Focusing-oriented transformative coaching:
supporting the journey of personal and social change

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Abstract

There is an urgent need to address an unprecedented confluence of social and environmental threats, in particular climate change, facing the world today. This will require more innovative and holistic approaches to learning that can address these threats and better support those working to create change. Research shows that change practitioners are particularly susceptible to the risks of feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, burnt out and depressed in relation to their work. Although there is an abundance of information recommending how practitioners can address these risks, there is little to no research examining how more embodied and transformative ways of learning can support both personal and social change. As such, this study examines practitioners' experiences of burnout, and how Eugene Gendlin's focusing (a form of inward bodily attention widely used within the humanistic psychotherapy tradition) can be used within coaching to support their self-care and effectiveness. A mixed methods approach was used involving a questionnaire, in-depth interviews and coaching over an 18-month period.

The study found that focusing combined with reflective dialogue supported the transformative learning of the participants, helped to address burnout, and improved their self-care and effectiveness. This was achieved by: 1) clarifying their sense of self (including values, beliefs etc.) in relation to life, work and broader sociocultural contexts; 2) developing relationships with aspects of themselves (such as the inner critic) that are connected to unhelpful ways of thinking and feeling; 3) enabling kinds of 'letting go' (e.g. of expectations of self and others), becoming more comfortable with 'not knowing' and letting the new felt meaning of situations emerge; and 4) supporting shifts in consciousness or ways of being that are more open, curious, kind, playful and authentically hopeful. Based on these findings a model for practitioners – *Focusing-oriented transformative coaching* is proposed. The significance of this study is that it addresses the need for evidence-based research within the field of adult learning (in particular within Transformative learning and Coaching), regarding how embodied ways of learning can support both personal *and* social change. In this way, transformation from the individual, micro level to the social, macro level can be viewed as a whole, ongoing process.

Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:

Jeremy Mah
PhD candidate, Macquarie University

Date: 23 October 2019

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Preface

> "In opening to our experience of life as it is, we often find that it does not meet our expectations of what it should be. Perhaps we don't fit the picture in our mind of who we should be. Perhaps those we love don't measure up to our ideals. Or we find the state of the world disheartening, even shocking. Reality is continually breaking our heart by not living up to how we would like it to be.
>
> If we can also open to our 'broken-open heart', it has a bittersweet quality. Reality never quite fits our fond hopes – that is the bitter taste. The sweetness is that when reality breaks our heart open, we discover a sweet, raw tenderness toward ourselves and the fragile beauty of life as a whole." (Welwood, 2002: 146)

As I write, the "lungs of the earth", the Amazon rainforest, is burning (de Urzedo, 2019: 1), and as the ice recedes, countries scramble to take advantage of Greenland's extensive oil and gas reserves (Rising & Borenstein, 2019: 2). Meanwhile in Australia, the Great Barrier Reef is under serious threat from climate change (GBRF, 2018: 4), and yet one of Australia's largest coal mine proposals, the Adani Carmichael coal mine, has recently been approved (Robertson, 2019: 2).

For those working to create social change, whether it be addressing issues such as injustice, oppression or ecological degradation, there is a never-ending barrage of bad news stories enabled by our instant access to media and the 24/7 news cycle. These global issues and concerns are of course *not* new. However, what is new is the existential threat of climate change, which is compounding these issues. It is therefore not surprising that a growing number of individuals passionate about creating change are suffering from anxiety, burnout, despair and sometimes sheer hopelessness. This was certainly how I felt after working for many years in this space for what appeared to be little joy and consequence. This led me to undertake a Master of Research study (2014) that looked at how we can better support transformative learning and leadership for sustainability.

Since then, despite worsening global threats, I have been able to transform how I work, in large part due to my engagement with Eugene Gendlin's Focusing theory and practices. Focusing has helped me address many deeply rooted, patterned ways of thinking and feeling, which no amount of self-analysis could have achieved. For me this has been a long journey involving many years of self-doubt and discovery as I've struggled to come to terms with the indelible problems the world faces and my miniscule place in it all.

For many of us working to create social change, the assumption is that change is something that occurs 'out there'. For those who understand the need for both personal 'inner' change in order to achieve real transformational change, there are few learning processes that support this kind of change. Indeed, many of these processes simply reinforce the hierarchical and hegemonic paradigms that underpin the systems we are trying to change. This study therefore examines how personal change can be supported in order to sustain authentic hope and commitment to the long and difficult journey of social change.

My own journey of transformation and hope forms the backdrop to this study. It is still very much a work in progress – some days are good, some are not so good. As Rebecca Solnit (2016: xi-xii) describes, hope is:

> not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse narrative. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings.

As a practitioner, learning how to "be with" complexity and uncertainty, grounded in the hope that change is always possible, has been the key. In the meantime, I draw hope and inspiration from Greta Thunberg and a new generation of socially and environmentally conscious young people who are taking action (Knox, 2019; Thunberg & youth activists for Fridays for Future, 2019).

1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the context, purpose and aims of the study, the research question and methods, the significance and scope of the research, and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Research context

1.2.1 The need for transformative change in all aspects of society

> "This century must be one of deep transformation if there is to be a next century in a human earth context." (O'Sullivan, 2012: 165)

There is growing recognition of the need to address the unprecedented confluence of social, environmental, economic and political threats facing the world today (O'Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Palsson et al., 2012; Brigham, Baillie Abidi, Tastsoglou, & Lange, 2015: 29; Rockström, 2015; Raskin, 2017; WWF, 2018; Selby & Kagawa, 2018; WEF, 2019). These threats include war, extremism, inequality, poverty, disease, food insecurity, overconsumption, pollution, and of course, climate change. Some scientists describe the current "biological annihilation" of species and habitat as the sixth mass extinction (Ceballos, Ehrlich, & Dirzo, 2017), and it is evident from most recent reports of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that we are currently undergoing profound changes to the climate system, which will only exacerbate these threats (IPCC, 2018: 20; 2019: 15).

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2018: 10) has warned that climate change, together with other megatrends such as population growth, rapid urbanization, food insecurity and water scarcity, will increase competition for resources, and heighten tensions and instability. Indeed, the UN General Assembly (2015: 1-2) goes so far as to say that climate change poses an existential threat that could undermine existing and future efforts for sustainable development, peace and security, and that unless climate change is addressed, achieving the 2030 Agenda and other Sustainable Development Goals will not be

possible (UN General Assembly, 2015: 2). This sentiment is echoed by leaders and decision-makers across the public and private sectors, academia and civil society who consider that climate change presents one of the greatest threats to humanity (Wright, Nyberg, De Cock, & Whiteman, 2013: 647; Selby & Kagawa, 2018: 1). Indeed, the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary (2017: 5) believes that "climate change is the single biggest threat to life, security and prosperity on Earth".

Clive Hamilton (2011), founder of The Australia Institute, argues that "the situation has become so urgent, and the forecasts so dire, that only radical social and economic transformation will give us a chance of avoiding dramatic and irreversible changes to the global climate". However, even if meaningful global action to address climate change were to occur today, many academics argue that we will still face radical and disruptive changes (Hamilton, 2010: viii) for generations to come (IPCC, 2014: 8, 16-17). Bendell (2018: 2) is more strident, recently claiming that there will be an "inevitable near-term social collapse due to climate change" and has called for a "deep adaptation" approach to manage the situation. In either case, there appears to be some agreement that fundamental societal transformations are needed to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change (Moore, King, Dale, & Newell, 2018: 8; UNFCCC, 2018). Limiting global warming to just 1.5ºC will by itself, require rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society (IPCC, 2018b: 1).

1.2.2 The urgent need for change and the zeitgeist of despair

Despite the urgent need for change, perhaps what is most concerning is the apparent helplessness of governments to act in the face of these gathering threats (Raskin, 2013: 2). Paul Raskin (2013: 2) – founder of The Great Transition Initiative, argues:

> [that] the task of fostering a just and enduring mode of world development, the paramount challenge of our time, lies beyond the grasp of our political order. The fragmented and myopic governance institutions we have inherited from the twentieth century are ill-suited for addressing the systemic and long-term predicament of the twenty-first. In turn, the doleful combination of deepening danger and feeble response feeds a rising Zeitgeist of despair.

This argument is supported by the World Economic Forum's most recent *Global Risks Report* (WEF, 2019: 6), which claims that aside from the threats themselves, continued failures in environmental and climate change policy and declining trust in the institutions responsible for such policy represent the "gravest threats" to socioeconomic development and security. In other words, a lack of trust in the ability of governments to address such threats is (in part) feeding a rising zeitgeist of anxiety, fear, disillusionment and despair. This not only renders a risk to social and political cohesion at the macro level but also to the psychological well-being of individuals at the micro level (WEC, 2019: 7). This is particularly the case for those working to address these threats, who are all too familiar with feelings of anger, overwhelm, hopelessness, burnout and despair (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 100; Marguiles Mehr, 2006: 28; Oster, 2006: 37; Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 43; Pigni, 2016: 30; Obear, 2018: 1). Indeed, activists speak of being "immobilised by fear", feeling overwhelmed by the urgency and magnitude of the situation, losing their sense of agency and descending into "climate depression" (Pearse, Goodman, & Rosewarne, 2010: 93). Terms such as 'eco-anxiety' (Clayton, Manning, Krygsman, & Speiser, 2017: 29; Castelloe, 2018) and 'solastalgia' (Clayton et al., 2017: 27) are appearing in the lexicon to describe the feelings of distress that people are experiencing in the face of these existential threats (Burke & Wauchope, n.d.; Clayton et al., 2017; Fawbert, 2019). So how might we support the kinds of change that are needed at the social level, and also address the existential angst associated with crisis and inaction at the personal level?

1.2.3 The need for more holistic, transformative approaches to learning

> "We must learn to attend to our surroundings as whole persons in a web of life." (O'Sullivan, 2012: 174)

Broadly speaking, the process of transformative change will require profound shifts in consciousness and radical realignments in the way we think, behave and imagine ourselves in the world (Meadows, 1999; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004;

O'Hara, 2006; Scharmer, 2009; Jagers & Matti, 2010; Alberts, 2011; Ziarek, 2011; O'Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Palsson et al., 2012; Wright, 2012; Downes et al., 2013; Rockström, 2015; Edwards, 2005, 2015; Riedy, 2016; Raskin, 2017; Bendell, 2018). According to Stephen Sterling (2010: 22 & 25), one of the leading voices in sustainability education, we need to be able to support deeper levels of knowing, perceiving and acting or "seeing things differently". This will be critical to being able to effectively address these complex, nonlinear, unpredictable and long-term threats, in particular climate change (Selby & Kagawa, 2018: 3), and transition towards sustainability (Raskin, 2006; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008; Lange, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2012). Further, this will not only require individuals capable of creating new possibilities (Stern, 2009 cited in HEFCE, 2009: 1), but who have the psychological and emotional maturity to effectively juggle contradiction and complexity (O'Hara, 2006: 114). And this "is *the* challenge of education" (David Orr 2001 cited in Sterling, 2001: 9) – the urgent need to reinvent and transform our current models of learning and education in order to better support these capacities.

Sterling (2010: 30) has appealed to academia to explore more transformative, socially engaged and future-oriented models of learning that can nurture both personal *and* social development. This includes more innovative, contextualised ways of learning such as: 'transformative' (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006; Sipos et al., 2008; Netzer & Rowe, 2010; Lange, 2012, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2012), and 'holistic' or 'whole-person' (Boyd & Gordon Myers, 1988; Dirkx, 1997; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Yorks & Kasl, 2006; Podger & Reid 2010; Lawrence, 2012: 6; O'Sullivan, 2012: 173; Cranton, 2016: 39; Jackson & Cox, 2018: 219; Lange, 2018: 292) approaches that can support improved understanding of oneself within the context of social change (Chappell et al., 2003; L. Cox, 2009). Specifically, these various ways of learning that seek to engender both personal and social development will need to include elements such as self-reflection, psychotherapy, meditation, contemplation, creativity and the arts (O'Hara, 2006: 114).

Moreover, there has been increasing interest in other ways of learning, such as 'embodied' or 'experiential' (Gendlin, 1978/1981, 1996; Hendricks, 2003; Krycka, 2006, 2012, 2014; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015; Walkerden, 2002, 2005, 2019), and 'contemplative' (Scharmer & Varela, 2000; Robinson, 2004; Gunnlaugson, 2011; Byrnes, 2012; Ettling, 2012; Tisdell & Riley, 2019) processes that can support more holistic learning. For example, mindfulness-based practices have been shown to be valuable ways of learning about one's "inner being" that allow for uncertainties and creative insights to arise (Burrows, 2015: 128). Indeed, experiential practices that support one's "inward bodily attention" (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 4, 1996: 1, 2004: 4) such as 'focusing' – the focus of this study, can help improve skilful professional practice in challenging situations (Walkerden, 2005: 170). By enabling an individual to *listen* to themselves and work from how they *feel* about a situation (not just from what their conceptual understanding may be), a practitioner can improve their insight and creativity regarding complex decision-making (Walkerden, 2005: 170).

The capacity for self-awareness and the ability to pay inward bodily attention is particularly relevant to those working to create change. This is because change practitioners, such as social justice and human rights activists, are especially susceptible to experiences such as 'burnout' (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 367), and the feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, helplessness and guilt that are often associated with working in this space (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001: 567; (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 35). According to Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 113), being able to juggle both hope and despair forms a central part of an activist's 'inner work'. This inner work is as much about developing a deeper understanding of one's self in the world, as it is about acquiring new skills and knowledge (Dirkx, 2014: para. 27). Further, this deep form of ongoing learning can support the kind of care for one's self (i.e. self-care) that is needed to sustain commitment over the long term (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 101 & 112). Importantly, adult learning educators, facilitators etc. working with practitioners will need to be able to support this kind of inner

work, in particular, to be able to work with feelings of anxiety, grief, loss and despair or the "inner pain" that often comes with the awareness of our current situation (Macy, 1989, 1991 cited in O'Sullivan, 1999: 35-36; Hathaway, 2017: 306). So how might these more innovative and holistic approaches to learning better support those working to create change? Specifically, how might experiential practices such as focusing support the kinds of inner work needed to address issues such as burnout, improve effectiveness and sustain commitment over the long term?

1.3 Purpose and aims of the study

The overarching purpose of this study is to explore how the self-care and effectiveness of environmental and social change practitioners (referred to in this study as practitioners) can be more effectively supported over the long term, and in particular, to examine how 'transformative learning' (Mezirow, 1975, 1978) and 'focusing' processes (Gendlin, 1978/1981; 1996) might be used within the context of coaching to provide this support. To achieve this, the study aims to:

1. examine how practitioners experience burnout and how it can be addressed.
2. examine how focusing can support transformative learning for these practitioners within a coaching context.
3. describe the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners and how these were supported within the coaching process.

This study forms part of a longer-term project that explores how practitioners working to create change now and over the long term can be better supported. It builds on my Master of Research study (2014), which explored how creative practice could support individuals participating in a sustainability leadership program to make better sense of their life and career journeys. Specifically, it addresses one of the recommendations for further research into how more embodied, sense-making practices such as focusing might be used within coaching to support the transformative learning and personal sustainability of practitioners. This study does

not aim to examine or compare other kinds of processes that support inward bodily attention such as mindfulness, meditation etc. but to examine how focusing might support transformative learning within a coaching context.

1.3.1 Key terms

The following definitions provide a brief outline of the key terms and concepts used in the research question and aims of the study. These terms and a number of others are further defined and discussed as part of the literature review in Chapter 2.

Practitioners

In this study, I refer to environmental and social change practitioners as *practitioners*. This term refers to the participants of the study and change practitioners more broadly. These include practitioners working across sectors and within various roles that aim to address environmental and/or social issues, for example, implementing energy, water and waste initiatives for corporations, developing climate change programs and policy for government, or working on social justice campaigns at not-for-profit organisations. Many practitioners work in roles that address aspects of both environmental and social change, where social change refers to "change that makes society or workplaces more humanizing, in terms of fostering human rights, and thriving towards what would seem more just, ecologically sustainable, inclusive, empowering and peaceful" (Shoukry, 2017: 176). In this sense, a practitioner working to address climate change is also working to address social change, whether this is an explicit aim of the role or not.

Adult learning

In this study, 'learning' refers to adult learning as distinct from other forms of learning and education such as children's learning. In this sense, adult learning is any voluntary, self-directed, experiential and collaborative process (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 4) that is part of a sustained informal or formal activity (Cranton, 2016: 2). This may lead to discernible changes in the learner such as in thinking or

behaviour (Brookfield, 2012: 136; Bachkirova, Cox, & Clutterbuck, 2018: xxxiv), the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, a revision of beliefs, values and assumptions, or in the way one sees oneself in the world (Cranton, 2016: 2).

Transformative learning and inner work

Transformative learning is an approach to adult learning developed by Jack Mezirow (1975, 1978). Over the past 40 years or so it has become one of the most popular and well researched theories in the field of adult education (Taylor, 2007: 173; Hoggan, 2016: 57; Hoggan, Mälkki, & Finnegan, 2017: 48). It leads the way in exploring holistic approaches to learning through the lens of social change (Sipos et al., 2008; Lange, 2012). I also draw heavily on the work of John Dirkx (2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014), in particular his concept of 'inner work', which involves developing a deeper understanding of one's sense of self in relation to life and work (Dirkx, 2014: para. 27). For Dirkx, transformative learning as inner work is a more holistic approach that emphasises the role of emotions, imagination, intuition and symbolism as part of the learning process (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Dirkx et al., 2006; Clark & Dirkx, 2008; Dirkx, 1997, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2014).

Focusing

Focusing[1] is a practice, process or "mode of inward bodily attention" developed by Eugene Gendlin in the 1950s/60s (1978/1981: 4, 1996: 1, 2004: 4). It is an experiential, embodied (or body-oriented) process that supports self-awareness, emotional healing (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 2), and making sense or meaning of a situation, problem or concern (Hendricks, 2007: 44). Gendlin's research was primarily used to build the practice of Focusing-oriented therapy (Gendlin, 1996), which differs from most other forms of psychotherapy in the explicit use of one's directly felt, bodily experiencing

[1] Throughout this document Focusing (with a capital F) is used in relation to the Focusing community and literature in order to differentiate it from to term 'focusing' (with a small f), which refers to the process or practice itself. This principle has also been applied to transformative learning, coaching and burnout.

(Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 254). In other words, focusing is a process that supports an individual to pay close attention to their inner, vague yet holistic sense of a situation (Hendricks, 2007a: 271). This form of inward bodily attention has the potential to provide us with more information than conceptual thinking processes alone (Walkerden, 2005: 180; Krycka, 2012: 1; Jaison, 2014: 71).

Coaching

Coaching is a collaborative learning process that involves "structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the client" (Bachkirova et al., 2018: xxix) both personally and professionally. Specifically, it is a collaborative, goal or solution-focused process that aims to enhance the personal and/or professional life of a client (Grant, 2003: 253). In this study, a 'transformative coaching' (Askew & Carnell, 2011) approach was used to inform and guide the coaching process that I facilitated in my role as practitioner-researcher. This approach is founded on Transformative learning theory and practice with a particular emphasis on the relationship between personal and social change.

Burnout

Burnout refers to the concept developed by Herbert Freudenberger (1974) and Christina Maslach (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017; Hoffarth, 2017). It is a condition that represents a "crisis" in one's relationship with their work (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 2016: 21). Specifically, it has been described as a chronic state of "emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment" (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 24). This state is often associated with feelings of anger, guilt, helplessness, fatigue, anxiety and depression (Schaufeli et al., 2001: 567; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 35). These feelings can in turn lead to reduced motivation and effectiveness, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours in relation to one's work (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 36).

Self-care and effectiveness

'Self-care' is the activity of taking care of oneself (e.g. looking after one's mental and physical health), not as a goal in itself, but as an activity connected to a purpose, such as being able to continue caring for others (Tennant, 2012: 148). In this study, self-care is considered a process and practice that supports well-being and personal sustainability over the long term. Although personal sustainability is a concept that considers all aspects of an individual's life and work that sustain their well-being, this study is primarily concerned with the emotional and psychological dimensions of an individual's sustainability in working to create change (L. Cox, 2009: 53).

In this study, 'effectiveness' refers to a practitioner's ability to be more effective in relation to their work, for example, being more open and empathetic to those with opposing ideas or more comfortable working with complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability to improve collaborative decision-making.

1.3.2 Research question

Based on the aims of the study, the primary research question is:

- How might focusing be used within a coaching context to: a) address burnout, and b) support the self-care and effectiveness journeys (characterised by transformative learning experiences) of practitioners more generally?

1.4 Overview of the research methods

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the research question. The research was designed to be conducted in three stages involving three main methods of data collection: an online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and coaching sessions as outlined in Figure 1.1 over page:

Stage 1 (2016)	Stage 2 (2017)	Stage 3 (2017-18)
• questionnaire of practitioners	• 30 interviews with practitioners • 11 interviews with coaches & therapists	• 52 coaching sessions with 11 practitioners conducted by myself as practitioner-researcher
How focusing processes used within a transformative coaching context helped to address burnout and support the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners.		

Figure 1.1 – research stages and methods used

Similar to other studies that aim to explore the effectiveness of adult learning processes, the research is descriptive rather than prescriptive, and interpretivist in that it primarily aims to better understand how focusing can support transformative learning experiences, rather than measuring cause-effect relationships (Jackson, 2005: 48). As such, the study does not aim to *measure* transformational learning outcomes or to prove that transformation has occurred. Nor does it aim to measure the effectiveness (or efficacy) of the coaching process or of specific coaching interventions. Instead, it aims to explore how more holistic, experiential approaches to knowing and learning might support transformative learning within a coaching context – in other words, how focusing could be employed within a transformative coaching context to support the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners.

1.5 Significance of this study

The significance of this study is that it helps to address the need for new knowledge, theory and evidence-based research in the fields of Transformative learning, Coaching, Burnout and Focusing. Specifically, the study:

a) provides an in-depth exploration of how practitioners working to create change in Australia experience issues such as anxiety, burnout and despair in relation to their work. In particular, it helps to address the call for a more nuanced understanding of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98), and for

research into micro-level processes (such as focusing, mindfulness etc.) that can help to mitigate burnout (notwithstanding broader systemic change), and support the self-care and personal sustainability of those working to create social change (L. Cox, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Chen & Gorski, 2015);

b) provides in-depth and granular exploration of how transformative learning can be supported by focusing processes within a coaching context. In particular, it provides detailed examples and rich descriptions (including a practice model for adult learning practitioners) of how focusing can be conducted to support the inner work (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Dirkx et al., 2006; Dirkx, 2012a, 2014), self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners. In other words, it demonstrates *how* embodied processes such as focusing can support both personal *and* social change (Hendricks, 2003; O'Sullivan & Taylor, 2004; O'Hara, 2006; Omidian & Lawrence, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Krycka, 2006, 2012, 2014; Hathaway, 2017; Johnson, Leighton, & Caldwell, 2018; Selby & Kagawa, 2018; Walkerden, 2005, 2019);

   The key findings help to address calls for research into more holistic or whole-person approaches to learning (Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 1997, 2008; Cranton & Roy, 2003; O'Hara, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2002, 2006; Freiler, 2008; Barnacle, 2009; Podger & Reid, 2010; Lawrence, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2012; Taylor & Laros, 2014; Lange, 2012, 2015, 2018), and in particular, research into how embodied, experiential learning can support whole-person learning *in practice* (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015), including within coaching contexts (Longhurst, 2006; Askew & Carnell, 2011; Drake, 2011; Madison, 2012; Hanssmann, 2014; Stelter, 2014; Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Cox, 2018; Smith & Hawkins, 2018);

c) helps to stimulate dialogue within the Transformative learning, Burnout (in particular within activist and social movement communities), Coaching and Focusing communities. The research will also be of interest to other adult learning communities, such as Education for Sustainability (Sterling, 2001,

2010; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Mah, Hunting, & Tilbury, 2006), Social Ecology (Wright, Camden-Pratt, & Hill, 2011) and Theory U (Scharmer, 2009a) that seek more holistic approaches to personal and social change.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis has eight chapters, as shown in Figure 1.2.

<table>
<tr><th>Chapter 1</th><th>Chapter 2</th><th>Chapter 3</th><th colspan="3">Chapter 4 | Chapter 5 | Chapter 6</th><th>Chapter 7</th><th>Chapter 8</th></tr>
<tr><td>Introduction</td><td>Literature review</td><td>Methodology</td><td colspan="3">Findings & discussion about the participants' self-care and effectiveness journeys</td><td>Implications for theory & practice</td><td>Conclusion</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1.2 – structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the context, aims, methods and significance of the research. Chapter 2 provides a review of the Burnout, Transformative learning, Focusing and Coaching literature in relation to personal and social change. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology including rationale for the various approaches and data collection methods employed. Chapter 4 explores the practitioners' experiences of burnout and potential relationships based on the findings from the questionnaire and interviews. Chapter 5 discusses the focusing and coaching processes including excerpts of focusing processes and reflective dialogue from the coaching sessions that describe the inner work, self-care and effectiveness aspects of the participants' coaching journeys. Chapter 6 discusses how focusing processes can be used within a coaching context to support self-care and effectiveness including key themes and process learnings that emerged from the findings. Chapter 7 discusses the implications for theory and practice in relation to the research question. Chapter 8 concludes by providing a summary of the key findings, implications for further research and some final thoughts.

