



**apacVOICE**

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIA PACIFIC ALLIANCE OF COACHES

# Change & Transition

VOL. 11.1 II JANUARY 2026

**APAC Voice** is a digital publication of APAC, published quarterly and distributed through email.  
It is also available on the [APAC Website](#).

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# President's Note



Dear APAC Community,

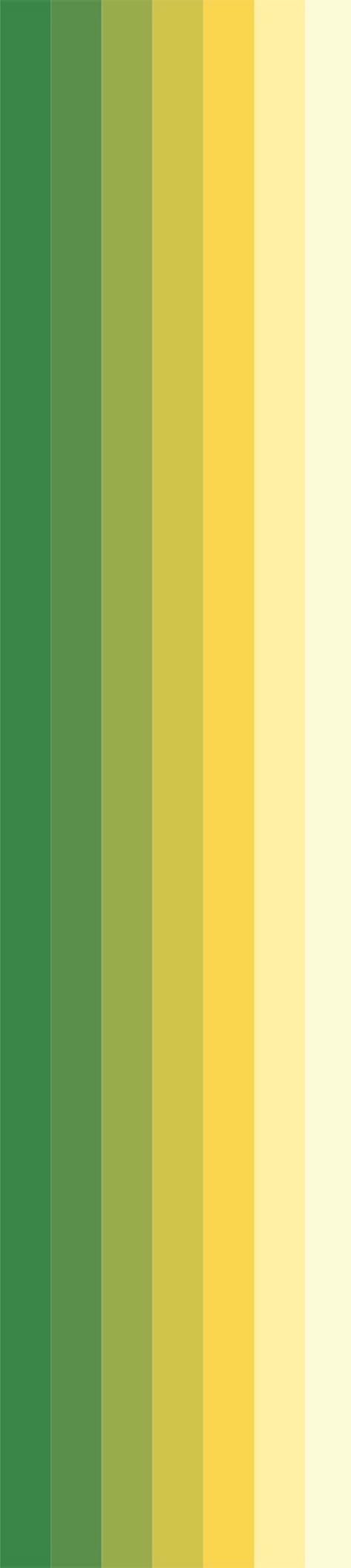
As we welcome a brand-new year, I want to extend my heartfelt wishes to each of you. May the months ahead bring renewal, clarity, and the courage to step into the possibilities that await. In a world that continues to shift at remarkable speed, our work as coaches has never been more vital, or more deeply needed.

This quarter, our newsletter explores the theme **Change & Transition**, a topic that sits at the very heart of coaching. While change is often external, situational, and immediate, transition is the inner psychological process that allows people to make sense of change, integrate it, and ultimately grow from it. Change can happen in a moment; transition unfolds over time. As coaches, we are often the companions who help individuals and teams navigate that inner terrain with awareness, compassion, and agency.

We are living through a period of profound global transformation shaped by geopolitical shifts, technological acceleration, the rise of AI, and evolving social expectations. These forces create waves of change that touch every organisation, community, and individual. At the same time, many people are experiencing deeply personal transitions: career shifts, identity evolution, family changes, and an ongoing search for meaning and stability in uncertain times. Change today is swift, often disruptive, and increasingly complex.

Coaching sits at the intersection of these realities. Our ability to support clients through both the outer change and the inner transition is what enables sustainable transformation. This work requires courage, time, and care. It calls us to look beyond the mechanics of change and attend to the emotional, psychological, and relational landscapes that shape how people truly move from one chapter to the next.

At the heart of APAC is a commitment to contribution and connection. As a community of coaches, we are united not only by our practice, but by a shared intention to serve with integrity, generosity, and impact. I invite each of you to reflect on how you



might extend your presence and participation, so that our collective work continues to support individuals, organisations, and communities navigating times of transition.

As we step into this new year together, may we continue to embody the essence of transition — meeting uncertainty with presence, and welcoming new beginnings with hope and intention. This is about living fully and consciously: embracing growth, fostering deep connection, and creating meaning through the choices we make each day.

Thank you for the work you do, the heart you bring, and the difference you make.

Warmest wishes,

*Suyin Ong*

**SUYIN ONG**

President, Asia Pacific Alliance of Coaches (APAC)

# From the Editor



Change is often visible and immediate. Transition is quieter, slower, and far more personal.

In my work across leadership development, coaching, and group relations, I repeatedly encounter this gap between what changes around us and what takes time to shift within us. Roles evolve, systems are redesigned, and expectations move quickly, yet the human experience of letting go, re-orienting, and becoming rarely follows the same pace. This tension between speed and sense-making is where much of today's leadership and coaching work now lives.

This issue of **APAC Voice** invites you to pause and explore that in-between space — the lived experience of transition.

The issue unfolds in a deliberate arc.

We begin by examining **what truly blocks change**, looking beneath surface resistance to the identity, meaning, and psychological dynamics that shape how people respond to disruption. From there, we move into **the transition journey itself**, exploring endings, liminal spaces, and new beginnings through established frameworks as well as cultural and aesthetic lenses.

The middle of the issue turns toward **living through transition**, where personal narratives and reflective pieces illuminate how change is experienced in the body, in identity, and in relationship. These contributions remind us that transition is not merely a concept, but a deeply human process.

We then shift into **practices for navigating change**, offering guided reflections, being-centred approaches, and practical tools that support coaches and leaders working amid uncertainty. The issue closes with reflections for practitioners, inviting ethical presence, depth, and care when accompanying others through periods of transition.

Not all pieces take the same form, and that is intentional. Transition is not a linear process, nor is learning. Some articles invite thinking, others invite feeling, and some invite you to slow

down and reflect. Together, they mirror the many ways individuals and systems grapple with uncertainty, loss, and possibility during times of change.

As you move through this issue, you may recognise moments from your own leadership, coaching, or life experiences — times when change happened quickly, but something inside needed more time. It is my hope that these voices offer not only insight, but companionship, perspective, and permission to attend to the human work of transition with greater care and curiosity.

We invite you to read gently, pause where needed, and trust that meaning often emerges not through urgency, but through attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonali Bhattacharya".

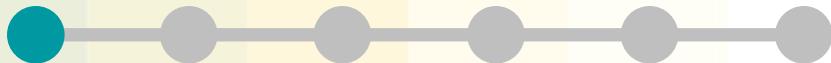
**SONALI BHATTACHARYA**

Editor & PR Chair

Asia Pacific Alliance of Coaches (APAC)

## Section 1

# Core Framing: What Really Blocks Change



# The Greatest Block to Transformation: Coaching “The Who” To Ensure Progress and Growth

by Marcia Reynolds, PsyD, MCC

Throughout your days, our brains rely on the past to give meaning and direction to the moment. You also define yourself based on past experiences. Your current but old self-concept gives you a sense of stability and keeps you stuck.

Even if you are courageous, if you are hoping to experience personal growth, if the changes threaten your identity – how you define yourself – you are likely to rationalize ways to avoid the transformation you desire.

Maja Djikic, author of *The Possible Self*, said, “Who we believe we are is often the enemy of who we want to become.”

Psychologist Dan McAdams of Northwestern University says old goals and self-perception are the “core planks of a life narrative” that gives you a false sense of security. Behavioral patterns become entrenched even when our stories do not support our best interests or desires.

Rationalizations for choices and actions derail



the possibility of making desired transformations.

## Transformation: How Coaching Can Transform One’s Self-Concept

It is difficult for most humans to start on the journey of self-transformation on their own even when they know the reasons for staying stuck are unsupported rationalizations. Self-reflection does not usually go beyond the boundaries of the stories holding perceptions of reality and identity in place.

The brain prefers the certainty of self-preservation over the possible discomfort of self-actualization.

One of the most powerful applications of coaching is using our skills to override our

clients' protective brain. When we talk about coaching "the who," we mean we are coaching their identity.

Identity-based coaching shifts and expands both the clients' perceptions of situations and how they see themselves in relation to their challenges.

Yet, timing for adequately coaching identity is critical to the process. The coach must spend time clarifying how clients see their situation to ensure there is a shared understanding of the problem and the desired outcome. This time, done with genuine care and skillful reflection, also establishes safety and trust.

Then, after connecting and clarifying perceptions of the problem and the desired outcome, is the time to explore WHO the client is being in the image of desired outcome before exploring WHO they think they are today.

Early in my career, I saw myself as the Warrior who could fix everything. I was hired for my experience and knowledge around changing organizational cultures. However, as a small woman in a room of large men, I had to have a powerful voice to be heard and respected. It worked, until it didn't.

The higher I rose in leadership, the more conflicts I encountered. When reviewing my performance, my boss told me I had earned my seat at the leadership table but I would lose it if I didn't quit pushing people so hard. He said, "Instead of forcing people to do what you want, can you inspire them to see what you see?"

Realizing my resistance could keep me from getting what I wanted, I asked a professional I had worked with to explore how I could change my behavior. She helped me define myself based on what I most liked to do with others. I liked sharing pictures of what was possible in the future. I enjoyed engaging everyone to talk about how we could make this happen. I then visioned myself being the inspiring visionary in my leadership meetings.

*"Instead of forcing people to do what you want, can you inspire them to see what you see?"*

I had forgotten this part of me. I set my intention to share inspiring visions instead of wielding a sword to achieve the results of changes we hoped to make.

Consider adopting the following process for coaching the Who, simplifying the process in your sessions if all the steps are not needed:

1. Looking at a current challenge, consider what it would look like if you could change or create a situation where the challenge was resolved. Take any doubts out of your description. Use your imagination to override your disbelief.
2. Looking at your envisioned desire, describe who you see yourself being in this

situation. How are you showing up? When looking at this vision, who are you at your best? How do you think, act, and feel? What values are you honoring? Envision yourself feeling fulfilled and proud.

