Harrison, she hasn't developed a significantly more complex *way of knowing* (Kegan, 1982), one that can see across multiple perspectives and ideas without being pulled into any one of them, in which she authors her story rather than being an unwitting actor in a story written by someone else. While Cody is facing demands beyond his form of mind in the work arena, Stacey is in over her head in multiple arenas—work, parenting, partnering (Kegan, 1994). Stacey's meaning-making capacity is literally bursting at the seams. Unless she changes her life circumstances or grows a more complex way of knowing, she seems destined to be torn, overwhelmed, and incapable of meeting the demands of her life.

Stages of Adult Development

The Socialized Mind. Harrison, Cody, and Stacey are all operating primarily from this form of mind. Through the socialized mind, knowledge is experienced as relatively certain, deriving primarily from external, authoritative sources. Knowledge is received rather than created (Baxter Magolda, 1999). This person can see others' perspectives but has trouble holding important others' views while simultaneously having a different view of her own. When external voices clash, she can feel torn apart, unable to navigate because she does not have an internal voice that is independent of the external ones. If she is a student, she may be good at learning and playing back her professors' ideas (like Harrison), but she doesn't really question them or see that there might be another *right* answer. In a work environment, she can be loyal and dedicated but also frequently told (like Cody) that she relies too heavily on the guidance of people or established rules. As a family member, she can find herself (like Stacey) attempting to satisfy multiple people with conflicting needs. In a world of competing demands and unclear and often changing ways of doing things, this person can feel torn and constantly trying to catch up with the world around her.

The Self-Authored Mind. For Stacey, genuine self-authorship occurs when she can construct knowledge claims independent of outside authority, construct her own inner psychological life, and regulate her relationships with others to maintain her own identity while honoring theirs (Baxter Magolda, 1999). At this point, she also becomes aware of her ability to author these things rather than them authoring her (Pizzolato, 2010). She can see and hold multiple perspectives but not lose her own because she can reflect on all of them rather than being them. This does not mean she dismisses what others think, ignores the wisdom and knowledge of external others, or avoids connecting with others in meaningful ways; her knowing is enhanced and informed through external sources, but she is the one who ultimately constructs meaning from them—they do not construct her. Harrison may well be on his way to self-authorship by the time he finishes college. Cody sees the

possibilities and, with the right support, these next few challenging years might see him make a developmental shift. Stacey has been given the gift of a developmental coach who may well support her to make the shift she has long needed.

Supports for Growth

Returning to the question of how our places of higher learning prepare students for the adult world, Baxter Magolda's (1999) study has found that the traditional college experience fails to consistently do the job. While we might think of college as place where young adults expand their minds, examine their beliefs about the world, learn to question, and transform themselves from teenagers into adults, Baxter Magolda found that for many of her study participants, this had not happened even decades later. So if chronology and college alone are insufficient to ensure we grow a form of mind that can meet the demands of the adult world, what other support might there be? This is likely to be a particularly relevant question for adults returning to school because, while roughly half of them will not yet be fully self-authored (Berger, 2012), their places of learning will likely expect them to be self-directed and self-managing in a way that is not expected in quite the same way of traditional college students. Just when an adult is returning to school, perhaps as an attempt to help her meet the demands of her life, the return to school itself places an additional demand on her ability to make sense of her world. If there were ever a need for developmental support, this is the time!

As Baxter Magolda followed her study subjects beyond the college years and into adulthood, she found that their growth into self-authorship depended in large part on whether they had what she calls good *learning partners*—people in their lives who supported their development. Coaches skilled at listening for the structure of a client's meaning making can make great learning partners in supporting their clients to become more self-authored.

Where to Begin

Perhaps the most important consideration when supporting someone in a developmental transition is to understand that growth comes with loss (Perry, 1978) and that humans are wired to avoid loss. Why would Harrison want to leave the place that has provided him such comfort and success? Stacey, while clearly in over her head, has invested heavily in constructing a way of being that, while often painful, has made her reasonably successful. Of the three examples, it is Cody who is most actively searching for a new way to make sense. He has not yet invested heavily in a context that matches his socialized mind; he has read about the journey and finds it hopeful. So the job of those who support development is to understand carefully the reasons a person might want to (and not want to) develop and to create the contexts that invite new perspectives.

Developmental Coaching and the Whole Self

In recent years, two different coaching approaches—one that uses a developmental and primarily cognitive-linguistic lens (Berger, 2012; Berger & Atkins, 2009) and another that uses a *whole self* or body-based lens (Silsbee, 2008; Strozzi-Heckler, 2014)—have gained significant attention in the coaching field. While little has been written about the benefits of combining these two highly complementary approaches, it would seem that an approach that engages as many domains as possible has a greater chance of supporting developmental shifts. By paying attention to the myriad bodily sensations that are normally invisible to them, people can more readily hold those as objects for their reflection, thereby more effectively enlisting them to consciously shape their meaning making. In this way, their bodies increasingly become a source of wisdom, and they can make choices about their actions, which in turn inform their knowing, thus creating a reinforcing cycle of growth.