2. Literature review

2.1 Chapter overview

The overarching aim of this study is to explore how practitioners can be more effectively supported over the long term. It aims to examine how transformative learning and focusing can be applied within the context of coaching to address burnout and support the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners. This chapter examines the literature in relation to:

- burnout – what it looks like, its relationship with social change, and how it can be addressed;
- how transformative learning and other ways of knowing, especially embodied, experiential learning, can support practitioners;
- developing a Focusing-oriented approach to transformative learning; and
- the role that transformative learning and focusing can play in developing approaches to coaching that support both personal and social change.

2.2 Burnout, social change and its prevention

2.2.1 Burnout and social change

"Drop-out" is a constant feature of those working in social movements and can range from suffering from burnout to "drifting away" (Fillieule 2005 cited in L. Cox, 2011: 2). Fifteen years ago, in researching activist burnout, Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 112) found that "caring deeply about one's work sometimes brings with it the risks of feeling overwhelmed, discouraged and depressed". At that time, little was known about how to sustain the passion, sense of vocation and commitment of those working to create social change (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 101). Since then substantial research into burnout that focuses on activists and the role of emotions has been conducted (Norgaard, 2006; Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Jacob, Jovic, & Brinkerhoff, 2009; Wettergren, 2009; L. Cox, 2011; Rodgers, 2010; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Gorski, 2019; Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman, & Rising, 2019). However, there remains a critical need for more contextualised research into the experiences of burnout for practitioners (including those who do not view themselves as activists)

working in different times, places, roles etc. For example, recent studies have looked at the experiences of burnout amongst racial justice, and animal and human rights activists (Chen & Gorski, 2015, Gorski & Chen, 2015; Gorski, 2019; Gorski et al., 2019), and non-activists such as sustainability professionals working as change agents within organisations (Blomfield & Jordan, 2014). Although limited (in particular an absence of longitudinal studies and statistics indicating the extent of the problem amongst practitioners), the research that has been conducted suggests that those working to create social change are especially susceptible to burnout (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 367). Indeed, rates of disengagement amongst activists – where an erosion of engagement can be considered an indicator of burnout (Schaufeli & Salanova 2014: 300) have been estimated at 50% to 60% (Klandermans 2003 cited in Gorski & Chen 2015: 389). Refer to section 4.3.2.1 for a discussion comparing about burnout in relation to normative data from two large databases compiled by Leiter and Schaufeli that combine data from multiple countries (including Australia) and numerous occupations from 1996 to 2015 (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 46). So, what is burnout and how does it relate to those working to create change?

2.2.2 The development of burnout as a concept

Developed in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of burnout has become ubiquitous in discussions about work-related stress (Hoffarth, 2017: 30). Generally considered to be the first to identify the "burnout syndrome" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 383), Herbert Freudenberger (a psychoanalyst) brought the concept to public awareness in his 1974 paper on "staff burnout" (Hoffarth, 2017: 31). At about the same time, Christina Maslach (a social psychological researcher) adopted the term 'burnout' as it was easily recognised by interviewees in her research into how human service professionals cope on the job (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 384). It quickly became a buzzword and topic of public interest (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 384). Freudenberger and Maslach argued that human service providers were taking on the problems of their work environment, and suggested ways to reduce their emotional interactions

in order to lower the likelihood of burnout (Hoffarth, 2017: 31). Interestingly, they also urged them to "stop expecting their efforts to lead to social change or personal satisfaction, as this would lead only to frustration, despair and eventual burnout" (Hoffarth, 2017: 31). They recommended 'self-awareness' and 'self-protection' as ways to reduce the likelihood of burnout (Hoffarth, 2017: 31).

During the 80s, the concept was extended beyond human services professions to include "people-oriented" professions in general, such as education, social services, medicine, and mental health (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 19), and more recently, to other professions such as activism, sport, business and so on (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 24). The concept has also expanded to include work 'engagement', which has emerged as its antithesis (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 385; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 295). Engagement is associated with "involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy" (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 299). Today a continuum of states from burnout to engagement, which attempts to describe these interconnected yet distinct forms of psychological well-being is being studied (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 385; Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90). This continuum is used to analyse the findings from the questionnaire used in this study and is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

2.2.3 How burnout is defined and its relationship with effectiveness

Although defining burnout has been described as like trying to define "the exact boundaries of a large cloud" or a "fuzzy set of symptoms" (Burisch, 1993/2017: 109), there are some definitions that help to describe the concept in its broadest sense. For example, Cherniss (1980: 40) defines burnout as:

> a process that begins with excessive and prolonged levels of job tension. This stress produces strain in the worker (feelings of tension, irritability, and fatigue). The process is completed when the workers defensively cope with the job stress by psychologically detaching themselves from the job and becoming apathetic, cynical, and rigid.

or:

> to deplete oneself, to exhaust one's physical and mental resources, to wear oneself out by excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or by the values of society. (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980: 16)

The most widely used definition, however, comes from Maslach and Jackson (1986: 1 cited in Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 24):

> a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do "people work" of some kind.

In essence, burnout represents a "crisis" in one's relationship with their work (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 37). This is often associated with emotions such as irritability, anger, guilt, helplessness, fatigue, anxiety and depression (Schaufeli et al., 2001: 567; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 35). These in turn can lead to "a sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work" (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1988: 36).

Importantly, burnout is not about feeling "blue or bored or having an occasional bad day"; it is a chronic state of feeling "stressed and out of sync with work" (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 44). Indeed, longitudinal studies have shown burnout to be stable over time, indicating a chronic rather than transient condition (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 392; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 24). In other words, it is a long-term process (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 28) that develops slowly over years or even decades, of which an individual is often unaware (Rettig, 2006: 19-20).

2.2.4 Burnout amongst practitioners working to create change

Burnout is commonly used as a metaphor to describe a process similar to the "smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a candle" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 383; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 295). The initial "fire" of enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to a cause "burns out", leaving behind the "smoldering embers of exhaustion, cynicism and ineffectiveness" (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 43).

Pines (1993/2017: 41) argues that an individual must first be "on fire" in order to burn out. A person without this initial motivation can experience anxiety, depression, or an existential crisis, but not burnout (Pines, 1993/2017: 41). Vizderman (1985 cited in Shields, 1994: 121) adds that burnout is an "occupational hazard for high achievers with high ideals", and that the "more fiery the ambition", the greater the likelihood of burnout.

Others argue that what distinguishes individuals suffering from burnout from others who may be mourning a loss for example, is "some active striving to bring about a change" (Burisch, 1993/2017: 112). A study by Greenglass and Burke (1988) showed that teachers who described themselves as "social activists" were more likely to burn out. In other words, an idealistically motivated individual is more likely to burn out when their ideals and aspirations are not met by the realities of work (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 312). This reflects the experiences of individuals committed to a movement or cause, who over time, lose "the idealism and spirit" that once drove them to work for social change (Pines, 1994: 381 cited in Chen & Gorski, 2015: 368), a process that Schaufeli and Buunk (2003: 411-412) describe as "progressive disillusionment".

Maslach and Gomes (2006: 43) argue that social justice and human rights activists are particularly susceptible to burnout due to the deep level of understanding they have of overwhelming social conditions related to suffering and oppression. This consciousness leads to increased levels of stress, "self-inflicted pressure" to create change, and therefore the likelihood of burnout (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 43; Chen & Gorski, 2015: 368). As activism shares many of the characteristics of those in caregiving professions, such as commitment and sacrifice, it is not surprising that many activists experience burnout at some stage in their careers (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 43).

Burnout is not only a significant issue for practitioners but also for the movements or causes they are working for. When activists burn out, they not only potentially

damage their careers but deprive their organisations and movements of valuable knowledge and experience (Rettig, 2006: 16). In turn, this causes disruption, fragmentation and "wheel reinventing" that keeps agendas from moving forward (Plyler, 2009: 1; Gorski et al., 2019: 364). For example, a study by Klandermans (2003 cited in Chen & Gorski, 2015: 369-370) found that activists who leave their movements because of burnout tend not to return, impacting the movements themselves. Therefore, it is critical that early indications of burnout are recognised in order to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

2.2.5 How to prevent burnout and support self-care and effectiveness

Much of the literature focuses on the symptoms and causes of burnout and provides recommendations on how to prevent it, for example, developing self-care strategies such as work-life balance and stress-reduction techniques. These recommendations tend to be generic in nature rather than in-depth explanations of *how* they could be implemented in practice. There is little research examining the impact of specific types of interventions (such as mindfulness) or contextualised approaches that could mitigate burnout and support personal sustainability for practitioners (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 383). Brown and Pickerill (2009: 25-27), for example, argue for greater "emotional reflexivity" and "spaces" where activists can reflect on their emotional needs and commitments as part of their ongoing resistance and involvement in movements, in particular, spaces where they can experience and reflect on the emotions embedded in their actions (of protest for example) in order to better understand and construct meaning from their experiences. How this can be done in practice, however, is not discussed in detail.

It is important to note that examining the individual, intrinsic factors that cause burnout forms only part of a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Other extrinsic factors in relation to the culture of organisations and movements, such as infighting, marginalisation, and individuals not being recognised or compensated for their work, need to be addressed. Therefore, supporting individuals to address

burnout through self-care is insufficient (Gorski et al., 2019: 377). Maslach and Leiter (1997: 79, 2005: 44) have long argued that "self-improvement alone is not enough". Rather, burnout is a situational problem that must be addressed at both personal and organisational levels (Maslach & Leiter, 1997: 79, 2005: 44). For this reason, this study considers other factors (such as organisational culture, levels of managerial support, resources, sociocultural influences etc.) that may have influenced the participants' experiences of burnout, while bearing in mind that the primary aim of the study is to examine how processes such as focusing might help to address burnout and support self-care. In other words, the research focuses on the participants' internal micro-level processes while being cognisant of other macro-level factors.

So how might adult learning help address issues such as burnout and support self-care and effectiveness? And what role can transformative learning play?

2.3 Transformative learning and supporting practitioners

2.3.1 What is transformative learning?

Conceived over 40 years ago, Transformative learning theory has become an increasingly researched, multidisciplinary and continually evolving form of adult learning and education (Taylor & Laros, 2014: 135; Cranton, 2016: xi, 16; Hoggan et al., 2017: 48). It leads the way in exploring holistic approaches to teaching and learning (such as embodied, experiential and contemplative), and a commitment to a transdisciplinary, integrated approach to achieving both environmental and social change (Sipos et al., 2008: 74; O'Sullivan, 2012: 172-173; Lange, 2012: 206, 2015: 31; Hathaway, 2017: 301).

The term was first coined by Jack Mezirow (1975, 1978) in 1975, culminating in his seminal book, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Education* (1991). Since then transformative learning has come to be defined as:

> Learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets). (Mezirow, 2003: 58-59)

This process involves examining, questioning, validating and revising "previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives" that form one's personal "frames of reference" (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Cranton & Roy, 2003: 87). Mezirow (1991: 4) describes frames of reference as consisting of an individual's "habits of expectation" or 'meaning perspectives' – the "web of cultural and psychological assumptions and meaning schemes [that] function as the rules and expectations that govern our lives" (Mezirow, 1985 cited in Cranton, 2016: 17). These habitual ways of thinking or 'habits of mind' (Mezirow, 2003: 58) that have been uncritically absorbed from family, community and culture comprise one's personal paradigm or worldview and remain unquestioned unless challenged by an alternative perspective (Lange, 2015: 29; Cranton, 2016: 29).

Central to transformative learning is 'perspective transformation', where an individual becomes critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way they perceive, understand and feel about the world (Mezirow, 1991: 167). This process enables an individual's perspectives or frames of reference to become:

> more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change and integrative of experience. (Mezirow, 2000: 19)

Frames of reference with these qualities generate beliefs and opinions that are "more true or justified" in guiding one's actions (Mezirow, 2003: 58-59; Dirkx et al., 2006: 124). By learning how to act more consciously according to one's values, beliefs and perspectives, rather than those assimilated from others, an individual can gain greater control over their life as a socially responsible decision maker (Mezirow, 2000: 7-8). This transforming or deepening of the quality of awareness can lead to transformations in behaviour (Scharmer & Yukelson, 2015: 35), and these transformations can involve "epochal" or more gradual, incremental shifts over time (Lange, 2012: 203; Cranton, 2016: 27). For Dirkx (2000: 247 cited in Cranton & Roy,

2003: 92), transformation is much more the "the stuff of ordinary, everyday occurrences".

Mezirow (1978, 1991) described perspective transformation as a 10-phase process where an individual:

1. experiences a *disorienting* dilemma [italics added]
2. undergoes self-examination
3. conducts a critical assessment of internalised assumptions and feels a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations
4. relates discontent to the similar experiences of others – recognizing that the problem is shared
5. explores options for new ways of acting
6. builds competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. plans a course of action
8. acquires the knowledge and skills for implementing a new course of action
9. tries out new roles and assesses them
10. reintegrates into society with the new perspective (adapted from Mezirow, 1991: 168-169).

This process can be challenging, unpredictable, alienating and "disorienting" and involve psychological and emotional discomfort (Mezirow, 1978 cited in Kitchenham, 2008: 105). This is because becoming more "open" involves more than simply changing one's point of view, it involves shifting habitual ways of thinking and then acting differently (Mezirow, 2000 cited in Cranton & Roy, 2003: 88).

2.3.2 Why transformative learning for this study?

Transformative learning theory is an integration of research, theory and concepts from a wide variety of disciplines including developmental and cognitive psychology, psychotherapy, sociology and philosophy. It is a transdisciplinary approach to adult learning with goals and theoretical assumptions that align with the

ontological (study of the nature of being), epistemological (theory of knowledge) and andragogical (theory and practice of adult education) underpinnings of this study.

Specifically, this study draws on multiple streams of Transformative learning theory, including: psycho-critical transformative learning (*rational* approach) originally theorized by Mezirow (1991); social-emancipatory transformative learning (*emancipatory* approach) based on the work of Paulo Freire (1970); psychoanalytical transformative learning (*extrarational* approach) based on Carl Jung's work (Boyd & Myers, 1988) (Lange, 2015: 29); and Laurent Daloz's (1986) *developmental* approach (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013: 44). The power of this transdisciplinary approach is that it provides a more integrated way to explore both the complex social questions at the centre of this study and questions about transformative learning itself (Lange, 2015: 31). Although it is not the remit of this literature review to describe in detail the philosophical links of each of these traditions to the study, a brief outline of the underpinnings shared with transformative learning is provided below.

2.3.2.1 The theoretical and philosophical roots of transformative learning

Transformative learning's philosophical roots lie in constructivism, humanism and critical social theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 5). Firstly, transformative learning is underpinned by constructivist assumptions. It is primarily a process that examines, questions and revises the meaning perspectives that are "constructed" from our experiences and validated through interaction and communication with others (Mezirow, 1991: xiv; Cranton, 2016: 18). In other words, transformative learning involves examining the uncritically assimilated perspectives formed from our social environment (such as prejudices and stereotypes) with the aim of perspective transformation (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 6). This is central to the aims of this study (i.e. supporting social change through personal change) including the methods used, and my role as practitioner-researcher facilitating the coaching process. How constructivist assumptions inform the research methods are discussed in Chapter 3.

Secondly, transformative learning is underpinned by humanist assumptions such as freedom and autonomy (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 6). Mezirow was influenced by Maslow's (1970) concept of 'self-actualisation' and Roger's (1969) Client-centred therapy (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 6), which inspired Knowles's (1975) development of 'self-directed' learning, a process where one freely participates in dialogue in order to question and revise one's perspectives (Mezirow, 1985 cited in Cranton, 2016: 17). These assumptions are core to the focusing and coaching processes used in this study and are discussed in depth in sections 2.6 and 2.7.

Thirdly, transformative learning is underpinned by critical social theory where the goal is to critique the dominant ideologies in society as a prelude to changing them (Cranton & Taylor, 2012: 7). This reflects the critical ideological paradigm at the core of this study, which aims to critically examine systemic issues of social change with the ultimate goal to "challenge the status quo" (Ponterotto, 2005: 129). In this way, this study is also founded on the work of Paulo Freire (1970), Jurgen Habermas (1971) and others through Mezirow.

Mezirow saw similarities between perspective transformation and Freire's (1970) concept of 'conscientization' (Baumgartner, 2012: 102). A process where an individual deepens their awareness of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality through action (Freire, 1970: 27 cited in Mezirow, 1991: 136). For both Mezirow and Freire, critical consciousness is a "pre-requisite for liberating personal development and social action" (1978: 103).

Mezirow also drew on Habermas's (1971) three kinds of learning or learning domains – technical, practical and emancipatory learning (Cranton, 2016: 16). In essence, Mezirow equated perspective transformation with emancipatory learning and action (Cranton, 2016: 16). Emancipatory learning occurs through "critical self-awareness" or critical reflection on one's beliefs or ideological assumptions that "constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships", leading to perspective transformation or "emancipatory action" (Mezirow, 1981: 6). This process not only

involves "structural reorganisation" in the way one sees themselves in the world (Mezirow, 1975: 162 cited in Cranton, 2016: 16), but also "structural change in the social world" that provides context for one's life (Cranton, 2016: 35). In this sense, transformative learning is not "individualistic", as it uses a socially embedded understanding of individuality, but it is "progressive" in privileging change, and "interventionist" in its commitment to social change (Lange, 2015: 30). In other words, transformative learning aims to deepen awareness and create fundamental change at all levels ranging from the personal and relational, through to the institutional and global (Tennant, 2005: 103). This mirrors the aims of this study, where achieving broader social change through personal change is implicit.

2.3.3 Transformative learning as inner work

The broader context of this study lies in the field of informal work-related learning as opposed to formal work-related learning such as training and development programs, continuing professional education etc. (Dirkx, 2014). According to Dirkx, (2014: para.24):

> work-related learning occurs within a context in which work may be experienced as a sense of *vocation* or *calling* by the learner, representing the potential for evoking a deeper sense of journey that involves exploring deeper aspects of our *sense of self* and our *being in the world*, while at the same time equipping us with the knowledge and skills required of our occupational role [italics added].

In other words, for practitioners whose work may hold a deeper form of meaning, work-related learning can provide the opportunity to explore deeper aspects of one's "sense of self" and "being in the world" (i.e. how we experience and make sense of our lives), which can be understood as a kind of "inner work" (Dirkx, 2014: para.26 & 35). In this sense, learning as inner work is as much about developing a deeper understanding of one's self in the world, as it is about acquiring new skills and knowledge (Dirkx, 2014: para. 27).

In Jungian psychology, 'Self' (with a capital S), refers to the totality of psychic structures (Cranton, 2016: 40), the whole of the psychological construct that

represents both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche (Cranton, 2016: 147). This reflects today's dominant view of the self (particularly in psychology), which Tennant (2012: 4) describes as the:

> locus of our experience, thoughts, intentions, actions and beliefs…the inner psychological entity that owns our unique individual biography and our sense of coherence and continuity over time.

In this study, I use the term 'self' (with a small s) to refer to the whole person as 'me' or 'I', which encompasses one's sense of self including implicit feelings, memories, knowledge, experiences, bodily sensations etc., not just cognitive awareness. Importantly, this sense of self is not just a thing or "inner reactions", but an ongoing process of experiencing or "interactions in life and situations" (Gendlin, 1962/1997: xiv). In this way, terms such as inner self, self-care, self-awareness and self-reflection point to an individual's ability to understand and act on their circumstances (i.e. to create personal change) (Tennant, 2012: 15). These various concepts become clearer below and are discussed further in sections 2.4 and 2.5.

Transformative learning has become an increasingly popular approach to understanding forms of deep learning such as inner work (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 101). For Dirkx, transformative learning as inner work (also referred to as 'soul work') is a more integrated and holistic view of adult learning that encompasses the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of our being in the world (Dirkx et al., 2006: 125). This is reflected in the description provided by the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, where transformative learning involves:

> a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions...a *shift of consciousness* that dramatically and permanently alters our way of *being in the world* [italics added]. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to

> living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002: 11; O'Sullivan, 2012: 164)

Of particular relevance is the emphasis on transformation as a "shift in consciousness" in one's understanding of self, and how this shapes one's "being in the world" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 102). Further, as one constructs and reconstructs the meaning of their life experiences and ways of being, one becomes more conscious (i.e. one's sense of self and the world deepens) (Dirkx, 2012b: 400-401).

Dirkx emphasises the importance of working with the 'unconscious' (or less conscious aspects of oneself) in creating meaning in one's life and work (Dirkx, 2014: para. 4-5), and the role of the 'imaginal' or "emotion-laden images" in bringing what is unconscious to greater consciousness (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103; Dirkx, 2014: para. 30). This view of inner work draws on Jung's (1971) concept of 'individuation', the process by which a person moves towards "wholeness" through the recognition and integration of conscious and unconscious aspects of oneself (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103; Dirkx, 2012a: 117, 2012b: 403). Also described by Jung as the interplay of one's 'inner' and 'outer' worlds (Dirkx, 2012a: 117), where "inner world" refers to one's sense of self or "being" that exists against a landscape or backdrop of what is happening around us in the "outer world" (Dirkx et al., 2006: 126). Further, the 'I' mediates between these worlds and is more or less conscious or aware of both worlds to varying degrees (Dirkx et al., 2006: 126).

Dirk also extends the application of depth psychology to transformative learning initiated by Boyd and others (Boyd, 1989/1991; Boyd & Myers, 1988). For Boyd (1989/1991: 459), personal transformation entails "a fundamental change in one's personality involving conjointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration". This process occurs whether we are conscious of it or not. However, when we participate in it consciously and imaginatively, a deepened sense of self and an expansion of consciousness can be developed (Cranton, 2016: 40).

In contrast to Mezirow (1991), Dirkx seeks to examine the ways in which the social, cultural and embodied, including the deeply personal and transpersonal aspects of our being potentially play out in the learning process (Dirkx et al., 2006: 125). Drawing on Jungian psychology, he is interested in learning that supports integration of one's experience of their "shadowy inner world" and their experiences of the "outer world" (Dirkx et al., 2006: 126). In this way, the path of self-understanding (or understanding of one's inner world) is intimately bound with one's being in the world (or outer world), not apart from it (Dirkx et al., 2006: 129).

The integration of one's inner and outer experiences and aspects of oneself is the domain of learning that is the focus of this study. Although Jung's concept of individuation has become an important way of understanding transformative learning theory (Cranton, 2016: 72) and this study draws heavily on Dirkx's concept of inner work as transformative learning, the concept of individuation is not explicitly built or expanded upon. As a Focusing-oriented practitioner-researcher, my knowledge and skills predominantly lie in Focusing theory and practice, not Jungian psychology. I feel my understanding of focusing and how it can support inner work can provide a greater contribution and is therefore the focus of this study.

2.3.4 Inner work for those working to create change

As mentioned in Chapter 1, nurturing personal development (or inner work) is needed to develop the emotional and psychological maturity (or shifts in consciousness) required to adapt to radically complex, unpredictable and long-term threats (O'Hara, 2006: 114; Selby & Kagawa, 2018: 3). This is particularly the case for those working to create change who have to learn how to address feelings such as grief, hopelessness and despair (Macy 1989, 1991 cited in O'Sullivan, 1999: 35-36) in order to sustain their passion and commitment to their work.

Kovan and Dirkx's (2003: 101) study into the role of learning in sustaining the commitment of environmental professionals working for non-profit organisations, suggests that:

> an *openness to change* is at the heart of sustained commitment, along with personal evolution, integration, and reflection. In other words, a deep, profound form of *ongoing learning* appears to be at the core of sustained commitment. Being guided by vocation and sustaining commitment and passion appear to be linked to the *inner work* of the self [italics added].

Further, central to the activists' inner work is:

> a process of juggling *hope* and *despair* [italics added], an unconscious interplay of emotions that seems to propel them onward in their work and further fuels their passion. The [activists] describe this interplay of emotions as an inner experience that at times manifests outwardly, such as experiences of hitting the wall. (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 113)

These experiences of "hitting the wall" or of deep stress associated with burnout, can paradoxically lead to deep learning. For example, some learnt how to "let go" and experience hope, while others learnt to recognise their needs and how to care for themselves (Kovan & Dirk, 2003: 112-113). For Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 114), this journey of transformation reflects the process of individuation or the "gradual unfolding of the self" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 114).

Moreover, the activists' journeys were characterised by learning to observe and listen to the images that came to populate their consciousness or arose from the "pieces of [their] being", rather than critical reflection or self-analysis (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). This involved a "kind of contemplative attitude, a letting go, listening deeply to their being in the world and seeing what has previously been unseen and unknown" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). In other words, "a deep, dialectical engagement" or dialogue between the conscious and unconscious aspects of their inner and outer worlds, enabled the activists to differentiate their sense of self from the broader "collective" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). It is through this deep dialogue that individuals can gain a better understanding of themselves in such a way that their

role, position, and sense of self within the broader collective, can be more consciously articulated (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012: 47). The question arises then, how might this inner work or deep dialogue be supported? In particular, how might more holistic and other ways of knowing/learning support this inner work?

