Applying the Cape Cod Model© to Coaching

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on a particular Gestalt approach to coaching – the Cape Cod Model (CCM)© – as well as on those foundational principles necessary for understanding the application of the model to coaching. What any one person might mean by coaching is itself a moving target. Presently, the field of coaching encompasses life coaching, relationship coaching, success coaching, entrepreneurial coaching, and so on. In this article, the focus is on coaching within an organization. This may include employees at any level of the organization, insofar as a third-party stakeholder is paying to support individual and organizational success.

Professional coaching, though still in its relative infancy, draws from many approaches and schools of thought. These include psychology, human development, social sciences, psychotherapy, and the human potential movement. Gestalt theory, with a rich and textured history in these same areas, clearly has something to say about coaching. If, in a previous article (Simon, 2009), the purpose was to explore how coaching can be effectively

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informed by well-established Gestalt principles, in this paper, it is to explore the application of contemporary Gestalt principles to coaching by using The Cape Cod Model (CCM)\(^2\).

The application of The Cape Cod Model\(^\circ\) to coaching was developed at the Gestalt International Study Center (GiSC) on Cape Cod, USA by Donna Colombel and the present author. The Cape Cod Model\(^\circ\) itself was developed at GiSC, primarily under the leadership of S.M. Nevis. It is a unique, optimistic, and accessible Gestalt approach based on trusting the competence of the client and the power of awareness as a foundation for change.

**The Cape Cod Model\(^\circ\)**

E. C. Nevis, Melnick, and S. M. Nevis (2008) articulate the foundational principles of the CCM\(^\circ\), noting that the Model has two essential components: (1) The basic stance that informs the behavior of the practitioner; and (2) A specific sequence of actions/interventions that a practitioner follows step by step. The basic stance of a CCM\(^\circ\) practitioner is one of optimism, supported by an experimental attitude. This approach is underpinned by Gestalt principles such as the “Paradoxical Theory of Change” (Biesser, 1970) and the notion of creative adaptation. Consequently, rather than looking to fix dysfunction, the CCM\(^\circ\) practitioner considers difficulties within a client or client system as being the result of misplaced or overused competencies.

The sequential steps of the CCM\(^\circ\) are specific and follow closely the emergent process of The Cycle of Experience. The sequence begins by building a safe and trusting relationship with the client, before moving to focus on the client’s competencies, identified as Well-Developed Competencies\(^\circ\). Growth and development possibilities are then connected to the Well-Developed and described as the Less-Developed Competencies\(^\circ\). Less-Developed Competencies\(^\circ\) are explored using the long-established Gestalt approach of experimentation. Strictly speaking, the sequence of the CCM\(^\circ\) can be described thus:

1. **Build trust, safety, and create connection (the process of building contact)**
2a. **Identify and focus on Well-Developed Competencies\(^\circ\)**

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\(^2\) There has been an increasing number of articles on coaching from a Gestalt perspective. See Simon (2009) for a review of the applicable literature. Historically, Gestalt theory was applied to psychotherapy for individuals. Over the years, Gestalt and other theories of psychology were expanded and applied to additional treatment modalities including couples, family, and group therapy. Eventually Gestalt theory was adapted and applied to *organizational behavior* (e.g., Herman, 1977; Alevras and Wepman, 1980; E. C. Nevis, 1987, 1992; E. C. Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo, 1996; Gaffney, 2008). This application of Gestalt theory to organizational behavior is logical, reasonable, and graceful.
2b. Make sure feedback about Well-Developed Competencies® sticks
3. Identify the potential Less-Developed Competencies®
4. Experiment with Less-Developed Competencies®
5. Debrief and close

As a way of structuring this article, we will move through the steps of the CCM®, demonstrate its application to coaching, and use real-life scenarios to support the theory.

1. Build trust, safety, and create connection (the process of building contact)

The foundation of the CCM® is of course Gestalt theory; it is foundational to Gestalt theory that people grow and develop to the extent that they are open to their environment – for new ideas, new awareness, new learning. The intention and ability to be open to new learning require a sense of trust and safety in one’s environment. This is particularly true when the learning environment is represented by the professional coach. Consequently, it would seem that no other principle of a Gestalt approach to coaching is more significant than the coach’s intent and ability to facilitate contact and trust with the client.