Strozzi-Heckler's (2014) Somatic Arc of Transformation offers a body-based accompaniment to the sort of developmental shift that both Kegan and Berger describe in more cognitive-linguistic terms and offers an illustration of how a coaching client might use her body to support her shift to self-authorship. (For more detailed descriptions of these practices, see Coughlin, 2015.)

Noticing and Honoring the Current Shape. A person's current shape (posture, tensions, sensations), congruent with and reflective of the socialized mind, has likely served him well. Like an old pair of shoes, his shape can be comfortable even when the soles have worn too thin to fully support him. Coaching through both a developmental and somatic lens can help enable clients to see and honor their current shape, thereby offering them 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. In these *shape-noticing* practices, a coach might ask the client questions like: In what ways is your current shape *designed* to be strongly pulled by people, ideas, or institutions outside yourself? Or, how does seeing your current shape in this new way create possibilities that didn't exist before?

Moving from Old Shape to Unbounded Shape. Leaving the familiar shape behind can feel like being unmoored. The external reference points have begun to lose their appeal before internal ones have appeared. Here, the coach can offer practices that simultaneously enable the client to feel the emotions that accompany a feeling of being at sea (through attention) while also creating a whole self (through practices like grounding and centering) that can tolerate these emotions.

Creating a New Shape. When the client has tolerated the phase of unbounded shape without retreating to the old, she can envision and create a new shape that is aligned with the self she wants to become. Her 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.

Embodying the New Shape. At this point, the essential move is 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 reconfigure our very muscles and tissues. Experimentation is useful here.

Developmental Habits of Mind

Berger and Johnston (2015) have identified three habits of mind that can enable developmental shifts by creating reinforcing feedback loops that sustain and grow development over time. Here are some ways they can be used in supporting clients to shift from the socialized to the self-authored mind.

Asking Different Questions. People tend to ask the questions they know how to ask, and those mostly come from the form of mind that gave rise to them. One of the most powerful interventions a coach can make is to help notice the questions the socialized client habitually asks and offer questions that might be more familiar to a person who makes meaning at the *self-authored* form of mind.

Taking Multiple Perspectives. A person making meaning at the socialized stage can readily imagine, and sometimes too readily take on, the perspectives of others, often leading him to feel overwhelmed or torn. Interventions that enable this client to see and honor his own perspective, see which others' perspectives he is most often taking, and practice questioning all of them equally will be supportive of the transition to self-authorship.

Seeing Systems. The self-authored mind can see larger and more complex systems without being overwhelmed by them, so supporting the socialized client to see (and resist the temptation to simplify) increasingly complex systems is key to supporting his development. Offering new ways of talking about increasingly complex systems (Johnson, 1996; Snowden & Kurtz, 2003) can be a gift for the socialized person, supporting him to see and describe more complex ideas in ways that feel manageable. Additionally, any practice or tool that helps the socialized person see patterns (journaling and self-observations) and to translate them from one domain of his life to another, will help him develop a system-seeing capacity that comes more naturally to the self-authored person.

Growth Edge Coaching Practices

Coaches trained to listen for distinctions of meaning making are able not only to get a sense of a person's form of mind but can often uncover other patterns in her meaning making that, if made explicit, can unlock growth. Following are three patterns we find both common and helpful to explore.

Seeing the Equals. Two ideas are equal when the client can't see the difference between what feels true to him and what is necessarily true. In his mind, the two ideas have become so much the same that he cannot reflect on them objectively. Coaches who tune their ears to those things that are synonymous to the client but not to them can ask: Why did you come to this as the obvious answer? Cody has a strong equals that says, "Being professional equals not making waves," which if left intact will continue to pull him back to the socialized form of mind.

Building Bridges. Many people, especially those in a developmental transition, have a piece of themselves that is more expansive and a piece that is less so. Coaches who see this consistently across issues or domains can help by putting the expansive and narrower selves in conversation, building a bridge between them. Stacey might be able to draw on the expansive self she uses at work when no authority is around to tell her what to do, as a bridge to a future self that consistently relies on a self-authored voice.

Noticing Tethers. Sometimes people have one small piece of themselves that holds them back. This isn't as widely contextual as the expansive/narrow self but is more specific to a single idea or relationship. One of my coaching clients appears to be fully self-authored but continues to call herself a *people pleaser*, a little thing that has big consequences for her leadership because it provides her a convenient excuse when she has capitulated. Coaches can look for a single idea (or relationship) that seems to have an unusual pull back to the socialized, name their hypothesis, and see if it is open for exploration.

Any practice that helps the client to be fully present so she can notice the ways she is making sense and try something else has the potential to be developmental. Being present also enables her to honor who and what she is now, an act of self-compassion that helps her remember that no matter where she is on the developmental journey—whether her capacities are or are not well aligned with the demands of her current context—she is at every stage both enough and also fully resourced to grow to the next place if she chooses. Coaching of the type described here can make the journey easier and more likely to be constructed on a firmer foundation.

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