2.4 Transformative learning and other ways of knowing

2.4.1 The call for more holistic and other ways of knowing

Since the Enlightenment and the emergence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, empirical knowledge and cognitive, rational thinking processes have been privileged, and "non-cognitive" ways of knowing and learning that involve the body, emotions, imagination, intuition and so on have tended to be marginalised (Dirkx, 2008: 11; Lange, 2012: 199; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012: 44; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012: 120). In discussing how to move from this mechanistic view of the world, Lange (2018: 283) argues that "rationalism, reductionism, empiricism, mechanism, dualism, and causality" still influence how transformative learning is understood by maintaining this mind/body, reason/emotion split (Lange, 2015: 30).

Mezirow has long been criticised for providing too much emphasis on rational thinking processes (Clark & Wilson, 1991: 82; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 102; Gunnlaugson, 2007: 137; Mälkki, 2012: 211; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012: 132; Tennant, 2012: 116; Cranton, 2016: 17), for overlooking the importance of bringing experience into "extra-linguistic awareness" (Yorks & Kasl, 2002: 181), and for ignoring the role of intuition, symbols and images in learning (Cranton, 2016: 17). However, he eventually acknowledged the importance of the affective and emotional aspects of transformative learning (Cranton, 2016: 17), concurring that "most of the process of learning occurs outside of awareness and may include emotional, intuitive, symbolic, imaginistic and/or contemplative modes of learning" (Dirkx et al., 2006: 124). However, he was keen to emphasise that a "metacognitive application of critical thinking" is central to transformative learning (Dirkx et al., 2006: 124). In other words, 'critical reflection', or the critical examination of one's epistemic assumptions

and expectations, remained the "linchpin of Mezirow's ideal of discourse" (Gunnlaugson, 2007: 135). For Mezirow, this is key to preventing transformative learning from "becoming reduced to a faith, prejudice, vision or desire" (Dirkx et al., 2006: 133), thus bringing the debate full circle.

Consequently, there have been calls for more holistic or whole-person (Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 1997, 2008; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Yorks & Kasl, 2002, 2006; Freiler, 2008; Barnacle, 2009; Podger & Reid, 2010; Lawrence, 2012: 6; O'Sullivan, 2012: 173; Taylor & Laros, 2014: 144; Cranton, 2016: 39; Lange, 2018: 292) approaches to learning that are more integrative, relational and where these dualistic distinctions are not so pronounced. This has led to an increased interest in other ways of knowing and learning, such as:

- experiential (Gendlin, 1978/1981, 1996; Michelson, 1998; Fenwick, 2000, 2003; Krycka, 2006; Jordi, 2011; Ikemi, 2017; Walkerden, 2002, 2005, 2019)
- intuitive (Ruth-Sahd & Tisdell, 2007; Lawrence, 2012)
- presentational or expressive (Heron, 1992; Yorks & Kasl, 2006, 2012)
- unconscious or imaginal (Dirkx, 2000, 2006, 2008, 2012a; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Clark & Dirkx, 2008)
- embodied or somatic (Clark, 2001; Freiler, 2007, 2008; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015; Selby & Kagawa, 2018)
- contemplative (Scharmer & Varela, 2000; Hart, 2004; Robinson, 2004; Gunnlaugson, 2011; Byrnes, 2012; Ettling, 2012; Tisdell & Riley, 2019).

Although these various approaches have been separated for simplification purposes, they all have numerous epistemological, ontological and pedagogical commonalities. Fenwick (2003), for example, discusses the "re-embodying" of experiential learning, and Tisdell teaches contemplative practices such as mindfulness, meditation and embodied learning from an experiential perspective (Tisdell & Riley, 2019: 15).

2.4.2 Experiential and embodied ways of knowing and learning

> "It is through my body that I understand other people." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 186)

Despite there being a long-standing and increasing interest amongst the Transformative learning community in more contemplative, embodied, extrarational and holistic approaches to learning (Cranton & Roy, 2003; Hart, 2004; Robinson, 2004; O'Hara, 2006; Clark & Dirkx, 2008; Sipos et al., 2008; Netzer & Rowe, 2010; Gunnlaugson, 2005, 2007, 2011; Byrnes, 2012; Dirkx, 2000, 2006, 2008, 2012; Ettling, 2012; O'Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012; Yorks & Kasl, 2002, 2006, 2012; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015; Hathaway, 2017; Lange, 2012, 2015, 2018; Selby & Kagawa, 2018), there remains a gap in the literature addressing how these approaches can be more effectively supported in practice. In particular, there is limited published research that explores 'embodied learning' (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015: 216-217).

2.4.2.1 What is embodied learning and how is it different?

The framework in Table 2.1 (Jackson, 2017: 259) provides an outline of the ontological, epistemological and practice considerations when discussing concepts such as embodied and experiential, and how they differ from other learning perspectives.

Table 2.1 – Contrasting embodied and classical perspectives

An embodied perspective	A classical perspective
Ontology	
Holistic, continuous 'being-in-the-world'	Dualistic (mind/body)
Epistemology	
Phenomenological, relative, subjective, implicit	Objective, rational, scientific, explicit
Praxis	
Experiential, personalised, narrative, fluid	Expert, didactic

Discussed largely within experiential learning theory (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015: 216), embodied learning is generally referred to as:

> a broader, more *holistic* view of constructing knowledge that engages the *body* as a site of learning, usually in connection with *other domains of knowing* (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic, cultural, rational). Direct engagement in an experience of guided imagery and visualisation that connects mental *images*, bodily *sensations*, and reactions can be interrelated with other domains of knowing [italics added]. (Freiler, 2007, 2008: 38)

Like other areas of learning, embodied or experiential forms of learning have suffered from the same problems of "disembodiment" (i.e. the mind/body split), where experience has primarily been subject to rational, critical consciousness-raising (Fenwick, 2003: 124-125). However, by incorporating other domains of knowing (such as affective, imaginal etc.), embodied learning is a more holistic and integrative approach to learning that can help address issues related with dualisms, especially the privileging of cognitive and rational forms of thinking. In this way, it has the potential to be more effective in enabling the changes or actions that may arise from shifts in perspective. As Gendlin (2018: 68) explains:

> One can say something about oneself which one understands quite well, and which one feels ought to be different; yet there's no change. One's feelings and behaviour remain as they were, even though one can now explain the problem, trace its origin, and show why and how the change is desired. (Gendlin, 2018: 68)

He further adds that:

> it is possible to make some seemingly convenient statement, explication, or value-conclusion which might state what one feels or wishes or desires, but which lacks the signposts of *experiential* explication [italics added]. In this case it is quite likely that much of what is felt (and thus much that is important in living situations with others) has not been carried further… (Gendlin, 2018: 77-78)

In other words, an individual might be able to explain the root causes of their problem or situation, but this does not guarantee change, while having an embodied or experiential understanding increases the potential for changes in action or behaviour to occur. According to Gendlin (2018: 68), this is the "experiential

difference". Change that is bodily felt has a different character from change that is only experienced as a shift in conceptual understanding or perspective. A shift in perspective may stem solely from assimilating new information, while change that is experienced bodily, "registers along broader lines than cognition alone" (Krycka, 2012: 1). Although both processes are kinds of change, embodied change (that is felt from the inside) can be more generative than change that only involves shifting existing schema or concepts (Krycka, 2012: 1).

2.4.2.2 What do embodied learning processes involve?

There are innumerable descriptions of embodied learning and the lack of consensus regarding the use of language makes discussion and understanding across disciplines difficult. For instance, Freiler (2008: 39) defines embodied learning as:

> a way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in *bodily experiences* and inhabiting one's body through a *felt sense* of being-in-the-world. It also involves a sense of connectedness and interdependence through the essence of *lived experiencing* within one's complete humanness, both body and mind, in perceiving, interacting, and engaging with the surrounding world. Simply stated, embodied learning involves being attentive to the *body* and its *experiences* as a *way of knowing* [italics added].

Here, Freiler (2008: 39) is pointing to one's direct experience or "felt sense of being-in-the world" as a way of knowing or constructing knowledge that pays special attention to the "body and its experiences". This definition and use of terms such as the 'felt sense' seems to align with the way experience is described in the Focusing community. However, engaging with emotions or "emotion-laden images" through experiential or 'extrarational' approaches, seems to be more commonly used within the Transformative learning community, where extrarational refers to ways of knowing and learning that move beyond reliance on rationality to include emotions, symbols, archetypes, stories and imagination (Lange, 2015: 30; Cranton, 2016: 39). Dirkx (2008: 15) describes embodied learning as:

> a way of *experiential knowing* that "depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language and our social history" (Varela et al.

> 1991: 149). This approach stresses the importance of somatic awareness and recognizes the body as a source of knowledge about one's self and one's relationship to the world. Embodied learning is characterized by a *strong emotional* or *feeling dimension* (Merriam et al. 2007). Emotions convey a deep and intimate connection with our world, and this connection is often manifest neurophysiologically through the body [italics added].

Here Dirkx emphasises the importance of bodily awareness and the role that emotions play in embodied learning. This is because transformative learning is often associated with strong, emotional experiences that reflect unconscious meaning-making processes (Dirkx, 2006: 23). These experiences and their associated learning are as significant and real to individuals as any intellectual achievement or mastery of a particular content area (Dirkx, 2006: 23).

Similar to Frieler, this approach also views experience as a verb – "a state of being in felt encounter" (Yorks & Kasl, 2002: 184). In this sense, emotions are an aspect of experiential knowing, which can be conceptualised as its own way of knowing (Yorks & Kasl, 2002: 184). This view differs from the more generally accepted understanding of experience held by Mezirow (1991, 2000) and others, including Kolb (1984), Jarvis (1987) and Boud (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993; Boud & Miller, 1996). Influenced by the pragmatist understanding of experience, the reflection-oriented constructivist perspective (Fenwick, 2000: 248) views experience as a noun – "a resource that can be catalogued, objectified and reflected on", and transformed into meaning (Yorks & Kasl, 2002: 180). In other words, when brought into consciousness and reflected on, experience "is *not* the direct sensation of felt encounter but is the *meaning* that we make of that encounter" (Yorks & Kasl, 2002: 181).

In contrast to Mezirow, Dirkx and others argue for the "centrality of emotional processes" in transformative learning (Dirkx, 2008: 16), where emotions represent "expressions and ways of coming to know one's unconscious self" (Dirkx, 2008: 15). By learning how to observe and express the "emotion-laden images" that

spontaneously populate one's consciousness (Dirkx, 2003; 2012a: 116, 124), individuals can learn to work through "unconscious psychic conflicts and dilemmas" in order to foster transformative learning (Dirkx, 2006: 16).

The experience of these "dimly perceived images" (like dreams) can often be difficult to fully articulate through words (Dirkx, 2006: 24). Dirkx (2006: 20) describes the need for language that can better facilitate a "conscious dialogue and relationship with those aspects of the psyche" that are expressed through emotion-laden images, that is, a need for language and process that can facilitate dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, or what is emerging into explicit awareness on the one hand and non-conceptual, embodied experiencing on the other.

Gendlin's philosophy of the implicit (Gendlin, 1962/1997, 1997a) and his experiential method for Focusing-oriented psychotherapy (Gendlin, 1996) provide a theoretical framework and methodology that can support this learning process. Although not commonly discussed within the field of adult learning, Gendlin's model relates intimately to embodied experiential learning (Jordi, 2011: 182). How this model can support transformative learning is discussed below.

2.5 Developing a Focusing-oriented approach to transformative learning

> "Focusing… is uniquely suited to our turbulent times when so many old forms are crumbling and old roles are vanishing. Most of us are having to invent, discover, and create the next steps of our lives without a light, a map, or a relevant tradition. We are trying to keep apace of rapidly changing technology, trying to understand ourselves and our relationships, seeking ways to be well, looking for meaning in our work and a new centre of gravity within ourselves." (Ferguson, 1980 cited in Gendlin, 1978/1981: xiii)

2.5.1 What is focusing?

Emerging from the philosophical traditions of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), John Dewey (1859-1952), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Richard McKeon (1900-

1985), Eugene Gendlin (1926-2017) developed a philosophy of the implicit (Gendlin, 1962/1997) and applied it to the client-centred therapy work he was doing with Carl Rogers in the 1950s and 60s (Hendricks, 2002: 222, 2007: 271).

Gendlin's research and philosophy was primarily used to build the practice of Focusing-oriented psychotherapy, referred to as Focusing-oriented therapy (Gendlin, 1996: 4). It differs from most other forms of experiential psychotherapy in the explicit use of one's directly felt, bodily experiencing (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 254). Focusing-oriented theory defines this process as bodily sensed or *embodied* experiencing (Gendlin, 1962/1997, 2018; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 253-254). According to Gendlin, human beings *are* their process of experiencing – the 'felt sense' of life as it is in the present moment (Gendlin 1961, 1964: 10; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 254). Our physical bodies are always in interaction with situations and the environment (Hendricks, 2002: 223; Hendricks, 2007a: 272; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 254), which we experience as a *felt* process of concrete, ongoing events: experiencing is the process of "concrete, bodily feeling, which constitutes the basic matter of psychological and personality phenomena" (Gendlin, 1964: 105).

Gendlin (1962/1997) also provided the concept of the 'lived body' as ongoing unfinished process (Madison, 2014: 31) or 'body-environment' as one continuous occurring (Krycka, 2012: 5). We are always living freshly, even at our most repetitious (Walkerden, 2005a: 245). As Gendlin (1996: 13) explains, "every bit of human experience has a possible further movement implicit in it. Human experience is never complete. It is never just as it appears. It never consists only of already-packaged things".

Gendlin approached the field of therapy with this philosophy of experiencing. In seeking to understand why some individuals benefited from psychotherapy and others did not, he found that it wasn't the mode of therapy or *what* the client talked about (i.e. content about family, relationships, past events etc.) that made the difference, but *how* they talked about the content (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 3-4). Clients

who benefited from therapy were able to pay attention to their implicit experiences or to "sense themselves inwardly" (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 5). They could "make contact with a special kind of internal bodily awareness" that he called the 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 11) or "direct referent" (Gendlin, 1996: 19). They were able to focus on their vague, inner bodily felt sense of some problem, concern or situation, and describe this sense in words or images (Hendricks, 2007a: 271). They would slow down, become less articulate and "grope" for words to describe something they were feeling in the moment (e.g. "hmmm…how can I describe this? I have this funny feeling in my stomach…it's…um…it's not exactly anger…uhm…") (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 4-5).

Gendlin (1978/1981: 4, 1996:1, 2004: 4) called this "mode of inward bodily attention" to bring what is vague and unclear into focus 'focusing'. Focusing is inherently an explication of meaning or sense-making (Hendricks, 2007: 44), an unfolding of a new story, a carrying forward of life and a different way of living (Ikemi, 2010: 116). Jaison (2014: 71) describes focusing as a process that supports:

> a gentle, friendly "attitude" that encourages the focuser to "pay attention to" and "keep company with" the organic, holistic felt sense of any experience: 1) because the felt sense can give us information that has more to it than just relying on the intellect and cognitive mind alone, and 2) because through deep listening to what the body has to say, we are able to have a bodily felt shift in how we carry the issue around (inside) – what focusers often refer to as the aha! experience.

Importantly, this process of gently listening to the bodily felt sense of a problem or situation brings with it a sense of relief, meaning and forward movement (Hendricks, 2007a: 271). As Gendlin (1996: 15) explains:

> …every experience and event contains *implicit further movement*. To find it one must sense its unclear edge. Every experience can be *carried forward*. Given a little help one can sense an *"edge"* in the experience more intricate than one's words or concepts can convey. One must attend to such sensed edges because *steps* of change come at those edges [italics added].

This process of paying attention to a bodily felt sense or "edge" and following the experiential steps that emerge from it are the subtle, moment-by-moment *micro-processes* that occur within a focusing session (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 263).

2.5.1.1 An example of a focusing process

The following example from Ann Weiser Cornell's book, *The Power of Focusing* (Weiser Cornell, 1996), which provides a practical guide for those new to focusing, demonstrates how focusing can be facilitated. Weiser Cornell provides an example of Jenny who was suffering from a choking sensation in her throat whenever she needed to speak up about herself (for example, in interviews or presentations). The more important the situation, the more strongly she felt the choking sensation. She had tried therapy to address the problem without success. Weiser Cornell felt that she would benefit from focusing, as her body was already speaking to her. The following transcript is adapted from this example (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 2).

> Ann asks Jenny if she is feeling the choking at that moment.
>
> Jenny: Yes. I can feel it. It's here now because I'm learning a new technique with you, and I feel I have to do well.
>
> Ann asks her to describe what it feels like. Jenny looks a little surprised and says,
>
> Jenny: Choking of course!
>
> Ann asks her to go back to the sensation and check the word "choking" to make sure that word is the right word for how it feels. She looks thoughtful,
>
> Jenny: Actually…it's more like a hand squeezing.
>
> Now Jenny's eyes are closed and she is concentrating inwardly. Ann asks her to gently say hello to the hand squeezing sensation.
>
> Ann: Just say hi to it, "yes I know you are there".
>
> This was a completely new attitude for her.
>
> Jenny: I've never sort of looked it in the eye before. I've tried to get rid of it.
>
> So this new attitude took a while to find, but when she did there was a definite sense of bodily relief.
>
> Jenny: It's still there, but it's not painful anymore. It's almost like, now that it has my attention, it doesn't need to hurt me.

Then Ann asks her to imagine that she is sitting down with the sensation as she would sit with a friend, curious about how the friend is feeling. Jenny is silent for several minutes, eyes closed, sensing. Then her eyes open in astonishment.

Jenny: Wow. I *never* dreamed it would say something like that. That's really amazing.

Ann waits, knowing she will tell her the rest in her own time. In a moment, Jenny speaks again.

Jenny: It says…it says it cares about me! It says it's just trying to keep me from making mistakes!

Ann: And how does it feel now?

Jenny: The choking or squeezing is completely gone. My throat feels open and relaxed. There's a good warm feeling spreading through my body. This is really amazing. I never thought it would change like this!

This example demonstrates the process of learning to listen to one's body in a gentle, accepting way, becoming aware of the subtle knowing that speaks through the body, and hearing the messages from one's felt sense.

Readers who are unfamiliar with embodied processes, focusing or working with the felt sense, may wish to read or take part in a short experiential exercise provided in Appendix A before continuing to the next section (2.5.2) on the felt sense.[2]

2.5.2 What is the felt sense?

Gendlin (1996) describes the experience of the felt sense or an experiential step as having eight characteristics:

2 The exercise in Appendix A aims to provide an understanding of what it is like to engage the felt sense, clarifies the language used and deepens understanding of characteristics of the felt sense and the focusing processes used in the coaching sessions described in this study. A further example of the use of focusing within a therapeutic context is provided in Appendix B. It is based on Gendlin's (1978/1981) six steps or 'inner acts', which he developed as guidelines for focusing. You can also visit The International Focusing Institute website for more information and an example by Lynn Preston and Joan Klagsbrun.

1. *The felt sense is sensed directly*

The felt sense forms at the "border zone" or "edge" between the conscious and unconscious where it can be sensed directly (Gendlin, 1996: 16). For example, if a strong emotion such as anger or sadness comes, one can focus on the inward sense of which that emotion is a part (e.g. that sad place or that angry place). Or if an image "pops" into one's awareness, one can sense the qualities or characteristics of the image, which are more than just a visual image. This felt sense may be unclear (or "dimly perceived"), an inner understanding that is not conceptual and may be difficult or impossible to describe. This sense is always much richer than words can say (Gendlin, 1996: 17). The following brief exercise, adapted from Gendlin's book, *Focusing* (1978/1981: 38-39), helps to illustrate this sense of knowing.

> Think about a loved one, a member of the family or friend. An image of that person may appear, which is accompanied by a whole felt sense of that person or how that person is to you (e.g. how they make you feel, your relationship, experiences together etc.). Now think of another person and notice how your sense of that person is completely different. Notice how your sense of the person doesn't come to you as bits of information or thoughts but as a *whole* sense of that person, which comes all at once and is *bodily felt*. Also notice that your felt sense has aspects or qualities of emotion, but it is not an emotion. It is much larger, complex and more difficult to describe than that.
>
> You could describe this person, what they look like, their qualities, characteristics indefinitely, but those words would not be able to fully describe your felt sense of that person. You could continue to describe this person in new and fresh ways, but no amount of detailed description will ever fully capture the whole felt sense you have of that person. This whole sense is implicitly felt and known in the body.

2. *The felt sense is at first unclear although it is unique and unmistakable*

The experience of sensing this edge, border zone or implicit source is always vague and unclear at first, although it is unique and unmistakable (Gendlin, 1996: 24). In some instances, the edge may not emerge for some time and an individual may tend to keep on talking (in a therapy session for example), especially if they are not practiced in paying attention to their body or if they feel uncomfortable with silence.

In this way they "stay outside of themselves" (Gendlin, 1996: 17-18). However, if one pauses and waits, this unclear edge or felt sense can start to form (Gendlin, 1996: 18).

The felt sense is distinct from recognisable emotions or familiar feelings (Gendlin, 1996: 17). It is neither strong emotion nor is it just thinking (Hendricks, 2007: 41), nor is it just an image or body sensation (Gendlin, 1996: 19). One could imagine it to be like the sensation of remembering and thinking about a dream one has just had and trying to describe this dream to a friend (similar to the exercise above). One's felt sense of the dream includes images, feelings, thoughts, vague sensations and more, which may at first be unclear and difficult to describe. Although the felt sense can come with any of these images, feelings, and sensations, and can also lead to any of them; it differs from all of them in that it is a bodily sensed whole of a situation, problem or aspect of one's life (Gendlin, 1996: 20). That is, you have a *whole* felt sense (discussed further at point 4 below) of the dream as you try to remember it.

This distinction is important, especially when the same kinds of concepts and language are used within the experiential and extrarational approaches to transformative learning described in the previous section. For example, although images can advance the focusing process, images alone are not the felt sense. Indeed, it is possible to be "seduced by a series of fascinating images" so that one can forget about one's body and just watch a sort of "inner movie" without feeling its connection to the felt sense (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 67). Moreover, "body-felt images" that are *in* the body (e.g. I see a tied knot in my stomach) differ to visual images that are in the "mind's eye" (e.g. I see my mother's face) (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 67). So, although images can help one engage with the felt sense, an image or series of images are not the felt sense itself. This is also the case for emotions as described in the short exercise above and discussed further in section 2.5.2.1.

3. The felt sense is experienced bodily

The felt sense is experienced bodily "as a physical, somatic sensation" (Gendlin, 1996: 18). Gendlin (1996: 18) felt that the middle of the body around the chest, throat

and/or stomach area was a good place to start sensing inwardly. This bodily sensation is sensed inwardly, which may at first appear to be a physical sensation such as a tightness in the chest or a tingling in the stomach. However, other Focusing practitioners such as McEvenue and Fleisch (2008: 179) have demonstrated that the felt sense can be sensed anywhere in the "whole body".

Due to our cultural mind/body dualisms, we tend to refer to "physical" and "body" as external sensations split off from our inner sense of ourselves (Gendlin, 1996: 19). To ask someone what their bodily felt sense of a situation is, may seem like a strange question. For example, if you were to ask someone what their felt sense of their dream or a loved one was, it may take some guiding and explanation to move beyond how one *feels* (in terms of emotions) and *thinks* about a situation, to a bodily felt sense of it. The felt sense is not already there as a bodily-sensed object but will (in its own time) appear as something fresh and new (Gendlin, 1996: 20).

4. The felt sense is experienced as a whole

The felt sense or "felt know-how" is inherently holistic – the sense of the whole of what we experience as relevant – the whole situation (Walkerden, 2019: 10). It is more than just an inner or "gut feeling" (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 80) but a bodily knowing of a whole complex situation, problem or concern that is more than could ever be described in words (Hendricks, 2007: 43). This sense of an intricate, complex whole is something that one *has* that one can attend to, but it is not something that one *is* (Gendlin, 1996: 20). Also, a *whole* sense doesn't mean it is complete or omniscient. Just as a person can sense that they are not their anger or sadness about a situation, one can focus on the felt sense as something in and of itself – "something that is there" (Gendlin, 1996: 20).

Sometimes having a felt sense comes with a feeling of relief, "as if the body is grateful for being allowed to form its own way of being as a whole" (Gendlin, 1996: 20). It is the relief that comes when one brings that implicit something into explicit understanding and awareness – "oh, that's what that is", for example, the sense of

relief that comes when you remember someone's name you had forgotten. As you try to remember, you both know *and* don't know the name, which can feel frustrating (among other feelings, thoughts and sensations) as you sense the whole of the person and situation. When you suddenly remember, you may have an "ahhh, that's it" moment, and a sense of relief may come with that.