This connection is essential. While coaches may have expertise, experience, and knowledge which can be helpful to the client, a precondition for genuine learning is that the client be available to be taught – to be interested in and engaged in the partnership for learning: “Only by taking the time to develop rich contact and trust is the coaching client able to develop curiosity about what the coach may have to teach” (Simon, 2009, p. 233).

It is easy to underestimate time and effort needed to build trust with a coaching client. This is the case whether the coaching client has initiated the request for help or has been “sent” to coaching by superiors. While most of us enjoy the prospect of professional or personal growth, learning, and development, few of us like the idea that we need to learn something, or that someone else has been designated to teach us something we should already know: “Even for the most psychologically hearty, self-esteem can be fragile. Consequently, it can be easily compromised in the presence of another who is hierarchically positioned to teach us things we believe we should know” (Simon, 2009, pp. 233-34).

This emphasis on trust is particularly important in organizational settings, where evaluation of success or failure is an ongoing part of the field. And, of course, it is easier to talk about the importance of building a relationship of trust and safety than it is to describe how one does it. Too often we rely on clichés; we describe the importance of “making small-talk” or of “being friendly and available”: 
The “how” of enriching the contact with the coaching client can be, and often is, a subtle and nuanced process. [...] [It] requires coaches to draw on all of their abilities to be present, to be interested in the client, and to able to be contacted. Sometimes it is about how the coach influences the pacing of the interaction; how eye contact is made or responded to; and how the coach responds to the client’s initial attempts toward or away from contact and engagement. All of these ways of working, and more, are required to create the connection and contact that are the basis for learning in the coaching relationship. (Simon, 2009, p. 235)

While there are many components to building and maintaining trust between people, two will be focused on here.

1a. Coaching clients must experience the coach as genuinely interested in them, even if limited by context
The following case will serve as an illustration.

Bob was the VP of Information Technology for a software start-up company. Over the course of his career, he had been highly successful, typically in situations that required fast analytical thinking, quick decisions, and bold actions. In particular, because of his swift responses during two security breaches (systems were hacked) that had quickly minimized damages, he had developed something of a “heroic” reputation. As a manager, however, he was struggling. Viewed as being “abrasive, curt, directive, and intolerant,” he was rapidly losing credibility and commitment from his team. The senior executive team was not yet prepared to return Bob to a position of individual contributor. Rather, they wanted him to stop being “abrasive.” Consequently, they had arranged for me to coach Bob to address his “abrasive” behavior.

As we might expect, Bob’s initial response to me was colored by cautiousness and defensiveness. Therefore, rather than “getting down to business” and trying to “teach” Bob something, I spent many of the early sessions being curious and learning about him: his career path, stresses on the job, likes and dislikes, etc. Seasoned Gestalt practitioners may note that what the coach is doing here is simply “building contact.” While they would be correct, it is also important to underscore that the coach is responsible for creating enough trust so that the client will be willing to begin “contacting” before work can be done. The process of building contact-between in a hierarchical
relationship often requires a careful and deliberate process.

1b. The coach’s must have the ability to maintain and communicate an optimistic stance

Today, so much is being written and talked about in the realm of optimism – books, articles, documentaries – that one can hardly do justice to the topic. Simply put here, a coach’s optimistic stance serves the client in all the vicissitudes of support. Developing new behaviors is difficult under any circumstances. In an organizational setting, where job success or stability may be in jeopardy, anxiety about failure can be significant. Being able to rely on the coach for an optimistic stance and outlook can be invaluable for building trust and mobilizing energy for the coaching process. As has been said elsewhere:

[Building trust] requires coaches to be authentically optimistic that clients are doing the best they can, that their skills and competencies will be appreciated, that a coach/client connection can result in a working partnership, and that, if there is a joint understanding of the client’s situation, this partnership can create solutions. (Simon, 2009, p. 234)

A caveat is in order with regard to coaching from an optimistic stance. It cannot be emphasized enough that when one points out something people need to do to be more effective, such feedback is going to make them feel bad and may even “sting.” Put another way, all of us like the idea of growing and developing; very few of us like to be told we need to do something better. For example, while Bob himself was highly successful, he was rapidly losing credibility and commitment from those who reported to him directly. The senior executive team wanted Bob to stop being “abrupt, curt, directive, and intolerant.” As much as I worked hard to build safety and trust, Bob continued to be somewhat cautious and defensive with me. It is realistic to assume that Bob’s cautiousness and defensiveness was driven in part by his awareness that his ability to be “abrupt, curt, directive, and intolerant” were abilities he relied on; the coaching process can be experienced as a threat to using reliable skills.