3. Start by naming the role you hold, such as a leader, researcher, team member, or parent. Then add an adjective such as creative, decisive, purposeful, or wise. Add one more adjective describing how you feel, such as calm, courageous, proud, compassionate, or even “being totally myself.”
4. Now go back to how you define yourself today. Start by naming your role in the situation you are exploring. Add an adjective, such as newest, youngest, most experienced, or most knowledgeable. Then add an adjective that describes how you feel, such as clueless, angry, resigned, excited, or scared.
5. As you compare who you are today with who you can become, what are you willing to start doing to begin your transformation? Are there any imagined shoulds, fears, or real circumstances you believe are holding your current identity intact? Are you afraid of judgement or rejection? What rules are you willing to break or beliefs can you release so you can take steps to try out the new identity you want to live into?
6. What have you learned is most important to you and your future that is worth it to you to move forward even if you are afraid to create a broader self-concept? If you can’t start shifting today, can you

determine when beginning to make this shift is possible?

Phoebe Eng, author of *Warrior Lessons: An Asian American Woman’s Journey into Power*, said, “Taking risks is the process of peeling back the layers of what you are, to be who you want to be.” To ensure transformation occurs, coach your clients to imagine who they can become to achieve their desires.

*“What rules are you willing to break or beliefs can you release so you can take steps to try out the new identity you want to live into?”*



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**Marcia Reynolds, PsyD, MCC** is a Master Certified Coach and Neuroplastician known for helping leaders and coaches create conversations that expand thinking, perceive new possibilities, and commit to meaningful change. She has worked in 47 countries, is a former global president of the ICF, a member of their Circle of Distinction and given an Impact Award for supporting AEON Vietnam to develop a coaching culture. She is the author of 6 books, including two international bestsellers. She was a Keynote Speaker at the APAC2025 Coaching Conference in Kuching, Malaysia.



# Change & Transition: A Being-Centred Perspective

by Lucy Faulconer, PCC

Change is everywhere.

In organisations, in relationships, in markets, in our own inner lives. Some changes arrive by choice, others by force. Some feel exciting and full of possibility; others feel disorienting, heavy, or even threatening. Working with our global community of coaches at Being Profile®, we sit alongside people precisely at these edges, moments where what *was* no longer fits, and what *will be* is not yet clear.

Yet one of the most common confusions I see is the tendency to treat change and transition as the same thing.

From an ontological perspective, they are not.

Ontology, simply put, is the study of Being and Reality, it explores how we experience ourselves, others, and engage with the world.

## Change Is External. Transition Is Ontological.

Change refers to something observable and external: a restructure, a new role, the end of a relationship, a health diagnosis, a strategic pivot. It is often clear *what* has changed.

Transition, however, is the internal, lived experience of that change. It is how we make sense of what is happening, how we orient ourselves to the new reality, and ultimately who we are becoming in the process.

Two people can experience the same change and live through entirely different transitions.

This is where the Being Framework, developed by Ashkan Tashvir, becomes particularly powerful.

## Being Shapes How We Meet Change

The Being Framework invites us to look

beyond behaviour and mindset, and instead explore *how we are being* in the face of what is happening. Our way of being, expressed through our emotions, thoughts, decisions, language, and sense of self fundamentally shapes our experience of transition.

When change occurs, we don't respond directly to the event itself. We respond from our Being.

Are we being defensive or curious?  
Contracted or open? Resigned or engaged?  
Certain or tentative? Reacting or responding?

Often, before we can clearly articulate what is happening, we are already interpreting the change through familiar meanings, stories, and concerns, what Ashkan Tashvir terms, our Metacontent. These interpretations shape how the transition is lived, often outside of conscious awareness.

From an ontological lens, transition is not something to *get through* as quickly as possible. It is something to *be with*, because it is in transition that shifts in meaning, our sense of self, and possibilities occur.

## The Hidden Cost of Skipping Transition

In many environments, particularly high-performance cultures, there is an unspoken expectation to "move on quickly." We update the org chart, announce the new strategy, or mentally decide that we should be over it by now.

But when transition is rushed or bypassed, it tends to resurface later, often as

disengagement, resistance, burnout, or a loss of trust.

From a Being perspective, this happens because parts of ourselves have not yet been integrated into the new reality. Something essential has not been acknowledged, grieved, or re-authored.

Change may be complete.

Transition may not be.

## Common Ways of Being in Transition

Through our work with the Being Framework, we often notice familiar ways of being that show up during transition. These are not traits or diagnoses, but patterns of interpretation and orientation that shape experience.

For example:

- **Being in control:** a strong need for certainty and predictability, where planning and managing become primary ways of reducing uncertainty.
- **Being resigned:** an orientation where possibility narrows and the future feels largely predetermined.
- **Being overwhelmed:** a sense that there is too much to process at once, making it difficult to find coherence or direction.
- **Being curious:** an openness to new awareness and not-yet-knowing, allowing new distinctions and possibilities to emerge.

None of these ways of being are right or

wrong. Each is a meaningful response to how the situation is being interpreted. What matters is whether the current way of being is *opening* or *constraining* what becomes possible in the transition.

Awareness is the first leverage point.

## Transition as a Space of Re-Authoring

One of the most overlooked aspects of transition is that it is not only about adapting to a new situation, but also about renegotiating identity. In transition, identity becomes unstable, not as a problem to solve, but as a necessary opening for new ways of being to emerge.

Questions often sit quietly underneath the surface:

- Who am I now that this has changed?
- What is being asked of me that wasn't before?
- What do I need to let go of?
- How do I need to be?

From an ontological perspective, transition is a space where our habitual ways of being are interrupted. While uncomfortable, this interruption also creates possibility. It gives us access to new distinctions, new choices, and new ways of showing up.

This is why transition can feel destabilising and generative at the same time.

## The Coach's Role: Creating Space for Being

As coaches, our value during times of

transition is not in providing answers or accelerating outcomes. It lies in our capacity to create space — space for reflection, sense-making, and embodied awareness.

Rather than asking only "*What's the plan?*" we might also inquire:

- How are you making sense of what is changing?
- What feels most uncertain or unsettled right now?
- What assumptions are shaping how you see this situation?
- Who are you needing to be as this transition unfolds?

These kinds of questions invite clients to slow down just enough to notice how meaning is being constructed. In doing so, they begin to relate to the transition differently — not as something happening *to* them, but as something they are actively participating in through their interpretations and choices.

## An Invitation to Reflect

As you read this, you may already have a change in mind, personal or professional, that you are currently navigating.

You might like to pause and reflect:

- What has changed recently in my world?
- How am I currently making sense of this transition?
- What way of being am I bringing to it, often without noticing?
- What alternative interpretations or orientations might also be available?

There is no need to rush to an answer.

Transition unfolds at its own pace.

From a Being perspective, change is inevitable. Transition is where meaning is made.

And when we are willing to meet transition with awareness, compassion, and curiosity, it becomes not just something we endure, but a powerful context for growth and becoming.



**Lucy Faulconer, PCC**, has over 15 years of experience as a coach, senior management consultant, and team dynamics facilitator. She partners with leadership teams of organisations globally to develop their vision, and enhance leadership, performance, and resilience. As the General Manager of Being Profile, Lucy leads a global community of coaches who use the Being Framework to drive transformation at both individual and organisational levels. She has trained hundreds of coaches in this framework, empowering them to support profound shifts with their clients across 53 countries. Lucy has worked with global brands across various industries, applying her expertise to help them achieve lasting change and sustainable growth. She holds a degree in Psychology from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and is certified as an Ontological Coach by the Newfield Network (Chile) and the Institute of Executive Coaching and Leadership (IECL) (Australia). Lucy is also a PCC-level coach certified by the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

## Section 2

# The Transition Journey: From Endings to Beginnings



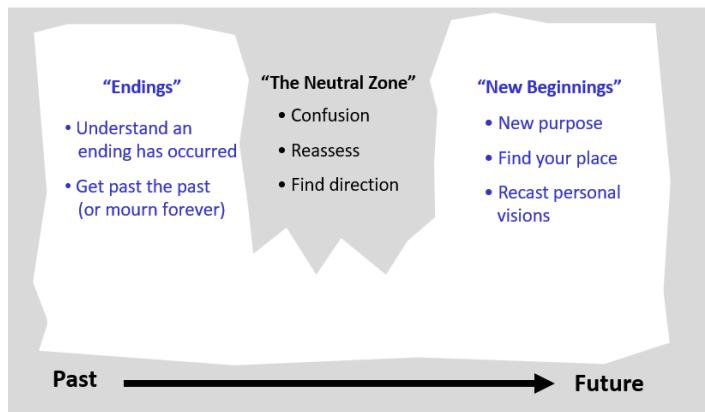


# Bridges Across Troubled Waters: The Art of Managing Transitions

by Douglas O'Loughlin, PhD

If you're wondering about the title, William Bridges is widely regarded as the guru of transitions, and with a surname like Bridges, doesn't it seem meant to be that he would spend his life supporting people through crossings?

Below is an illustration of his Transition Model, showing the three phases, "Endings", The Neutral Zone", and "New Beginnings":



Bridges model looks at the psychological experience people go through during change, with transitions in both personal and organisational life. Let's look at the three phases with examples for each phase, which I hope provide you with ideas for yourself and others:

## Endings

Depending on the nature of change, people may experience a loss of identity, disrupted routines, and a mix of emotions. Bridges says this is normal, and that change isn't just about what's new, it's about acknowledging losses so people gain a sense of closure. Closure doesn't erase memories or eliminate grief, but it helps make space for what comes next.

What Endings Look Like in Practice:

- Symbolic Ending: When I was in IT, a 50-person project team was brought together, and we were told that the funding for the project had been cut. The senior leader gave each of us a mini toilet bowl with the project's name on it, and we 'flushed' the project together. At the time, it felt like a fun thing to do, in hindsight it was very meaningful.