5. Change steps arise from the felt sense – it shifts and opens step by step

The felt sense of a situation has a finely organised implying of steps or forward movement in some "right" way (Hendricks, 2007: 43-44). When one feels that a word or image expresses the felt sense most precisely, an inner sense of forward movement is experienced – a 'felt shift' (Porat & Bar-Natan, 2013: 1). For example, in trying to remember someone's name, the felt sense or 'felt meaning' is enough for us to indicate we know the name (Gendlin, 1962/1997: 76). One may try different names or words to describe one's sense of the person. As you try out each name you concentrate on the "feel" or sense of the name as being correct or incorrect, and as you continue to use different names you *step* closer to the right name. Once you have found the right name, a "felt knowing", realisation or *shift* occurs, like an 'aha' moment. This "experiential shift" is felt directly (Gendlin, 2018: 70) and can bring with it a sense of relief, an easing of tension, tears or deepening of the breath (Hendricks, 2007: 42). As Gendlin beautifully explains, a felt shift:

> transforms the whole constellation. It might be a big dramatic step or a very small one, but it is a change in the nature of the whole. Such a change or *"shift"* is experienced unmistakably in the body. One has a sense of continuity; the sensed whole is altering. (Gendlin, 1996: 20)

The experience of a felt shift is what facilitates change in unhelpful patterns or ways of being. In other words, insights that are accompanied by a felt shift increase the ability to function in everyday situations from a less patterned or habitual place (Porat & Bar-Nathan, 2013: 2). Indeed, the micro-process of forming a felt sense and allowing it to explicate, is in itself a "new" kind of sequence, which involves pausing the "usual patterned" ways of behaving and feeling (Hendricks, 2003: 5). In this way,

focusing can help to change an individual's core cognitive schemas and belief systems – or transform assumptions and frames of reference (using Transformative learning theory language).

In addition, engaging the felt sense helps to integrate "new material" into an individual's belief system, which lessens the possibility of it being forgotten, reinforcing ownership of the new information as it is now *felt* as part of one's own belief system (Hendricks, 2007: 45). In a physiological sense, Berry (2006 cited in Hendricks, 2007: 44) explains it as:

> the combination of cognition, affect, and sensation, which are all part of the felt sense *"activation"* that engages the biological system in encoding new ways of interpreting events and situations. Thus, the changed cognition directly experienced bodily in the moment is more likely to carry forward into new situations, having a *transformative* effect [italics added].

In other words, engaging the felt sense not only enables transformation to occur, but is more likely to provide the conditions for the felt sense to be carried forward as changes in ways of being, consciousness and behaviour.

6. A step brings one closer to being oneself

When one gains a felt sense of the whole of "something that is there" (Gendlin, 1996: 20), one can sense the difference between 'me' and 'it'. In other words, the process of felt sensing enables one to differentiate that they are neither their felt sense (Gendlin, 1996: 21), nor their emotions, feelings or thoughts that may be associated with it. Krycka and Ikemi (2016: 262) refer to this as "experiential distance". This experience of distance can support an individual to become more deeply themselves (Gendlin, 1996: 21). This idea of becoming more deeply oneself is closely aligned with Dirkx's concept of individuation as "becoming who we truly are" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103), and Cranton and Roy's (2003) idea of becoming one's "authentic self".

7. *Steps are in a direction of growth*

For Gendlin (1996: 21), an experiential step has its own "growth direction". When a person's "inward self" expands and develops, the 'I' becomes stronger – it "comes more into its own" (Gendlin, 1996: 21). As he explains:

> …[a person] develops when one's hopes and desires stir, when one's own perceptions and evaluations carry a new sureness, when the capacity to stand one's ground increases, and when one can consider others and their needs…It is development when something stirs inside that has long been immobile and silent, cramped and almost dumb, and when life's energy flows in a new way (Gendlin, 1996: 21-22).

Clearly, this has implications in supporting an individual working to create change who may be suffering from burnout, where in coming more into their own, one may become more hopeful, more self-assured in being with others, in particular with those who may not share their values or beliefs. This in turn may help to address the root causes of their burnout and in the process improve their resilience and effectiveness as a practitioner.

8. *Steps can only be explained retrospectively*

The felt sense or an experiential step cannot be predicted or inferred in advance (Gendlin, 1996: 23). What comes is often a surprise to the person doing the focusing and also to the person listening (Hendricks, 2007: 43). However, once a step or felt shift has occurred, *how* it occurred and its relation to a problem or situation can be reflected on retrospectively (Gendlin, 1996: 23). According to Madison (2009: 188), focusing enables one to notice how their implicit feeling gives rise to explicit content, and how there is:

> always a "more than" hazily surrounding anything explicit. Reflecting upon bodily-felt experiencing in an open phenomenological way can lead to shifts in bodily comportment, often accompanied by insights into self *and* world. Focusing is a way of paying attention to our being-in-the-world.

This idea of reflecting on our bodily-felt experience of one's "being-in-the-world" reflects the descriptions of experiential knowing and learning by Frieler, Dirkx and others mentioned in the previous section.

The conceptual precision of Gendlin's philosophy, in dialogue with Focusing practice, yields rich insights into areas of human experience, consciousness and learning that can help to inform adult learning theory and practice. How this occurs in practice is the focus of this study and is discussed further below.

2.5.3 How focusing and the experiential method can support adult learning

> "Gendlin is careful not to set himself up as another expert; he wants his philosophy to point us back to ourselves. His message is empirical and not another doctrine. The intention is to help break the hegemony of received meanings so that the source of thinking can be found." (Madison, 2014: 29)

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, adult learning and education has either been slow or, in some cases, has failed to take advantage of the rich stores of knowledge about other ways of knowing generated in therapy fields (Yorks & Kasl, 2006: 46). This is also the case for coaching, which is discussed in section 2.6. This may in part be due to a concern about maintaining a clear distinction between education and therapy, and a lack of skill development in facilitating experiential learning processes (Yorks & Kasl, 2006: 46). Further, even though an individual may have an "adult learning experience" in therapy, it is often framed as "therapy" and not learning (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015: 228). However, as Gendlin's research demonstrates, clients can learn to cultivate their awareness of their bodily felt sense as a source of *knowing* (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015: 228). Concepts such as the felt sense and felt shift can provide learners with the kind of language needed (as called for by Dirkx, and mentioned in section 2.4.2.2) to "articulate implicit intricacy and thereby find the meaning and small steps of change that carry life forward" (Hendricks, 2007: 46). This clearly has implications for how focusing can more effectively support transformative learning and practitioner know-how (the focus of this study).

Although Focusing-oriented theory and practice were developed within therapeutic discourses, Gendlin's philosophy and phenomenology of experiencing offers a framework and methodology that intimately relates to embodied learning. As Hendricks (2007: 42) argues, while Focusing-oriented therapy is itself an orientation (Gendlin, 1996; Wiltsco, 1996; Leijssen, 1998; Hendricks, 1986, 2002; Friedman, 2004; Wagner, 2006; Rappaport, 2010; Purton, 2010; Weiser Cornell, 1996, 2013; Madison, 2009, 2014a, 2014b; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016; Ikemi, 2010, 2017; Hirano, 2019), any therapeutic orientation (e.g. Jungian psychoanalysis, existential therapy, Gestalt therapy etc.) can be practiced in a "focusing-oriented" way if the approach pays attention to the individual's bodily felt sense (Hendricks, 2007: 42). In other words, focusing enables therapeutic avenues, modalities or procedures within different orientations (e.g. the use of imagery, role play, dreams, emotions, movement) to be facilitated in an experiential way (Gendlin, 1996: 170; Hendricks, 2007: 46). In this way, all avenues can lead to a felt sense and from the felt sense "the next step can come as words, an image, an emotion or an interpersonal interaction" (Gendlin, 1996: 171).

2.5.3.1 The difference between working with emotions and the felt sense

Images and emotions are not the felt sense. As mentioned at point 2 above (the second characteristic), one's felt sense of a dream (or situation), for example, can include images, emotions, thoughts, and more. However, the felt sense differs from these in that it is a bodily sensed *whole* of the dream or situation (Gendlin, 1996: 20). As such, simply feeling emotions as part of an experiential process cannot change the pattern from which they arise (Hendricks, 2007: 43). This is because emotions are *part* of the pattern that generates it. So, although "getting in touch with one's feelings" and facilitating processes that enable expression of emotions may be useful, this is not the same as paying attention to or working with the felt sense. Indeed, an individual may experience strong emotions, yet a shift or change in the patterned way of thinking/feeling that is associated with the emotions may not occur. In

contrast, when one can form a felt sense of the whole situation, new possibilities for carrying forward are implicit that do not exist within the usual patterns (Hendricks, 2003: 6).

This is an important distinction, especially when many personal development theories about "personality change" involve some kind of "intense affective or feeling process" (Gendlin, 1964: 103). This is particularly the case within transformative learning, which is often characterised by the experience of strong emotions (Dirkx, 2006: 23). For example, one aspect of the imaginal method described by Dirkx (2012: 125) that seems to be most similar to a focusing process is "animating" the image. This involves the learner entering into an "imaginal dialogue" with an image or issue (Watkins, 2000; Dirkx, 2012a: 125). Similar to focusing, this process enables an individual to identify and connect with aspects of themselves they were previously unaware of, and "befriend powerful aspects of their inner lives and establish relationship[s] with unconscious psychic content" (Dirkx, 2012a: 125).

Dirkx suggests two ways to facilitate this process. The first involves a written dialogue that invites the image to respond and where the learner is encouraged to simply record what enters into consciousness (Dirkx, 2012a: 125) – a kind of "free-writing" process (Dirkx, 2006: 24). However, without sufficient scaffolding (such as guiding that supports inward attention and moving from storytelling to felt sensing), an individual may simply describe how they feel or what they see, describing an "inner movie" (as previously mentioned) without feeling its connection to the felt sense (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 67) or experiencing a felt shift.

The second involves a role-play scenario where the learner "personifies" the image, initiates dialogue with the image as though it is "speaking back", and then reflects on the dialogue and associated emotions (Dirkx, 2012a: 125). Similarly, without sufficient scaffolding (e.g. asking questions that support the learner to engage the felt sense), the learner may ask themselves questions to which they already know the

answers. In this way, they may be "forcing words or images *into* a feeling" rather than "letting them flow *out*" of the feeling, in effect preventing freshly felt insight from occurring (Gendlin, 1978/81: 68). In contrast, the words that flow *out* of a feeling or felt sense are the kind that can produce a bodily felt shift (Gendlin, 1978/81: 68).

2.5.3.2 Supporting more holistic, creative and open ways of knowing

Gendlin proposed that felt sensing is both an innate ability that everybody has and a *skill* that can be learned and developed. He felt that this skill can enable anyone to find and change parts of their life where they feel "stuck" in order to live from a place that is more than just one's habitual thoughts and feelings (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 4). Felt sensing is inherently *holistic*, *creative* and *open* to what may come next (Walkerden, 2009: 253). Having an "holistic feel for what is needed", implies being sensitive to what is possible, including possibilities for action (Walkerden, 2005: 175; 2019: 10), and being sensitive to one's situation can help to deepen insight and improve the creativity and appropriateness of one's actions (Walkerden, 2005a: 16). In other words, the process of felt sensing enables individuals to work primarily from *how* situations feel, rather than from *what* one's conceptual models might say, and this is what deepens professional learning and practice (Walkerden, 2005: 180).

Importantly, practitioners can be trained to think and reflect in this way (Walkerden, 2019: 15). Building on Schön's (1983/1991; 1995) description of 'reflection-in-action', Walkerden (2005: 177) argues that having the ability to engage the felt sense and explicate felt meaning underpins skilful professional practice. Working from felt meaning "opens the way to a fluidity and openness in thinking that is unimaginable in the canons of technical rationality" (Walkerden, 2005: 179). It can also enable "logic [to] generate powerful inferences far beyond what can be found directly from experiencing" (Gendlin, 2018: 292). This in part helps to address problems associated with mind/body, rational/non-rational thinking dualisms previously discussed.

By placing holistic, felt understanding at the centre of one's learning, the openness and flexibility one experiences is foregrounded (Walkerden, 2019: 11). This enables

individuals to be more open to ideas, dialogue and collaboration with others (Walkerden, 2005: 179) and directly supports creative action in working to address complex problems (Walkerden, 2019: 17). Further, teaching people skills in how to work with their felt sense can build their ability to wait in a space of uncertainty or "not knowing" as the next steps emerge (Walkerden, 2019: 15). This is of particular relevance to change practitioners who are often working in highly complex, uncertain, politically charged situations, and where the next steps are unknown.

2.5.3.3 Supporting personal and social change

In addition to supporting individuals to live from a deeper place of knowing and improving professional practices, focusing can also act as a force for social change (Hendricks, 2003). When an individual's ability to "pause the ongoing situation and create a space in which a felt sense can form" is supported, their capacity to think for themselves increases, freeing them from emotional manipulation by external authority, cultural roles and ideologies, and the internal oppression of self-attacking and shame (Hendricks, 2003: 1, 2009: 151). Supporting an individual's capacity to work from their felt sense of a situation builds reliance on their own sensibilities rather than on an authority's (Walkerden, 2019: 11), making them less vulnerable to oppression and less susceptible to "we" groupings or generalities (Hendricks, 2003: 2). As focusing practice deepens, they become better attuned to identifying what is an emotional, culturally determined response to (or an uncritically assimilated perspective of) a situation, and what is from the wider felt sense of a situation from which the "right" next steps may come. They become aware and therefore more reluctant to act in ways that may violate the person "in there" (Hendricks, 2003: 8).

Focusing also develops a gentle, curious attitude or approach to self and others that enables the kinds of change needed in the world. In the same way that "what we resist persists" – or as Jung originally contended that "what you resist not only persists, but will grow in size" (Kelly, 2019: 1292), an approach to ourselves and others that is more open, gentle and non-judgemental in order to develop

relationships that can enable change for both self and others is needed. Krycka (2012) proposes a model of personal and social change or what he calls "peacebuilding from the inside". He argues that:

> a deeper understanding of the role embodied intelligence can play in social change is vitally important if we are to be successful in creating and maintaining a more just and sustainable world. (Krycka, 2012: 1)

This is because change that is bodily experienced – *embodied change* that is felt from the inside – is more *generative* than change that involves a change in thought alone (Krycka, 2012: 1). He argues that none of the current models of thinking and learning about social change can hold complexity and promise adequately, and in ways that are responsive, open and creative (Krycka, 2012: 10). This is because the kinds of hierarchical structures (including conceptual, epistemological and pedagogical) that have been created to solve our "wicked" problems do not support *openness* to "experience as it is" (Krycka, 2012: 4). The qualities of felt sensing support a new logic of knowing, deep listening and presence that can support social change in any context (Krycka, 2012: 8).

2.6 Coaching for personal *and* social change

> "As coaches, we can be expected to coach with more perspective, depth, courage, and compassion, from a perspective that bears witness to the larger social, economic, and environmental conditions and trends in the world... What is the alternative – especially in this globally intimate, climate changing, ecologically endangered, and socially unstable world?" (Raines, 2007 cited in Outhwaite & Bettridge, 2009: 76)

2.6.1 The case for coaching

In a time where there is a greater need for support at all stages of professional development (Barr, 1998: 182), coaching is now considered a powerful tool for workplace learning (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 11) and for improving personal effectiveness more generally (Bachkirova et al., 2018: xxix). Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014: 3, 12) found that coaching within an organisational context has

significant positive effects on performance and skills, well-being (including reductions in absenteeism and burnout), work and career attitudes, and self-management. Importantly, in an increasingly globalised and hyper-complex world, coaching can help build the capacity for self-reflexivity as a key to understanding one's place in the world or social "dis-order" (Stelter, 2014: 17). By "slowing down" and reflecting on one's values, aspirations, dreams and hopes, issues such as exhaustion, burnout and depression can be addressed (Stelter, 2018: 331). This helps to explain the growth in practices such as coaching that can provide this kind of personal support and development (Stelter, 2014: 17).

2.6.2 What is coaching?

There are numerous approaches to coaching (such as performance, executive, leadership, workplace, career, developmental, life and so on) and therefore many definitions. However, coaching is broadly considered to be a learning activity (E. Cox, 2015: 28) that aims to address personal and professional concerns in order to improve personal effectiveness and satisfaction (E. Cox, 2015: 28; Grant & Green, 2018: 348). Coaching approaches that focus on the developmental aspect of adult learning (i.e. career/life) are the focus of this study, in contrast to more directive coaching approaches (such as performance, executive or sports coaching).

The International Coaching Federation[3] (n.d.) defines coaching as "a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires [clients] to maximise their personal and professional potential". Leading international academics Bachkirova, Cox and Clutterbuck (2018: xxix) define coaching more specifically as:

> a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the client and potentially for other stakeholders.

[3] https://coachfederation.org/about

Grant (2003: 253-254) defines coaching, in particular personal or life coaching as:

> a collaborative solution-focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, nonclinical clients.

Here, he refers to "non-clinical" clients as those who do not present with "clinically significant problems" (Grant & Green, 2018: 349). This leads to an ongoing debate within the coaching community regarding the difference between coaching and therapy, which is clearly pertinent to this study.

2.6.2.1 The difference between coaching and therapy

Grant (2014: 23), Cavanagh and Buckley (2018: 451) and others are keen to clarify that while coaching may involve addressing unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour, coaching is not therapy. Even though coaching draws significantly from psychology and psychotherapy disciplines, it differs from therapy in that it is inherently outcome or "goal focused", whether it be building skills, improving performance, or facilitating personal or professional development (Grant & Green, 2018: 348), rather than about ameliorating issues related to psychological problems (Grant, 2014: 23). However, Joseph (2018: 61) is keen to point out that this distinction "reflects the pervasive medical model" that views helping people in distress as being different to helping people improve their well-being. The development of terminology to grade people along a spectrum (e.g. from clinical to non-clinical) is a social construction grounded in "a medical model and ideology of illness" (Joseph, 2018: 61). For Joseph (2018: 61), a 'person-centred' approach to learning has no theoretical boundary between coaching and therapy (discussed further in section 2.6.4).

This is not to say there are no differences. However, it is generally acknowledged that the boundary between coaching and therapy is imprecise, fluid and "blurry" (Cavanagh & Buckley, 2018: 451; Cox et al., 2017: 140). For Grant and Green (2018: 348), developmental coaching, in particular, is like "therapy for people who don't

need therapy", but who instead require a supportive environment where they can explore their issues and concerns. Even though a coach may work with an individual who is feeling anxious or depressed, their aim is not to diagnose or directly address potential mental health issues (Cavanagh & Buckley, 2018: 453; Grant & Green, 2018: 350). Instead, a coach needs to identify their limitations concerning particular issues (such as anxiety or depression), whether or not coaching can help, and whether it is in the best interest of the client (Cavanagh & Buckley, 2018: 453 & 462). If such issues start to inhibit the coaching process, then the coach needs to ascertain if a referral to a suitable mental health professional is required (Cavanagh & Buckley, 2018: 462; Grant & Green, 2018: 350).

A similar distinction between adult learning and therapy was also held by Mezirow (1981: 205), who believed that although transformative learning needed to address "distortions in psychological as well as epistemic and sociolinguistic meaning perspectives", adult educators are not conducting therapy. At the same time, he believed that educators can act in a way that supports "essentially healthy learners deal with life transitions" (Mezirow, 1981: 205). In this way, educators can provide both the emotional support and theoretical insight (especially regarding sociocultural constructs) necessary to help learners address psychological distortions in their meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1981: 205). These views have clear implications for how coaches can work with the psychological and emotional discomfort often associated with transformative learning, and with practitioners who may be suffering from issues such as anxiety, burnout and depression as a result of their work.

2.6.3 The theoretical foundations of coaching

Being a relatively new area of practice, there is no established theoretical foundation for coaching. Instead, coaching has philosophical and theoretical roots in a range of disciplines including sociology, adult education and learning, psychology and psychotherapy, management, and human and organisational development, to name

a few (E. Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014: 139; Bachkirova, 2017: 28; Bachkirova et al., 2018: xxxii). Despite the experiential nature of the coaching process, experiential learning theory and practices are not well-researched in the Coaching literature. Conversely, coaching has not been widely examined in either the experiential or Transformative learning literature (Potter, 2017: 16).

Bachkirova et al., (2018: xxxi) acknowledge the problems and challenges in trying to differentiate coaching from other practices such as therapy, as they share similar aims. Creating a unique identity for coaching is therefore a difficult and potentially unsolvable problem. The authors also acknowledge that the eclectic use of theory has led to criticisms of coaching as being atheoretical (Cox et al., 2017: 140). However, they are keen to emphasise that their view of coaching is underpinned by three foundational theories of adult learning, including Mezirow's (1991) Transformative learning, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning and Knowles' (1978) andragogy (Cox et al., 2017: 147; Bachkirova et al., 2018: xxxiv). These theories help to define the coach–client relationship and the principles that are core to the coaching process, in particular the role of experiential learning and self-determination (discussed below and in the following section).

Firstly, experiential learning emphasises the central role that personal "concrete experience" plays in the learning process in contrast to more analytical and cognitive ways of learning (Kolb, 1984, 2015: ch.2 para.2). It is the role of the coach to facilitate experiential learning by building on the learner's experience and the needs arising from that experience (E. Cox, 2015: 36). This process generally follows Kolb's four stages of the learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Bennett & Campone, 2017: 104). An example of the four stages could include: identifying and defining an issue, exploring goals and obstacles, developing and implementing actions, and reflecting on experience to re-evaluate those actions (Bennett & Campone, 2017: 106 & 115).

Secondly, transformative learning reinforces the principle or concept of 'self-determination' or 'self-direction' in the learning process (E. Cox, 2015: 27; Bennett & Campone, 2017: 115). The concept of 'self-directed learning' developed by Knowles (1975) (also mentioned in section 2.3.2), represents a process where the self-directed learner freely participates in dialogue in order to question and revise their perspectives (Mezirow, 1985 cited in Cranton, 2016: 17). As such, coaching can be viewed as a 'learner-' or 'person-centred' approach to learning, involving dialogue that integrates experiences, concepts and observations in order to support understanding, direction and action (E. Cox, 2015: 30; E. Cox et al., 2017: 148). In this way, a person-centred approach to coaching can be a powerful tool for enabling transformative learning and change.

2.6.4 How a person-centred approach to coaching supports transformative learning

Like transformative learning, the goals of coaching are inherently linked with those of humanism. Both take a person-centred approach in emphasizing the needs of the individual and helping the individual realise their fullest potential (Gregory & Levy, 2013: 285). The emergence of coaching has reinvigorated interest in the person-centred approach, however, according to Joseph (2018: 62), the majority of coaches don't fully appreciate the philosophical underpinnings of the approach with its intention to foster self-determination. This approach to coaching builds on Rogers (1951), Habermas (1971), Knowles (1984) and Mezirow (1991).

Rogers (1951) introduced a new approach to therapy, referred to as 'non-directive' therapy in the 1940s, and renamed 'client-centred therapy' in the 1950s to emphasise that direction of the process comes from the client (Joseph, 2018: 52-53). In being non-directive, the therapist is always following and helping to clarify the direction of the client (Joseph, 2018: 53). This approach was then extended to other areas of learning beyond therapy, including coaching, where it became known as the person-centred

approach (Joseph, 2018: 53). According to Rogers (1980: 115), the central hypothesis of this approach is that:

> individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviour; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.

Unlike some therapeutic approaches, the person-centred approach does not aim to "diagnose", "heal", "fix" or "repair" (Joseph, 2018: 61). Instead, the coach trusts the client (also referred to as the 'coachee' in this study) to be their own expert and to find the directions that are best for them. This enables the coach to embody an empathic, non-judgemental and unconditional regard (similar to the focusing attitude), because he/she trusts the coachee to find their own way forward. These three conditions are congruent with the concept of "autonomy support" – central to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000; 2008), which encourages the use of the client's "inner resources" (Joseph 2018: 60) such as choice, self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2017: 12) and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 234). This involves the therapist (or coach) providing a non-demanding and non-controlling environment (Ryan & Deci, 2017: 12) where they are simply "present" for the client, while acknowledging and respecting their perspectives (Ryan & Deci, 2017: 435). In this sense, a person-centred approach to coaching intentionally aims to foster the client's self-determination (Joseph, 2018: 54 & 62). For example, clarifying meaning with non-directive questions that arise from active listening (as opposed to asking for information) is a process that respects the self-determination of the client (Joseph, 2018: 61). In other words, it is through an ongoing supportive and collaborative process that a client's inherent actualizing tendencies and motivation for personal change are facilitated (Ryan & Deci, 2017: 427 & 435). How focusing can support a person-centred approach to coaching is discussed in section 2.6.8 below.

Influenced by Rogers, Knowles argued that self-direction – the capacity for an individual to take responsibility for their own decisions and not to be influenced by

others, could be developed as part of the learning process (Knowles et al., 2011 cited in Coxb, 2015: 29). A non-directive approach to coaching considers the coachee to be "a mature, motivated, voluntary, and equal participant" in a learning relationship with a coach whose role is to support the achievement of his/her self-determined learning objectives (Rachal 2002 cited in Cox, 2015: 27).

Habermas's (1971) concept of emancipatory knowledge, which is gained through a process of critically questioning oneself and the social systems in which one lives, is dependent on an individual's ability to be self-determining *and* self-reflective (Cranton, 2016: 10-11). As mentioned in section 2.4, Mezirow (1991) built his theory of learning on Habermas's idea of emancipatory knowledge, where the central role of critical self-reflection and discourse is to enable perspective transformation (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 23; Cranton, 2016: 10-11). The emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of one's "culturally induced dependency roles and relationships" (Mezirow, 1981) can provide a new sense of personal responsibility and agency leading to actions for change as part of the coaching process (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 33). This can potentially involve painful, *disorienting* experiences and emotional discomfort (Mezirow 2006: 124; E. Cox, 2015: 35) as one struggles to make sense of and embed a new narrative about oneself (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 121). Importantly, this requires the coach to provide a safe place and be a "trusted travel companion" for the coachee on their journey of transformation (Daloz, 1999; Jackson & Cox, 2010 cited in Hanssmann, 2014: 25). In other words, the aim of coaching is not only to support critical self-reflection but to provide a safe, non-judgemental space for the coachee to explore their self-directed process in order to improve both goal attainment and well-being (Grant, 2003: 259; Theeboom, van Vianen, & Beersma, 2017: 2).

