

CONSCIOUS BODY FOR COACHES

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When we teach Conscious Body in France, both business coaches and life coaches in our trainings have expressed concern about doing Conscious Body with their coachees. This article addresses their concerns and shows how, indeed, Conscious Body can be used by all coaches, and where the boundaries lie. In realizing that business coaches may have more stringent limitations than life coaches on what they can and cannot do in sessions, we decided to address the more limiting situations. We trust you as coaches to take what you need for your own situation.

HOW WE MET, AND HOW WE FOUND THAT COACHES HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS

Let us take a moment to introduce ourselves. Judith Hendin, a Voice Dialogue facilitator since 1989, developed Conscious Body, a way of working with body symptoms and illness, based on Voice Dialogue. For twenty years she has done this work with clients, and has found over and over again that pain or disease revealed a hidden, disowned self that is calling to be found. Amazingly, when the hidden self is found, it dramatically changes the client's life, and it often brings actual physical healing.

In 2007 Judith began teaching Conscious Body throughout Europe. In 2010 she gave a presentation at the Voice Dialogue Convergence in London. As luck would have it, Myriam Ladeuze, a Voice Dialogue facilitator and a Belgian corporate coach, attended the lecture-demonstration. A year later, Myriam joined a Conscious Body training in Berlin and dived deeply into the work. Later at the Paris Convergence of 2012, Judith again presented Conscious Body, and this time Myriam translated the presentation, and afterward helped to organize a full Conscious Body training in France. Myriam translated all the handouts for the training, she translated the trainings themselves, she expertly supervised and facilitated participants, and she led practice weekends. She became a powerhouse in the work.

Fast forward to 2016. Pierre Cauvin and Geneviève Cailloux invited Judith Hendin to teach an introductory Conscious Body training at their Osiris center, south of Paris. In the training

everyone was doing very deep work. Then, on the last afternoon, several participants spoke up and said, “This Conscious Body work is great, but we can’t do it with our coaching clients.” Judith asked why. They described the structure of business coaching—coachees can’t lie down in sessions, there are a limited number of sessions, and other issues. Judith was terribly disappointed because she wanted them to be able to use Conscious Body.

Soon after, Judith shared this news with Myriam, and Myriam replied, “Oh, I use Conscious Body in business coaching, even at the highest levels of the company.”

“How do you do it?!” Judith asked.

As she began to describe what she does, Judith was overjoyed. The following paper presents what Myriam does, and adds additional guidelines that evolved in our discussions together. We hope it will help coaches take Conscious Body successfully into your coaching sessions.

USING CONSCIOUS BODY IN COACHING: ISSUES AND OPTIONS

When coachees have body symptoms, Conscious Body can discover the disowned self that may be calling, a self that may have a significant and often surprising impact on coachees’ lives. Coaches who want to use Conscious Body face several important issues.

Staying Work-related

First, the content of a coaching session must be directly work-related, or must impact work in some way.

One way to determine whether to do Conscious Body is to see how it fits in the overall goal of the coaching contract. If, for example, the goal is to develop managerial competence, there is no immediate need to do Conscious Body. If, on the other hand, the goal is to manage stress, Conscious Body might be an excellent tool to employ.

Another question the coach can consider is, Is the body symptom work-related? Actually, any body symptom, pain, or illness, might lead to a self that has direct relevance to the coachee’s work:

- Sometimes the coachee may see an “obvious” connection between a body symptom and their job, such as back pain that seems to come from sitting at the computer day after day. In such a case, doing Conscious Body with the backache would seem fine in a coaching session.
- Other body symptoms might be less obviously related to work, and the coachee just happens to mention them in passing. For example, while talking about their coaching goals, a coachee complains about a nagging headache they have had for several weeks. In such a case, doing Conscious Body would also be appropriate.

- Still other body conditions may have no obvious relation at all to work, and yet the coach may choose to do Conscious Body to discover the disowned self that is calling, and then determine if the newfound self is work-related.

It is key to remember that, no matter what the body symptom may be, we can never predict whether the self that emerges through Conscious Body will, in fact, be work-related or not. The backache may, indeed, turn out to be related to sitting all day at the computer. Or it may be something completely different, such as an issue from the coachee's personal life, like being a good mother or father.