*“Closure doesn’t erase memories or eliminate grief, but it helps make space for what comes next.”*

- Collective Goodbye: When a friend's organisation's closed its Singapore office, he and his colleagues spent an evening moving room to room sharing their favourite memories. When they felt ready to move, they turned off the lights and went to the next room. There were many

tears, such a purposeful closure to the office.

- Even Positive Changes have Endings: Something like a promotion may bring excitement, but also some fear, of increased responsibilities, lost connections and familiar routines. It is helpful to honor the endings and emotions.

As Coaches/Consultants: we remind others that “people don’t resist change”, they sometimes require time to process losses. We can support them to honor endings.

## Neutral Zone

The old has gone, but the new isn't in place yet. Bridges says that this phase can be the most uncomfortable, as it can feel confusing and disorienting, and yet it's also where new ways of thinking can emerge. Clear, frequent communication matters here, especially with reassurance that confusion is normal.

What the Neutral Zone can look like in practice:

- Time to Experiment: During a major transformation in a bank, the country's CEO told the senior leaders they had a full year to experiment, learn, ask questions, and make suggestions. For that year, it was about learning, then Performance will take front and center again.
- Communicating Honestly: I have heard senior leaders say, “we will go through this together” while also acknowledging the intensity of the changes. They understood that some people might not be up for the

challenge, and told everyone that there were resources available for those who weren't up for the journey ahead.

- Journeying Symbolically: Synapxe is the organisation that provides IT services for Singapore's healthcare system, including the Health Hub app. About 80 staff, including the most senior leaders, carried signs and posters from their old building and walked 15 kilometres to the new one. It was a physical, collective way to mark the journey from the old to the new.

As Coaches/Consultants: we support people to stay present and curious while they find their footing again as something new is trying to emerge.

## New Beginnings

This is where people start to accept changes and get a clearer sense of purpose. Bridges says this a time to reinforce key messages, model desired behaviours, and celebrate early wins. These help anchor new beginnings and build confidence that they are on the right path.

What New Beginnings Look Like in Practice:

- Meaningful Beginnings: After a merger or re-organisation, start with a simple note to everyone, something like: "Welcome to our new way of working. On your desk, you will find a plant to symbolise new growth, an eraser that shows how we might make mistakes in early days, and a KitKat to remind you to take care for yourself." It's so simple and yet so impactful.

- Team Launches: Team launches are a great way to start a new project or newly-formed team. Teams come together to share individual and collective hopes, co-create group norms, and conduct a pre-mortem to surface potential challenges and strategise how to address them if they were to arise.
- Symbolic Beginnings: In one public sector merger, they held the integration session in the Registry of Marriages, how about that for a symbolic start? Similarly, when the Changi Women's Prison was integrated into a wing of the Men's Prison, the Commander conducted a wedding ceremony, complete with cake, to mark the union. Memorable moments like these help people connect to their new chapter.

As Coaches/Consultants: because beginnings don't automatically sustain themselves, we support others to give the changes an opportunity to take root, and remind leaders to provide reinforcement and visible leadership.

## Endings/New Beginnings of this Piece

Transitions are not linear. An ending doesn't mean everything is fully resolved or the neutral zone is completely cleared. Likewise, a new beginning doesn't mean that it will be all smooth sailing.

Transitions are not limited to major life events or organisational changes. Endings, neutral zones, and new beginnings are woven into our daily life. After all, each day contains its own moments of starting again, uncertainty, and

letting go. The principles of this work invite us to ask: How might we close things more thoughtfully? How might we move through uncertainty with more compassion and curiosity? How might we begin new chapters in a way that sets us up to thrive?

May we learn to design sacred endings, honour our neutral zones, and create new beginnings filled with possibilities.

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## **“My Mom Is a Master of Transitions”**

While I was sharing the Bridges model in a workshop, one participant exclaimed, “my mom is a master of transitions!” Her father was a Singapore Airlines station manager, which meant the family moved to a new city every three years, and her mother handled it so thoughtfully. Before each move, she took the children to their favourite places, hosted small gatherings, and they all shared stories about what those years meant. She helped them savour the ending.

On moving day, the kids locked the front door together, and she reminded them that they could carry their memories with them. When they arrived at the new home, the children opened the door together and their mother welcomed them to their new adventure. She intuitively honoured endings, guided her children through transition and created space for new beginnings. What a masterclass in navigating change!

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**Douglas O'Loughlin, PhD**, is the Principal of The Dao of Thriving and an Associate Consultant with Civil Service College (CSC) after working there as a Senior Principal Consultant. Originally from New York, through a series of serendipitous events he ended up living in Singapore in 1993, and has worked across all sectors and in more than 20 countries. His passion is to support impactful and joyful organisations and communities. He serves a few organisations in various capacities, did a TEDx Singapore talk, and has written numerous articles and blogs, such as *OD for Leaders*. He has also spoken at many conferences, has written two books, *Facilitating Transformation* and *ANDlightenment: Polarity Thinking from Self to Society*, and edited a third, *Creating and Holding Spaces*.

# Managing the Human Side of Change

by Dr. Lim Peng Soon



The world is changing, the pace of change is accelerating, and individuals and organisations are under increasing pressure to adapt. While change initiatives often focus on systems, structures, and strategies, their success ultimately depends on how people experience and navigate change.

Radical change can challenge not only our assumptions about the organisation, but also our sense of identity and competence. It is therefore not surprising that change efforts frequently encounter difficulty. What is often labelled as “resistance to change” deserves closer examination.

## Change Is Not the Same as Transition

While resistance to change is commonly cited as a reason why change initiatives fail, scholars have long questioned whether people truly resist change itself. Schein describes resistance to change as one of the most ubiquitous organisational phenomena, while Ansoff characterises it as a multifaceted dynamic that introduces delays, costs, and instability into strategic change efforts.

William Bridges, author of “Managing Transitions” asserts that change is different from transition. Change, he argues, is situational and external—a new leader, a new restructured organization, or new work processes. Transition, by contrast, is psychological and internal. It is the human process of coming to terms with the

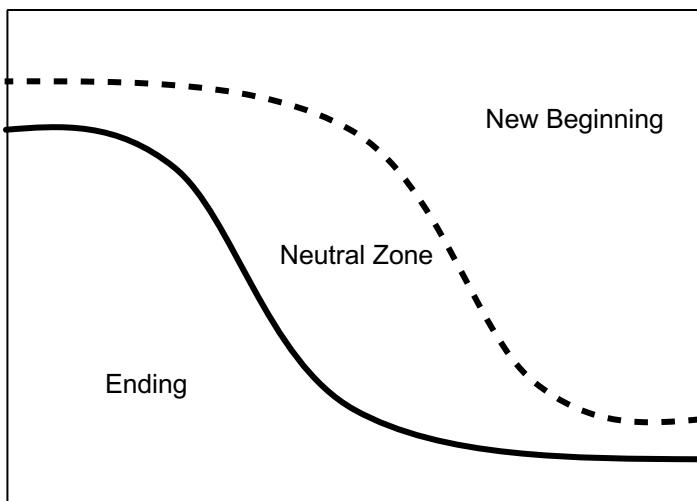
implications of change. As Bridges cautions, unless transition is addressed, change is unlikely to succeed.

## Understanding the Transition Process

A transition is the psychological process by which people affected by a change reorient themselves from what-has-been to what-is going-to-be. According to Bridges, there are three phases' people undergo in a transition:

- **The First Phase, the Ending**
- **The Second Phase, Neutral Zone**
- **The Final Phase, New Beginning**

People resist the transition they undergo. Every transition begins with an ending, and it is often this sense of loss that makes transition particularly difficult. When endings are not acknowledged, people can become stuck, disengaged, or anxious.



Source: Bridges, W. M. (2003). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*, 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA. Perseus Publishing. p. 5.

## Managing the Human Side of Change

Successful change requires attention to both **change management** and **transition management**. While change management focuses on plans, structures, and timelines, transition management attends to the human experience of letting go, navigating uncertainty, and making a new beginning.

Transition management addresses the human side of change by anticipating who will need to let go of what, and by supporting people as they disengage from familiar ways of working. It recognises both the risks and the opportunities of the in-between phase and provides the support needed to move through it. It also ensures that time and resources are set aside to help people establish new beginnings. To do this is to manage transition; to neglect it is to initiate change that may ultimately prove unmanageable.

Today, the costs of **unmanaged transition** in organizations are far more visible and far more damaging. When the human side of change is neglected:

- Organisations lose good people—often the best ones.
- Anxiety undermines teamwork, adaptability, and communication.
- Old problems resurface and unresolved mistrust reappears.
- Stress levels rise, bringing with them higher absenteeism and healthcare costs.

These consequences remind us of an important distinction: people do not resist

change itself; they resist the **transition** they must undergo.

### Change and Transition: A Crucial Distinction

Change	Transition
External	Internal
Situational	Psychological
Event-based	Experience-based

Change happens at the organisational level—through mergers, restructurings, downsizing, or new systems. Transition happens at the human level. People may understand what is changing, yet still struggle internally to make sense of what the change means for them. The role of the change leader, therefore, is not only to manage change, but to attend carefully to the transitions people experience.

## Supporting the Three Phases of Transition

Every transition begins with an **ending**.

During this phase, leaders can help by:

- Identifying who is losing what,
- Marking endings clearly,
- Treating the past with respect, and
- Allowing people to carry valued elements of the old into the new.

Once endings are acknowledged, people enter an **in-between phase**, often referred to as the Neutral Zone. This phase is characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, but it is also a time of potential renewal.

Leaders can support this phase by:

- Recognising that it is normal,
- Resisting the urge to rush people through it, and
- Creating space for learning and revitalisation.

The final phase is the **new beginning**. This is when people begin to feel at home in the new reality. Commitment and energy grow as:

- Hearts and minds come into alignment,
- Anxieties about new learning are reframed as opportunities, and
- Consistency reinforces the new direction (for example, “paperless means paperless”).

