

Recommended Reading

This is a personal list of books that I have found useful – as part of my own journey as well as a resource for coaching. I hope you find them to be as helpful.

I've grouped them under headings, but several could fit more than one category.

Let me know which ones were particularly useful for you and if there are any books you'd suggest that I should read and perhaps add to this list.

Coaching.

<i>The Coaching Habit</i> Michael Bungay-Stanier	Great introduction to coaching – with a focus on good coaching questions and how to structure a useful dialogue. Particularly helpful for internal coaches who are interested in using coaching questions as part of their day-to-day team development.
<i>Coaching - Evoking Excellence in others</i> James Flaherty	Overview of the art and science of coaching that reflects deeply on the coach as a human being and how this influences the practice. Each chapter contains suggested reading with a brief description of each book - which I found a particularly useful guide to next steps into specific topics. Combines a psychological and philosophical view to create a very well-rounded primer on coaching.
<i>The Coach's Coach</i> Alison Hardingham	One of the set texts for the Henley Certificate programme, this is a great stepping-stone between the introductions to coaching (e.g., Bungay-Stanier) and the more philosophical or academic texts (e.g. Flaherty or Passmore). It provides a lot of practical advice - drawing on Alison's many years as an executive coach.
<i>Time to Think.</i> Nancy Kline	Nancy Kline has created the concept of a "Thinking Environment" based on active listening. She suggests that "the quality of a person's attention defines the quality of the other people's thinking" making a powerful case for really listening deeply to other people to enable them to fully realise their potential. The book provides many useful examples and sets out a series of steps to achieve this. As listening is a key attribute for any coach - this is an excellent source of ideas and guidance to help strengthen and deepen this key skill.

<p><i>The Coaches' Handbook</i></p> <p>Edited by Jonathan Passmore</p>	<p>Wide ranging contributions by expert authors on coaching as an activity and on the many different approaches and techniques. Each section draws on the underlying academic evidence and provides useful examples of current practice.</p>
<p><i>The Psychology of Executive Coaching</i></p> <p>Bruce Peltier</p>	<p>Introduction to psychology in the context of Executive Coaching, taking various theories and applying them in corporate coaching contexts. Some useful recommended reading at the end of each section for those who want to go deeper.</p>
<p><i>Seven Languages for Transformation</i></p> <p>Robert Kegan / Lisa Lahey</p>	<p>Although this book does not mention coaching, it provides several thought-provoking examples of how changing one's mindset or articulating a concern in a different way can have a transformative effect. The authors have worked in adult learning and change management and their models and recommendations are directly applicable to coaching situations.</p>
<p><i>Listen</i></p> <p>Kathryn Maddox</p>	<p>Another non-coaching book. Maddox is a palliative care doctor who practices communication in very difficult situations. She introduces the concept of tender conversations, suggesting that how we listen is at its heart. Using a series of stories exploring different perspectives and the role a listener can play to help someone come to terms with or move forward with a life changing situation, this book also helps us realise what really matters in life.</p>
<p><i>Simplifying Coaching</i></p> <p>Claire Pedrick</p>	<p>A large part of the difference in PCC and MCC coaching is the realisation that the coach can do less and still be of great service to the client. In this book, Pedrick strongly endorses this approach, emphasising that the coach is there to help the client think, not to be the thinker themselves. She includes many examples of how to simplify the questions within a clear framework to become a more effective thinking partner. Highly recommended, for more experienced coaches looking for the next stage in their practice, but also for those new to coaching.</p>

Meditation and Mindfulness

<p><i>Wherever You Go, There You Are</i></p> <p>Jon Kabat-Zinn</p>	<p>Jon Kabat-Zinn is well known from his TED talks on stress reduction and the benefits of mindfulness. This book provides a good introduction to the benefits of mindfulness with some basic techniques and examples. It also has several philosophical musings on life and how mindfulness and increased awareness can change the way we view our world and our lives. Very relevant to coaching as an enabler of greater self-awareness and more openness to the moment which leads to more empathy and deeper engagement.</p>
--	---