2.6.5 Transformative approaches to coaching and social change

Coaching theorists have started to recognise that coaching is also a powerful means for understanding how the needs of the world and the needs of the individual are connected (Outhwaite & Bettridge 2009: 76). As Shoukry (2017: 177) explains:

> Social change starts by internal steps such as *empowerment* of the self, dismantling dysfunctional beliefs, and gaining inspiration and authenticity (Harro, 2000). *Emancipation* becomes a personal project that involves a transformation within the individual that results in social change. Coaching interventions can play a role at the heart of the tension between *individual agency* and *social structure*. Coaching can act as an enabler for *personal transformation* and *action*, supporting individuals in understanding how society is shaping their experience and their beliefs, and in acting to change their immediate and wider social conditions [italics added].

Although coaching may be a potential enabler of both personal and social transformation, there is limited research into coaching as a social process (Shoukry, 2017: 176 & 183; Shoukry & Cox, 2018: 425) and little research that examines the explicit links between coaching and transformative learning (Sammut, 2014: 39). Further, although transformational learning is widely acknowledged within coaching, little is known about how such learning can be achieved in practice (Hanssmann, 2014: 24; Moons & Kingdom, 2016: 45). There are, however, a few established approaches to coaching that are founded on Transformative learning theory, including transformative coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Sammut, 2014; Wellbelove, 2016), transformational coaching (Smith & Hawkins, 2018), and coaching for transformation (Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels, & Brown, 2011; Plantener, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, Susan Askew and Eileen Carnell's (2011) transformative coaching approach was used as a framework for the coaching process. This is primarily because it draws heavily on Transformative learning theory, and because of the explicit links it makes between individual self-reflection and broader systemic change, and its emphasis on emancipation and empowerment. Although other approaches point to the need for a holistic understanding of change,

their emphasis tends to be on personal rather than social change. Shoukry's (2016; 2017) coaching for social change and Snorf and Baye's (2009) coaching for climate change are exceptions. However, their theoretical links to adult learning are not as well-founded.

The term 'transformational coaching' is used liberally in non-academic sources and therefore can be misleading due to its numerous interpretations and applications (E. Cox, 2015: 22). However, according to Askew and Carnell (2011: 4), for coaching to be transformative, there needs to be an emphasis on self-reflection that leads to perspective transformation. This involves changes in one's self (i.e. in one's assumptions, beliefs etc.) not just in one's situation or in attaining coaching goals (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 4; E. Cox, 2015: 35). Further, building one's capacity for self-reflexivity is key to understanding one's personal and professional role in an increasingly complex world (Stelter, 2014: 17). Indeed, becoming critically conscious of issues of self-identity and power in the workplace is of particular significance to practitioners working in the area of climate change (Sarewitz 2004: 386; Hart and Nisbet, 2012: 702), for example, recognising how one's beliefs about climate change are associated with political orientations. By helping practitioners to connect what they do with a sense of purpose that is situated within a broader social-historical-political context, individuals can learn to transcend their self-identities (Sparrowe and Olin, 2005: 427). This can be particularly challenging for individuals whose identities are strongly tied to their work (Snorf & Baye, 2009: 65). Therefore, coaching can support individuals by providing a sense of continuity between who they are and who they are "becoming" (Ibarra and Barbulascu, 2010: 136). In this sense, transformative coaching takes learning from an individual, psychological endeavour to a psychosocial endeavour in which learning occurs with the help of others (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 122).

2.6.6 The call for more holistic and embodied approaches to coaching

Although there is a vast amount of research into how change is supported within other fields such as psychology, psychotherapy and adult learning, insights into coaching processes within the literature are fragmented (Theeboom et al., 2017: 2). Moreover, concepts such as the body, embodiment and physicality have largely been absent (Jackson, 2017: 256). For example, in the recently released *Complete Handbook of Coaching*, there is only one brief mention of embodied learning (Smith & Hawkins, 2018: 235). Accordingly, there are calls within the Coaching community for more holistic approaches that engage all domains of learning, including experiential and embodied ways of learning (Longhurst, 2006: 72; Drake, 2011: 139; Hanssmann, 2014: 25; Jackson, 2017: 256; Jackson & Cox, 2018: 219).

Numerous coaching approaches that do already employ more holistic, embodied and experiential ways of learning are growing in popularity (Goldman Schuyler, 2010: 22; Attan, Whitelaw, & Ferguson, 2018: 17). Some of these include:

- integral coaching (Hunt, 2009; Snorf & Baye, 2009),
- somatic coaching (Strozzi-Heckler, 2014),
- ontological coaching (Sieler, 2018),
- presence-based coaching (Silsbee, 2008),
- mindful compassionate coaching (Hall, 2015),
- coaching for emancipation or social change (Shoukry, 2016; 2017: 176),
- third generation coaching (Stelter, 2014),
- experiential-existential or embodied coaching (Madison, 2012: 118).

Refer to Appendix C for a brief description of each of these approaches.

A number of these approaches use similar concepts, terms and processes to those used in Focusing theory and practice. However, it cannot be assumed that how these are defined and understood is shared. Although some of these approaches may

employ experiential or embodied learning processes, they may not explicitly work with the felt sense or employ focusing as described by Gendlin. For example, working with the felt sense in focusing is not the same as working with somatic experience (Krycka, 2014: 55). Further, any acknowledgment of embodied learning generally refers to how coaches might recognise and facilitate embodied shifts, such as "aha" or "critical moments" (Longhurst, 2006; de Haan & Nieß, 2012; Kets de Vries, 2013; Moons & Kingdom, 2016: 47-48). For example, Smith and Hawkins (2018: 232) describe the moment of transformation as a "shift in the room", where the coachee experiences an embodied change in perspective that encompasses a fundamental shift in their way of thinking, feeling and behaving. The focus is on how the coach can provide the "conditions" for these transformative shifts to occur (e.g. developing an empathic, compassionate orientation) or on "stages" of the transformative coaching process (Smith & Hawkins, 2018: 236), rather than on micro-level examination of the felt process. So, how might focusing processes better support transformative learning as part of the coaching process?

2.6.7 How a Focusing-oriented approach can support the coaching process

> "Focusing… is optimistic. It is based on the very positive expectation of change. It doesn't envision a human being as a fixed structure whose shape can be analysed once and for all. It envisions a person as a process, capable of continual change and forward movement." (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 77)

As mentioned in section 2.5, Gendlin's philosophy and phenomenology of experiencing offers a framework and methodology that intimately relates to embodied learning. Moreover, because focusing (like listening) is a skill and not a therapeutic technique (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 1), any modality, including coaching, can be practiced in a focusing-oriented way (Hendricks, 2007: 42). Although many clients who come to coaching are not expecting a therapeutic process, focusing offers a safe non-therapeutic alternative that can support an individual to move forward if they find themselves feeling "stuck", without the need for the coach to ask questions

about stories or past events. Indeed, Gendlin's notion of putting the client's lived experience as interaction first, frees the coach from having to understand the content of a client's story (Krycka, 2014: 58). This is not to say that critical reflection on the root causes that may be influencing a situation cannot be discussed after a focusing session as part of the coaching conversation.

This is an important distinction, especially in relation to the debate about coaching and therapy, where a large proportion of the coaching community believes that "emotional processing" should not be used as part of the coaching process (Vaughan Smith, 2007: 42). According to Vaughan Smith (2007: 42), the coach works with the client's thoughts and associated feelings but does not seek to explore the source of the feelings. This clearly presents a problem for a transformative approach to coaching where engaging with uncomfortable or strong emotions may form part of the transformative learning experience. As such, a Focusing-oriented approach to coaching can support transformative learning in the following ways.

Firstly, a Focusing-oriented approach *is* a person-centred approach (Gendlin, 1996: 301). As previously discussed, the humanistic values of acceptance, congruence and positive regard are core to the approach (Gendlin, 1996: 297; Hendricks, 2007: 44; Krycka, 2014: 54). These values are derived from Rogers' (1980: 115) three relational conditions or attitudes of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence, which he felt must be present to create a "growth-promoting climate". 'Congruence' refers to situations where the coach (or therapist) is being their most transparent, genuine or real self in the relationship (Rogers, 1980: 115). 'Unconditional positive regard' refers to the coach's experience of a positive, accepting and unconditional attitude for whatever the client *is* in the moment (Rogers, 1980: 116). 'Empathic understanding' refers to where the coach accurately senses the feelings and personal meanings the client is experiencing and communicates this understanding to the client. This involves actively listening with real understanding and true empathy (Rogers, 1980: 116). According to Hendricks (2007a: 272):

> …the most important idea about Focusing-oriented therapy is that the therapist relates to the client as a person *"in there"*, knowing that a client is never reduced to (or exhaustively explained by) any theory… The touchstone at every point is the client's felt experience, which stirs from inside and/or in response to the therapist. Because the therapist does not judge, the client is, therefore, safe to articulate his/her implicit intricacy. The words and symbols that arise directly from the client's body sense often surprise the client and therapist, and are small steps, which carry forward the client's life. This way of working with the client is inherently *kind* and *respectful*. Clients are *safer* when the therapist is sensitive to the felt sense, regardless of the therapist's orientation [italics added].

By relating to the person "in there", a Focusing-oriented approach is inherently genuine and non-judgemental, which helps to create a safe and respectful space for the client (Hendricks, 2007: 44). As Gendlin (1996: 287) points out, the person "in there, struggling, trying to live" is not their traits, experiences or "the content". An unconditional positive regard is for the "embattled person in there, not for the stuff" (Gendlin, 1996: 287). This aligns with a person-centred approach to coaching where developing an empathic, congruent, respectful and unconditional positive regard for the client is key (Rogers, 1957: 827; Vaughan Smith, 2007: 19 & 36; Joseph, 2018: 54).

Secondly, 'active listening' that requires close and careful attention to the client's direction (Joseph, 2018: 61) is fundamental to effective coaching. According to Friedman (2004: 25), "listening is focusing's fraternal twin" and both are ways to pay attention to and make contact with the client's experiencing process. A Focusing-oriented approach can transform listening into *experiential* listening for both the coach and the client, where what is said goes beyond content and "deeper into the body's feeling response to what is said" (Madison, 2014: 18). Further, 'reflective listening' – where the coach "takes in" (or senses) what the client is saying and reflects the words back "bit by bit" (or the sense of what was said), is central to manifesting this attitude of empathy and unconditional positive regard (Gendlin, 1996: 297). In this way, these qualities can have a "concrete effect" (Gendlin, 1996: 297) when the client feels they are being listened to in a genuine way.

Thirdly, focusing, like active listening, is a process that respects the self-determination of the client (Joseph, 2018: 61), and is *non-directive* in that the listener closely follows the client's process (discussed in section 2.6.4). Like the person-centred approach, a Focusing-oriented approach to coaching is non-directive in that any suggestions (such as an invitation to offer an idea, conduct an exercise etc.) are offered as invitations that the client can choose to accept or not accept depending upon how it feels for them.

Fourthly, focusing provides a pathway for individuals to work with emotions in a different way that is also safe and gentle (previously discussed in section 2.5.4.1).

Finally, focusing supports forward movement. Although focusing is not inherently "future-focused" as coaching is, it is congruent with the forward movement of coaching (Vaughan Smith, 2007: 38). However, whereas coaching encourages forward movement primarily through dialogue, goal setting and offering emotional support (Grant & Green, 2018: 352-353), focusing enables forward movement through the felt sense (discussed in-depth in section 2.5.2).

2.7 Chapter summary

As this literature review demonstrates, there is a pressing need for research into more effective learning processes that can better support practitioners working to create change. It also highlights a number of gaps, which this study aims to address.

Firstly, there is a need for research that examines more holistic approaches to learning that help address issues such as burnout, anxiety and despair in relation to social change. This needs to be conducted in a holistic way that considers all levels from the personal to the sociocultural, and not in isolation.

Secondly, there is a need for micro-level research that examines embodied, experiential ways of knowing and learning within the domain of adult learning. In particular, research that demonstrates *how* embodied processes can better support transformative learning within coaching. This includes exploring processes (such as

focusing) that can better facilitate an individual's inner work or dialogue between their conscious and unconscious, or what is emerging into explicit awareness on the one hand and non-conceptual, embodied experiencing on the other. The overarching aim of this study is to explore the confluence of these research gaps through the lens of a Focusing-oriented approach to coaching.

3. Research design and methodology

3.1. Chapter overview

This chapter details the research design and methodology of the study. Firstly, it provides an overview of the research design, the stages of the research and methods used. Secondly, it describes the theoretical and epistemological framework and methodological approaches used to guide the research. Finally, it describes how the methods were used to conduct the research, including ethical considerations.

3.2 Overview of the research design and process

3.2.1 Research design

The overall research design was developed according to Crotty's (1998: ch.1) four basic elements of the research process. This involved examining and describing the epistemological and theoretical perspectives that informed the methodologies, which guided the choice of methods. How these elements interacted and informed each other is outlined in Figure 3.1 (adapted from Carter & Little, 2007: 1317).

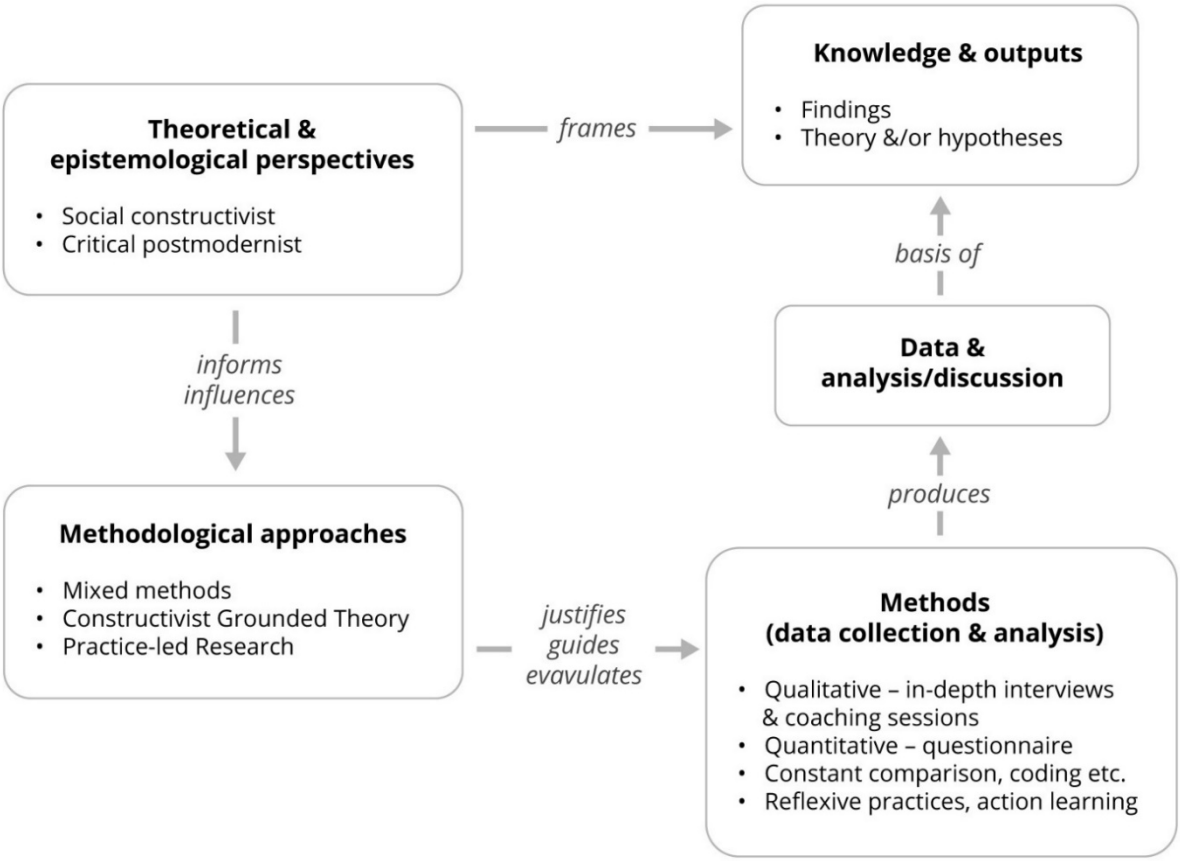

Figure 3.1 – model of the research

The theoretical and epistemological perspectives of social constructivism and critical postmodernism informed the choice of three methodological approaches – Practice-led research (Haseman & Mafe, 2009), Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010) and Mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). These approaches informed and guided the choice of qualitative and quantitative methods used.

3.2.2 Overview of stages and methods used

The research was designed to be conducted in three stages involving three main methods of data collection: an online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and coaching sessions as outlined in Figure 3.2 below:

Stage 1 (2016)	Stage 2 (2017)	Stage 3 (2017-18)
• questionnaire of practitioners	• interviews with practitioners • interviews with coaches/ therapists	• coaching sessions with practitioners conducted by myself as practitioner-researcher
How focusing processes used within a transformative coaching context helped to address burnout and support the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners.		

Figure 3.2 – research stages and methods

Stage 1 – questionnaire

Stage 1 involved conducting an online questionnaire that aimed to ascertain what challenges practitioners face (including experiences of burnout), and what kinds of support (e.g. networks, coaching etc.) they feel have helped them in the past and will need in the future. It was expected that this would help contextualise the research by providing a richer picture of the participants' work/career situations.

Stage 2 – interviews

Stage 2 involved conducting semi-structured interviews with practitioners and coaches and with therapists who work with and/or support change practitioners. The

primary aim of the interviews with practitioners was to ascertain the learning and change outcomes they have gained from participating in a coaching process. This involved discussing the challenges faced by the participants in their workplaces, the kinds of support they have found helpful over the course of their careers, and their experiences (if any) of engaging in a coaching process. The interviews were designed to provide information to help orient the research and inform the coaching process used in the study. They were also a valuable source of information to better understand the experiences of practitioners across professions (e.g. activist, sustainability manager, social entrepreneur) and grounded the coaching dialogue in this more nuanced understanding.

The interviews with coaches explored what they feel is needed to more effectively support change practitioners, including the kinds of methods and techniques they have found to be effective in supporting the learning and change of their clients, what specific challenges they think clients face in their organisations and how they could be better supported.

Stage 3 – coaching sessions

Stage 3 involved conducting coaching sessions with practitioners over an 18-month period. These aimed to examine the transformative learning experiences that occurred as part of the coaching process, with particular attention on the role of focusing in supporting these changes. A finer-grained description of the transformative learning process and the role of focusing as part of the participants' self-care and effectiveness journeys emerged from these sessions.

3.3 Theoretical and epistemological perspectives

The theoretical and epistemological perspectives that underpin the research align with the paradigms that underpin the transformative learning and coaching theories and practices that the research aims to build upon. Careful attention to these underlying perspectives and paradigms, and how they influenced the choice of

methodological approaches and methods, was critical to developing research that was in service of personal and social change (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013: 69; Mertens, 2015: 4).

Central to the research was, firstly, a 'critical ideological' paradigm, where the aim is to examine and understand systemic issues of environmental and social change (Ponterotto, 2005: 129). This paradigm is situated in 'critical postmodernism', which combines the worldviews of critical theory and postmodern scholarship (Gephart, 2004: 457). According to Gephart (2004: 457), critical postmodernism:

> describes dominant and subordinated meanings, displays the *power* implications of meanings, and encourages *critical reflexivity* to make people aware of the constraints on their own meanings and actions [italics added].

Secondly, the research was founded on 'interpretive' or 'social constructivist' perspectives (Creswell, 2014: 8), which aim to uncover, describe and interpret the meanings people use in real situations (Gephart, 2004: 457). Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997 cited in Kim, 2006: 2). It is founded on the premise that knowledge, and therefore meaning, is socially and culturally constructed (Crotty, 1998: ch.3; Prawat & Floden, 1994: 37; Kim, 2006: 3), and that learning is a social process, where knowledge is constructed by the learner (Prawat & Floden, 1994: 37; Kim, 2006: 3). In this way, each individual constructs their own unique experience of reality and sense of meaning (Kim, 2006: 6; J. Raskin, 2002: 2).

In practice, this leads the researcher to rely on the participants' views and sense of a situation. In other words, the meaning of a situation is formed or constructed through interaction with the participants and through the norms that operate in their social worlds (Creswell, 2014: 9) and so it was important to address both the research process and my role as practitioner-researcher (P. Jarvis, 1999) from this perspective. For example, this required being sensitive to how my background and relationship

with the participants shaped their experience of the research process (Creswell, 2014: 9), and in particular the coaching process. Importantly, this sensitivity was supported by the various principles central to transformative coaching, transformative learning and focusing such as self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975; Cranton, 2016: 17) as discussed in sections 2.6.3 and 2.6.7.

Finally, the research is *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*, and *interpretivist* (mentioned above) in that it primarily aims to better understand the kinds of learning and change that can occur. The aim was to examine how focusing processes might be used within a coaching context to support transformative learning and change, rather than to measure "cause-effect" relationships (Jackson, 2005: 48). The research did not aim to measure or prove whether the learning and change was "transformative"; rather, it aimed to generate a rich picture of the transformative learning process by describing the participants' journeys in detail.

3.4 Methodological approaches and methods

Three methodological approaches were used to guide and inform the research – Practice-led research (Haseman & Mafe, 2009), Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010) and Mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). Certain aspects were drawn from each approach according to their strengths, specifically:

- Practice-led research was used to inform: a) how the coaching sessions were developed and conducted; b) how the sessions could be used to gather a variety of data and evoke new knowledge; and c) how my own reflective practice as practitioner-researcher could improve my effectiveness in these roles (Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Gray, 1996; Gray & Malins, 2004; Smith & Dean, 2009; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Walkerden, 2009);
- Constructivist grounded theory was used to: a) explicitly describe how the theory was developed from experiential data and in real time; and b) provide rigorous methods for collecting, coding and analysing the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Turner, 1981; Charmaz, 2014; Dick, 2007; Lingard, Albert, & Levinson, 2008; Charmaz & Bryant, 2010); and

- Mixed methods was used to guide: a) the choice of quantitative and qualitative methods and how they were conducted; and b) a more holistic and accurate understanding of the research question (Creswell, 2014: 242; Woolley, 2009: 7; Ponterotto, Mathew, & Raughley, 2013: 47).

It was expected that employing these approaches would encourage new insights and knowledge to emerge that may not have occurred if any one of the approaches were used in isolation (Kincheloe, 2001: 687; Teram, Schachter, & Stalker, 2005: 1129; Yee, 2010: 16).

3.4.1 How mixed methods informed the research

A mixed methods approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the research problem and inform the choice of methods in conjunction with the other two approaches, which were also guided by the critical, social constructivist perspectives that underpin the research. The inclusive, pluralistic and complementary nature of mixed methods enabled a richer choice of methods to conduct the research and analyse the data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17), which suited the exploratory nature of the study.

According to Mertens (2015: 3), a mixed methods approach to research is required to address the "wicked problems" (such as climate change, social inequity etc.) we face today. As researchers we have the potential to contribute to social change and mixed methods can be used as a tool for such change (Mertens, 2011: 195). For example, mixed methods can help to provide an holistic and critical understanding of the systemic issues that influence an individual's life experience and hence support empowerment (Ponterotto et al., 2013: 48).

Mixed methods research has become increasingly popular within the human and social sciences (Creswell, 2014: 4 & 238) and has become widely accepted as a separate, third methodological approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: ix; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007: 112) that helps to address the long debated qualitative and quantitative "paradigm wars" (Gage 1989 cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:

ix) by offering a logical and practical alternative (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17). Mixed methods research can be defined as:

> the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17; Johnson et al., 2007: 120)

Integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods takes advantage of the strengths of each to produce findings that have the potential to be greater than the sum of their parts (Woolley, 2009: 7).

The research question is fundamental to guiding the method selection. Here the social constructivist nature of the research (i.e. asking what and how) can be effectively answered through mixed research solutions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 18). Mixed methods provide ways to consider structures and processes, establish relationships between variables and explore the reasons behind these relationships, and thereby, ways to bridge micro-macro levels of social analysis (Bryman, 1988, 1992 cited in Woolley, 2009: 8). In other words, the flexibility inherent in mixed methods can result in a more holistic and accurate understanding of the social phenomena being studied (Ponterotto et al., 2013: 47). This is of particular relevance to this study, where multiple sources of information are required to make sense of the participants' experiences of coaching (Plano, Clark & Wang, 2010: 428 cited in Ponterotto et al., 2013: 48). For example, the quantitative data from the questionnaire helps to contextualise the participants' experiences of working to create change, and the qualitative data from the interviews and coaching sessions explicates their understanding and experiences of how to be more effective. By providing multiple pathways for participants to articulate their experiences, it is possible to understand their learning experiences in more depth (Lundgren & Poell, 2016: 21). Multiple sources of data can also help to provide findings that might not be anticipated and potential for the data to be triangulated (Gray & Malins, 2004: 31, 57 & 143; Bryman, 2006: 111; Fletcher, 2008: 61).