There is a further caution. Even coaches who have the expertise, skill, and awareness of the importance of building trust in a professional relationship may find themselves moving too quickly into the “work.” Feeling appropriate pressure from the coaching sponsor to be successful, coaches often move too rapidly in an attempt to establish their expertise. Ironically, what is typically called for early in the coaching process is behavior that focuses less on the hierarchical nature of a student/teacher relationship and more on the
equality and commonality of coach and client. In essence, the coach initially works towards an atmosphere of “us-ness.” This type of contact mobilizes the potential excitement and energy necessary for openness to learning.

With its foundation in Gestalt theory, the CCM© applies the “Cycle of Experience” as a lens through which to view behavior. In work settings, where consultants and coaches are engaged to enhance organizational success, the Cycle is often used as a model for “How Work Gets Done” or “A Unit of Work.” The concept of “work” is relevant to coaches, since the organization is a third-party stakeholder expecting an outcome that will lead to increased success and productivity. Unlike the therapy process where clinician and client are supported in becoming interested in any emerging figure or Gestalt, the Gestalt coach must operate within the guidelines of the organizational contract. In coaching, then, the Cycle necessarily becomes an interactive or cocreated cycle. It does not so much emerge as become created through the work of the coach and the client. Therefore, in Diagram 1, the word “Sensations” has been replaced with the phrase “Beginning the (coaching) engagement.” The coaching task thus reflects the process of building relationship and connection of trust.

The Cycle of Experience Applied to Coaching Using the Cape Cod Model©

Diagram 1
2a. Identify and focus on Well-Developed Competencies

As mentioned above, CCM practitioners who use an optimistic approach to support growth and development – personal, systemic, organizational – work from the perspective of adding new competencies as opposed to “correcting” dysfunction. They assume that any behavior can, and should, be considered a competency. When behaviors are deemed “ineffective,” the CCM practitioner would say that the competency is probably being “overused,” or being used in a “contextually inappropriate” manner. Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this aspect of the CCM, and to show how it applies to coaching, is by invoking the Gestalt concept of polarities. Imagine making a list of employee behaviors that as a coach one might find “problematic.” In workshops in which I teach the CCM as applied to coaching, participants regularly come up with the following sorts of lists.

**Problematic behaviors demonstrated by someone who:**

- tightly controls a meeting
- speaks all the time
- interrupts others
- has to be right
- focuses on minutia
- changes the subject
- disagrees with everything being said
- gives negative feedback
- never gives an opinion
- shows up late to meetings
- always cancels their attendance
- never speaks up

When I ask participants to describe a polarity of these behaviors, the list often looks like this:

- tightly controls a meeting
  - rarely directs the meeting
- speaks all the time
  - seldom speaks up
- interrupts others
  - always remains quiet
- has to be right
  - doesn’t fight for own point of view
- focuses on minutia
  - always focused on the big picture
- changes the subject
  - unwilling to move to another issue
- disagrees with everything being said
  - agrees with everything being said
- always gives negative feedback
  - only gives positive feedback
- never gives an opinion
  - always voices their opinion
- shows up late to meetings
  - is always punctual
• always cancels
• never speaks up
♦ fulfills every commitment
♦ speaks all the time

The astute reader may have noticed that some of the polarities appear on the same list: for example, “speaks up all the time” and its polarity “never speaks up” are also on the original list of “problematic behaviors.” Part of the reason for this “duplication” is that often people are drawn towards one way of being in the world over another (e.g., some will value quiet acquiescence above boldly speaking out, and vice-versa). From a CCM© (and Gestalt) perspective, however, the critical issue is that success and satisfaction in life and work occur when we have a full range of polarities – a full range of behavioral choices available depending on the situation. Therefore, it is essential to ask workshop participants (or, in this case, the reader) which behaviors on either list we would wish to eliminate from the coaching client’s repertoire. For example, do we really want to eliminate the ability to tightly control a meeting if the process is going off track or getting out of control? Or, do we want to eliminate the ability to interrupt others if an employee is doing something potentially dangerous, etc.?

It is important to stress that what we call problematic behavior is not so much the existence of a particular behavior, as it is a person’s being limited to that behavior. For example, while interrupting a colleague can be an important skill if the colleague is perceived to be going off track, always interrupting, without ever hearing other people’s perspectives, is a problem. Similarly, tightly controlling a meeting may be essential if there are time limitations and a decision is needed. Only being able to tightly control a meeting, without ever including other team members’ ideas, is a problem.

