



MODULE TWO

Self-doubt and Developmental Psychology



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Adulthood: Sameness and Difference	4
Developmental Psychology: Making Sense of Ourselves.....	5
The Self-belief Coaching Developmental Model	7
Expanding the client's Self-concept.....	12
References.....	18

Introduction

In Module Two, we are exploring what Developmental Psychology offers us as we coach our clients through self-doubt.

In this module, you'll find core ideas that help to deepen our work as Self-belief Coaches:

- We will explore a helpful 'meta-model' of adulthood, with a particular focus on how our sense of self is formed, reformed, and transformed and how this helps us to navigate self-doubt.
- We'll look at how to identify, make sense of and coach effectively with clients at any developmental stage.
- We will also explore the concept of the 'multiplicity of selves' and how to create a sense of psychological spaciousness for clients.

Consider:

- How does Developmental Psychology help me to understand my experience of adulthood?
- How might these ideas be incorporated into my client work?
- What is unclear to me?
- What questions do I have?

Adulthood: Sameness and Difference

As adults, our development is about our capacity to understand, reflect on and respond to two core aspects of our experience:

- Our comfort within sameness – this offers us the safety, stability and relaxation needed for integration.
- Our sense of disruption within difference - offers us the stimulation of complexity and newness needed for expansion and development.



Adulthood is a dance between these two states. When we experience the quality of sameness, we access acceptance, a sense of safety and protection. Sameness is peaceful. Our self-doubt has hardly anything to do when we are here.

Sometimes sameness takes on the sense of dullness and stagnancy – we stay in a job, a relationship, a town for too long - we stop growing. This is when we seek out difference – we look for opportunities for our lives to change.

Of course, we are often jettisoned into difference through unexpected changes – sometimes undesired – that occur over the course of a life. When we sense a difference, we often feel stress and concern – change is disruption, often uncomfortable.

Our protective self-doubt becomes braced for psychological risks. But while it can be painful or difficult, these times of change are the stimulation we need to grow.

The difference offers us opportunities to expand our self-concept. Even when we return to sameness, we are different. We are always dancing between sameness and difference.

Our clients will often seek out coaching support during life changes.

Developmental Psychology: Making Sense of Ourselves

Developmental psychology is the study of how and why humans change over the course of their lifespan.

Developmental models explore and attempt to explain our self-concept, our social and emotional development, and how our identity takes form over time. Theorists are interested in the influences of both nature and nurture.

Many researchers have tried to make sense of how we develop. Some of the main theories:

- Freud's stages of psychosexual development
- Piaget's stages of cognition
- Kohlberg's stages of moral development
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Graves's levels of existence
- Loevinger's theory of 'ego development'
- Kegan's orders of mind
- Wilber's integral theory
- Torbert's stages of action logic

Most theorists talk about the limits of developmental frameworks.

They tend to agree that 'development is a massively complex, overlapping, nonlinear affair, following no set sequence whatsoever' (Wilber, 1999).

All models suggest that adult development unfolds through a series of stages.

NB: All theorists mentioned are white men – predominantly North American. As we explore developmental psychology, let's keep in mind: what ideas, perspectives, possible interpretations might be missing?

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Developmental Psychology includes many theories and different conceptualisations of stages, and nearly all of them are relevant to coaching.

However, much of the meta-research suggests that the movement through three developmental stages is the most characteristic for the majority of adults.

Transitioning to another developmental stage is not just like entering a room you have never been in – it's one you've *never conceived of* - our self-concept going through a complete metamorphosis.

This makes the time of movement to a new stage ripe for coaching support.

Things to know:

- Stages are not fixed and do not unfold in a linear fashion – we can return to previous stages. Think of a labyrinth rather than a straight line.
- Stages do not have a hierarchy – no one stage is better than another. Think of an onion rather than a ladder.
- Stages cannot be 'skipped' because each is built upon the previous one.
- We don't 'push' for development - we meet our clients where they are. We help them to reflect, to feel resourced, to act and be effective in their action.