<i>Diamond Mind</i> Rob Nairn	Short and very practical book by an experienced mindfulness teacher. Provides a great introduction to mindfulness and how to extend a basic practice. Although he is a practicing Buddhist, this book focusses on the practical aspects of establishing and maintaining regular mindfulness.
<i>The Miracle of Mindfulness</i> Thich Nhat Hanh	An introduction to mindfulness as a way of life, within a Buddhist philosophical context. There is a beautiful simplicity to Thich Nhat Hanh's view of life which comes through in the text. As well as introducing mindfulness he suggests several areas for reflection, with the underlying theme being the importance of leading a mindful life, as a complement to a mindfulness practice.
<i>The Mind Illuminated</i> John Yates	This is a very comprehensive "manual" on mindfulness practice and how to systematically deepen and broaden individual capabilities. He identifies ten stages of development and suggests exercises for each stage. There is a strong alignment with Buddhist thinking, with each step being referenced to the stages of Buddhist development. Although a long book, it is well written and easy to follow. Recommended for an experienced meditator who wants to explore a more advanced practice.
<i>The Meditative Mind</i> Daniel Goleman	A good introduction into a wide variety of meditative traditions from a Western as well as an Eastern perspective. Helps to frame mindfulness within a broader context, highlighting the similarities between different religious and mystical traditions.

Practical Skills

<i>The Culture Map</i> Erin Mayer	Mayer suggests eight different dimensions of communication and how they vary between different nationalities. Drawing on her experience of working with many businesses across cultures she shows how misunderstandings can arise, and what we can do to minimise this. A very helpful overview of a critical topic.
<i>Deep Work</i> Cal Newport	Many people find it difficult to find time to concentrate, amidst the constant pressure of meetings and emails. Newport identifies some simple practices to clear out time to focus on the areas in which you really add value. It is a simple concept, but a helpful model.
<i>Expert</i> Roger Kneebone	Kneebone is a surgeon who studies mastery; how do we become "experts"? He talks to individuals with many kinds of expertise and suggests some useful frameworks around how we can think of ourselves as being on a journey from apprentice to journeyman to master. Short and easy to read, it helps provide a useful model to think about how we develop and maintain expertise.

<p><i>The First 90 Days</i></p> <p>Michael Watkins</p>	<p>The definitive book on role transitions. This provides a series of useful frameworks to put the new role in context and to recognise the steps needed to make the transition a success. A great book to dip into at different stages – before a transition, as it is happening and perhaps looking back at a transition to understand what has worked and what still needs to be done.</p>
<p><i>Insight</i></p> <p>Tasha Eurich</p>	<p>Eurich highlights our lack of self-awareness, particularly around how other people often perceives us. In this easy-to-read book, she suggests some useful models of how we can examine ourselves to develop a better understanding of how and why we react to others. Using practical examples, she also provides a series of useful exercises that can be used individually or as part of a team development session.</p>
<p><i>Seven Ways to build Resilience.</i></p> <p>Chris Johnstone</p>	<p>This is the best overall book on Resilience that I have found so far. Johnstone is a GP and resilience trainer who has created several simple models and practices that help to explore the nature of resilience and suggest ways in which it can be strengthened.</p>
<p><i>Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers</i></p> <p>Robert Sapolsky</p>	<p>As a close second choice on resilience – this book looks at the physiology of stress and how our evolutionary history is not ideal for our modern lives. As well as being a neuroscientist, Sapolski is a primatologist, making many connections between our behaviour and that of the primates he studies.</p>
<p><i>The Five Dysfunctions of a Team</i></p> <p>Patrick Lencioni</p>	<p>A well-known reference for building high performance teams, Lencioni suggests a basic 5 step process to identify and address the underlying issues that impact on team performance. Short and easy to read, this is very helpful as a basic introduction to team dynamics.</p>
<p><i>Atomic Habits</i></p> <p>James Clear</p>	<p>A fast moving and readable guide on how to develop good habits – and how to break bad ones. Suggests a simple 4 step process that can be applied to most situations, but also points out the cumulative benefits of small incremental improvements.</p>
<p><i>Range</i></p> <p>David Epstein</p>	<p>Epstein looks at how individuals become successful and suggests that having a broad range of activities rather than being highly specialised may often be more effective. He also looks at creativity and how many breakthroughs are the result of connections with un-related fields. Well worth reading.</p>
<p><i>Turn the Ship Around</i></p> <p>David Marquet</p>	<p>Marquet was the commander of a USN nuclear submarine who introduced a different approach to leadership and delegation. Working within a very hierarchical environment he pushed decision making down the structure, driving initiative and ownership. He has an engaging style and many of his suggestions have direct relevance in a corporate environment.</p>

Life and how to live it....