## Implications for Leaders and Coaches

When transitions are poorly managed, organisations pay a high price: increased anxiety, reduced collaboration, resurfacing of old conflicts, and the loss of capable people. In today’s environment, the costs of unmanaged transition are simply too great to ignore.

For leaders and coaches, the transition framework offers a practical lens for understanding strong emotional reactions during times of change—whether related to restructuring, role changes, retrenchment, or learning new technologies. Transitions are always accompanied by some form of loss, and the sooner these losses are acknowledged and worked through, the more effectively individuals can move forward.

Managing change alone is not enough.

Managing transition is essential. The ability to attend to the human side of change has become a critical leadership and coaching capability—and one that will remain vital wherever change continues to unfold.

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*Adapted from Bridges, W. M. (2003).  
Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change.*

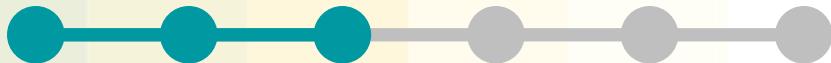


**Dr. Lim Peng Soon** is the President of Learning & Performance Systems. He works in partnership with organizations in their change and transition management initiatives. Dr. holds a doctoral degree in education and human development from The George Washington University. He is certified by William Bridges & Associates to conduct workshops on “Leading the Human Side of Change” for change leaders and change agents in the public and private sectors. Dr. Lim’s LinkedIn profile is found in [www.linkedin.com/in/drlimpengsoon](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drlimpengsoon), and his email address is [pslim@gwu.edu](mailto:pslim@gwu.edu).

# **Section 3**

# **Living Through**

# **Transition**



# “When Change Moves Fast but the Heart Moves Slowly”

by Ina Rizqie Amalia, MCC, ESIA

**Change often arrives abruptly.**

*New expectations.*

*New roles.*

*New systems and*

*New realities.*

Yet through my years working with leaders and teams across Indonesia, one lesson keeps surfacing:

***Change may be fast, but true transition takes time—because it lives in the human heart.***

The real work of transformation happens quietly, in the space between what we leave behind and what we have not yet grown into.

## A Story From 23 Years Ago: When I Stepped Into the Unknown

More than two decades ago—23 years to be exact—I made a decision that altered the course of my life.

At that time, I was thriving in the corporate world. I had built my career in one of the largest global fashion retail companies. The pace was quick, but everything was familiar:



the structure, the metrics, the rhythm of daily business. I understood what success looked like and how to achieve it.

Yet even in the midst of that clarity, something inside me began to shift.

It wasn't dramatic. It wasn't emotional. It was subtle—almost like a faint knock on the door of my awareness.

A quiet feeling that my life was asking a different question. A tug toward a meaning I couldn't name yet.

That inner whisper became harder to ignore. And eventually, I made a move that surprised many people around me—including myself.

***I left the corporate world altogether.***

The **change** happened in a moment: a

resignation letter, a farewell, a new pathway opening.

But the **transition** that followed was a long, uneven and deeply human journey.

## Starting Over: The Years That Taught Me Who I Really Was

Leaving corporate life meant entering a world with no clear map. I moved into academia, then stepped into training, consulting, and eventually coaching and mentoring.

It truly felt like beginning again. There was no job description to follow, no well-defined career ladder, and little certainty about what lay ahead.

Some days I woke up excited and full of purpose. Other days I wondered if I had made a mistake.

It was only later that I realised that I was living in what William Bridges calls the **Neutral Zone** —that uncomfortable, honest space where you are no longer who you were, but not yet who you are becoming (Bridges, *Transitions*, 1991).

It was a season of:

- unlearning,
- wrestling with doubt,
- rebuilding my confidence,
- and slowly discovering a different part of myself.

In that long in-between, something important happened.

I found:

- purpose rooted in meaning,

- courage not tied to a title,
- confidence no longer dependent on external validation,
- and a calling to support human growth—something I never imagined earlier in my life.

This was not simply a career shift. It was a transformation from the inside out.

## Seeing My Story Reflected in the Leaders I Coach

Years later, as I began working closely with leaders across Indonesia, I noticed how often their experiences echoed my own.

On the outside, many leaders appeared ready for change:

- adopting new tools,
- using new language,
- attending transformation workshops,
- following new organisational directions.

Yet internally, many were struggling.

Some moved fast but felt emotionally unsettled. Some delivered results but carried quiet exhaustion. Some looked “updated,” but still held onto old identities.

That was when it became clear:

**Many organizations manage change effectively, far fewer support the inner transition required to make change sustainable.**

People can comply with new processes. But without inner clarity, transformation remains fragile.

## Coaching: A Space for Leaders to Rebuild From Within

This is why I believe so deeply in coaching—because coaching gives people time and space to breathe in the middle of rapid change.

In coaching conversations, I often ask:

- “Which part of you hasn’t caught up with this change yet?”
- “What are you letting go of, even if quietly?”
- “What identity is slowly forming beneath the surface?”
- “What do you need to stay whole while everything moves around you?”

These are simple questions, yet they open doors leaders often avoid.

Because technical change is easy to mandate. But emotional transition must be invited.

And that invitation—the space to explore, integrate, and be honest—is what coaching offers.

## What My Journey—And Theirs—Continues to Teach Me

After 23 years of walking this path myself and accompanying countless leaders through their own transitions, I have learned one thing:

- **Change** shifts our circumstances.
- **Transition** reshapes our identity.
- **Transformation** is the alignment of the two.

We cannot slow down the world around us. But we can deepen the world within us.

We can choose reflection over reaction, meaning over motion, purpose over pressure.

And perhaps most importantly:

**People don’t just need change. They need to understand who they are becoming within that change.**



**Ina Rizqie Amalia, MCC, ESIA** is a professional coach, coach educator, mentor, and supervisor with over 23 years of experience supporting leaders and organizations on their growth journeys. She is the Co-Founder and Program Director of Loop Institute of Coaching (Indonesia), a Master Certified Coach (MCC) with the International Coaching Federation, and an ESIA-EMCC accredited Coach Supervisor. Ina has also served as the APAC Country Ambassador for Indonesia and the 1st President of the ICF Jakarta Charter Chapter. Known for her warm, human-centered approach, she acts as a coaching catalyst, deeply committed to advancing ethical coaching, conscious leadership, and sustainable impact across Indonesia.

# The Aesthetics of Adaptation in Change & Transition: The Power of the Japanese Word *Utsuroi*

by Yukiyo Yamamoto, ACC

When I was first given the theme “*Change & Transition*,” I found myself unexpectedly perplexed. Although the terms are widely used, I realised that I lacked a felt understanding of their depth, particularly when attempting to translate them meaningfully into Japanese. My initial efforts did not fully capture the nuances embedded in these concepts. I therefore returned to first principles, exploring their fundamental meanings, and it was through this reflective process that I began to glimpse the essential

relationship between change and transition. That moment marked the true starting point of my inquiry.

Change refers to external, objective events—a visible replacement of situations, structures, or systems. It is the action or event that disrupts the status quo. Transition, on the other hand, is the internal psychological and emotional process we undergo to adapt to that external change; it is the journey of the heart as people move from old ways to new ones. In



organisational dynamics, this distinction is critical: the change is the event (for example, the merging of two departments), while the transition is the human experience of navigating that merger. In most cases, an external change occurs first, inevitably triggering an often prolonged and internal transition.

As I assimilated this distinction, the Japanese word *utsuroi* spontaneously came to mind. It can be used as a noun (*utsuroi*) to denote the act of shifting, or as a verb (*utsurou*), meaning to move or fade away.

*“[Transition] is the journey of the heart as people move from old ways to new ones.”*

Hearing the four distinct sounds—*u*, *tsu*, *ro*, *i*—in sequence, I was struck by the quiet phonetic beauty of the word itself. Its soft, flowing quality seemed to mirror the very meaning of gentle movement. While this resonance may be influenced by Japanese being my mother tongue, I believe the word’s subtle power extends beyond language alone.

## **The Strength of the Yamato-kotoba *Utsuroi* and Transition**

*Utsuroi* is a *Yamato-kotoba*, an ancient term indigenous to Japan. To grasp its significance, it is helpful to contrast it with the more commonly used Japanese term *iko*, which is

also translated as “transition.” Comparing the two reveals a deeper, often overlooked dimension of the English concept.

*Iko* originates from Sino-Japanese vocabulary (*Kan-go*). It typically refers to planned, administrative, and intentional movement—a formal transfer of responsibility, function, or role. It is most often applied to systems, organisational procedures, and institutional policies, carrying connotations of rationality, objective achievement, and strategic control. Implicit within *iko* is a sense of a clear and defined break from the past.

In contrast, *utsuroi* describes change as gentle, emotional, and often naturally occurring. Its subjects are rarely impersonal structures; rather, they include the human heart, the passing of seasons, and the subtle atmosphere of a place (*fuzei*). The word is deeply imbued with the aesthetics of impermanence (*mujo no bi*), reflecting an acceptance that nothing remains fixed.

*Utsuroi* immediately evokes the image of the slow transition of the four seasons—the gradual shift from the intensity of midsummer to the cooling air of autumn and the quiet anticipation of autumn leaves. This change does not occur abruptly but unfolds through a smooth and continuous gradient. In this sense, *utsuroi* closely mirrors the inner process of transition: ambiguous, unhurried, and rarely linear.

The heart’s journey toward a new reality is seldom a planned or scheduled *iko*. It is not a switch that can be flipped at will. Instead, it is often a messy and uncertain process—one

that involves lingering attachments to the past, moments of disorientation, and the courage required to say farewell to former identities. Such a process calls not for control, but for patience and acceptance.

## **The Aesthetics of Embracing Adaptation and Impermanence**

Transition may be the most challenging internal adaptation we face when confronted with significant external change. In many organisational and business contexts, particularly in the West, transition is frequently treated as a task to be managed efficiently—an *iko*—using timelines, tools, and frameworks. Yet from the perspective of lived experience, transition is far more faithfully captured by *utsuroi*: a non-linear process through which the heart gradually releases the old and grows into the new.

