

Nourish to Flourish

Nourish to Flourish brings together practitioners' voices and creative practices, and appreciative reviews of books that support strengths-based approaches to human interactions.

Book Appreciation



Neena Verma

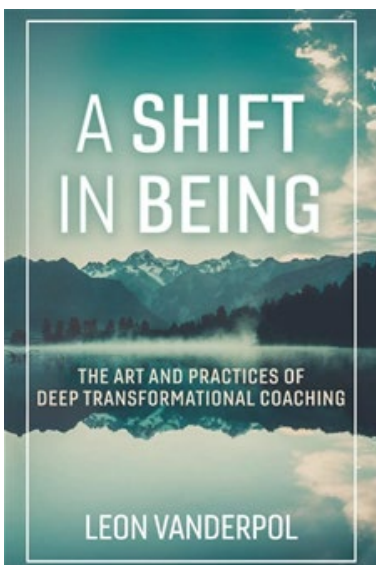
Neena Verma, Ph.D., is an Appreciative Inquiry thought leader, an ICF-PCC coach, NTL professional member and TAOS Associate. As well as editing Feb 2013, Nov 2016 and May 2020 issues of AIP, Neena has authored one book and several articles. She serves on the AIP editorial board and contributes book appreciations. Neena runs a library movement for underprivileged children and volunteers for various social causes.

Dr Neena Verma has been associated with AI Practitioner for many years, most recently editing the May 2020 issue of the journal and contributing the Feature Choice article for this issue. She has written the Book Appreciation since 2015, contributing thoughtful columns on books related to Appreciative Inquiry and strengths-based disciplines. She has decided it is time to take a step back. I would like to thank her for her support and contributions over the years.

Shelagh Aitken, Managing Editor, AI Practitioner

A Shift in Being: The Art and Practices of Deep Transformational Coaching

By Leon VanderPol
Imaginal Light Publishing, 2019
ISBN – 978-0-374-53221-5



Google for “coaching + transformation”, and you get 10,70,000 results. Searching the same key words on Amazon returns 5000 results. With such an overwhelming array of material on coaching and transformation, one really needs a compelling reason to talk about *A Shift in Being*, yet another book on coaching and transformation. The book, I must say, offers more than one.

A Shift in Being by Leon Vanderpol shepherds the reader gently into the realm of deep consciousness, far beyond the familiar narrative of transformation. This book is about the way to and journey of transformation that comes from deep awakening and truly profound shifts at a “being” level. It is unique in the way it affirms the call and promise of coaching to facilitate deep transformation

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and consciousness, at not just psychological but also at existential and spiritual levels, although a more popular focus of coaching remains breakthroughs, solutions or possibility alternatives.

An expansive offer

One of the most transformative lessons this book offers is that transformation enables transformation, thereby encouraging coaches to be on an ongoing transformative journey themselves. To his credit, the author acknowledges the significance and value of transactional coaching, which focusses on helping clients work their way towards tangible solutions and goals.

He explains that while transactional and transformational coaching may be on opposite ends of the coaching continuum, they do overlap, and it is often in this intersecting space that many coaches help their clients find transformative solutions for even transactional goals and problems. His focus, though, remains what he calls “being-focused” (transformational) coaching which works at deeper-than-surface level, affirms the simultaneity of shadow and light, engages the core, and “illuminates the inner operating system”.

The author draws from Alan Seale’s *four levels of engagement* (drama, situation, choice and opportunity) to underline that transformation begins when we start engaging at choice level and finds a way to embody a shift-in-being when we work at the opportunity level, seeking and embracing the gift of what is yet unfolding.

The author contends that the journey of transformation essentially happens at being level. The challenge lies in being willing and able to coach at this level, since the preferred and more common domain of coaching is the conscious mind, not the realm of deeper consciousness itself. The author explains his point with a not-so-commonly known interpretation of the famous caterpillar-to-butterfly metamorphosis: even as the decaying cells of the caterpillar are turning into a primordial goo, its disintegrating immune system puts up a fight with the emergent cells that will eventually take birth as a butterfly, perceiving the latter to be an enemy. The emergent cells, in contrast, are focused on “imagining” the possible, thereby earning the name of imaginal cells. Even in dying, the decaying immune system of caterpillar fights to resist the emergence of these imaginal cells; yet the butterfly emerges because imaginal cells choose to stay and create a new form of life.