The crucial point is that a CCM© practitioner assumes an authentic perspective of looking for competence, as differentiated from saying something “nice.” It is not the proverbial “feedback sandwich” employed in many organizations and coaching approaches for introducing corrective behavior, i.e., the intervener finds something positive to say, introduces the corrective or negative behavior to be changed, and finishes with a positive statement. My opposition to the feedback sandwich is that the use of the positive simply to cushion the negative can result in its being potentially disingenuous and patronizing to the recipient. On the other hand, when giving developmental feedback from a CCM© perspective, the practitioner is not searching for something positive to say, but rather looking for the presence of a genuine competency that is overused or contextually inappropriate.

It may also have become evident to the reader that the notions of Well-Developed and Less-Developed Competencies© are inextricably connected. That is, a Well-Developed Competency© in the process of becoming overused
has typically developed at the expense of another behavior. For example, it is likely that someone who is “always agreeable” has had little internal or external support for disagreeing or saying no; someone who “always has to be right” has never learned to live with the disappointment of having someone else’s point of view prevail, and so on.

In applying the notion of Well-Developed Competencies©, let us return the work with the client Bob to explore a “real-life” example: the senior executive team wanted Bob to stop being “abrupt, curt, directive, and intolerant.” And, in fact, those behaviors were becoming a problem for Bob. In applying the CCM©, however, a coach would first focus on these behaviors as genuine competencies. For example, though those behaviors were certainly limiting him, they also supported his success in managing the crisis of a security breach. During those events, Bob’s “abrupt, curt, directive and intolerant” behavior was effective in getting things done quickly. In a crisis he was seen as being bold, self-assured, to the point, and refusing to take “no” for an answer. If my goal as a coach were to get Bob to “change” this behavior, I would be asking him to give up the foundation of his success. Rather, my goal was to get Bob to see that he had become over-reliant on a set of skills, and that now he needed to expand his range.

Consequently, my initial task was to have Bob see that I genuinely respected and appreciated his approach, and that I saw his behaviors as competencies that had led in large part to his success. He had to realize that those skills were already well-developed in him, that they were easily accessible to him, and that he was comfortable using them. The essence of Bob’s problem was that he did not have a wider range of skills to support his success. Here, Beisser’s (1970) “Paradoxical Theory of Change” comes into play. Briefly, a Gestalt coach works towards mobilizing energy for new behaviors. And the “Paradoxical Theory” suggests that energy is available for new behaviors when one fully accepts what one is, rather than simply striving to be different.

At the point where the following dialogue begins, Bob and I are discussing the behaviors that have been getting him into trouble, and how they may be overdeveloped competencies:

**Stuart:** Is there anyone who does not know where they stand with you?
**Bob:** No one can ever accuse me of “BS.” But look where it is getting me.
**Stuart:** You mean with your direct reports?
**Bob:** Yes, and with my management team.
**Stuart:** I promise we’ll talk about that, but first... where did this approach get you when you were managing the security breaches?
**Bob:** Well... things got done, and they got done quickly.
**Stuart:** And you were widely seen as responsible for minimizing the damage?
Bob: Yes... but people aren’t so happy with me when there’s not a crisis.
Stuart: That’s true. Any regrets about how you handled the crises?
Bob: No, someone had to take over.
Stuart: So, we’re agreed that though these behaviors are getting you into trouble now, they have also contributed to your success in crises... that what your managers are calling “abrupt, curt, directive, and intolerant” is your style of being, bold, self-assured, to the point, and of finding a way to get things done quickly.
Bob: ... Yes.
Stuart: Would you want to train someone in IT crises management who couldn’t be bold, self-assured, to the point, etc.?
Bob: ... No. But you know, and I know, that my management team is not celebrating my being “bold, self-assured, and to the point.”
Stuart: Well, that’s not entirely true. They’ve liked it when you use those behaviors in a crisis.
Bob: Yeah... but no one is saying that to me... they just want me to change.
Stuart: Yes, they do want you to change. And no they’re not telling you what great skills these are... but I am saying it to you... Do you believe me?
Bob: That these are my skills?
Stuart: Yes.
Bob: (reflecting). Yes.
Stuart: What’s getting you in trouble is that you don’t have other skills to go with your boldness. You’re not sure quite what to do when bold or self-assured aren’t called for. And I assure you that I will work on that with you. (Laughing) That’s what they’re paying me for. But it’s important to me that you recognize that what you presently do is not to be tossed away. Your ability to be “bold, self-assured and to the point” is a corporate asset. Does that make sense to you?
Bob: (reflecting). Yes.