*Utsuroi* seems to walk quietly alongside us during this difficult process of adaptation, offering a sense of solace and understanding. It allows us to perceive the beauty inherent in impermanence and the emotional atmosphere that Japanese culture has long valued. To encounter this word is to be reminded that internal change unfolds in its own time, and that acceptance may be more sustaining than forceful effort.

## ***Utsuroi* in Coaching and Cross-Cultural Understanding**

I find myself wondering what images and metaphors for transition arise in cultures beyond Japan. Given differences in climate, history, and worldview, the language used to

describe inner change must inevitably vary. This curiosity highlights how complex the localisation of universal concepts can be.

This exploration has reinforced for me the importance of alignment and clarity in professional coaching. No matter how carefully a coach seeks to attune to a client, fully sharing the same inner world is never entirely possible. Coaching therefore requires

*“Transition may be the most challenging internal adaptation we face when confronted with significant external change.”*



the capacity to remain present with ambiguity and difference. It is often within these subtle moments of misalignment—shaped by culture, emotion, or personal history—that the most meaningful insights emerge.

From this perspective, the role of the coach is not to fix or hasten transition, but to recognise and honour each client's unique path of *utsuroi*—a gentle, unfolding movement toward what is becoming.



**Yukiyo Yamamoto, ACC**, is a professional coach and the APAC Country Ambassador for Japan. With mixed roots in Japan and Hong Kong and a background in Psychology, she brings over 20 years of multifaceted business experience across International Sales, HR, Corporate Identity (CI), and Brand Development. Growing up between diverse cultures, she embraced the perspective that "what is taken for granted is never absolute." This realization serves as the cornerstone of her identity, leading to a mindfulness-based coaching practice that creates a quiet "Space" to honor the "Unspoken Voice" and the authentic desires within each individual.

# Change and Transition: What Comes After the Blink

by Siew Siew Ng

Change can arrive in an instant. In the coaching world, we see it all the time. One day a client holds a title that defines them, and the next they are left with only their own name and



an unfamiliar future. Overnight, a fire can take away a lifetime of belongings and memories. Within a day, election results can place someone once dismissed into a position of power. Change reminds us that life is unpredictable, immediate, and inevitable.

Transition, however, is a different kind of experience. The days, and sometimes years, that follow change are where the real work of becoming takes place. Self-doubt can cloud clarity. Old routines no longer fit, and new ones feel awkward or fragile. Identity feels unsettled, and discomfort becomes an unwelcome companion. Transition has neither the sharp edges of sudden change nor the reassuring shape of resolution. It is both a borderland and a bridge, inviting patience, presence and gentle curiosity.

We often remind ourselves that “change is inevitable,” yet many of us spend more energy bracing for the change than preparing for the life that unfolds afterward. We forget to ready the part of ourselves that will inhabit the days beyond the change itself. In coaching practice, this is where meaningful work happens. Helping clients step into their humanity after change is different from helping them simply react to it. Coaches can guide clients to notice what has shifted, explore the new contours of daily life and identity, and gently open space for new possibilities to emerge.

Transitions ripple beyond the immediate change, touching routines, relationships, and the rhythm of everyday life. Supporting clients through this time is about helping them find steadiness amid uncertainty, and nurturing

clarity, compassion, and confidence as they settle into the new reality.

Transition is not simply what follows change. It is the space where we learn to live with uncertainty with grace, where compassion for ourselves and others deepens, and where new possibilities quietly take shape. It is the gentle stretch between what was and what will be. This is the territory where coaching matters most.



**Siew Siew Ng** is an ICF-certified coach who partners with individuals and leaders navigating periods of change and transition. Her work focuses on supporting clients to reconnect with themselves, integrate change with inner clarity, and move forward with intention.

## Section 4

# Practices for Navigating Change



# Attention Please: A New Way to Approach New Year Resolutions (Better Than 2025)

by Deenij 'Vicky' Jittanoonta, PCC

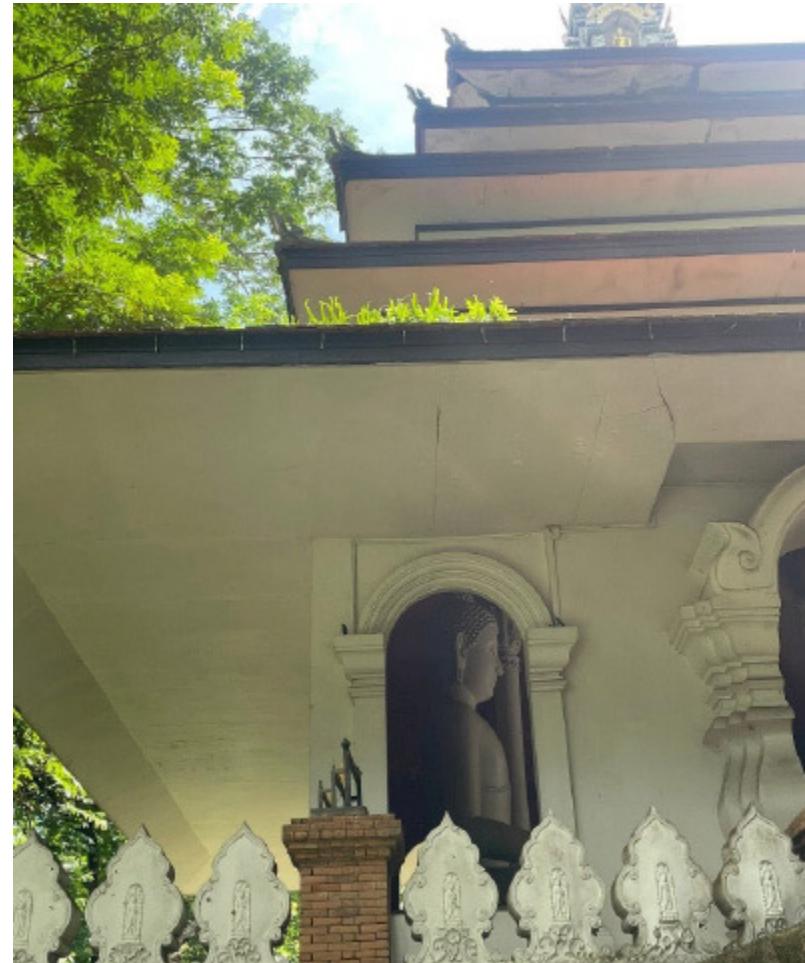
**Happy New Year, and welcome to 2026!**

If you happen to be in Thailand at this time of year, you may hear people greeting one another with “*Sawadee Pee Mai*,” which means *Happy New Year*. It’s a simple phrase, yet it carries a deep sense of hope, renewal, and reflection. For me, it is a gentle reminder to pause and consider what we want to bring into the year ahead.

I’ve always felt that the first week of January holds a unique energy. People are looking forward, dreaming, and imagining a better version of themselves. And yet, so often, that energy fades quickly.

I’m Vicky, a PCC coach and HR consultant with over a decade of experience. At the end of 2025, I stepped into my role as APAC Ambassador from Thailand. This transition prompted me to reflect deeply on how we approach New Year resolutions — not as a list of goals to chase, but as meaningful, actionable, and joyful changes aligned with who we are becoming.

Over the years, I’ve seen many people set



*Wat Pha Lat (temple), Chiangmai Thailand 2025*

ambitious goals, only to abandon them within weeks. What I’ve learned is that sustainable change doesn’t come from willpower alone. It comes from clarity, rhythm, and awareness working together.

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## 1) From Vision to Action: Turning Dreams into Reality

Every meaningful change begins with clarity. Before rushing into the year ahead, pause and ask yourself:

**What do I truly want to change in the next 12 months?**

This is where a vision board can be a powerful tool. More than a collage of images or words, a vision board reflects who you want to

become and what success looks like on your own terms. By intentionally choosing symbols that represent your values and aspirations, you help train your attention toward what truly matters.

Think of a vision board as a personal compass. It doesn't just show you the destination; it reinforces belief that the journey is possible.

For example, if your vision is to *"boost my morning energy,"* the intention may include waking up feeling refreshed, confident, and ready to begin the day with positivity. That clarity alone is powerful — it signals direction.

Yet vision alone is not enough.

This is where an **action board** becomes essential. While the vision shows the destination, the action board lays out the roadmap: daily habits, routines, and small milestones. Continuing the same example, your action board might include waking up 15 minutes earlier, stretching for 10 minutes, practicing five minutes of mindfulness, or taking a short morning walk.

These concrete actions turn aspiration into practice.

Take a moment to reflect:

Which areas of your life remain ideas, and which have a clear path forward?

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## 2) Awareness of Time: Shorten the Horizon, Sharpen Your Focus

Even with clarity and action, many people struggle because goals feel too distant. This is why I appreciate the concept from *The 12 Week Year* by Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington.

Instead of thinking in annual terms, this approach compresses the year into focused 12-week cycles. When goals stretch too far into the future, urgency fades and attention drifts. Shorter horizons naturally sharpen focus and discipline.

Importantly, this method measures success by the quality of actions rather than outcomes alone. Instead of fixating on a result months away, attention stays on consistent habits — such as regular movement, mindful eating, or sufficient rest. Progress becomes visible sooner, reinforcing motivation and confidence.

Short cycles also encourage reflection and adjustment. Life rarely unfolds exactly as planned, and a 12-week rhythm allows for learning and course correction without losing momentum. Over time, this builds a sustainable relationship with change.

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## 3) Joy-Joy Moment: Enjoy the Journey

Even with clarity and discipline, change can feel heavy if it lacks joy. This is why I emphasise what I call the **"Joy-Joy" moment** — moments of full presence, where we are engaged in what we are doing without striving or self-judgment.

