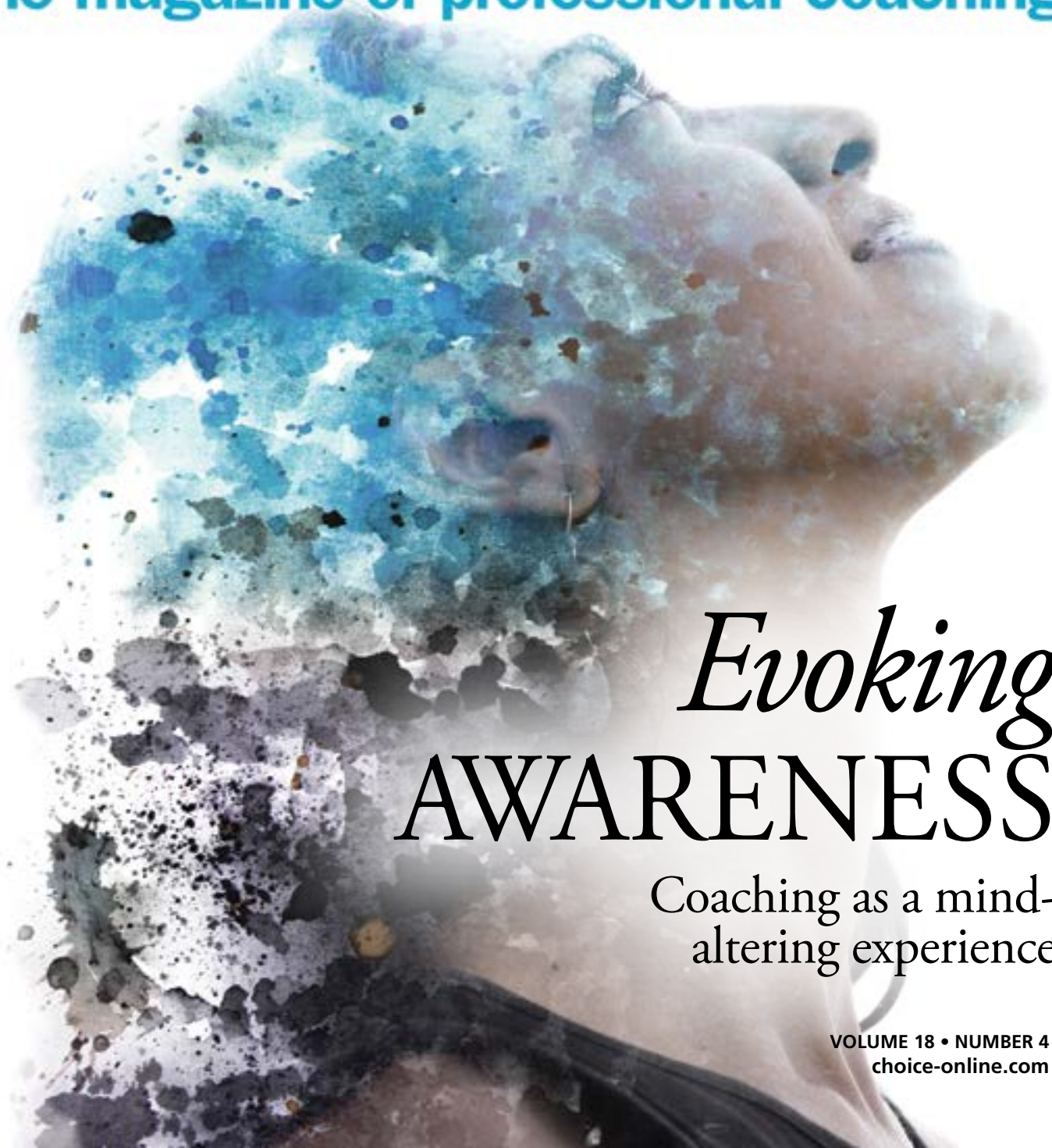


choice

the magazine of professional coaching



Evoking AWARENESS

Coaching as a mind-
altering experience

Evoking **AWARENESS**

Coaching as a mind-altering experience

What does it take to expand and shift your clients' perspective? How does the coach use presence to facilitate the discovery process? What are the mental habits of master coaches? In addition to asking questions, what are the essential practices used in awareness-based coaching? Join us as we explore what elements are needed in a coaching model that goes beyond finding answers to powerfully evoke awareness.



Enneagram

Diving deeper into awareness coaching

By Joe DeGraaf, MA, CLC

Imagine letting your body float slowly to the very bottom of a rocky lake, the light filtering in slowly around you. You are alone in the water of your own self, your own being. What is there? What sensations do you feel? This is the space we are challenged to explore in our pursuit of greater awareness.

So many of our coaching practices utilize the mind's incredible capacity for exploration of the future to understand the present. We are able to visualize our future selves or obtain a glimpse at our own inner sanctums. All of this is good practice and insightful in its own right. But how often do we follow the current all the way to the bottom? To find a way to sit in the depth of personal awareness is something special and not always common.