So whenever a coach decides to do Conscious Body with a coachee, it is an *exploratory* session. You can go ahead and do Conscious Body, and then you have two options: (1) You can determine if the self that comes up is, in fact, work-related or has an impact on the work. If it is, you can work with that self in further coaching sessions. (2) If the self that comes up is not work-related, Conscious Body has given the coachee *awareness* of their inner issue, which the coachee can then deal with on their own.

Working with Certain Physical Conditions

In coaching the question arises, What physical conditions or body parts can be addressed in a coaching context? For example, if a woman has difficulty with her menses, or if she has breast cancer; or if a man has erectile dysfunction or prostate cancer—are these appropriate conditions to address in a coaching context?

Ultimately, Conscious Body addresses all body symptoms equally, recognizing that they may all lead to the discovery of an important disowned self. The decision about what conditions are appropriate in the coaching context depend on two factors: (1) the facilitator's comfort in working with certain physical conditions, and (2) the coaching contract.

Staying within the Time Frame of the Coaching Contract

The question arises, will you have enough time in the coaching contract to fully integrate a new self that has emerged through Conscious Body? A company pays for 10 sessions (or perhaps 15 or even 20, if the coaching contract is extended). Given that the coach needs at least three sessions to create a sufficient alliance with the coachee to do Conscious Body, that leaves seven sessions for inner work.

Again, the coach has two options: (1) In some cases, seven sessions can be enough time for the coachee to begin to incorporate the newly discovered disowned self that was discovered with Conscious Body. (2) Or the coachee may need to continue the work on their own after the coaching contract has ended.

THE 4 TYPES OF HIDDEN SELVES THAT EMERGE IN CONSCIOUS BODY, AND HOW TO ADDRESS EACH OF THESE SELVES IN THE COACHING ENVIRONMENT

Judith Hendin has found that the hidden self that emerges from a body symptom or illness is usually a *disowned self*, and is one of four types: everyday opposite selves, unknown Inner Children, unexpressed emotions, and selves that hold buried trauma. Let us look at each of these in the coaching context.

1. Everyday Opposite Selves

Everyday opposite selves often arise in Conscious Body. These are disowned selves that are the opposite of primary selves. Some examples of everyday opposite disowned selves that might emerge that are directly work-related are:

Disowned Self

Straight Talker

Takes Care Of Myself

Dreamer

Creative Self/Finding New Options

Opposite of Primary Self

Shy Self or Pleaser

Gives Too Much To Colleagues

Stays Focused On The Exact Problem At Hand

Stays With What Is Usual In The Company

If an everyday opposite disowned self emerges in Conscious Body, the coach can ask the newfound self, “Is there any situation at work where you could be helpful or useful?” Then when the coachee returns to the Aware Ego, coach and coachee can find ways to begin to bring the newly discovered self into the work environment.

2. Unknown Inner Children

The Inner Child often arises in Conscious Body as “the self behind the symptom.” If this occurs in the coaching environment, the coach discusses this with the coachee to assess if this Inner Child is work-related—for example, could an Inner Child’s creativity contribute to developing new projects, or is its vulnerability present in business relationships?

In Conscious Body, if an Inner Child emerges, here is how the coach can dialogue with it to determine if it is work-related:

Inner Child: I feel scared a lot.

Coach: What do you feel scared about?

Inner Child: Lots of things—certain people, scary movies, even just walking across a busy street.

Coach: Do you ever feel scared at work?

Inner Child: Oh yes. The boss is very scary to me. Some colleagues at the office scare me, too. Even the big building scares me.

Language is important here. A high-powered business executive may not feel comfortable with the name, “Inner Child.” So the coach can find other options, such as “the sensitive part of you,” “the fragile part of you,” “the playful part of you,” or “the part of you that needs to be protected.”

There can be many forms of the Inner Child. For the purposes of coaching, we can simplify this into two types:

- Those that need protection, or that feel sad, scared, or vulnerable
- Those that bring creativity, joy, and playfulness

Myriam Ladeuze explains that coaches often support the coachee *not* to bring the Inner Child to work because it is too personal. Myriam advises her coachees, “When you come to work, you have to wear a Teflon suit so things slide off you, because a lot is at stake, like gaining respect and keeping your job. The Inner Child cannot show up with certain colleagues. But the Inner Child is there with you. You bring it to work automatically, whether you like it or not, and you need to take care of it.”