Productivity matters, but so does the

experience of being alive along the way.

Growing up in Thailand, I practiced meditation each morning at school. It wasn't about competition or improvement; it was about presence. My father often reminded me, "*Do one thing at a time.*" I didn't fully appreciate this wisdom until I experienced its impact for myself.

Research now confirms what many traditions have long known: while our bodies can multitask, our minds function best when focused on one thing at a time.

When stress or overwhelm arises, gently bring attention back to the body. Notice your posture, the sensation of the chair beneath you, or the rhythm of your breath. These small acts of awareness create calm, focus, and — most importantly — joy.

Ask yourself:

**How can I make today more enjoyable, regardless of what needs to be done?**

That question alone can transform how we experience change.

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## Toward a Purposeful 2026

As we step into 2026, let us embrace change with intention rather than pressure. When clarity of vision, actionable steps, a realistic sense of time, and joyful presence come together, change becomes more humane — and more sustainable.

Celebrate small wins. Learn from missteps.

Stay present to the process.

Your resolutions are not only about what you achieve, but about who you become along the way. May 2026 be a year of growth, connection, and joy — where each step forward contributes to a more purposeful and fulfilling life.



**Deenij 'Vicky' Jittanoonta, PCC**, is the APAC Country Ambassador for Thailand. She is an HR consultant specializing in leadership development and organization system redesign. Working closely with Japanese organizations across APAC, she brings over a decade of experience partnering with multinational leaders to navigate people dynamics and redesign HRM systems for sustainable organizational development. She is an ICF Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with more than 800 coaching hours and has facilitated leadership development for over 50 leaders. Her work blends deep coaching expertise with practical business acumen, focusing on practical solutions for people development and organizational transformation.

# “Change Happens Fast. Transition Takes Courage, Time, and Care.”

by Rye Cruz

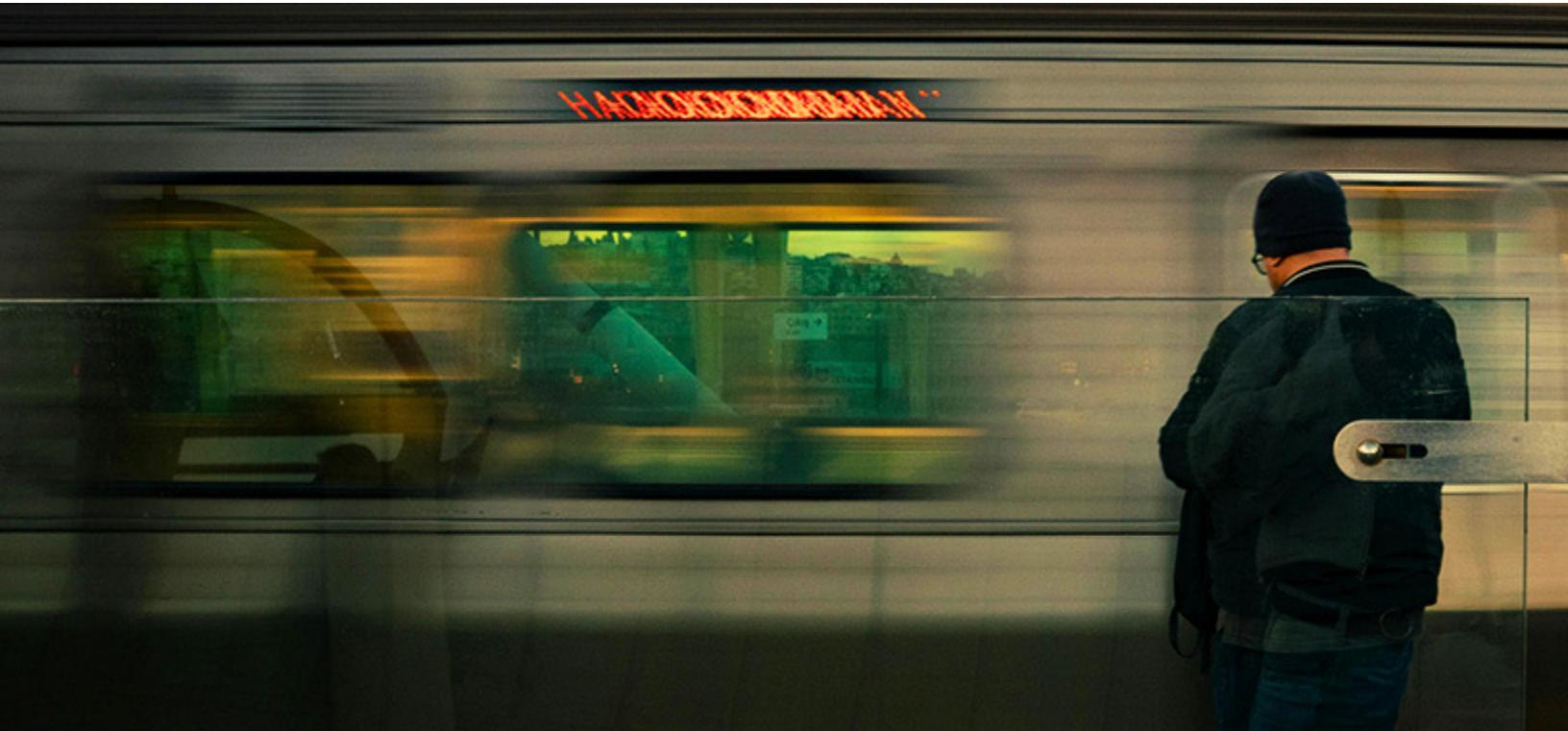
In the fast-moving world of 2026, with AI reshaping entire industries almost overnight, leaders are constantly navigating upheaval. I see that there are clear lines between "change" and "transition" and it's a distinction that can make or break a team.

Change is the external event: the new system rollout, the merger, the pivot to decentralized operations. It happens quickly, often whether people are ready or not.

Transition, though, is the inner process, the slower, messier human side where old identities dissolve and new ones emerge. I call this in between space the "Neutral Zone," a place of discomfort but also real creativity, provided leaders create enough psychological safety for people to experiment and reflect.

To guide teams through this, I use the SPERMAHV model (Spiritual, Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Habits & Vitality), placing particular weight on meaning and healthy habits to build vitality and lasting resilience. For true mental health isn't just avoiding burnout; it's actively cultivating "growth pivots" turning those disruptions into meaningful stepping stones.

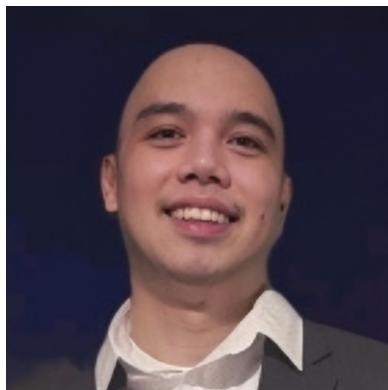
Take a real-world example: a plant manager in a 50-year-old manufacturing company



introducing decentralized AI systems. The change itself installing the software was done in months. But the transition was far tougher: long standing departments lost their familiar boundaries, and people grieved the identities they'd built over decades.

My simple suggestion in this scenario of Change & Transition would be to "Honor the Past" sessions gatherings where teams openly celebrate past wins, share stories of what worked, and acknowledge what's being left behind. These strengths-based rituals don't deny the loss; they build a sturdy bridge to the future. When leaders facilitate this thoughtfully, they stop being mere enforcers of change and become genuine architects of well-being.

The result? Teams don't just survive the shift they come out stronger, with a shared sense of purpose and a flourishing mindset ready for whatever comes next.



**Rye Cruz** is the APAC Country Ambassador for the Philippines.

# A Change Starts Here: A Guided Reflection on Change

by Patricia Liaw

Sometimes, the smallest step can feel like the biggest leap. Writing down your thoughts may seem simple, yet it is a powerful act of courage. Today, you've chosen to pause and reflect—and that's where transformation begins.

Change is everywhere. It shows up in quiet shifts in our routine, unexpected turns in our plans, and big decisions that reshape our lives. At times it feels exciting and full of possibility; at other times, it feels uncertain, even uncomfortable. That's normal. Change challenges us because it moves us beyond what is familiar. But here's the truth: every change, no matter how small, carries the seed of growth.

When I was invited to write about change, I wanted to approach it differently. I wanted to make it fun, interactive, and meaningful. Rather than offering theory or models, I chose to create a reflective space—an invitation to notice what change brings up for you, here and now.

This worksheet is not about being perfect. It is about being honest—with yourself and your journey. It is about slowing down, breathing,



and noticing what is happening within. Because when you take time to reflect, you create space for clarity and clarity helps us move forward with greater confidence.

As you begin, remember this: change doesn't have to be overwhelming. It can start with one thought, one choice, one word on this page. That's enough. That's progress.

#### Quote to Inspire You:

*“Change is the only constant in life.”*  
— Heraclitus

So, let's begin. Write freely. Explore your thoughts. There's no judgment here—only curiosity and possibility. This is your space to discover what change means for you and how you can embrace it, one step at a time.

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## CHANGE

### Great News! It is Happening NOW

#### What Does CHANGE Mean?

(15 min)

Let's begin with **CHANGE - Constant Happening**. Your thoughts needed to be here & now. This is a judgment-free zone. *The only one that is judging is probably only YOU.*

When you think of CHANGE, what comes to your mind?

#### Pause and Explore Your Thoughts

Ask yourself:

- Are my thoughts about change leaning toward possibilities—new opportunities, growth, and learning?
- Or are they focused on obstacles—what I

might lose, fears, or moving away from goals?

#### Why This Matters

Your perspective shapes your response:

- Possibility-focused thinking often leads to creativity and resilience.
- Goal-avoidance thinking can trigger resistance or stress, making adaptation harder.