The author uses this analogy of metamorphosis to emphasise that transformation happens when one is able to affirm simultaneously that which is

dissolving and which is emerging. Transformation, according to him, happens in the metamorphic space in between, where one experiences and endures “inner earthquake” and embraces the “impulse to transform” by choosing to embark on a heroic journey of self-discovery.

Building on Janet Hagberg’s model of *six stages of personal power* (powerlessness, power by association, power by achievement, power by reflection, power by purpose and power by wisdom), the author elaborates that one can “coach transformationally” anyone, irrespective of which personal power base they are at, shifting the focus of exploration from the situation to the choice level of engagement. But “coaching for transformation” calls for facing the “crisis of integrity” and seeking the pathway of awakening at the consciousness level. The personal power bases of reflection, purpose and wisdom serve immensely in this journey. That said, the author is quick to emphasise that the coach should be willing and able to meet and coach the client for what they are seeking – transactional breakthrough, transformational coaching even if around more tangible matters, or coaching for transformation, i.e., at the deep being level.

Transformation calls for the dual dynamics of ‘letting go’ (dissolution) and ‘letting come’ (emergence) to be honoured simultaneously.

The author points out that transformation calls for the dual dynamics of “letting go” (dissolution) and “letting come” (emergence) to be honoured simultaneously, by working through the “personal gravity” of core limiting beliefs that need healing. He offers the framework of *six propelling engines* (spirit, spiritual energy, light of the self, inner attitudes, environment and transformative practice) that support movement towards renewal. Elaborating on the concept of “spiritual partnering” (relating with the intention to serve a higher purpose for both parties), the idea of “transformation enabling transformation” is re-emphasised to make the point that for a coach to be able to facilitate truly deep transformation it is immensely useful if the coach’s own transformative journey is ongoing.

The book culminates in the elaboration of nine practices of deep transformative coaching:

1. Slowing it all down and syncing with the rhythm of life and spirit
2. Releasing your agenda; and living your spiritual values
3. Nurturing a healing space
4. Letting there by silence
5. Coaching more from the heart, less from the head

6. Attuning to the client's deeper sense of self and letting that lead
7. Expanding your capacity to be with pain and allow healing moments
8. Fostering the emergence of what wants to happen
9. Cultivating trust in the mystery and magic of transformation.

With stories, wisdom tips, inquiry pauses, reflective exercises and more, the reader is taken on an expansive journey of awakening deep consciousness. Whether a coach, a facilitator, or simply an attuned reader, you are likely to gain much at personal level from the evocative and engaging way in which the author nudges and guides you to meet your core self, and to engage with yourself at consciousness and higher-purpose levels.

As I close

For practitioners inclined toward deep transformational work this book is an absolute delight.

I offer my appreciation for the author's courage to integrate existential consciousness with a liberal helping of spiritual influence in creating a coaching model that is truly path-breaking. The model may not easily find favour with those who prefer to stick to the established norms and frameworks of coaching. However, if one comes across a coaching opportunity in the realm of deep healing and growth, this book has much to offer. The book may attract mixed views for its distinctive emphasis on matters of consciousness and spiritual partnering with the client. It is also likely to draw critical review from the research-evidence and academically rigorous points of view. For practitioners inclined toward deep transformational work, though, this book is an absolute delight.



Leon VanderPol

Leon VanderPol is an internationally recognized leader and master-teacher in the field of transformational coaching. Founder and director of the Centre for Transformational Coaching & Living, Leon is an ICF credentialed professional certified coach. His writing, coaching and teaching transcend borders and cultures. Eloquent, thought-provoking and transformative, Leon is a sought-after coach and speaker. You may discover more about him at – <https://www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/leon-vanderpol-pcc/>.

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