If the Inner Child emerges in Conscious Body, coach and coachee can discuss how to take care of this Inner Child at work. Both Myriam and Judith advise our coachees and clients to care for their Inner Children at work in various ways, such as:

- Find a resource at work, such as taking a walk in nature during a meal break.
- Place objects on the desk that represent the Inner Child, such as flowers, feathers, or a decorative toy mouse. If the object seems questionable for a work environment, it can be discreetly placed in the desk drawer.
- Put something in a pocket to represent the Inner Child, like a small smooth rock, a tiny stuffed animal, or a soft little ball. Then at those times when the Inner Child needs care—such as in a meeting with that scary boss—the coachee can slip their hand into their pocket, gently hold the object, and say to the Inner Child, “I know you’re here. I’m with you. I’m doing my best to handle this situation.”

Particular Inner Children can be supported in various ways. Here are some ideas for various Inner Children:

- The Playful Child: As the coachee is standing around the coffee machine, the coachee’s Playful Child can tell stories or be a little silly. Or, if the coachee is a manager, they can designate five minutes in a meeting for telling jokes.
- The Creative Child: A manager can propose that time in a meeting be devoted to brainstorming ideas “outside the box,” and the Creative Child can come up with amazingly fresh, new ideas.
- The Anxious Child: When feeling anxious, the coachee can stand up and get some water, and while drinking it, say to the Anxious Child, “I know you’re here. I’ll do whatever I can for you right now, and I’ll take care of you even more when I get home.”

3. Unexpressed Emotions

Unexpressed emotions often arise in Conscious Body. These emotions can be succinctly named “Mad, Sad, Glad, and Scared.”

If an emotion that emerges in Conscious Body relates to an actual situation at work, it is fine to address it in coaching sessions. If an emotion emerges in Conscious Body that does not seem to relate to the work environment, at least the coachee has gained *awareness* of the unexpressed emotion and can deal with it later on their own.

Myriam explains that coaches often deal with emotions. Emotions can be seen as the expression of a “need that is not fulfilled.” Myriam supports her coachees to find the “need” behind the emotion. Take the example of a coachee who wanted a promotion but a colleague got it instead, and the coachee feels sad and angry. In such a situation, the coach can help the coachee see that it is all right to feel sad and angry, and then explore the needs behind these emotions and how these needs can be fulfilled.

If an emotion that emerges in Conscious Body is from the past, the coach can ask the coachee, “Does this emotion impact you at work?” For example, if the coachee felt abandoned by their mother, and similarly feels abandoned by their boss, the coachee’s past may be impacting the present. In such a situation, the coach can find a way to separate the feelings about the mother from the feelings about the boss, and can suggest that the coachee deal with their mother issues in psychotherapy.

4. Buried Trauma

The final type of hidden self that can emerge in Conscious Body is a self that is carrying buried trauma. If this occurs, it is certainly outside the scope of the coaching contract. Here is a very brief description of what to do if buried trauma arises. (This is taught fully in Level II of Conscious Body trainings.)

First, recognize that buried trauma may be coming up. Notice physical and emotional cues, such as fast breathing, a terrified look on the face, wanting to run away, or the whole body contracted and tense. The feelings and memories that are arising have all been buried, so the coachee often has no idea what is going on.

As Voice Dialogue practitioners, you can view this emerging energy as a self, one that may be holding buried trauma. Because it is not appropriate to pursue this kind of material in a coaching context, if such a self emerges, gently and gradually bring the coachee back to the Aware Ego, using your own awareness of energy to support the client energetically.

When the client is firmly grounded and present and has fully returned to their regular waking consciousness, discuss with the coachee what just happened. The facilitator can ask, “Do you have any sense of what was going on?” The coachee can describe what they experienced. The coach does not interpret the events. In fact, the coach may not know exactly what was coming up

for the client. Maybe it was buried trauma, or maybe it was something else. If you suspect that buried trauma was coming up, do not label it as such, because that can be seen as planting ideas in the client's mind, which we avoid.

The coach can say, with empathy, "It looks like something came up today that goes beyond our coaching work. I fully support you, even though our sessions are not the appropriate place to go further with this." If the coachee asks, "What can/should I do with this?" you can make recommendations about how the coachee can go further with this on their own. If you have names of therapists you can recommend, by all means do so.

If it seems that buried trauma has arisen, the coach can offer great support in two specific ways. First, the coach can explain that it is not the entire coachee who was traumatized. Rather, it is a *self* within the coachee who holds the experience of the trauma. This awareness frees the coachee from completely identifying with the trauma, and enables him or her to move forward in their professional and personal life.