SELF-BELIEF COACHING DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

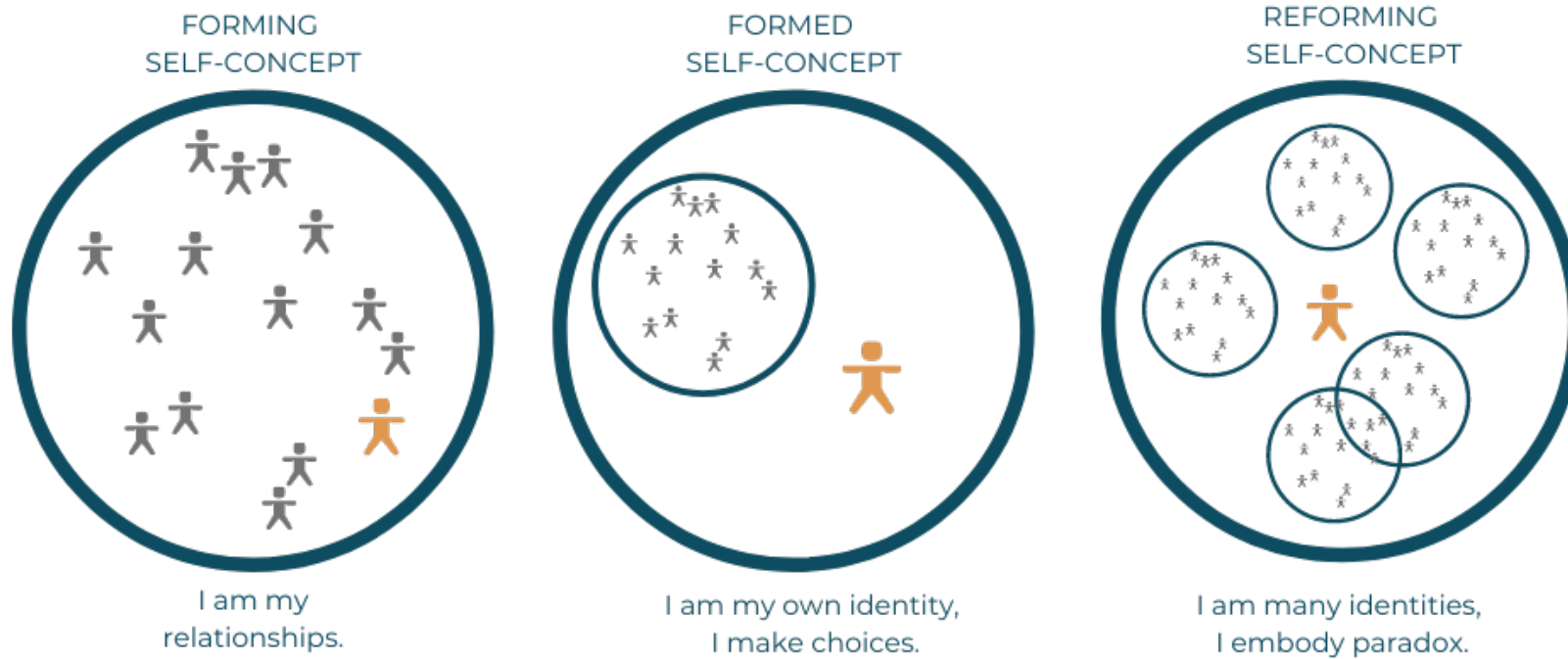
The Self-belief Coaching Developmental Model is a three-stage model rooted in the experiences of our clients with self-doubt.

The self-concept is our client's unique and personal relationship with their self-doubt, self-belief, self-acceptance, self-worth and self-trust.

There are three stages in this model: Forming Self-concept, Formed Self-concept and Reforming Self-concept.

The Self-belief Coaching Developmental Model has been adapted from Bachkirova (2013).

The Self-belief Coaching Developmental Model



	FORMING SELF-CONCEPT	FORMED SELF-CONCEPT	REFORMING SELF-CONCEPT
Self-concept at this Stage:	Higher dependency on others for a sense of self. External rules tend to be internalised and followed. Exhibit socially expected behaviour in relationships to preserve belonging. May see an emerging ability to self-reflect and question. Seeking certainty.	Sense of self is formed ('this is me; this is not me'). Capacity to choose independently of others and take ownership for choices. Personal goals and success measured by internal standards. Self-reliance – feel resourced to cope with life. Value differences of others. Likely self-deception (denial of qualities and traits the client wishes they didn't have). Seeking authenticity.	Sense of self is open to change. High tolerance for ambiguity, contradiction and paradoxes both within self-concept and in conflicts with others. Harmony between beliefs, values and action. Appreciation of complexity. Respect autonomy of others even when values oppose. Seeking meaning.
Population:	60% of Adults	35% of Adults	<5% of Adults
Likely Coaching focus:	Coaching towards healthy sense of self.	Coaching the self-concept to expand.	Coaching beyond the self to here and now authenticity.