2b. Ensure feedback about Well-Developed Competencies© resonates with the client

A few points stand out with respect to this interaction with Bob. First, very few of us who live and work in the world expect feedback about our performance to be delivered authentically from a “positive” and appreciative perspective. Therefore, when initially delivering feedback on what is Well-Developed©, a coach often encounters resistance about the feedback’s authenticity or validity. In this case, Bob was questioning the validity of the feedback and, just as importantly, how that feedback would be helpful to him. With reference to the “Paradoxical Theory,” the point here is that a
coach applying the CCM® must stay engaged with clients long enough to ensure that they embrace what they already do well, so that they can mobilize maximum energy for a new behavior.

There are various methods to maximize the possibility of feedback resonating with the client. These include: making sure there is sufficient trust in the relationship, delivering the intervention simply and boldly, and having sufficient data should the client need it. Perhaps most important is the ability and willingness of the coach to manage resistance by demonstrating interest, curiosity, and engagement with the client’s protests. With Bob, my approach was to maintain curiosity and engagement with his experience of my feedback.

In moving from Well-Developed Competencies® to identifying Less-Developed Competencies®, it is particularly useful to focus on the cost to the coaching client for overusing or misusing a particular competency. In working with Bob, this may have been evident when I discussed with him the cost to his overreliance on boldness, directness, abruptness, etc. Focusing on the cost can soften the negative aspects of overusing the Well-Developed, in that it invites the client to see the consequences of not developing a new behavior.

With respect to the Cycle of Experience, Diagram 2 demonstrates that the process of emerging awareness is facilitated by the coach’s task of intentionally building awareness of the client’s Well-Developed Competency®.
3. Identify potentially Less-Developed Competencies©

Regardless of how effectively the coach builds a trusting relationship, works from an optimistic stance, and gets “buy-in” to a well-established competency, the process of effectively giving developmental feed-back can be difficult. As mentioned earlier, most of us like the idea of learning, growing, and developing; few of us like to be told there is something we do not know, or things we need to learn. Simply put, developmental feedback, even when done well, can sting a bit. As coaches, we must be aware of this issue and manage it well.

Conceptualizing the Gestalt notion of polarities can offer a useful frame for moving from Well-Developed Competencies© to identifying Less-Developed Competencies©. Often, we identify one way of behaving as being better than another way. For example, some believe it is better (or find it easier) to be quiet and attentive rather than highly visible and outgoing. Or, perhaps it is easier for some to be leaders, while others prefer to follow, and so on. It is foundational to Gestalt theory that movement through life offers perpetual opportunity for growth and development. Sharing this perspective with the coaching client supports the notion that growth and development are ordinary.

Whatever the situation, it is essential that the coach take time and care in introducing the Less-Developed Competency© and in getting “buy-in” from the client. Let us return to the work with Bob:

Stuart: So we’re agreed that your abrasive behavior can also be authentically described as bold, self-assured and to the point?

Bob: Yes.

Stuart: And that the real problem is that you’re not particularly comfortable with another approach. For example, it’s not easy for you to listen – genuinely listen – to someone else’s point of view once you believe you know the answer.

Bob: (Frowning)

Stuart: Can I ask what the frown is about?

Bob: I don’t like hearing that I’m not good at listening to another’s point of view.

Stuart: I can imagine. Nonetheless, is it true? No less true than how good you are in a crisis precisely because you don’t stop to listen to others? You follow your instincts which both you and your company value.

Bob: Yeah, but still I don’t like hearing it.

Stuart: What’s to like about it? (Laughing) On the other hand, they are going to pay you….and me…to get better at it.

Bob: I suppose that my real worry is that I might not be able to do it.
Stuart: Well should we see what happens when you try?
Bob: Sure.

Diagram 3 should demonstrate where we are on the Cycle. If the transition from appreciating the Well-Developed Competency© to identifying the Less-Developed Competency© is managed well, the client is likely to have the interest, energy, and even excitement for exploring a new behavior.

