

# How Multidimensional is Your Coaching?

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How many times have you heard clients say, “I’ve been trying to figure this out but I’m going ’round and ’round and getting nowhere?” When this happens, clients are often seeing only a part of the picture and focusing solely on the mental or thinking parts of themselves. A multidimensional approach helps clients access imagery, body responses, sense of purpose and feelings, allowing them to make choices and take actions that integrate all parts of themselves. This additional information promotes fast and lasting change, as well as movement that aligns with all aspects of their being.

Coaching from multiple perspectives can be done using a holistic and integral coaching model. The Wisdom of the Whole® model is based on Jean Gebser’s integral theory. Gebser traced the development of human consciousness from its beginning until the present by looking at philosophy, poetry, music, visual arts, architecture, religion, physics and other natural sciences. He identified five specific structures of consciousness (ways of thinking, being, doing and knowing) throughout history. He named them and described their key elements as follows:

- **Archaic**—undifferentiated oneness or connection to source
- **Intuitive**—knowledge based on subtle information
- **Mythical**—myths, archetypes, storytelling
- **Mental**—logical, sequential, thinking
- **Integral**—ability to function in all structures

Although these structures may sound foreign or unfamiliar, we experience them sequentially in our human development from conception to adulthood:

- **Archaic**—fetus in the womb
- **Intuitive**—toddler who believes in magic
- **Mythical**—child who loves to listen to stories and play imaginary roles
- **Mental**—teen who can conceptualize abstract thoughts
- **Integral**—adult who can access all structures

We even travel through these structures of consciousness daily:

- **Archaic**—deep sleep
- **Intuitive**—dreaming
- **Mythical**—between dreaming and being awake, when dreams can be remembered
- **Mental**—awake
- **Integral**—ability to access all structures

The Wisdom of the Whole® coaching model embraces mental, mythical, intuitive and spiritual aspects of coaching. It uses Gebser’s theory to create evidence-informed coaching practices and simple yet effective coaching tools that access all parts of self.

<p><b>Mental Skills</b> (logical, sequential, thinking)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listing and Prioritizing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Readiness for Change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Patterns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transition Styles and Patterns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Somatic Tools (e.g., walking the 1-10 scale, standing in options, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mythical Skills</b> (myths, archetypes, storytelling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Story</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Imagery</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Empowerment Language</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal Constitution (ayurveda, TCM, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Somatic Tools (e.g., acting out a story)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intuitive Skills</b> (knowledge based on subtle information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Intuition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ritual</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Magic Wand</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Individual Energy Patterns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Group Energy Patterns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Somatic Tools (e.g., awareness of physical sensation connected to emotion or subtle energy, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Archaic Skills</b> (undifferentiated oneness or connection to source)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meditation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Present Moment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compassion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sense of Purpose</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breath</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Somatic Tools (e.g., awareness of physical changes connected with breath or feelings of compassion, etc.)</li> </ul>

The table above shows examples of some coaching tools that match the ways of knowing, being, thinking and doing of each structure of consciousness. An integral approach is created when a coach can access and work from all structures of consciousness. Which skills do you use in your coaching practice? To assess your strengths, place a check mark beside each of your skills in the quadrants above.

How multidimensional is your coaching? Notice which quadrant has the most check marks beside it; chances are you will attract more clients who are comfortable working from that quadrant. As you expand your coaching skill set in more quadrants, you can then attract more clients. Which quadrant(s) would you like to develop?

An integral coaching approach can also help your clients move more quickly and authentically toward their goals. For example, a coach with a client focusing on work/life balance could invite the client to explore behavior patterns (mental) and to use imagery (mythical) to describe an ideal week. She could also invite the client to notice any somatic responses such as tightness in the throat (intuitive) that might shift when the client became more compassionate and clearer about values and sense of purpose (archaic). Using approaches from various quadrants accesses different parts of the self. Drawing from all four quadrants allows the whole person to be addressed and connections between parts of the self to become clear.

A multidimensional approach has even more far-reaching effects than growing your practice or helping your clients move more quickly and authentically. When both coaches and clients are able to come from multiple perspectives as they work with their internal worlds, they are more accepting of differences with the people around them (their external worlds). As they turn outward, they can appreciate multiple perspectives on any topic, celebrate differences, acknowledge individual gifts and skills, and discover how individuals complement one another in a group, whether it is a family, a health care team or a division of a company.

An integral approach not only brings comfort with and appreciation of differences, but also awareness of similarity, connection and being part of a whole. People are less likely to harm

each other because they realize the extent of their connection and oneness. Metaphorically speaking, they are not inclined use the left hand to cut off the right hand. This could result in less violence and could create more kindness, caring and consideration for one another and the planet we live on.

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Author bio:

**Linda Bark, Ph.D., RN, MCC**, founder of the Wisdom of the Whole Coaching Academy, is a Board Certified Nurse Coach and a graduate of the California Institute of Integral Studies in philosophy. She has 25 years of experience coaching in private practice and 20 years of experience training coaches internationally in organizations including Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic and KPMG in India. Linda's textbook, *The Wisdom of the Whole: Coaching for Joy, Health, and Success* (CreateSpace, 2011), was awarded the American Journal of Nursing 2012 Book of the Year Award for Professional Development and Issues. She was instrumental in creating the Nurse Coach certification through AHNCC and is currently on the executive board of the National Consortium for the Certification of Health and Wellness Coaches (NCCHWC). Her integral coaching model, based on Jean Gebser's structures of consciousness, is an innovative and unique practical approach for people to increase their sense of ease, fun and fulfillment. Her school is a home for discovery and exploration of a new way of coaching that creates wholeness and benefits the coach, the client and the world.