	FORMING SELF-CONCEPT	FORMED SELF-CONCEPT	REFORMING SELF-CONCEPT
How Self-doubt can present at this Stage:	Inability to make decisions in situations where there is no clear 'right' choice. Often find it difficult to take responsibility for the consequences of actions. Likely to struggle with being singled out, visible, relied on. Lack of boundaries inability to say 'no.' Difficulty with identifying needs, preferences, opinions and ideas. Psychological risk is in the driver's seat.	How to build relationships without losing your sense of identity? Experience of psychological risks leads to internal conflict e.g.: drive for success versus underlying fear of failure. Personal choices can lead to constructive or destructive results. May be aware of risks, but struggle to take action. Protection of self-concept is in the driver's seat.	Dissatisfaction with life in spite of achievements. Internal conflict for competing goals. Difficulty initiating a significant change. Dealing with personal illusions and self-deception. Struggle to take a clear stand with competing ideologies/multiple perspectives. Grief/loss at realisation protection is incompatible with growth edges.
Risks for Coaches:	Coach may be frustrated by the client worldview. Desire to 'push' for development before the client is ready.	Coach and client may share aspects of self-doubt - can make it difficult to hold 'psychological spaciousness' for the client to evolve.	When the coach is not at this Stage, the client may not feel sufficiently challenged or supported.

THE LIMITS OF DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

While developmental stages can help us to understand our client's perception of themselves and the world, they are limited.

It is quite difficult to identify with any precision the developmental Stage that anyone is resting in. Development is messy and tends to unfold at an inconsistent pace across different lines (cognitive, emotional, moral, etc.) for each person. This means that someone could be, for example, at one Stage intellectually, another morally and somewhere else emotionally.

Developmental theory is also quite 'heady' – beliefs and behaviours tend to dominate. My research into self-doubt was a phenomenological enquiry (nb: this is the fanciest word we will use during the programme!). Phenomenology is interested in more than just our intellectual or cognitive sense-making; it's about a holistic experience – including the senses, the body, the mystical and the shared or collective experience.

Probably because these elements are so difficult to quantify at scale, developmental theory has largely ignored such things.

BEING A DEVELOPMENTALLY MINDED COACH

I believe that being developmentally minded or having at least a curiosity about psychological development, adds another dimension to the spectrum of psychological diversity we face in our client work.

Developmental themes - what clients bring for coaching – help us to see beyond the client's immediate goals, to better understanding the challenges they face and the root causes of such challenges.

Having a developmentally minded approach can help us to listen in a deeper way and to be more present to the gap between our client's self-doubt and self-belief.

The self-concept of the coach matters here. Your ability to hold complexity – including opposing values, and the way that you make meaning – is critical to your coaching presence.

Understanding your developmental edges can help to deepen and expand your self-concept.

BEYOND THE THREE MAIN STAGES: TRANSFORMING SELF-CONCEPT

Several developmental theories provide significant evidence for at least one more level – what I've termed the 'Transforming Self-Concept'.

The common feature of this Stage referred to by various researchers, is that it seems to include a spiritual dimension. This includes a dis-identification with our self-concept, and often refers to experiences of enlightenment.

The opportunity of researching those with a Transforming Self-concept is limited by the proportion of people (believed to be less than 1% of the adult population) who seem to be demonstrating capacities to hold this level of complexity.

Consequently, this developmental Stage is much less understood though research into transpersonal psychology offers us some insight.

Expanding the client's Self-concept

Our aim as Self-belief Coaches is to help our clients to heal the root causes of their self-doubt and to cultivate their inner resources of self-belief, self-acceptance, self-worth, and self-trust.