3.4.1.1 How the quantitative and qualitative methods were integrated

The quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, with priority or emphasis given to the qualitative data. Building on the work of Morgan (1998), Greene and Caracelli (1997), and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), Creswell (2003: 242) developed a classification system to help researchers choose the specific strategy for data collection they plan to use. These are grouped into two categories:

- sequential designs (explanatory, exploratory, and transformative)
- concurrent designs (triangulation, nested, and transformative).

Each of these designs differ according to whether the qualitative and quantitative data is collected concurrently or sequentially, the priority given to the qualitative and quantitative data, the point during the study at which the data is integrated, and whether or not an overall theoretical perspective was used to guide the research design (Creswell, 2014: 242). For example, the primary aim of the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was to gain an overall picture of the kinds of challenges practitioners face in the workplace, and the kinds of support they have found helpful. Priority was given to the qualitative data, however, as this would provide the rich data about the participants' journeys. For these reasons, the quantitative component (Stage 1) was *sequentially* followed by the qualitative component (Stages 2 and 3).

In addition, the study was guided by a critical, social constructivist perspective, where the aim of the research was to support practitioners working to create change. This places the research within a transformative framework, and so the model or strategy for the approach was a 'transformative sequential strategy' (Creswell, 2014: 248). Unlike sequential exploratory and explanatory approaches, the sequential transformative model is guided by a theoretical perspective, and for this study, the perspective or paradigms underpinning the research were more important in guiding the research than the use of methods alone (Creswell, 2014: 247).

An advantage of this strategy was that the sequential steps for the data collection methods were clear and easy to implement, however the main limitation was the additional time needed to implement the separate collection phases, analyse the data and integrate the findings. Although not considered part of the transformative sequential strategy, it can be argued that an 'exploratory' component to the model was also integrated (Creswell, 2014: 246). This is because a new instrument (the questionnaire) was developed to explore the lived experiences of a broader range of practitioners.

3.4.1.2 How quantitative methods were used

Quantitative methods with a positivist worldview (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 4; Creswell, 2014: 21; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 14), rely on numerical data or measurements to make sense of experience (Punch, 2014: 3). The quantitative methods used for this study aimed to provide numerical data through statistical analysis to uncover potential underlying and contributory relationships (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2009) between the challenges that practitioners were facing at work and levels of burnout. The intention of this study was not to try and produce "generalisable" findings or theory about the sample population (Mertens, 2010: 4; Ruel, Wagner III, & Gillespie, 2016: 125) for the following reasons:

- the primary aim of the research was to generate theory that can elucidate the detailed workings of unique learning contexts which might support practitioners and may be transferable to other contexts (Mertens, 2010: 4; Mertens & Wilson, 2012: 287). This is akin to Schön's model of generalisation where practice experiments are used to test the relevance and helpfulness of what has been learnt in one situation in new situations perceived to be similar to the first (Schön, 1995: 31; Walkerden, 2009: 250). As such, the qualitative data was the priority (as described above);
- the questionnaire was designed as an entry point for participants to start thinking about their challenges at work and the kinds of support they have or could benefit from, and then to consider if they would be interested in participating in

an interview and/or coaching session(s). In this way the questionnaire would both provide data and act as a tool for recruiting participants; and

- time restrictions, in particular the time required to obtain a large enough sample that could be considered representative of a population.

In essence, the intention was for the quantitative data to support the qualitative data, and how this would occur would be determined during the iterative analysis and discussion phases of the study. This approach follows the transformative sequential strategy mentioned above.

3.4.1.3 How qualitative methods were used

Qualitative methods with a social constructivist or interpretivist worldview (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 4; Creswell, 2014: 21; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 16), rely on data derived from text rather than on numerical data, and ask open questions about phenomena as they occur in context rather than testing predetermined hypotheses (Carter & Little, 2007: 1316). The qualitative methods used for this study met key aims as defined by Creswell (2007: 40), which included:

- gathering the participants' thoughts, feelings and actions in order to describe their lived experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2013: 59). This involved analysing interview and coaching session transcripts as a way to reflect on "taken-for-granted truths" (Gephart, 2004a: 457), and in particular, to gain deeper insight into the challenges faced by practitioners and how coaching can support their self-care and effectiveness over the course of their careers;
- accurately reflecting the participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviours in a rich and detailed way (Creswell, 2013: 40). This involved describing the subtleties and nuances of the coaching process and honouring the trust that the individual participants had in me as facilitator of their learning;
- employing an interpretive approach (Creswell, 2013: 39) appropriate for the epistemological underpinnings of the research, which do not prescribe any one, rigid methodology; and

- generating new theory (such as a practice model for coaching), building on established theories of Transformative learning, Focusing and Coaching.

Constructivist grounded theory and Practice-led research approaches were primarily used to inform the qualitative methods. These embody the collaborative, iterative, emergent, critically reflexive, action-oriented and context-based principles that also underpin approaches to transformative learning and coaching. Figure 3.3 below provides a diagram depicting the methodological approaches informing the qualitative methods.

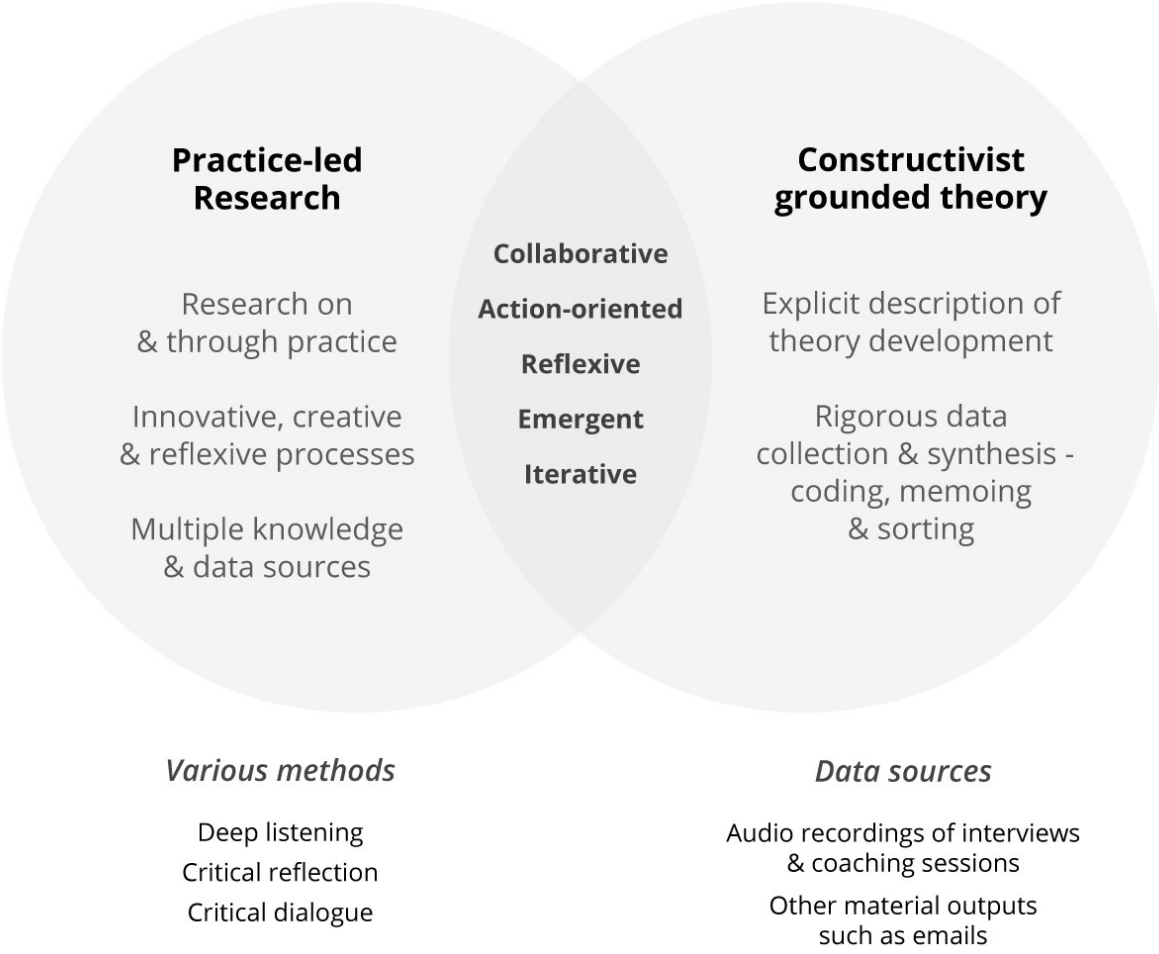

Figure 3.3 – diagram depicting the methodological approaches to the research

3.4.2. How Practice-led research informed the research

Practice-led research is a relatively new research tradition that was specifically developed to meet the needs of those working in the creative arts (Haseman & Mafe, 2009: 212-213). Practice-led research was useful in that it provided an approach that was:

> firstly…initiated in practice, where questions, problems, and challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners, and secondly…carried out through practice, using…specific methods familiar to…practitioners. (Gray, 1996: 3)

This approach was particularly suited to my role as practitioner-researcher where the research question was situated in the practice of coaching, and the research was conducted on and through the coaching process. In other words, the research provided an opportunity to examine my role as coach and a method of inquiry to better understand the relationship between theory and practice (Jarvis, 1999: xiii). This process of theorising "out of practice" involves a different way of thinking than applying theory to practice (Bolt, 2007: 33) and therefore the situated knowledge that emerges can more easily enter into dialogue with existing theories and practices (Bolt, 2007: 33). This was a key factor in developing knowledge about coaching practices (such as a model) that could stimulate discourse and be applied by other practitioners (Yee, 2007: 91).

Practice-led research can be represented as a cyclical and iterative process of idea generation, action and reflection that interweaves research and practice to generate new techniques and theories of learning (Smith & Dean, 2009: 7-8). Figure 3.4 over page provides a depiction of the Practice-led research model developed by Smith and Dean (2009: 20).

Central to Practice-led research is action learning and reflexivity. How action learning and reflective practices were integrated into the research is discussed over page.

Figure 3.4 – model of the Practice-led research approach

3.4.2.1 How action learning was used

Action learning is an iterative process of planning, action and reflection designed to build capacity and improve practice (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005: 111; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, 2011; Stephens & Margey, 2015). In this study, understanding how change occurs at all levels within systems was an essential requirement in developing a research project that would help to address complex personal and social issues, and at the same time improve practice. This involved a collaborative process of 'self-reflective enquiry' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988: 27) where the participants and I aimed to improve understanding of our own learning and self-care and professional development practices, and the situations or contexts in which these practices were carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988: 27). This process can be represented as a cyclical process of:

- *reflecting* on the current situation,
- *planning* to innovate on current practice through critically informed action,
- *acting* to implement the plans,
- *observing* this action through the collection of evidence,
- *critically reflecting* on and *learning* from the action being undertaken (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988: 10-14; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992: 16).

Figure 3.5 (Mah et al., 2006) over page depicts the cycles of action learning as part of an Action Research process.

As part of the action learning process, I was required to critically reflect upon and revise learning processes in dialogue with the participants and my colleagues (Thomas & Benn, 2009: 19). This process allowed for a greater variety of perspectives which helped to protect the research process from my and the participants' biases, preconceptions and motivations (Dick, 2007: 406).

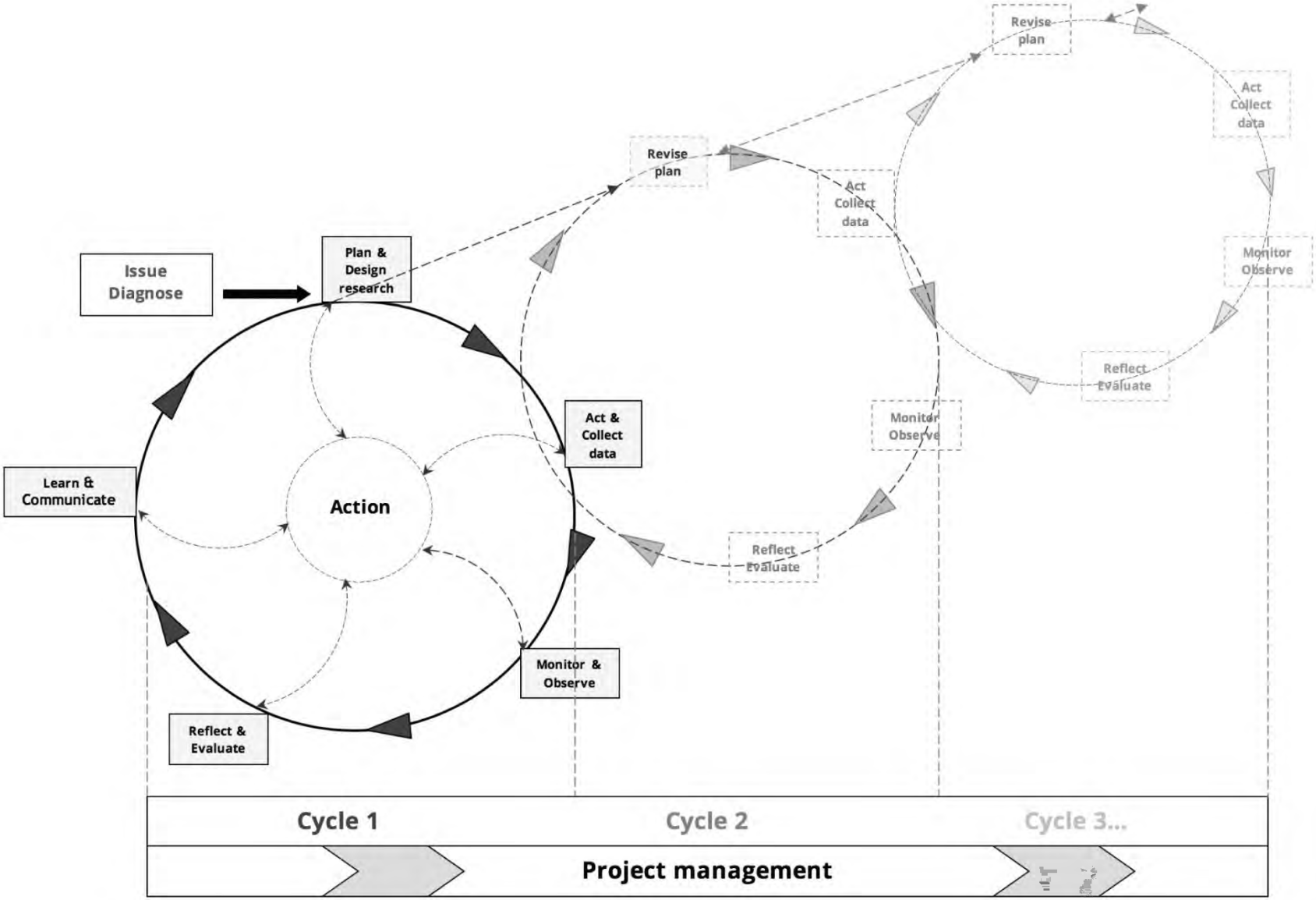

Figure 3.5 – action learning cycles of action research

Zuber-Skerritt (1992: 15) describes this process as:

> critical collaborative enquiry by reflective practitioners being accountable and making the results of their enquiry public, self-evaluating their practice, and engaged in participative problem-solving and continuing professional development.

In this sense, the participants were not only informants of the research by participating in interviews and coaching sessions but were at the centre of their own learning and development. Further, this interweaving of research and coaching practice informed and inspired innovation in my own practice, for example, exploring the interface between focusing and reflective practice in coaching.

3.4.2.2 How reflective practice was used

Reflexivity, an "artist like process" which is foundational to Practice-led research (Haseman & Mafe, 2009: 219), played a key role in the research and assisting the process of self-reflective enquiry (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988: 27). Indeed, as a practitioner-researcher I acted as a reflective practitioner researching my own practice and reflecting on it (Schön, 1983/1991; Jarvis, 1999: 71). This enabled a more rigorous and sensitive approach to the research process and the continuing development of skilful practice (Schön, 1983/1991; Walkerden, 2009). It also helped to provide a more nuanced understanding of the various interactions, relationships, and issues of power and self-identity in the workplace (Strauss, 2008: 89 & 99). Further, ongoing reflection between me and the participants within the coaching sessions (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408) supported critical dialogue and the possibility of transformative learning to occur (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Heron, 1985; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Moon, 2004).

Drawing on the work of Schön (1983; 1995), Gendlin (1996; 2018) and Walkerden (2005, 2009), this reflexive approach incorporated distinctly different "kinds of reflective thinking" (Walkerden, 2009: 251) with a particular focus on my felt sense

within the coaching and research contexts. These included 'reflection-in-action' and 'critical reflective dialogue' as described below.

Reflection-in-action

Reflection-in-action or "reflecting-in-practice" (Schön, 1983/1991: 59) – that is, my own reflection practice – took place both in the moment and between sessions. It involved reflecting on the coaching process in the moment (that is, how I was facilitating the coaching and focusing processes as they were occurring) and how the participants were responding as the "action" was taking place (Hatton & Smith, 1995: 45-46). It also involved 'descriptive reflection' (Hatton & Smith, 1995: 45-46) after each interview and coaching session, in which I wrote down my reflections about what worked and what had not worked, how effective I felt the process was, and how I could improve my practice.

To support these practices, I drew on the reflective practice research model developed by Walkerden (2009: 251), which builds on the work of Schön, Gendlin and Taylor. A core element involved focusing on my *felt sense* of the situation (e.g. either during or after a coaching session) (Walkerden, 2009: 251), which enabled me to gain much richer insight into my experience of the coaching process. When made explicit, this not only helped the research process to move forward but deepened my practice "know how" (Walkerden, 2009: 253-254). This was not an easy task as it required trust in my intuition and experience, remaining present in order to be attentive to the participants' process during the coaching sessions, and simultaneously maintaining a self-reflective lens.

The process was particularly useful in building awareness of how I felt and responded to my own habitual ways of perceiving and thinking about the coaching process, and how I could behave or facilitate a process differently in subsequent sessions (Mezirow, 1981: 12). In other words, I became highly aware of my own thoughts and personal biases that could appear and influence the process, and the effects this could have on a participant's learning. This not only helped to uncover

my tacit knowledge and assumptions about the learning process, but helped to situate and make explicit the participants' learning process within the broader social context (Schön, 1983/1991: 62).

Critical reflective dialogue

Critical dialogue/reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995: 45-46) was conducted with participants, the research team and colleagues. It involved reflecting on the effectiveness of the coaching sessions (what worked and what didn't work), the participants' learnings, and what could have been done differently. This was a critical component of understanding the process of learning, to assess the needs and development of participants, and to understand deeper connections to systemic issues and sociocultural contexts. These dialogues included:

- fortnightly meetings with my supervisor and co-supervisor;
- participating in an Advanced Focusing Training program facilitated by Jane Quayle, a counsellor, psychotherapist and a Focusing trainer. This program aims to support practitioners to deepen their knowledge and practice of focusing, and to become certified by the International Focusing Institute[4] (2019) as a Focusing trainer or Focusing-oriented therapist. The program was conducted over two years via monthly workshops and online discussions, partnership focusing exchanges and one-on-one supervisory/mentoring sessions with Jane. During the supervisory sessions, I was able to discuss aspects of the coaching process and how I could facilitate focusing processes more effectively;
- a monthly discussion group formed with members of the training program where we reflected more deeply on focusing theory and practice; and
- attending two conferences with international Focusing experts, Dr Greg Madison and Professor Akira Ikemi in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Ikemi's workshop explored ways of integrating mindfulness and focusing.

[4] https://focusing.org/

Together, these forms of reflection not only allowed a greater variety of perspectives to emerge, but helped to protect the research from any biases and preconceptions that I, the participants or the research team may have had (Dick, 2007: 406).

3.4.3 How Constructivist grounded theory informed the research

Constructivist grounded theory advocated by Charmaz (2006 cited in Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408) builds on Grounded theory originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory aims to go beyond description to generate new theory (Creswell, 2013: 63). It is particularly relevant to this study as the theory that emerges is "grounded" in the data from the participants' experiences, which helps to explain how the processes of learning and change can be more effectively supported (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 cited in Creswell, 2013: 63).

Grounded theory is a comparative method for analysing data that involves an iterative process of data collection and analysis (Eich, 2008: 177) as depicted in Figure 3.6 (adapted from Weed, 2009: 506).

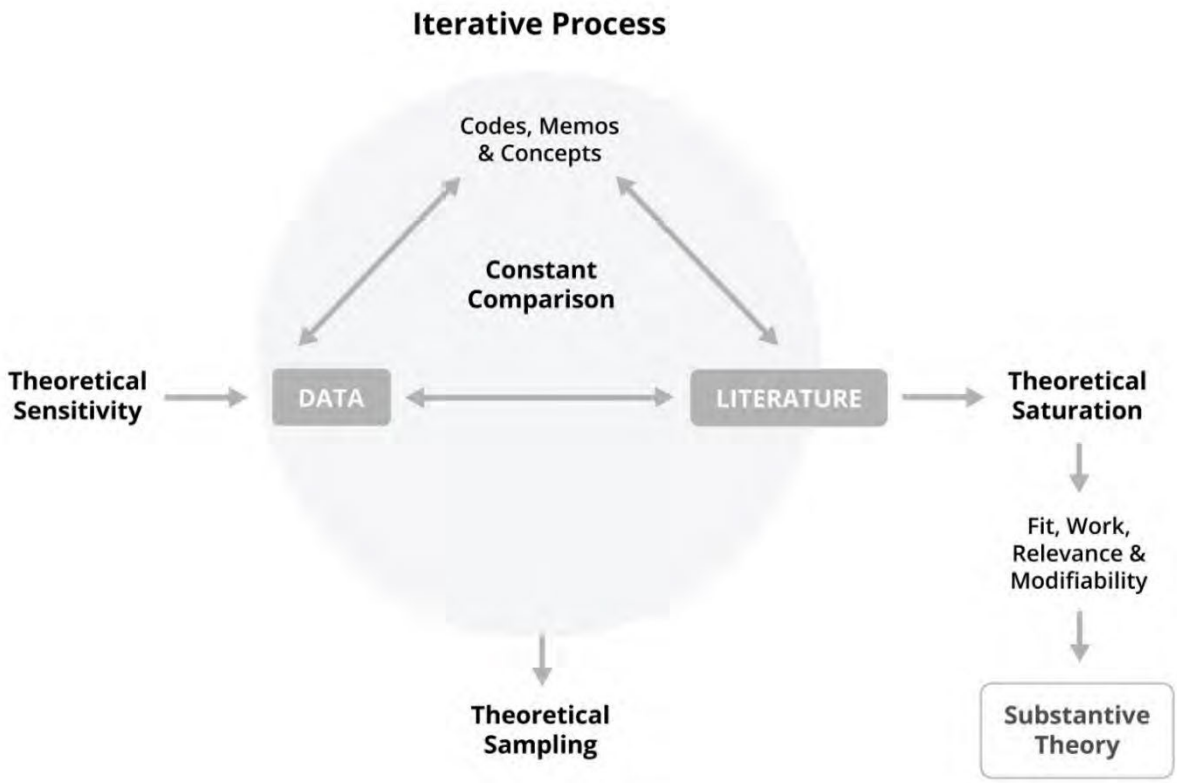

Figure 3.6 – the process of grounded theory

From this process, ideas and theory emerge which in turn can be used to develop and check the emerging ideas or theory (Lingard et al., 2008: 459; Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 406). Constructivist grounded theory differs from grounded theory in that it:

> arises from a relativist epistemology, challenges positivist assumptions in earlier versions of grounded theory, and aligns the method with interpretive inquiry. Constructivist grounded theory… takes action as a central concern. (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408)

For the purposes of this study, the emerging concepts and themes were formed by analysing and coding transcriptions of interviews and coaching sessions. In-depth interviews combined with coaching sessions were chosen as a way to capture participant narratives, lived experiences and learning processes. These provide a deeper understanding of how learning and change occurs based on the thoughts, feelings and actions of the participants themselves.

It is important to highlight that Constructivist grounded theory also differs from grounded theory in that it aims to gain "an insider's view" of the participants and their context, which requires sustained interaction rather than limited interviews (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408). For this reason, coaching sessions were chosen (in addition to interviews) as they enable a more intimate level of engagement with participants for a sustained period of time. This provided a unique opportunity to "go beneath the surface" and access the "liminal world of the research participant's implicit actions and meanings" (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408). Further, analysing data from multiple sources allowed me to pay close attention to language as a way to understand the participants' experiences (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408). For example, how a participant's *feel* for a situation ("I felt tight and anxious") helped them to *sense* their way through a complex or challenging situation at work ("I realised I'm not comfortable with uncertainty"). Gathering of this rich data was the first step towards generating theory (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010: 408).