Second, the coach can assist the coachee to build an inner support team of selves. This is a very practical tool that allows the coachee to continue to live life with normalcy. Selves on the inner support team may include:

- *Professional self*
- *Financial self*
- *Partner self*
- *Parent self*
- *Family self*
- *Driver self*
- *Rational Mind self*
- *Nurturer or Personal Care self*
- *Social self*
- *Fun self*

Note: Judith Hendin is currently writing a detailed manual about how to work with trauma from the perspective of inner selves.

DOING THE STEPS OF CONSCIOUS BODY: COACHING OR THERAPY

Conscious Body has several specific steps, and coaches can modify some of these steps to suit the coaching environment.

IN THERAPY

IN COACHING

<p>Gather information about the body symptom.</p> <p>Also ask the client for any ideas they may have about the cause of the symptom.</p>	<p><u>Intake</u></p>	<p>Same.</p>
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<p>Explain the concept of the Gatekeeper, which is the part of the client that may have concerns and reservations about doing deep work with the body. Then ask the client to move over and let the Gatekeeper speak, using Voice Dialogue.</p>	<p><u>Gatekeeper</u></p>	<p>Similar:</p> <p>Do this without using the name of the Gatekeeper. Just say, “Can we talk to the part of you that might have concerns and reservations about doing this work?”</p>
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<p>Now it is time for the client to enter the bodypsyche, where body and psyche interweave.</p> <p>The client lies down.</p> <p>The client closes their eyes.</p> <p>The facilitator leads the client through a full-body relaxation, using a slow, deep tone of voice to help the client get out of their rational mind and enter the bodypsyche.</p>	<p><u>Relaxation</u></p>	<p>Different:</p> <p>The coachee sits up. They may use a pillow to allow them to lean back a little.</p> <p>The coachee may keep their eyes closed or open, as they wish.</p> <p>The relaxation can be shorter than the full-body relaxation. Still, the coach needs to be sure that the coachee is fully entering the bodypsyche.</p>
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<p>The facilitator asks the client to focus</p>	<p><u>Symbolic</u></p>	<p>Mostly the same.</p>
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<p>their attention on the presence of the symptom, and to wait for any symbolic material that may appear—an image, a feeling, a movement, sound, taste, or smell. Even if it makes no sense.</p> <p>The facilitator stays alert for anything that might sound rational. If the client says something rational, the facilitator points this out to the client, and asks them to once again let their attention go into the presence of the symptom and wait for something to emerge from a level that is deeper than rationality.</p> <p>When symbolic material emerges, the facilitator accepts the first thing that comes. Then the facilitator talks to the symbolic material.</p>	<p><u>Realm</u></p>	<p>Different:</p> <p>The coach does not use the term “symbolic material,” but instead tells the coachee that “something non-rational” will come up.</p>
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<p>While talking to the symbolic material, the facilitator listens for an emerging disowned self. When that self becomes clear, the facilitator talks to this newfound self, using regular Voice Dialogue technique.</p> <p>The Conscious Body facilitator can work with all selves that emerge: everyday opposite selves, unknown Inner Children, unexpressed emotions, and buried trauma.</p>	<p><u>Find the Self behind the Symptom</u></p>	<p>Same:</p> <p>The coach listens for an emerging disowned self and talks to it using Voice Dialogue.</p> <p>Different:</p> <p>(a) Coach and coachee determine if the self that emerged is work-related. For example, the coach can ask the self, “Do you have a role in x’s professional life?” Or, “How could you help x to reach his/her goal?” (related to the coaching contract). If the self is not work-related, the coachee has gained awareness of this self and can pursue it further on their own.</p> <p>(b) The coach does not work with buried trauma.</p>
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<p>After the disowned self has spoken, the facilitator helps the client to move</p>	<p><u>Move the Energy</u></p>	<p>Different:</p> <p>The coach does not focus on physical</p>
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<p>the energy of the newfound self through the body symptom. The purpose of this is to bring actual physical healing to the symptom.</p>		<p>healing.</p> <p>However the coach can invite the coachee to stand up and do a little movement to allow the energy of the newfound self to flow throughout the body.</p>
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CONCLUSION

Conscious Body can be used in both business and life coaching, and we are confident that Conscious Body can be very helpful in both contexts. Of course, using Conscious Body in coaching is somewhat different from using it in therapy, but despite those differences, the power of Conscious Body remains strong.

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