Developmental Psychology offers us a framework for this expansion of the client's self-concept.

Using a developmental lens, we can see that an expanded self-concept doesn't come from becoming more skilled, knowledgeable, or informed (adding information and techniques to the 'container' of the mind).

Instead, it's about *transforming* our self-concept — changing the way we know and understand ourselves and the world (changing the form of our 'container').

Transforming our self-concept is a "personal Copernican shift".

SCIENCE FACT SEGUE: Prior to Copernicus we thought the earth was the centre of the solar system. Then Copernicus came along and showed that in fact, the sun is at the centre. So, while nothing external changed, our entire conception and perception of the world was transformed.

As Self-belief Coaches, we help our clients make sense of their unique and wondrous container – how they understand themselves and the world – to support them to expand their Self-concept.

Let's look at some of the ideas that help us do this.

THE SUBJECT-OBJECT SHIFT

Kegan's Subject-Object theory is a cracking concept to know!

This is based on the premise that the more in of our lives we see as 'Object' the more clearly, we can see the world, ourselves and the people in it. This is how we start to expand our self-concept.

- **Subject ("I AM")** — Aspects of our self-concept we are attached to. It can be difficult to reflect on or take an objective look at. They include personality traits, assumptions about the way the world works, behaviours, emotions, etc.

- **Object ("I HAVE")** — Aspects of our self-concept we can detach ourselves from. We can look at, reflect upon, engage, control and connect to something else.

The Subject-Object Shift helps our clients to make this crucial distinction i.e. I am not my feelings, emotions, past or beliefs, I have feelings, beliefs, emotions.

This is about loving detachment - the act of seeing the things we believe are intrinsic to who we are as objective ideas – often learned behaviours or long-standing beliefs – that we can choose to change.

We change what we know to be true, and we can change our entire concept of who we know ourselves to be.

A SELF-CONCEPT OF PARTS

Therapeutic traditions such as Internal Family Systems, Voice Dialogue Work, Shadow Work and Psychosynthesis offer us a conceptualisation of the self as many interconnected mini-selves or parts.

One of the most fun descriptions of this idea comes from Claxton (1994), who describes our self-concept as a **'discotheque of octopuses'**:
'...some are awake, some are asleep most of the time. Those who are awake can tickle others to make them awake., When some of them receive impulses from outside through their dancing, they transfer this to others who stimulate action. But no single octopus is sovereign. When they are mingling at the disco, each to varying degrees of involvement, the self can perform many different functions.'

Framing the self in this way is consistent with developmental theories in that different parts of our Self-concept are at different developmental stages at the same time.

It is helpful for clients to see that their 'self' that engages with the world is multiple, and every 'part' has a purpose. Knowing about the multiplicity of the self allows better adjustment to different roles, circumstances and life changes.

We can support our clients to expand their self-concept in manageable ways. By meeting parts of their self-concept, they can see that they have always had inner resources that may have been lying dormant or just outside of their consciousness.

Clients become curious about their own complexity – as they feel safe, they are able to see parts that are hurt or that they may worry can hurt them.

The core 'parts' that we support our clients to develop:

- The Protector (self-doubt)
- Sovereign (self-belief)
- Lover (self-acceptance)
- Warrior (self-worth)
- Sage (self-trust)
- Healthy Adult Self (internalised healthy adult)

We can also help our clients to notice other unique and personal 'parts' that belong to them.

We'll return to this idea in Module 3 – Trauma Informed Coaching and as we begin to explore Self-belief Coaching Practices.

THE SUBJECT-OBJECT SHIFT IN PRACTICE:

	FORMING SELF-CONCEPT	FORMED SELF-CONCEPT	REFORMING SELF-CONCEPT
Subject-Object Shift:	Subject: I AM my interpersonal relationships. Object: I HAVE interpersonal relationships	Subject: I AM my own identity and ideology. Object: I HAVE my own identity and ideology.	Subject: I AM. Object: I HAVE needs, interests & desires.
Self-concept shift:	We experience ourselves as a function of how others experience us. We take an external view of our ourselves "They'll think I look selfish" and make it part of our internal experience "I am selfish".	We understand that we are a person, with thoughts, feelings and beliefs that are independent from the standards and expectations of our environment. We can distinguish the opinions of others from our own. We are rooted with who we are and are not — "this is the kind of person I am, this is what I stand for".	Our sense of self is not tied to particular identities or roles but is continuously created. We can not only question external authority, but also question our own. We recognise that our identity is limited by circumstances in life that will continuously change, and our identity needs to change with it.