<p><i>Man's Search for Meaning</i></p> <p>Victor Frankl</p>	<p>Frankl was a successful psychiatrist who survived Auschwitz and wrote this as an insight into what fundamentally drives us. His perspective on humanity in the most difficult situations and how this can drive greater meaning on our lives is profound. It is a short book but can change the way you view life and why we are here.</p>
<p><i>On Being a Person</i></p> <p>Carl Rogers</p>	<p>Carl Rogers is recognised as the founder of "client centred" therapy with a well-articulated and profound theory of how the therapy process works, and what this means for the client and the therapist. Although written in the late 50's it is directly relevant today for any coach trying to establish a deeper relationship with their clients and prepared to put themselves on the line. The book is a series of essays based on various lectures and covers a range of topics including the evidence supporting the benefits to be gained from this client centred approach. Very highly recommended.</p>
<p><i>The Happiness Hypothesis</i></p> <p>Jonathan Haidt</p>	<p>One of my favourite books ever. Haidt introduces several different concepts around how we see the world and our place in it, and how this helps us understand what may make us happier. In a wide-ranging discussion, he looks at the role of our subconscious and at the evolution of our value systems. Well written and thought provoking.</p>
<p><i>The Art of Living</i></p> <p>Thich Nhat Hanh</p>	<p>A philosophy of life from a Buddhist perspective. Nhat Hanh can take complex concepts and communicate them in a simple and direct way that I found deeply satisfying. It is a short book – but one to come back to regularly.</p>
<p><i>Nonviolent Communication</i></p> <p>Marshall Rosenberg</p>	<p>Marshall Rosenberg specialises in conflict resolution and how the use of language impacts the way that we interact with other people. It provides a thought-provoking view of how we see situations and other people and what we need to understand about this in order to move forward toward a deeper level of communication.</p>
<p><i>The Idiot Brain</i></p> <p>Dean Burnett</p>	<p>Fairly light-hearted introduction to neuroscience which highlights the various imperfections in how the brain processes information. Useful to help understand some of the underlying motivators and cognitive biases in the way we interact with each other.</p>
<p><i>Strangers to ourselves: discovering the adaptive unconscious.</i></p> <p>Timothy Wilson</p>	<p>A description of our unconscious and how it influences the way that we perceive others and react to situations. Some good reflections on unconscious bias and what we may be able to do to recognise and address it. A very good introduction to the subject, with a summary of recent research and current theories.</p>
<p><i>Why Buddhism is True</i></p>	<p>Despite the title, this is a very balanced view of how Buddhist philosophy and modern psychological theories are increasingly converging. It also follows Robert Wright's attempts to become more mindful, providing a very insightful account of what can influence this</p>

Robert Wright	and the learnings from his personal journey. An excellent introduction to Buddhist thought from an accomplished and highly intelligent author.
<i>Me, myself, us</i> Brian Little	Highly readable introduction to personality psychology from a leader in the field. Provides an overview of current thinking about how our personalities vary and how they influence the way we operate and interact. Worth watching his TED talks to get an entertaining summary of his propositions.
<i>Awareness</i> Anthony Mello	Mello was a Jesuit priest whose writings were proscribed by the Vatican. This short book is based on a series of workshops he ran around the theme of personal awareness – becoming “awake” as he puts. His style is relentless; quick-fire humour and contentious statements, but there is a serious message underneath it all which comes through clearly.
<i>I and Thou</i> Martin Buber	Buber’s famous work on interpersonal relationships is a difficult read but addresses the key question of how we relate to other people, and the extent to which we truly recognise the person in them. The edition I have has an introduction by Kaufmann which really helped to set the context and explain some of the text.
<i>Existential Psychotherapy</i> Irvin Yalom	Yalom is a leading psychotherapist and prolific author. This is one of his earlier books and is a wide-ranging introduction to the existential fears we all experience, and how these can impact on how we live our lives. Drawing on many years of clinical practice, and referencing a wide range of philosophic approaches, this is a powerful and well written book which helps to get to the heart of the human condition.
<i>Four Thousand Weeks</i> Oliver Burkeman	Burkeman is a writer and philosopher who used to advise on time management. He realised that becoming more efficient doesn’t address the underlying issue of our attitude to time. In this thoughtful book he explores this – reminding us that our expected life span is only 4000 weeks and how we can live a meaningful life by recognising and embracing this reality. Highly recommended.
<i>Wisdom – from philosophy to neuroscience</i> Stephen S Hall	Wisdom is difficult to define even if we all believe it is worth achieving. In this well researched book, Hall explores the historical and cultural context of wisdom and suggests a number of areas that help us behave more wisely. As the title suggests, he introduces concepts from philosophy as well as neuroscience to provide a well-rounded account.
<i>The Power of Purpose</i> Richard J Leider	Like wisdom, purpose is can have different meanings, but is core to our experience of life. Leider is an experienced coach who has spent a lot of time working with clients to help them understand their own purpose and how to realise it. There are some useful thought exercises and examples of different approaches to identifying purpose and what may stand in the way.