#### Practical Exercise

1. Write down your first three thoughts about change.
2. Label each as:
  - Possibility (e.g., “I can learn something new”)
  - Avoidance (e.g., “This will derail my plans”)
3. Reflect: What patterns do you notice? How might shifting even one thought toward possibility change your experience?



## PAUSE & Reflect

(20 min)

Many will jump into action or start the thinking process. But here I want to invite you to take a PAUSE and reflect.

This is essential. When sudden change occurs—whether big or small—it can feel like a process of loss (*do Google: "Process of Loss"*). Taking time to PAUSE helps us regain balance and clarity before moving forward.

Let's take a PAUSE.

**P** – Pay attention to your emotions, body, and thoughts.

**A** – Assess your reactions.

**U** – Understand the impact.

**S** – Set boundaries and seek support.

**E** – Express when needed.

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## Before-NOW-After

(at least 20 mins)

Think about a significant change you've experienced.

### Before

- How did I manage to handle it BEFORE?
- **Recognition**
- How have I done well in the past?
- *It is not what you did not do but learn to recognise yourself.*

### NOW

- What's different that is notice NOW?
- **Stay Present and Curious**

- What have I not noticed before? What is important for me right now?
- *It is also time to learn about your own values and also setting clear intention before goal.*

### Future

- What can you do differently or... in the FUTURE?
- **Possibilities**
- Define what success looks like for you in adapting to change!
- *Think about shifting even one thought toward possibility. This small change can transform your experience.*

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## Extra... Extra... When I Am stuck...

Often, we feel stuck when it comes to change—and that's completely normal. Change can feel overwhelming, uncertain, or even like a loss. It disrupts what's familiar and pushes us into unknown territory. In those moments, it's easy to freeze, resist, or doubt ourselves. But here's the truth: feeling stuck is not failure—it's part of the process. The key is learning how to move forward with clarity and confidence.

When you find yourself stuck, pause and remember the 5As. These simple steps can help you regain balance and take meaningful action:

- **Aware:** Start by noticing what's happening inside you. Pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions. Awareness is the first step toward change.

- **Acknowledge:** Name what you're experiencing without judgment. Say to yourself, "*I feel uncertain*," or "*I'm afraid of what's next*." Acknowledging your feelings makes them less overwhelming.
- **Accept:** Embrace reality as it is, rather than resisting it. Acceptance doesn't mean you like the situation—it means you stop fighting what you can't control, creating space for progress.
- **Anchor:** Ground yourself in what matters most: your values, strengths, and priorities. Ask, "*What do I stand for? What keeps me steady?*" Anchoring helps you feel secure even in uncertainty.
- **Action:** Take one small step forward. It doesn't have to be big—just something that moves you closer to clarity. Even the smallest action can break the cycle of feeling stuck.

*With the 5As, you can turn stuck moments into opportunities for growth. Remember: progress starts with awareness and ends with action. One step at a time, you can move forward.*

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## Closing Reflection

### Change Is Never Easy—But Progress Makes It Possible

Change often feels uncomfortable because it pushes us beyond what's familiar. It challenges routines, beliefs, and sometimes even our sense of security. That's why feeling resistance is normal. But here's the key:

change becomes easier when we focus on **progress**, not perfection. Every small step forward matters. Progress is what transforms uncertainty into possibility.

When you take time to reflect, set intentions, and act—even in tiny ways—you create momentum. That momentum builds confidence and resilience. Remember, change doesn't happen overnight. It's a journey of consistent steps, guided by clarity and purpose.

So, ask yourself:

- *What does progress look like for me today?*
- *What is one small action I can take to move forward?*

Because the truth is, change isn't about doing everything at once—it's about doing something **NOW**.



**Patricia Liaw** is an EMCC Senior Practitioner and ICF-certified executive coach with 2,000+ coaching hours and 200+ international clients. Specializes in leadership, belief systems, and sustainable breakthroughs for emerging leaders. Proven track record in driving impactful, lasting change through authentic, challenging partnerships. Everyone can Make a Difference and it starts with **YOU!**

# From Smart to Wise: Unlocking Whole-Body Intelligence for Transformational Leadership in the Age of AI

by Yun Chen



Across the dynamic and diverse landscape of the Asia-Pacific region, leaders and the coaches who support them are navigating a pivotal moment. We are called to guide teams through relentless change and complex systemic challenges, all while the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) redefine the nature of work and life. AI excels with astonishing speed in the realm of the known, from analyzing past data, generating prediction, to executing tasks automatically. Yet, the most pressing human and organizational challenges

are fostering genuine innovation, building resilient and inclusive cultures, and sensing the future, which all reside in the emergent and unknown. This reality presents not a threat to our relevance, but a profound invitation, calling to evolve our leadership from a predominantly cognitive endeavour into a transformational practice of embodied wisdom.

The definitive advantage in this new era will not be a more sophisticated algorithm, but the cultivation of more integrated, self-aware leaders, who can access and synthesise the deep, often-untapped intelligence of their entire being. This capacity to lead from a place of whole-body intelligence is what enables us to navigate ambiguity with clarity, foster unshakable trust, and guide sustained transformation with both courage and compassion. This is the essential journey from being a technically smart leader to becoming a profoundly wise one.

## The Leadership Triad: Integrating Mind, Heart, and Gut

This evolution begins with a conscious integration of three native, human intelligences. The first is the **Strategic Mind**, or what might be termed an **Open Mind**. This

is our capacity for analysis, logic, and strategic foresight. It is the intelligence that allows us to harness AI's computational power effectively and understand complex systems. However, when operating in isolation, it can lead to detachment, over-analysis, and paralysis when faced with incomplete information or novel situations.

*“The definitive advantage in this new era will not be a more sophisticated algorithm, but the cultivation of more integrated, self-aware leaders.”*

The second intelligence is the **Empathetic Heart**, or **Open Heart**. This is our capacity for authentic connection, compassion, and reading the emotional and relational field. It is the core of building psychological safety, sensing unspoken team dynamics, and fostering the deep level of trust required for people to engage fully, take risks, and embrace change rather than fear it. This relational intelligence is the bedrock of loyalty, collaboration, and a thriving organisational culture.

The third is the **Courageous Gut**, or **Open Will**. This is our capacity for instinct, grounded

conviction, and decisive action. Often experienced as a somatic “gut feeling” or a deep sense of knowing, this intelligence is the source of the courage required to make unpopular calls amid uncertainty. It provides the intuition to sense nascent opportunities and the resilience to remain centred and purposeful under significant pressure. True leadership, especially in times of transformation, requires the synthesis of all three.

### **Grounded in Science and Process**

This framework of whole-body intelligence is supported by both contemporary science and established leadership philosophy.

Biologically, it is echoed in the research of organisations like the **HeartMath Institute**, which demonstrates the heart's own complex neural network and its significant influence on our emotions, intuition, and stress response. It is further validated by studies on the brain-gut connection, such as those from **Johns Hopkins Medicine**, which identify our enteric nervous system as a tangible, biological source of instinct and somatic insight. These are not mere metaphors; they are evidence of our multifaceted biological intelligence.

This triadic integration is also a central pillar of advanced change frameworks, most notably **Otto Scharmer’s Theory U**. In Scharmer’s work, “leading from the emerging future”, posits that leading profound innovation and transformation requires the deliberate development of these same three core capacities: an Open Mind, Open Heart, and Open Will. The critical pivot in this process, a

state Scharmer terms “presencing,” is fundamentally an embodied experience. It is the moment we move beyond habitual thinking and connect to a deeper source of knowing, a state only accessible when the intelligence of the head, heart, and gut are aligned. When these centres operate in concert, we lead from a place of integrated wisdom. We move from merely managing change to fully embodying the transformation we wish to see.

## **The Embodied Journey: From Insight to Impact**

This embodied wisdom constitutes our irreplaceable human advantage in the age of AI. Our value lies in our ability to sense and shape the future. **Whole-body intelligence** becomes our greatest asset, enabling a form of leadership that navigates ambiguity with intuitive clarity, cultivate cultures where psychological safety fuels co-creation and innovation, and ground transformational visions in authentic conviction that inspires collective action. Fundamentally, it allows a leader to become a stable, integrated presence, which is the true north for teams and organisations to rally around during periods of intense turbulence and change.

This transition is a journey of embodiment rather than intellect alone. It begins with the simple, yet courageous, step of turning our attention inward. In my coaching practice, I am privileged to witness this shift very often. One recent example is a global marketing leader who felt constrained by rigid corporate processes. Our work focused not on adding new strategies, but on reconnecting him with

his innate entrepreneurial courage—his Open Will. By honouring that gut-level passion and conviction, he ignited a new creative spark within his team, proactively driving market disruption and transforming the energy of their function.

*“Whole-body intelligence becomes our greatest asset, enabling a form of leadership that navigates ambiguity with intuitive clarity, cultivate cultures where psychological safety fuels co-creation and innovation...”*



Similarly, a Chief of Staff in a global technology company moved beyond observing different leadership styles to consciously refining her own authentic presence. By choosing to lead with deep empathy and relational clarity—from her Open Heart, she eventually cultivated an exceptionally inclusive and collaborative organizational culture rooted in psychological safety. This success has now become the foundation for her ambition to expand her authentic leadership impact into broader societal contributions. These leaders did not adopt an external checklist; they unlocked the profound wisdom that already resided within them. They ceased merely thinking about change and began to embody the transformation itself.

For leaders and coaches across our APAC community in an age defined by AI, our most powerful technology is our own deepened humanity. The vehicle for change is our personal and collective willingness to embark on it, to develop the self-awareness and somatic acuity to integrate mind, heart, and gut. This is how we evolve from smart to wise. Beyond navigating the future reactively, we step into our role as conscious co-creators of it, leading with clarity, connection, and unwavering courage.