DEVELOPING A SELF-CONCEPT OF PARTS

	FORMING SELF-CONCEPT	FORMED SELF-CONCEPT	REFORMING SELF-CONCEPT
Aims for Coaching the multiplicity of Selves	To see the logic and value of multiplicity Get to know The Protector part. Highlight helpful and productive parts (Sovereign, Lover, Warrior, Sage). Being to internalise an 'inner coach' part.	To create a functional 'team of parts' rather than being used by them. Support clients in experimenting with different models of who they can be. Gentle challenge if you see identification with only helpful and productive parts.	Exploring the values represented in mini-selves and how they manifest themselves in action. Being open to parts from an earlier layer springing into action. Being open to new and emerging parts.
Signs of progress for this Stage	The emergence of (likely highly populated) organised and logical identity centre, in which the voice of the client matters more than the voices of various outside influences.	The expansion of the identity centre to explore parts of the self that may live in shadow because they threaten the Self-concept. Emerging integration of parts.	Willing to explore conflict between parts to integrate (and reintegrate) all parts. Relaxation about the number of contradictory parts.

CREATING 'PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACIOUSNESS' FOR DEVELOPMENT

	FORMING SELF-CONCEPT	FORMED SELF-CONCEPT	REFORMING SELF-CONCEPT
Knowing yourself: awareness and humility	Client is curious about who they are, what they think, what they want and why. Able to practice: "what do I want?" versus "what do other people want from me?"	Client is willing to question the limits of their perspective. Developing the ability to think critically about ideas, beliefs, loyalties from any external 'authority'.	Client is willing to embrace contradictions and paradox of their personality. Less attached to a fixed identity.
Sharing yourself: finding at least one source of emotional safety	Client experiments with articulating their ideas, preferences, and opinions to the people they care about. Willing to reveal aspects of themselves they may have kept hidden, owning their stories.	Client is willing to surface conflict to construct more authentic relationships. Creates boundaries to take care of themselves. Willing to take risks to develop healthy intimacy, trust and vulnerability.	Client is willing to allow themselves to be known. Accept they may not be understood or may feel lonely. Finding emotional safety in evolving and paradoxical, contradictory self.
Honouring yourself: promises and commitments, supportive habits	Client is willing to make and keep promises to themselves. To accept the consequences of their choices.	Acts from intrinsic motivations (what we value or give meaning to) rather than extrinsic motivations (status, power, resources).	Willingness for identity to be changed by the process of honouring promises, commitments, and habits.

References

Bachkirova, T. (2011). *Developmental Coaching: Working with the Self*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2008) *Three Elements of Self-authorship*. Journal of college Student Development, Vol 49: No: 4.

Berger, J. & Fitzgerald, C. (2002) Leadership and Complexity of Mind: The Role of Executive Coaching in Fitzgerald, C. & Berger, J. (Eds) *Executive Coaching: Practices & Perspectives*, Palo Alto: Davies-Black Publishing.

Bridges, W. (1980). *Transitions: making sense of life's changes*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Claxton, G. (1994) *Noises from the Darkroom*, London: Aquarian.

Holmes, T. (2007) *Parts Work: An illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life*. Winged Heart Press: Kalamazoo.

Kegan, R. (2013) *The Further Reaches of Adult Development*. Presentation at Royal Society of the Arts
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoasM4cCHBc>

Schwartz, R. + Sweezy, M. (2020) *Internal Family Systems Therapy*. The Guilford Press: New York.

Weiss, B. (2013) *Self-therapy Workbook: An exercise book for the IFS Process*. Pattern System Books: Larkspur CA.

Coaches Rising Podcast:

E32: Jennifer Garvey Berger on adult development:

<https://www.coachesrising.com/podcast/uncovering-the-deep-principles-of-change/>

E62: Internal Family Systems and Coaching with Richard Schwartz

<https://www.coachesrising.com/podcast/internal-family-systems-and-coaching/>