As a coach, I have found it difficult not to focus on the productive nature of our work. There are so many practical and effective uses of coaching that I want each of my clients to experience first-hand. The desire to move forward with

the action can be alluring and compelling. Who doesn't want to see their client master a skill or make quick progress on their goals?

The reality, though, is that action without process removes most of the power. This is the unique gift of true coaching; not only pursuing external experiences but processing through inner realities.

Journey with me again to the waters. The wind can make waves roll and water churn. This is what we tend to see, the visual we set our focus on. A wave is more than the surface. Its true power lies in the forces that move it from beneath.

Many C-Suite clients and business leaders tune into coaching because of the tangible ways that it has improved businesses and their people. This is a testament to the great work put in by professional coaches over the past several decades and not something to dismiss. Clients see the results, the white caps on the waves, and they want to see what coaching is all about.

If we are not careful, it can be easy to get caught up in their excitement, to get distracted by the same elements without doing the diligence of diving deeper.

The art of moving beneath the surface is in creating awareness of who they are and how they are living in the world. Using the tools and tradecraft of coaching, we are able to move with our clients into a place that challenges their understanding of their own selves.

This can be incredibly daunting, emotional, and even frustrating. Some clients who find themselves on that rocky bottom feel trapped, even suffocated. Some want to explore and see what might be hiding in the shadows. Still others find the depth quiet and tranquil. Being prepared for each of these responses is vital for a coach who brings this level of depth and awareness to their clients. But getting to this place of awareness is a challenge in its own right.

Do we hit home with our challenging questions, or do we invite exploration through visuals and exercises? Do we wade in slowly or dive straight to the bottom? Do we allow for some reflection or are we tuned in exclusively to their present reality? The easy answer is that it is different for each client. The question still remains, “How do we know what is right for each client?”

This is where we can utilize an ancient tool – the Enneagram. The Enneagram has grown in popularity in many sectors over recent years, including coaching. It is a personality assessment that focuses on understanding the internal motivations and purposes that each of us carry. While you and I may act similarly, our motivations may be miles apart. You may coach as a way of benefiting the people around you. Another may coach because it is stimulating and fun. The coaching still happens, often in a similar way, but the underlying motivations paint everything in a new light.

There are tests, such as the iEQ9 or RHETI, that coaches can employ to help clients discover which of the nine Enneagram types they belong to. But here is where the coach has an advantage. Coaches know how to ask great questions. Unlike many other personality tests, the Enneagram does not rely on any particular test. You can only guess at your answers to many other assessments. With Enneagram, a person knows their type when they are challenged to really dive into their inner self, when they are challenged to form deeper self-awareness.

The Enneagram moves people toward this internal state of reflection in another meaningful way. The Enneagram focuses on the stuff of well-kept secrets and hidden truths. Many describe this as if someone is reading their mail or spying over their shoulder. They are pieces of an individual that touch nearly everything they do. This is powerful material in the hands of a coach.

When our clients are confronted with their own realities, their own answers to what motivates them at a foundational level, they begin to sink down to the bottom of their lake. They are challenged to see the world from an internal

perspective, rather than just the world on the surface. They have to dive below the basic motivations of money, power, or fame to something more like the need to be loved, the need to stand up for the defenseless, or the need to avoid conflict.

While these may seem plain in reading them on a page, diving into these motivations with your clients will open new avenues of insight and clarity for who they are and what need their actions are meeting.

This is not simply a tool that provides depth in process alone. Coaches can work with clients to utilize their awareness for who they are and what they are doing in every aspect of their life. When integrated into coaching, the client begins to see what is really shaping their decisions and patterns of behaviors. This in turn allows a client to find healthier ways of managing stress, more productive uses of their motivations, and more meaningful detachments from the mundane.

The art of **moving beneath the surface** is in **creating awareness** of who they are and **how they are living** in the world.

The beginning of this process is in simple, curious questions aimed at developing an understanding of their Enneagram type. This gets them below the surface. The next step is to explore their type and how it is manifesting in their lives today. What feels true about your type in this moment? How is your type influencing that relationship? With an understanding and exploration of their type, a coach can work with their client to form patterns of health that move them away from stress and into growth.

What is important about this tool in awareness coaching is that it pins self-awareness to each part of their life. It feeds into their perspective and gives them an ability to understand their actions in light of their deeper realities. It clears away the silt and allows them to see the depths of their waters without losing sight of the waves on the surface. They see what drives them and this awareness makes each achievement that much more meaningful.

The Enneagram is an ancient tool that has been used for centuries to help people understand themselves with greater awareness. In the context of modern coaching, we are able to utilize this tool to draw clients to the bottom of their own deep pool of personality. When we take this dive with our clients, we are able to help them understand the ways in which their waters move and provide them a new avenue for personal growth based in self-awareness and perspective that may otherwise be lost in the churning of the waves. •