![Diagram of the Cycle of Experience Applied to Coaching Using the Cape Cod Model©](image)

**Diagram 3**

4. Experiment with Less-Developed Competencies©

At the risk of stating the obvious, Well-Developed Competencies© might also be described as habits – repeated patterns of behavior that might occur without awareness. Additionally, because Well-Developed behaviors are often the result of creative adaptation, we may have a strong but unaware predilection to continuing that behavior. Consequently, the process of raising awareness, while necessary, may be insufficient for creating a choice for new behaviors. Like golfers trying to develop a new swing, or actors trying to expand their range, simply being given a directive to do it differently is rarely effective. Golfers, like all athletes, need time to experiment with a new swing – to experience it, to see what feels right, what they want to adjust, change, etc. Actors spend time exploring new aspects of themselves that they may use. Additionally, in organizational settings with a third party payer, there can
be a tendency to identify desired new behaviors and mobilize quickly towards them. The Gestalt “experiment” can provide an opportunity for the client to explore their Less Developed Competencies®.

The use of experiment while coaching from the vantage point of the CCM® is similar to any “Gestalt” experiment. Growing from awareness of “what is,” the Gestalt experiment is a process of supporting the coaching client’s “choiceful” trying of a behavior that is new and perhaps difficult. If there is any difference in how a CCM® coach might use experiment, it is that we typically avoid the word “experiment” itself. This is because, like many words, experiment both inside and outside Gestalt has taken on additional meanings. Thus, CCM® uses the obviously simple expression, “Let’s try.” By either name, Gestalt practitioners will recognize the components.

The Gestalt experiment is grounded in the client’s emerging awareness of what is both Well-developed and Less-Developed®. It accommodates resistance, is co-created by coach and client, and is framed as an invitation to learning by trying something new. The coaching client must of course understand what is to be learned and feel that the experiment has been well calibrated (i.e., not too hard nor too easy). It is important to remember that, unlike other coaching models, the Gestalt experiment is not a directive to do something new, but to TRY something new in service of developing and grounding new behaviors (see Diagram 4).

As Gestalt practitioners know, experimentation with new behaviors is bounded only by context and the creative process between practitioner and client. With Bob, it was clear that he was already comfortable and confident using behaviors focused on getting things done in the short term: to be bold, clear, directive. He needed to develop a more relational approach that would serve to build connections with those who reported to him directly. And, of course, that connection would serve to sustain the working relationship in the long run.

Because there was such a high degree of buy-in from Bob regarding the focus of his growing edge, creating an experiment something for him to try, was relatively easy. Bob and I discussed several possibilities that would allow him to try employing listening behaviors when he disagreed with the speaker. We settled on a political discussion that allowed me to take positions that I knew would oppose Bob’s. He was to try remaining curious and open to my ideas by asking questions and listening.

Doing the experiment was quite meaningful for Bob. His worry that he might not be able to listen successfully was well-founded. As I put forward ideas and positions I knew Bob would disagree with, it was nearly impossible for him to listen. He quickly became agitated and interrupted immediately and continuously.
5. Debrief and close

Even Bob, who had predicted the failure, was surprised by how difficult it was for him to be curious and interested. But because Bob and I had created a solid working relationship, we were able to use this experience for further exploration. He initiated an exploration of the root causes of what he came to call his “listening disability” and, together, we discovered how it was a creative adaptation to his early familial experiences. Ultimately, it laid groundwork for his being able to practice new listening skills. Just as importantly, his fears about failing began to diminish. Quite remarkably, he decided to take public ownership with those who reported directly to him about his difficulty with listening, and he enlisted their support in pointing out to him when they did not feel listened to.

With respect to the Cycle, we can see in Diagram 5 that debriefing and closing the unit of work maps easily to the stage of Assimilation and Integration.
The practice of professional coaching has grown dramatically over the past 10 to 15 years. This period has been marked by the proliferation of professionals that identify themselves as coaches. At its core, Gestalt is a theory of learning. Consequently, the application of Gestalt principles to the field of coaching is natural and appropriate.

The Cape Cod Model©, developed over the past 25 years at the Gestalt International Study Center under the direction of Sonia March Nevis, can be applied as a practical and accessible approach for Gestalt practitioners. Sequential in design, it is firmly grounded in traditional Gestalt principles. These include: the development of rich contact and awareness, the exploration of polarities for growth and development, the paradoxical theory of change, and the use of creative experimentation. Because Gestalt theory focuses clearly on growth and development (as opposed to fixing dysfunction), it is particularly suited for application in the emerging field of professional coaching.

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REFERENCES