Theory that describes how transformative learning can be identified and assessed (in a detailed and nuanced way) is limited, so Constructivist grounded theory was useful in that it built on inductive processes from which tentative hypotheses could be formulated to guide practice (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004: 277). It also enabled me to be intimately involved in the research and develop theories based on my area of interest. However, the categories and themes that emerged from the data were grounded in the participants' experiential data, which helped to negate any bias or predetermined notions I may have had (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further, the principle of 'theoretical sensitivity' (refer to Figure 3.6) acknowledges the pre-existing knowledge of the researcher but can enter the area without pre-conceived ideas of what could emerge from the data (Weed 2009, 505). 'Sensitizing concepts' was employed where my existing knowledge in conjunction with the literature was used to provide tentative ideas and raise questions about the emerging concepts (Charmaz, 2014: 30). In this sense, sensitizing concepts was used as a tool to support theoretical sensitivity by guiding but not commanding inquiry (i.e. tentative ideas were used as a starting place for inquiry, not an ending place) (Weed, 2009: 505; Charmaz, 2014: 30).

3.5 Data collection methods

Following the mixed methods approach, three forms of data were collected for this study. The primary source of data was qualitative, obtained from the interviews and coaching sessions in the form of audio recordings. Other data sources included my notes from coaching sessions and self-reported progress/learnings provided by the participants in the form of emails. The qualitative data was supplemented by a secondary source of quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. Finally, the third source of data was from the literature. This helped to provide background information for the research, theory and data for constant comparison, and additional evidence to support the findings. Ethical considerations that informed the research process are discussed in section 3.8.

3.5.1 Selection of participants

Both 'probability' and 'purposive sampling' approaches were employed to satisfy the requirements of mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 284), and 'theoretical sampling' to satisfy the requirements of grounded theory (Weed, 2009: 505; Charmaz, 2014: 214). However, in line with the constructivist paradigm, sampling began by identifying individuals and groups where the phenomena being examined was occurring (Mertens, 2010: 310). Specifically, 'convenience sampling' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 279; Morse, 2007: 235) was used to identify individuals, communities and networks of interest. In general, the intention was to select specific groups and individuals who would provide the most information appropriate to the research question and were easily accessible (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 279). These sampling techniques were conducted according to the following logic.

3.5.1.1 Logic of the sample size and representation for the questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to professional associations and networks that I confidently felt (based on my knowledge and connections within the sector) represented a heterogenous range of practitioners/professionals working in sustainability and/or working to create social change in Australia. These included the Centre for Sustainability Leadership[5] (CSL), the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand[6] (EIANZ) and GreenUps.

CSL (2016) was an adult learning organisation where I previously worked as a program facilitator, coach and Head of Learning for Sustainability. CSL supported sustainability leaders and change practitioners to more effectively achieve change. Management of my relationship with CSL participants from an ethics perspective is discussed in section 3.7.

[5] CSL sadly closed in 2018, however, its intellectual property was transitioned to the Monash Sustainable Development Institute.

[6] https://www.eianz.org/

EIANZ is a not-for-profit professional association for environmental practitioners across Australia and New Zealand. It supports environmental/sustainability practitioners and promotes independent and interdisciplinary discussion on environmental issues. Like CSL, its members represented a diverse range of practitioners in areas such as climate change, sustainability and conservation.

GreenUps is a monthly social networking event that connects people across a range of sectors who share a passion for the environment and sustainability.

CSL had a mailing list of approximately 3,500 members, EIANZ has a membership of approximately 1,500, and GreenUps has a mailing list of approximately 3,000. This equates to a population of approximately 8,000 individuals. It was anticipated that up to 5% of this cohort (or up to around 400 individuals) would participate in the questionnaire.

Although the aim of the questionnaire was to examine practitioners' experiences of burnout, this was only one of its aims. For example, the questionnaire also aimed to better understand the kinds of support (such as coaching) practitioners have found helpful in the past and feel would be helpful in the future (discussed further in Section 3.6.1). As such, the primary goal was to obtain a broadly representative sample of the practitioners who are the focus of the study.

3.5.1.2 Logic of the sample size and representation for the interviews and coaching sessions

The study engaged practitioners and experienced coaches or therapists from a wide range of backgrounds, roles and organisations. As mentioned in section 1.3.1, a practitioner was considered to be anyone working in the field of environmental and/or social change or who is passionate about creating change more generally. They may or may not identify themselves as working to create change, but their common goal is to achieve positive environmental outcomes (e.g. reduced pollution, improved biodiversity, more resilient ecologies) and/or social outcomes (e.g. improved equity, social justice, health, access to education).

The experienced coaches and therapists selected were from a range of backgrounds and modalities, and all either supported practitioners or were interested in supporting change more broadly. They had completed some form of training and/or formal accreditation in adult learning, coaching, counselling and/or psychotherapy, were part of an organisation that offers coaching or had their own clients.

The aim of the interviews and coaching sessions was to explore the practitioners' interactions, relationships and experiences in relation to their work. My role as researcher required me to establish ongoing relationships with the participants in order to address the research problem in depth (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 483). Therefore, compared to quantitative studies, a relatively small number of participants were selected for the interviews (30 practitioners and 13 coaches/therapists) and coaching (11 practitioners). This enabled closer connections with the participants to be developed and a finer-grained inquiry, which enhanced validity (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 483). In other words, it was more important for depth to be achieved in the research (i.e. to be intensive) and thus persuasive at the conceptual level, rather than extensive with the aim to be convincing through numbers (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 494). However, to ensure that most or all of the participants' perceptions that might be important were uncovered, ultimately the sample size for the interviews followed the grounded theory principle of 'saturation' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where new data is no longer providing significantly new information about the processes being investigated. The search for saturation was guided by an iterative process of analysis and 'theoretical sampling' (refer to figure 3.6) designed to provide a relatively complete picture of how focusing might be used within the coaching process, refining ideas and categories as they emerged (Charmaz & Bryant, 2007: 240) and to arrive at a relatively complete picture of the contribution of focusing. For example, coaching participants were selected based on their expression of interest for coaching in the questionnaire (discussed further in section 3.5.2) and their degree of burnout (the focus of the study) as indicated by the Maslach

Burnout Inventory survey (discussed further in section 3.6.1.2). Although saturation was the guiding principle, other factors were taken into consideration, such as how sample size was selected in other research studies into coaching including studies by Jackson (2005), Hargreaves (2010), De Haan & Nieß (2012), Linger (2014) and McZeal (2014). Factors that constrained the sample size included the estimated time to organise and conduct the interviews and coaching sessions, the budget available to transcribe audio recordings (Mason, 2010: 2), and the time required to code and analyse the transcriptions in a way that remained faithful to grounded theory.

3.5.2 How the participants were recruited

The recruitment process included the following steps:

1. The online questionnaire invitation was sent out via:

   - CSL's Alumni newsletter and Facebook page in December 2016 and January 2017
   - EIANZ's Institute Insider newsletter and website in December 2016 and January 2017
   - GreenUps' network email in December 2016
   - my personal LinkedIn network in December 2016.

   The questionnaire provided an 'opt in' process for participation in further interviews and/or coaching.

2. Participants in the interviews and coaching sessions were selected from those who expressed interest in the questionnaire, based on their representation of the broader community (i.e. to cover most or all demographic areas). Potential participants who expressed interest were invited by email and provided with an information and consent form for either an interview and/or for coaching (refer to Appendix D), followed by a conversation with the participant to discuss any concerns they may have about the research. It was made clear that the research was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time.

3. Experienced coaches and therapists from the CSL and coaching communities were invited to participate in the interviews. Some of these coaches recommended others during the interview process who were also invited. The coaches were invited to participate by an email, which explained the aims of the research and included an information and consent form (refer to Appendix E).
4. Additional interview and/or coaching participants were selected from my contacts and invited by email following the same process as above.

In total, 151 participants were involved in the research as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – participant numbers for the study

Stage 1 – questionnaire	Stage 2 – interviews	Stage 3 – coaching
• 97 practitioners	• 30 practitioners • 13 coaches & therapists	• 11 practitioners

A description of the participants' profiles is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.6 Stage 1 – conducting the research and analysing the data

3.6.1 How the questionnaire was designed and conducted

Stage 1 of the study involved conducting a questionnaire. In total, 105 respondents participated, of which 97 responses were useable (i.e. completed questionnaires). The questionnaire was designed following the core principles of questionnaire construction such as guidelines concerning open or closed-ended questions, avoiding "leading" questions, ease of use, reliability and validity (de Vaus, 2002: 96; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 303).

The first step – to establish clear aims for the questionnaire and to translate these into clear and unambiguous questions (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004) – involved thinking about how the findings from the questionnaire would fit in with the overall aims of the research and how the data would be analysed (de Vaus, 2002: 94). This was an iterative process that required a comprehensive review of the literature, input

from my supervisors, an academic colleague who specialises in social research methods, and my own experience developing questionnaires. The aims of the questionnaire were to ascertain:

- what challenges and degrees of burnout practitioners may be facing;
- what kinds of support (such as coaching) they feel have helped them in the past, and what changes occurred as a result;
- what coaching methods they found helpful (if they have participated in coaching), and what changes occurred as a result; and
- what kinds of support they feel would help them in the future.

The final version of the questionnaire comprised 61 questions divided into six sections. Refer to Appendix F for a copy of the questionnaire.

An accompanying cover letter briefly outlined the research project, its significance, what the questionnaire involved, how confidentiality would be maintained, and how they could access the results. It made it clear that participation was completely voluntary and participants were not obliged to complete the questionnaire or answer any questions they might find uncomfortable answering.

The questionnaire was then uploaded into Qualtrics (an online survey platform), which was chosen for its ease of use in developing and distributing the questionnaire, and features that met the data analysis requirements of the research. Qualtrics is also considered an effective and easily accessible way to increase participation rates amongst a busy, 'time poor' audience. A further advantage was that the data was automatically stored, and various analysis functions could be conducted in real time (Ruel et al., 2016: 176).

A test version of the questionnaire, sent to approximately 10 colleagues and key contacts, (e.g. from CSL, EIANZ and GreenUps) helped to refine the questions, layout and length of the questionnaire and provided a form of quality control to

ensure the organisations were happy with the questionnaire before sending it out to their networks.

3.6.1.1 Response scales used

The questions used a combination of response scales, primarily using Likert and Likert-type scales (Clason & Dormody, 1994: 3). Developed by Likert in 1932 to measure character and personality traits (Boone & Boone, 2012: 1), the scale is still widely used today (Clason & Dormondy, 1994; Boone & Boone, 2012; Punch, 2014: 234). Likert scales are particularly helpful when measuring respondents' attitudes and opinions about particular topics, people, ideas, or experiences (Ruel et al., 2016: 58-60). Respondents indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement, and are usually given the alternatives of Strongly Approve, Approve, Undecided, Disapprove, and Strongly Disapprove (de Vaus, 2002: 102).

In this study, three of the 15 selected measurement scales used five-point Likert or Likert-type response scales where the question asked about levels of satisfaction using a response range from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. Most of the remaining questions (12) used the Out of 10 scale where respondents were asked to indicate their rating on a zero to 10 score (de Vaus, 2002: 103). The primary benefits of using the 11-point scale are that it provides more options for the participant (than a 5-point scale for example), and the clear end points on the scale help to reduce ambiguity and errors from variation in response functions (Saris & de Rooij, 1988 cited in Scherpenzeel, 2002: 2). Further, the scale can be divided into three groups of approximately the same number of responses (de Vaus, 2002: 165). This was useful to help simplify and make sense of the data. A weakness of the Out of 10 scale is that it for some individuals it is more difficult to make a selection, which can lead to errors. To address this potential issue, clear labels ('not at all' and 'a great deal') were given to the zero and 10 end points respectively to help provide fixed end points (Scherpenzeel, 2002: 2).

To address the issue of 'social desirability', that is the potential for participants to provide answers that present themselves in a positive way, anonymity was offered as an option at the start of the survey (Joinson, 1999: 433; de Vaus, 2002: 107).

3.6.1.2 The Maslach Burnout Inventory – how burnout was measured and assessed

A primary aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain the challenges and degrees of burnout practitioners may face (Section 4 – how you feel about your work, of the questionnaire). The idea to examine burnout emerged from the literature regarding well-being and burnout amongst those working to create social change, in particular activists (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Downton & Wehr, 1998; Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Reynolds, 2011; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Gorski & Chen, 2015b; Hoggett & Randall, 2016; Pigni, 2016), and my own anecdotal evidence as coach at CSL and member of the community. This led me to the work on burnout by Maslach and Leiter (1997, Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1986/2016) who developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a survey consisting of 16 statements[7] on work-related feelings (e.g. 'I feel depressed at work'). The survey takes approximately five to 10 minutes to complete.

First published in 1981, the MBI has been used in many research studies (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 89) and is now recognised as the leading measure of burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 1). Although the MBI is the most widely used instrument to assess burnout (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 297), there are others such as the Burnout Measure, which is the second most widely used (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 391). This instrument focuses on measuring levels of exhaustion (including physical, emotional and mental) as indicators of burnout and is not necessarily job-related (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 392). The MBI was therefore a better fit with the aims of this research, not only because it is considered the "gold standard" for measuring

[7] For copyright reasons only three of the 16 statements have been provided in the questionnaire in Appendix F. A license to reproduce the survey was purchased from Mind Garden, Inc.

burnout (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009: 211) and easily administered, but also because of its three-dimensional assessment of burnout (i.e. exhaustion, cynicism and efficacy).

Originally defined as a syndrome that affected those doing "people work" of some kind, burnout was restricted to the "helping" or human service professions such as those working with students, clients and patients. (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 386). The concept has broadened, however, and different versions of the MBI have been developed for different groups and settings, including human services, medical personnel and educators. A General Survey (MBI-GS) was designed for a wider range of groups such as customer service and management (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 2 & 37) in order to focus on the performance of work regardless of the nature of the work (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 37). The MBI-GS defines burnout as "a crisis in one's relationship with work in general, not necessarily as a crisis in one's relationships with people at work" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 386; Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 37). It measures respondents' relationships with their work on a continuum from 'engagement' to 'burnout' as mentioned in section 2.2.2 and discussed further below.

The MBI – General survey

The MBI-GS has three subscales, exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy, which are defined respectively as feelings of fatigue, an indifferent or distant attitude towards work and occupational accomplishment (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 386). Together the subscales provide a three-dimensional perspective on burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 38).

The exhaustion scale assesses feelings of exhaustion in general (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 39). It can also be described as feeling overextended, emotionally and physically depleted (Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 498), "worn out", a loss of energy, debilitated or fatigued (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 89). Emotional exhaustion is a sign of distress in emotionally demanding work (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 20).

The professional efficacy (or efficacy) scale assesses feelings of effectiveness in reference to satisfaction with both past and present accomplishments (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 39). It can also be described as feelings of incompetence, a lack of achievement (Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 498), reduced capability, low morale and an inability to cope (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 89).

The cynicism scale assesses feelings of indifference or a distant attitude towards work (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 39). Feeling unhappy at work leads to a myriad of "negative attitudes" such as cynicism (Naus, van Iterson, & Roe, 2007: 196-197). Cynicism can also be described as feelings of depersonalisation, detached concern, irritability, loss of idealism and withdrawal (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 89). It represents dysfunctional coping where individuals develop indifference and cynicism about their work in order to distance themselves psychologically from its exhausting demands (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 20 & 22). This reaction is expected to be dysfunctional in that cynicism reduces the energy available for performing work and for developing creative solutions to the problems work presents.

Cynicism also diminishes the potential for building professional efficacy. Therefore, cynicism is expected to be positively correlated with exhaustion and negatively correlated with efficacy (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 22). However, for the purposes of this study, the scores for efficacy were reversed (as demonstrated in Table 3.2 over page) so that the scores positively correlate with the scores for exhaustion and cynicism (i.e. high scores reflect high *inefficacy* in the same way that high scores reflect high levels of exhaustion and cynicism) (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 92).

Table 3.2 – Frequency scale

Response options	**Never**	**A few times a year or less**	**Once a month or less**	**A few times a month**	**Once a week**	**A few times a week**	**Everyday**
Score for exhaustion, cynicism & efficacy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Everyday	**A few times a week**	**Once a week**	**A few times a month**	**Once a month or less**	**A few times a year or less**	**Never**
Reversed score for inefficacy	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Exhaustion is often considered the strongest aspect of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90), however people experiencing burnout are not simply exhausted, fatigued or overwhelmed by their workload, but are disconnected in a way that negatively impacts their motivation and sense of identity (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90), leaving them feeling discouraged and alienated (Cherniss, 2014; Light, 2015 cited in Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). The aspects of cynicism and inefficacy help to describe these feelings of disconnection and disaffection (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90). Such an immediate reaction to exhaustion exists that a strong relationship between exhaustion and cynicism is consistently found across a wide range of organisations and occupations (Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 499). It appears that cynicism is linked to work conditions such as poor quality social relationships and lack of resources, which can lead to reduced job performance and dissatisfaction (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). In their most recent research, Leiter and Maslach (2016: 98) argue that feelings of cynicism may be more central to burnout than exhaustion.

Using a profile analysis approach – from engagement to burnout

The interrelated nature of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy changes over time, and forms various patterns depending on situational and personal factors (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90), which can be used to clarify where an individual may be on a continuum from burnout to engagement (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90). 'Engagement'

is a state where an individual is dedicated to excellent performance and is confident in their effectiveness at work (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 20), "an energetic state of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance one's sense of professional efficacy" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 498). An "engaged" pattern consists of no exhaustion, cynicism or inefficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90), and an Engaged profile is represented by highly positive scores on each of the three scales, while the Burnout profile is represented by highly negative scores on all three scales (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90).

Intermediate profiles including Overextended, Disengaged and Ineffective are determined according to their level from high to low on each aspect as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 – original profiles developed by Maslach and Leiter

Profile types	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Inneficacy
Engaged	Low	Low	Low
Ineffective	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	High
Overextended	High	Low to Moderate	High to Moderate
Disengaged	Low to Moderate	High	High to Moderate
Burnout	High	High	High

In order to closely examine the questionnaire data, a comprehensive list of profiles was developed based on this profile analysis approach. All possible subscale combinations from Burnout (i.e. High, High, High) to Engaged (i.e. Low, Low, Low) were developed and then ordered. When ordering these combinations, most weight was given to exhaustion, which is widely considered to be the core component of burnout (Alarcon, 2011: 556) and has been demonstrated to be the most reliable indicator (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 3). This was followed by cynicism, as exhaustion and cynicism have consistently been shown to be the most strongly correlated of the three indicators (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 24; Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98) (refer to Appendix G for a list of these profiles).

The importance of this relatively recent profile analysis approach developed by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 91) is that it acknowledges that various patterns have meaningful implications. For example, an individual with an Overextended profile may be working long hours and feel exhausted, but still maintain a high level of accomplishment and commitment to the job, whereas an individual with an Ineffective profile may be just starting their career and although not exhausted or cynical, may lack confidence in their capacity to be effective in their role. Therefore, having high scores on any one of the three aspects may serve as "early warning" signs of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 91). A practical implication of using this profile approach is that it focuses on the individual's experience at points in time in order to consider preventative actions, rather than making definitive assumptions about an individual's experience of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 498).

As a general rule, higher scores indicate higher degrees of burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 45). However, to help sort scores into High, Moderate and Low categories, "cut-off" scores based on 104 arbitrary statistical norms (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 57, 59 & 61) were used, as outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 – burnout score categories

Exhaustion	Score	Cynicism	Score	Inefficacy	Score
High	16-30	**High**	13-30	**High**	30-36
Moderate	8-15	**Moderate**	6-12	**Moderate**	24-29
Low	0-7	**Low**	0-5	**Low**	0-23

It is important to note that there are no clinically valid cut-off points for the MBI that allow differentiation between levels of burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 392). Although useful for assessing the overall pattern of a group, these score categories "do not have any diagnostic validity" (i.e. high scores across the three subscales do not provide a categorical definition of an individual experiencing burnout) (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 73). The scores are not definitive and cannot prove an individual has

burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2010: 45). Instead, the scores provide an indication of how an individual feels and judgements can then be made about whether an individual may or may not be suffering from burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 45).

Limitations of the MBI

According to Schaufeli, Enzmann and Girault (1993/2017: 273), the psychometric quality of the MBI is somewhat inconsistent. The factorial and the convergent validity as well as the reliability of the instrument is encouraging (discussed further below), however burnout as measured by the MBI cannot be validly distinguished from related concepts such as depression. Further, the relationship to self-ratings of burnout using the MBI are less strong. Therefore, except for exhaustion, which is the best validated dimension of burnout, the convergent validity of the MBI has not yet been convincingly demonstrated (Schaufeli et al., 2017: 273).

3.6.2 How the questionnaire data was analysed

Analysis of the questionnaire involved both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Statistical methods were used to examine relationships between variables, and Constructivist grounded theory methods were used to analyse the qualitative data from the open-ended questions. Qualtrics was used for quantitative data analysis (such as cross tabulation), and NVivo software was used to code and analyse the qualitative data (refer to section 3.7.3).

The statistical analysis involved simple descriptive analysis followed by two-variable relationship analysis, which was guided by the research question (Punch, 2014: 268). The mean, standard deviation and variance, and simple frequency and contingency tables were used to describe the relationships between variables, and to summarise and make sense of the data.

Due to the relatively small number of respondents to the survey (97 useable responses of 105 respondents), more sophisticated statistical tests such as p-value or Chi-square validity tests, which would have allowed the findings to be extrapolated

to larger populations, could not be used. The statistical results therefore refer to the sample of respondents to this questionnaire only.

3.6.2.1. Analysis of the data from the Maslach Burnout Inventory

Each of the respondents' three MBI scale scores were calculated and interpreted separately. Mean and standard deviations for each scale were then calculated for the entire group and compared to normative data (e.g. from the Schaufeli and Leiter databases) to determine relative degrees of burnout (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 46). The MBI scores were correlated with each other and with other information obtained from the questionnaire, such as demographic data and work characteristics.

Reliability and validity of the MBI

As mentioned, the "psychometric quality of the MBI is encouraging" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 391). The scales are internally consistent and the three-dimension structure has been confirmed in various studies (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998: 51). Further, the 'reliability' of the three MBI scales (i.e. exhaustion, cynicism and efficacy) exceeds the recommended levels for research instruments (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 3 & 40).

Emotional exhaustion, the most robust scale of the MBI, is strongly related to other burnout measures, demonstrating 'convergent validity' (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 391). It is also the least specific scale in that it cannot be easily distinguished from other conditions such as depression (discriminant validity) (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 391). However, the validity of the MBI has been demonstrated by numerous studies and meta-analytic reviews that confirm hypotheses about the relationships between job attributes and burnout. Further, Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli (2000: 53) demonstrated that the MBI-GS is superior to alternative models, and that its three-factor structure proved to be invariant across all occupational groups. This is supported by studies that have found that the MBI-GS can be used in any occupational context (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2002: 255).

3.7 Stages 2 and 3 – conducting the research and analysing the data

3.7.1 How the interviews were designed and conducted

Stage 2 of the study involved conducting 43 in-depth interviews with practitioners, and coaches and therapists who work with and/or support change practitioners between late 2016 and early 2017.

Punch (2014: 148) states that a successful in-depth interview has the characteristics of an intimate conversation, and it was this quality that I attempted to incorporate into the interview process. A 'semi-structured' or 'interview guide' approach (Patton, 1987 cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 305) was employed, and a set of questions in the form of a script was developed to guide the interview and act as a reminder (Bryman, 2015) (refer to Appendix H).

The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and some were conducted online via Skype depending on the availability (i.e. time and location) of the participant. The interviews were recorded using a small handheld voice recorder and notes were taken by hand.

The interviews began with informal conversation to establish rapport, followed by discussion of the aims of the research and answering any questions about confidentiality. The first part of the interview sought to understand the participant's work background and workplace environment. The second part explored the kinds of support the interviewee had found helpful and their experience of coaching. Examples of prompting questions include:

- What kinds of learning did you hope to get out of participating coaching?
- In what ways do you feel you achieved the learning or change you hoped for?
- Can you describe an example of any learning or change that happened?
- Was there a particular exercise or process you feel supported that learning?

As the study progressed and I became more familiar with the interview process and emerging ideas, a more 'informal conversational interview' approach was employed

(Patton 1987 cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: 305), beginning with questions from the script, and evolving as ideas emerged (Mertens, 2010: 370).

3.7.2 How the coaching sessions were designed and conducted

During Stage 3 of the study, 52 coaching sessions (equating to approximately 78 hours) were conducted over 18 months from early 2017 to mid-2018. The coaching sessions were conducted face-to-face and online via Skype and were recorded. In addition to providing a data source, recording enabled me to be fully present without having to take detailed notes or remember what occurred during the sessions. Notes were taken to help situate myself in the conversation and to act as reminders after the session during the reflective process. The sessions were generally of about an hour and a half duration, and were conducted either weekly, fortnightly or monthly according to the needs and availability of the participant.

The coaching process itself was designed and conducted using a transformative coaching framework (Askew & Carnell, 2011), supported by focusing processes (Gendlin, 1996; Walkerden, 2005, 2009; Krycka, 2012, 2014; Ikemi, 2017) (discussed in sections 2.6.6 and 2.6.8).

In essence, the approach integrated focusing processes into the coaching session so it could be facilitated in a more holistic and experiential way (Jaison, 2014: 72). This involved facilitating reflective dialogue interspersed with focusing. The diagram in Figure 3.7 over page illustrates the overlap of the three practice traditions used in this study and how embodied, experiential ways of knowing and learning are shared.