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**Yun Chen** is the founder and executive coach of The Coaching Wave. With 18 years of leading global change management in the banking sector, and also an internal executive coach since 2021, she now runs her own coaching and facilitation practice to help leaders and organizations succeed in transformation through transitions. She also provides leadership coaching to the S&P 1000 clients on BetterUp.

## **Section 5**

# **For Coaches & Practitioners**



# Into the Cave: When the Past Shows Up in Coaching

by Dr. Jonathan Marshall

*Editor's note: In periods of change, leaders and professionals often find that forward movement is blocked not by a lack of capability, but by unresolved transitions rooted in the past. In this piece, Dr. Jonathan Marshall explores what happens when coaches encounter those deeper layers and the ethical, developmental, and supervisory questions that emerge when we "enter the cave" with our clients.*

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He was one of the highest performers I'd worked with. Top of his MBA class at a world-renowned business school. Bright, driven, and on track for an exceptional career. But something shifted.

Deadlines slipped. Focus scattered. His confidence thinned. Then came a realization. "My father did an MBA too, but from a local business school," he said. "Part of me believes that if I keep surpassing him, he'll lose face, and any chance of a relationship will go with it."

Outperforming his father felt like betrayal. To move forward, he had to look back and work with feelings of loyalty.

Most seasoned coaches reading this will recognize the challenge of secondary gain rooted in childhood. The client who can't stop overworking because rest once meant invisibility. The leader who avoids conflict because harmony was the price of safety growing up. The high performer who sabotages success because outshining a parent feels like abandonment.



The past shows up, and it often holds the key to what's stuck in the present. Most of us, at some point, follow the thread.

## The Cave We Enter

Going into a client's past is like caving. Done well, it can reveal what's hidden and unlock what's stuck. Done without preparation, we can get dangerously lost in the dark.

The International Coaching Federation rightly cautions against this. Their credentialing standards state that coaching should be focused on present and future issues, and that a conversation that delves mostly into past emotional issues is inappropriate. The intent is to protect clients and help coaches stay within their competence. I fully support that intent.

But here's the reality: coaches go caving anyway. The past doesn't wait for permission. It surfaces as resistance, self-sabotage, or reactions that seem disproportionate. When it surfaces, most coaches I speak with do engage with it, because staying rigidly on the surface would mean ignoring what's actually coming up.

The problem isn't that coaches enter the cave. It's that many do so without the right gear.

## The Gear We're Missing

The essential gear for working with the past is the ability to recognize when you're out of your depth and the knowledge of how to get to safety. We tell coaches where not to go, but we don't train them to notice when they've already arrived.

The result is predictable. Coaches find themselves deeper than they intended, unsure whether what they're seeing is a competing commitment or a clinical crisis, unsure whether to stay or to refer.

I once attended a group supervision session at a respected organization. A coach asked the group how to handle a client expressing suicidal thoughts and deliberately walking across roads carelessly. The suggestions included recommending a book and spending more time exploring her divorce. Not a single person in the room, including the supervisor, identified this as a mandatory clinical referral.

That moment stayed with me because it revealed how easily good intentions can turn into real risk when referral competence is missing. This is what happens when we go caving without gear: we can't see the dangers, and we don't know when to turn back.

## What the Gear Looks Like

If coaches are going to work anywhere near the past, and most will, they need basic equipment.

First, referral competence. Coaches need to recognize the signs that indicate a client needs more than coaching: sustained low mood, anxiety that impairs daily functioning, and substance abuse. This requires enough psychological literacy to distinguish a competing commitment from a depressive episode, a limiting belief from a trauma response. The goal isn't to treat these, but to see them clearly and refer appropriately. This can be learned in as little as one day.

Second, honest supervision. Coaches need space to discuss the moments when they found themselves deeper than expected. What did they see? What did they do? Should they have referred? These conversations rarely happen because the official position is that coaches shouldn't be there in the first place, and because most coach supervisors lack the relevant training.

The past will keep showing up in our coaching rooms. We can keep pretending coaches don't go caving, or we can accept that they do and give them the tools to do it safely.



**Dr. Jonathan Marshall** is a clinical psychologist and executive coach based in Singapore, working with senior leaders and top teams on performance and well-being. Formerly full-time leadership faculty at the National University of Singapore, he now runs Marshall Consulting and teaches at The School of Positive Psychology.

# APAC Community Announcements & Updates





## Community Highlights

We began the year with a thought-provoking webinar by Maurice Jenkens, The Intuitive Leader™, on “What to Trust in Times of Extreme Uncertainty.” His insights set a powerful tone for a year of deeper inquiry and courageous leadership.

Coming up next is our webinar Harnessing Emergence in Team Coaching with Dr. Sebastian Fox — a rich exploration of how teams adapt, evolve, and co-create in complex environments.

More learning opportunities are on the way, including the Team Coaching Circle led by Clémence Blondel and Suman Balani. Stay tuned as we continue to learn, grow, and support one another as a community.

## Ways to Get Involved

If you have contacts or opportunities for individual pro bono coaching, or organisations interested in exploring team coaching, we warmly invite you to reach out. These partnerships allow us to extend our impact, support underserved communities, and create meaningful development opportunities for our members.

We also welcome your feedback and suggestions on how APAC can better serve your needs. Your voice shapes our direction and strengthens our community. Please feel free to write to us at [info@apacoaches.org](mailto:info@apacoaches.org)

# Upcoming Events

For the full list of events and more details, visit our website:

<https://apacoaches.org/events/>

Jan  
19

## Harnessing Emergence in Team Coaching

Speaker: Dr. Sebastian Fox

When: Monday, 19 January 2026 at 4PM – 5PM SGT

[Learn more and register >>](#)



Feb  
09

## Team Coaching Circle

Team Coach Supervisor: Clémence Blondel, PCC

When: Monday, 9 February 2026 at 4PM – 5:15PM SGT

[Learn more and register >>](#)



Mar  
02

## Team Coaching Circle

Team Coach Supervisor: Suman Balani, PCC

When: Monday, 2 March 2026 at 4PM – 5:15PM SGT

[Learn more and register >>](#)



Mar  
11

## Personal Change Using Schema Coaching

Speaker: Dr. Iain McCormick

When: Wednesday, 11 March 2026 at 2PM – 3:30PM SGT

[Learn more and register >>](#)



Apr  
13

## Team Coaching Circle

Team Coach Supervisor: Clémence Blondel, PCC

When: Monday, 13 April 2026 at 4PM – 5:15PM SG time

[Learn more and register >>](#)



# Welcome

A WARM WELCOME to the (4) new members who joined us since the last APAC Voice in October 2025 to January 2026! We wish you a long and fruitful association with APAC!

Our **SINCERE THANKS** to the introducers as well! Thank you for supporting us in continuously growing this professional, diverse, learning, serving, and engaging community. Your help is highly appreciated!

## Individual Membership (4):

LOCATION	NAME	INTRODUCED BY
HONG KONG	Joyce Koh	Suyin Ong
INDONESIA	Fauziah Zulfitri	Ina Rizqie Amalia
SINGAPORE	Sophie Khoo	Joanne Teh
UNITED KINGDOM	Sayidatina Khan	



# Membership Overview

## TOTAL NO. OF APAC MEMBERS

As of 10 January 2026, APAC has 148 current members.

Australia	New Zealand
China	Philippines
Germany	Singapore
Hong Kong	Taiwan
India	Thailand
Indonesia	United Arab Emirates
Italy	United Kingdom
Japan	United States
Malaysia	

## JOIN US AND HELP APAC GROW!

Share your benefits and recommend your colleagues to join us today! Share your skills and experience and become a sub-committee member! Contact us at [membership@apacoaches.org](mailto:membership@apacoaches.org)

- Coaching voice of Asia Pacific
- Unique regional community
- Professional development & support
- Pro bono coaching and R&D projects
- Newsletter – APAC Voice
- “Find a Coach” listing
- APAC Coaching Conference

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

By renewing your APAC membership, you are supporting APAC in giving impact to society through Coaching.

# Advertise With Us

Advertising opportunities are available for both APAC Voice (our newsletter) and our website. If you're interested and for more information, please contact Sonali Bhattacharya at [sonali@invictus.expert](mailto:sonali@invictus.expert)

View the APAC Ad Guidelines at: <https://apacoaches.org/apac-ad-guidelines/>

## APAC VOICE (NEWSLETTER)

AD SIZE	MEASUREMENTS (in inches)	1x	2x	3x	4x
<b>FOR MEMBERS</b>					
Full Page	8" w by 10.5" h	120	105	100	90
Half Page	8" w by 5" h	60	45	40	35
1/4 Page	3.75" by 5" h	30	25	20	15
<b>FOR NON-MEMBERS</b>					
Full Page	8" w by 10.5" h	200	180	160	140
Half Page	8" w by 5" h	100	88	80	75
1/4 Page	3.75" by 5" h	60	50	40	35

*Pricing per insertion/quarter and in SGD. Pricing valid through 30 April 2026.*

## APAC WEBSITE

AD SIZE	MEASUREMENTS (in inches)	3 months	6 months
<b>FOR MEMBERS</b>			
Leaderboard (top)	8.13" w x 0.94" h	800	1500
Leaderboard (bottom)	8.13" w x 0.94" h	400	750
Rectangle (medium)	3.13" w x 2.6" h	450	800
<b>FOR NON-MEMBERS</b>			
Leaderboard (top)	8.13" w x 0.94" h	1200	2100
Leaderboard (bottom)	8.13" w x 0.94" h	660	1140
Rectangle (medium)	3.13" w x 2.6" h	720	1200

*Pricing per insertion in SGD. Pricing valid through 30 April 2026.*

# Connect With Us



**Website:**

<https://www.apacoaches.org>



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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/asia-pacific-alliance-of-coaches>



**LinkedIn (Members-only Group):**

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1957098>



**Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/APACoaches>



**Facebook (Members-only Group):**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/383974071797393>



**Instagram:**

<https://www.instagram.com/asiapacificallianceofcoaches/>