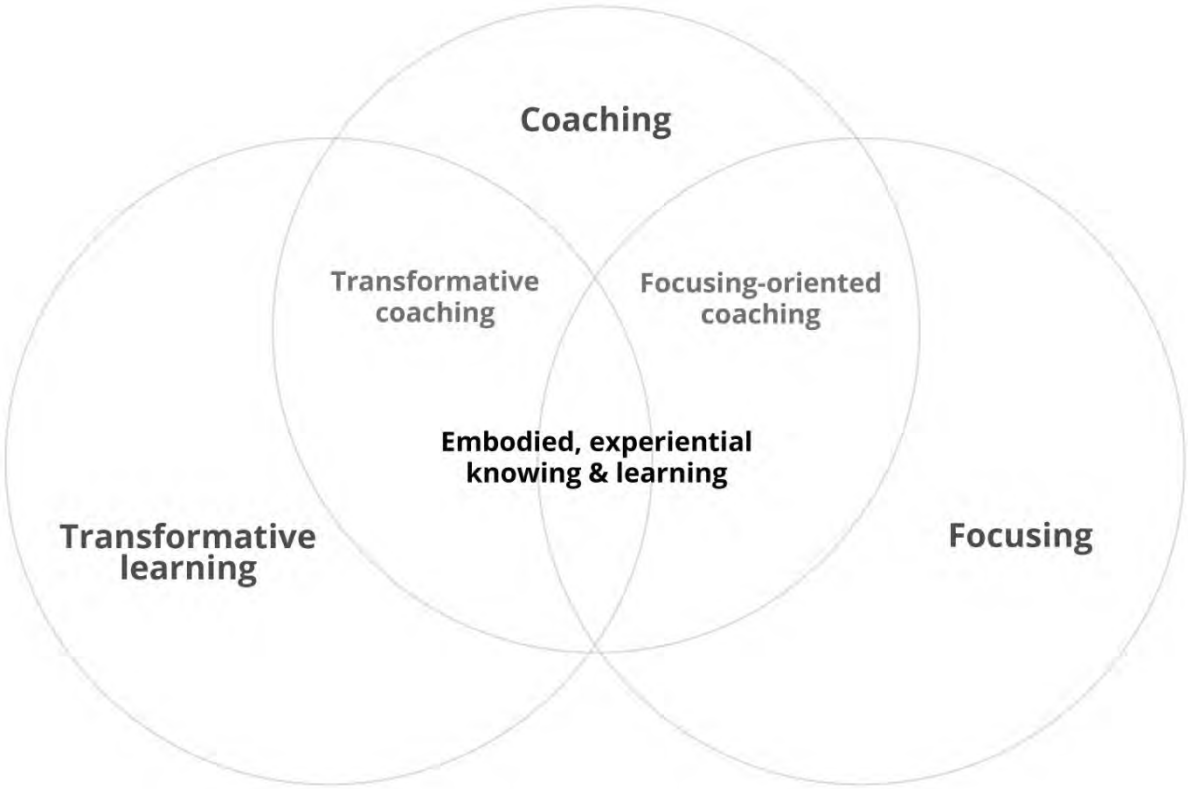

Figure 3.7 – diagram depicting the crossover between three practice traditions

3.7.2.1 How the transformative coaching approach informed the process

The primary aim of the coaching was to provide support for practitioners experiencing challenging life or work situations, where they may have been struggling to explain their actions (i.e. what they do) in relation to their intentions (e.g. their desire for social change) within the context of a broader narrative (i.e. their life and career journeys). By helping them to connect what they do with a sense of purpose and within a broader historical context or social movement, it was hoped the practitioners could make better sense of their identity or role as change agents over the long term (Sparrowe and Olin, 2005: 427). To achieve this, Askew and Carnell's (2011) transformative coaching approach was used as a framework for the coaching process in the following ways.

Firstly, for coaching to be transformative there needs to be an emphasis on self-reflection that leads to changes in oneself, behaviour and practice, not just in goal achievement or situation (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 4). The process of critical reflective

dialogue (discussed in section 3.4.4.2) was central to the coaching process. It aimed to empower the participants and support them to become aware of and understand what was implicit in their actions and the actions of others (Mezirow, 1981). For example, how their values, expectations and ways of thinking/acting, combined with systemic workplace issues (i.e. the nature of work, social change etc.) were contributing to feelings such as anxiety, burnout and hopelessness. The process also aimed to support practitioners to become aware of how unexamined expectations and assumptions might lead them to behave in ways that are uncomfortable or inauthentic for them (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 122), such as developing feelings (e.g. anger, resentment and cynicism) towards others who may not share the same values or beliefs that may lead to ineffective ways of communication and engagement.

Secondly, a person-centred approach also framed the coaching process, as it is considered central to both coaching (E. Cox, 2015: 30; Cox et al., 2017: 148) and transformative learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000 cited in Ettling, 2012: 544). As discussed in section 2.6.5, a person-centred approach to coaching aims to foster self-determination (Cox, 2015: 27; Bennett & Campone, 2017: 115) and my role was not to "diagnose", "heal", "fix" or "repair" (Joseph, 2018: 61). It was important for me to keep in mind that I could only create the conditions for the potential for transformation to occur, and whether a learning experience was transformative or not lay solely with the individual (Dirkx & Smith 2009: 65 cited in Ettling, 2012: 543). This enabled me to trust the participant to be their own expert and find the directions that were best for them. Further, as the coaching was not provided or being paid for by the participants' employers, we were free from organisational agendas and expectations. This allowed the process to truly follow the needs and agendas of the participants, and not be restricted to more traditional coaching methods such as goal setting and action plans. This also enabled a safe space to be provided where the participants were free to envision and explore possibilities without judgements and

limitations imposed by others or by themselves. In this way, space for transformation was provided (Vaughan Smith, 2007: 44).

Thirdly, a safe space built on the qualities of empathy, congruence, respect, and unconditional, non-judgemental positive regard was provided (Rogers, 1980: 166; Askew & Carnell, 2011: 103). These qualities are core to a Focusing-oriented approach (Gendlin, 1996: 297; Hendricks, 2007: 44; Krycka, 2014: 54) as discussed in section 2.6.8. This enabled me to provide the emotional support needed for the participants to reflect on their dilemmas or situations in a safe way (E. Cox, 2015: 33).

Finally, drawing on the iterative process of action learning, the sessions were designed according to the stages of exploration, reflective learning, actions for change, and meta-learning (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 110). The *exploration* stage involved an initial conversation at the start of each session to determine what the participant would like to focus on for that session (e.g. an area of concern). This allowed me to clarify the area of concern and to enter into the *reflective learning* stage. *Actions for change* (goals, steps, etc.) would emerge from the learning, which I would then support the participant to bring into explicit awareness. This process of reflecting on the change (e.g. a change in perspective) is what enabled the learning to be transformative. Finally, reflecting on the process of learning itself (*meta-learning*) helped to embed the learning more fully (for example, reflecting on how a participant's experience of focusing related to aspects of theory and/or process). This cycle would then be repeated.

3.7.2.2 How focusing processes were incorporated into the process

As mentioned in section 2.6.8, a Focusing-oriented approach, which is also a person-centred approach (Gendlin, 1996: 301), was used to inform the coaching process in the following ways.

Firstly, the process involved a 'non-directive' approach (E. Cox, 2015: 27) where self-determination was honoured by following the participant's process in whatever

direction it happened to go (Jaison, 2014: 79-80). This was supported by 'active listening' that closely and carefully paid attention (in an experiential way) to the participant's process (Joseph, 2018: 61) and by 'reflective listening', where I "took in" (or sensed) what the participant was saying and reflected back the words "bit by bit" or my sense of what the participant said (Gendlin, 1996: 297). This close attention helped the participant to feel they were being listened to in a genuine way.

Secondly, by relating to the person "in there" and knowing that a participant can never be reduced to (or exhaustively explained by) any theory, the focusing attitude of empathy and unconditional positive regard could be developed (Hendricks, 2007: 44). This in turn helped to create a safe, respectful and non-judgemental space for the participant to articulate his/her implicit intricacy (Hendricks, 2007a: 272), and by maintaining awareness of my assumptions and being careful to stay in the "openness of *not knowing*" (Ikemi, 2017: 10), the participant's felt sense of a situation could be carried forward. This reflection-in-action involved intuitively listening to my felt sense and any desires I may have to "come in" and influence the process.

Focusing was incorporated, both implicitly and explicitly, into the coaching process. For example, "small bits of instruction" were periodically integrated into the dialogue with practitioners as the session progressed (Gendlin, 1996: 70). In other instances, focusing was taught explicitly to the participant and practiced over multiple sessions depending on their needs. This generally followed the "inner acts" or movements of the six-step process of focusing developed by Gendlin (1978/1981: 58-74; 1996a) including:

1. *clearing a space*
2. paying attention to the *felt sense*
3. finding a *handle* (word, image or phrase) on the felt sense
4. *resonating* between the felt sense and the handle
5. *asking* the felt sense what it has to say
6. *receiving* what comes with a felt shift in a friendly.

Refer to Appendix I for a more detailed description of the six steps.

These steps were developed as guidelines to support anyone to engage or come into contact with the felt sense and are clearly explained with examples in Gendlin's book, *Focusing* (1979/1981). This book also provides examples of how to provide a safe space and address obstacles or difficulties in engaging with the felt sense (e.g. analysing or intellectually thinking about a situation rather than engaging with the felt sense). Gendlin (1996: 70) was keen to emphasise that these steps were not meant to be prescriptive but were intended as a guide or scaffold for teaching and learning purposes. Indeed, every focusing trainer has his/her way of approaching and describing the focusing process.

'Clearing a space', in particular, was used at the start of each session to help the participant to focus internally, take an inventory of their current issues or concerns and to gently place them "aside" for the moment (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262). The participant was then guided to clear an inner space (usually pointing to the area between the chest and the stomach) and wait for the felt sense to emerge (discussed in section 2.5.2). Several studies have confirmed that this micro-process helps to establish an emotionally and psychologically safe space from which people are better able to identify the concerns that most need their attention and to work with them in a more effective manner (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262).

Once the participant was familiar with the focusing process it would then be introduced into the dialogue through invitation (i.e. when I sensed it could be a good time to draw a bodily attention to an issue being discussed) or if the participant indicated they would like to do some focusing. In general, I followed my own felt sense of the process, moment-by-moment, and drew on my experience as a Focusing practitioner and coach to guide the process.

3.7.3 Analysis of the data from the interviews and coaching sessions

Constructivist grounded theory methods were used to code and analyse the data from the interviews and coaching sessions, and the qualitative data from the questionnaire. These methods involved iterative phases of collection, observation, analysis, reflection and writing as depicted in Figure 3.8 (Creswell, 2013: 151).

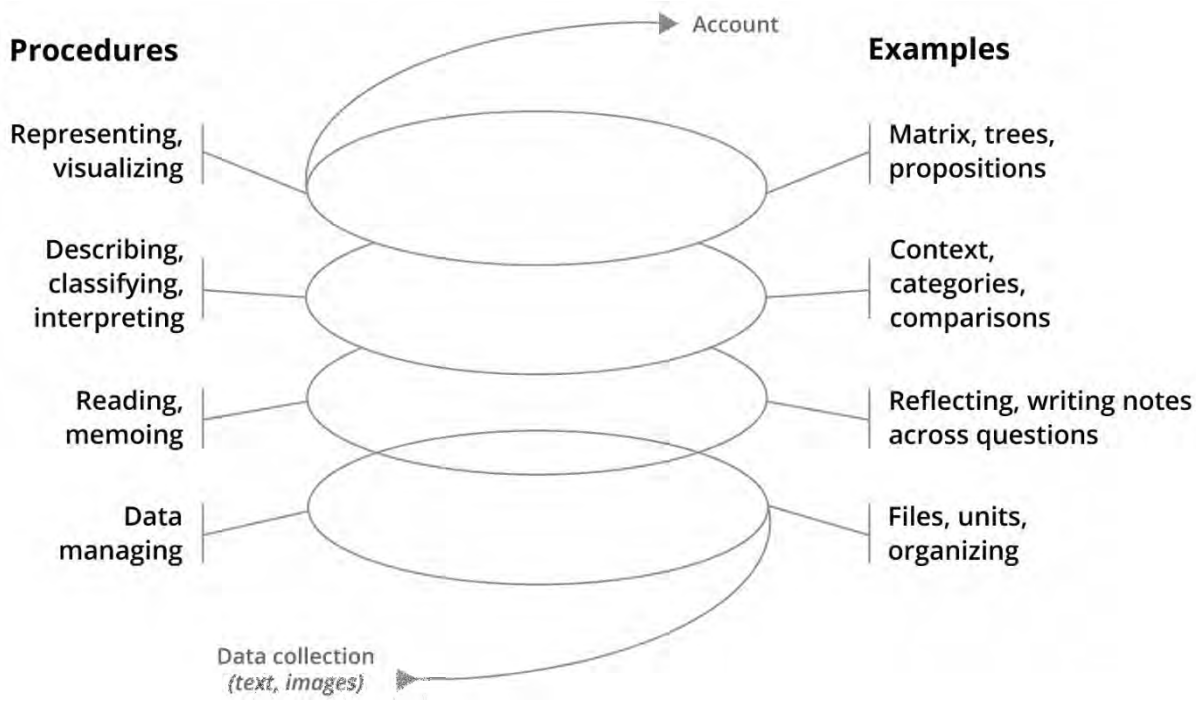

Figure 3.8 – diagram depicting the data analysis spiral

Firstly, the interview and coaching transcripts were uploaded into NVivo.

Secondly, the 'constant comparative method', which is central to grounded theory, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was then used to analyse the data. The method broadly involves the overlapping phases depicted in Figure 3.9 over page (Dick, 2005: 2).

Thirdly, a combination of 'bottom-up', 'top-down' and 'thematic' coding methods (Urquhart, 2013) were employed. This 'middle-range' coding approach to grounded theory methods allows for categories to emerge from the data and literature, and also for the categories to be either small or large in size (Urquhart, 2013: 39).

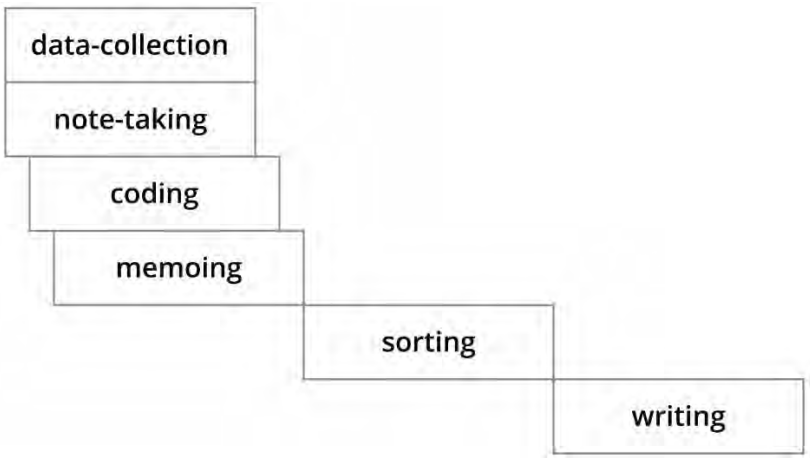

Figure 3.9 – depicting the phases of constant comparative method

'Concept mapping' (Gray & Malins, 2004: 58) was employed by writing codes on paper, numbering these codes, drawing connections between the codes, and highlighting categories as they started to emerge. Constant referral back to the original text (e.g. from interview and coaching transcriptions) and revision of codes to represent the text more accurately was conducted to ensure that the original meaning of the text was maintained. Comments or memos were used to clarify or crystalize the essence of the code. After reviewing the transcripts and codes multiple times, I employed an intuitive process of "inductive reasoning and constant comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to help make sense of the codes. I then synthesised the codes using 'selective' coding until the main categories/themes emerged and I felt I had reached theoretical 'saturation' (Glaser 1978 cited in Urquhart, 2013: 49). These themes formed the findings of the research.

Fourthly, Gendlin's Experiencing (EXP) scale (Gendlin, 1961; Klein, Mathieu, Gendlin, & Kiesler, 1969; Hendricks, 2009) was also used to guide analysis of the coaching transcripts in order to determine the levels of experiencing within the coaching sessions, in particular where focusing occurred. As mentioned in section 2.5, research conducted by Gendlin in the 1950s/60s demonstrated that a strong determinant of a positive or successful outcome in therapy was the extent to which clients were able to sense inwardly or follow their present moment experiencing

(Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 260). Studies showed that higher levels of experiencing correlate with more successful outcomes, and that clients can be taught focusing in order to increase their experiencing levels (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 260). From these studies, Gendlin and others developed the EXP scale (Gendlin, 1961; Klein et al., 1969), which measures this level of experiencing. Specifically, the concept of the 'Experiencing level', points to the "manner" in which a person says something, provides an indication of their felt experience. The manner is a first-person process which is quantitatively measurable that can be applied to almost any content area (e.g. audio recordings, transcripts etc.) (Hendricks, 2009: 129).

According to Hendricks (2009: 130), the manner or level of experiencing can range from a pure narration of events with no reference to felt experiencing to a present exploration of meanings arising from the felt sense. At a high experiencing level, a person attends directly to their felt sense of some situation and allows words or images to emerge. After some small step changes, new meanings and insights emerge and a felt shift occurs. The body responds with a deep breath, tears, or some expression of relief. Each level has precise linguistic and somatic characteristics that can be identified and observed. This allows the "subjective" first person process to be analysed in a more rigorous and reliable way without the need for self-reports (Hendricks, 2009: 130-131). Examples of transcripts for each of the levels of experiencing are provided in Appendix J.

In summary, a low EXP level is characterised by comments that are mostly in the past tense, are about external events that are described as "flat" and self-evident. A middle EXP level is characterised by a descriptive narrative of events, and emotions are briefly referred to without internal elaboration. A high EXP level is characterised by an inner exploration of felt meanings or the felt sense, where events are used to sense inwardly, the present tense is used, there are pauses as one waits for the words or images to emerge from the felt sense, and the use of language such as "it's like…",

"that", point to the unknown "something" that is emerging from the felt sense (Hendricks, 2009: 134-136).

Finally, qualitative indicators of change (also part of the action learning process) including observed changes and self-reported changes were validated by participants or verified by another source (e.g. accounts of experiences or emails from participants) to triangulate the data.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully thought through as an inherent part of the research process and the university's ethics approval process (refer to Appendix K). This careful consideration included anticipating potential risks to the participants and how they could be mitigated (e.g. if a participant felt uncomfortable about aspects of the coaching or interview process and did not wish to continue). As mentioned in section 3.5.2, it was made clear in the Information and Consent forms provided for the interviews and coaching sessions that the research was completely voluntary, and that participants could withdraw at any time without consequence, and that any quotes would be de-identified and pseudonyms used to protect privacy. The opt-in process for coaching as part of the questionnaire also helped to address the risk that participants might have felt compelled to participate. Refer to Appendix L for a full list of these risks and how they were mitigated.

Importantly, these ethical considerations were informed by the principles underpinning the theoretical and methodological approaches used. For example, the non-directive, self-determining principles of a person-centred approach central to transformative coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 103), transformative learning (Ettling, 2012: 544) and focusing (Gendlin, 1996: 301) were core to the coaching process, which also helped to address potential issues of power in the coaching relationship. Moreover, the qualities of empathy, congruence, respect, and unconditional, non-judgemental positive regard (Rogers, 1980; Gendlin, 1996: 297;

Askew & Carnell, 2011: 103) helped to create a safe space for the participants. Refer to Appendix M to view the British Focusing Association code of ethics, which provides guidelines for Focusing teachers.

Ethical considerations were also informed by the codes of ethics and standards of practice (such as those set by the International Coaching Federation) that are core to good coaching (Brennan & Wildflower, 2018: 501-502). These include practices such as demonstrating commitment to duty of care, confidentiality, knowing one's limits (e.g. knowing when to refer a client to a counsellor/therapist), and recognising potential conflicts of interests and issues of power.

3.9 Chapter summary

The epistemological and theoretical perspectives that inform and guide the research align with the paradigms that underpin the transformative learning and coaching theories and practices that the research aims to build upon. Each of these theories and practices approaches adult learning from different ontological, epistemological and andragogical perspectives, but all integrate reflective practice and deep learning as core ways to enable change, which also align with the aims of the study. These aims guided the design of the research, which drew on the methodological approaches of Mixed methods, Practice-led research and Constructivist grounded theory. These methods were chosen to gain a holistic understanding of the complex emotional, psychological and sociocultural issues (such as burnout) that face practitioners today. Further, the various processes, including action learning, reflective practice, reflective dialogue and focusing, were all carefully chosen to align with the epistemological underpinnings of the research and to support the methods. The methods were tailored to support and empower the participants as part of the research process, and therefore contribute to both personal and social change.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, explores experiences of burnout based on the findings drawn from the questionnaire and interviews.

4. An exploration of practitioners' experiences of burnout

4.1 Chapter overview

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore the nature of burnout for practitioners by discussing the findings from the questionnaire and interviews. This addresses the first aim of the study, which is to examine how practitioners experience burnout and how it can be addressed.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly, it provides a brief overview of the questionnaire and the interview participants' profiles and workplace environments including the key challenges they face. Secondly, it explores the participants' experiences of burnout including potential relationships with factors such as a demographics, perceived lack of support and so forth. Thirdly, it discusses the kinds of support practitioners find helpful for their self-care and effectiveness.

4.2 The participants' profiles and workplace environments

4.2.1 Overview

In addition to participants' profiles and workplace environments, this section considers how participants who took the questionnaire feel about their work, including levels of satisfaction and intentions to leave, supported by findings from the interview participants. These provide context and a platform for discussion of the participants' experiences of burnout in section 4.3.

4.2.2 Interview participant profiles

Forty-three interviews were conducted with 30 practitioners, and 13 coaches and therapists. The terms practitioner, coach and therapist refer to the participant sample in this study only, not to the broader population.

4.2.2.1 Practitioner profiles

The practitioners were of diverse backgrounds and worked in a wide range of organisations and sectors, roles and levels of experience and seniority. The majority (57%) were women. Forty percent were in the 35-44 age bracket and 30% worked either directly or indirectly for government. Just over half (53%) of the practitioners

were in management positions or higher, and the remaining were professionals or specialists but not in a management position.

Although 40% had only been in their current roles for 1-2 years, the large majority (67%) had been working in the area they are interested in and care about for over 10 years. Table 4.1 below provides a summary of these findings.

Table 4.1 – age, sector, and years in role and career for the practitioners

Age	Years in role
• 18-24 – 1 (3%) • 25-34 – 8 (27%) • 35-44 – 12 (40%) • 45-54 – 7 (23%) • 55-64 – 2 (7%)	• less than 1 year – 3 (10%) • 1-2 years – 12 (40%) • 3-5 years – 11 (37%) • 6-9 years – 3 (10%) • greater than 10 years – 1 (3%)
Sector	**Years in career**
• Government – 9 (30%) • Corporate – 7 (23%) • Academia/Tertiary – 5 (17%) • Social enterprise – 4 (13%) • Not-for-profit – 3 (10%) • Sole trader/business owner – 2 (7%)	• less than 1 year – 1 (3%) • 1-2 years – 2 (7%) • 3-5 years – 5 (16%) • 6-9 years – 2 (7%) • greater than 10 years – 20 (67%)

Refer to Appendix O for a full summary of the practitioners' demographics.

4.2.2.2 Coach and therapist profiles

The coaches and therapists were from a wide range of philosophical, pedagogical and/or therapeutic backgrounds and modalities, including executive/career and leadership coaches, holistic or transpersonal coaches/counsellors, and ecopsychologists/therapists. They ranged in levels of knowledge and experience from four to 21 years, and belonged to organisations that offer learning programs, coaching or counselling, or managed their own practices. Each of the coaches were interested in issues of change and saw their work as supporting both personal and social change. Refer to Appendix P for a summary of the coaches' and therapists' demographics and specialties.

4.2.3 Questionnaire participant profiles

The questionnaire aimed to gather demographic data (such as role level, sector) to help build a profile of the participants and their work environments. The sample consisted mostly of women (69%) and 62% ranged in age from 25 to 44 years.

Most of the participants (91%) held an undergraduate qualification or higher, and 58% had completed a postgraduate degree. The majority (89%) worked in full or part time paid positions, and in roles ranging from sustainability advisors, officers and managers to researchers, planners and psychologists. Eighty-nine percent nominated that their role is related to supporting social and/or environmental change.

Fifty-six percent of participants worked in a non-managerial professional role, and 32% were in a management role or higher. The participants worked in a range of sectors (listed in Table 4.1). About one third (35%) worked either directly (25%) or indirectly (10%) for government, which represented the largest number of participants.

Table 4.1 – sector(s) working in for the questionnaire participants

Sector	Count*	Percent (%)
Corporate	22	17
Government	32	25
Not-for-profit	21	16
Academic	15	11
Social enterprise	11	9
Sole trader/business owner	15	11
Contractor	4	3
Other	10	8
Total	130	100

*The respondents were able to nominate more than one sector due to the transdisciplinary nature of their work.

When asked if they belong to a network or group, 78% nominated 'yes': of these, 42% belong to EIANZ, 18% to CSL and 3% to GreenUps. This also provides an indication

of the level of response to the questionnaire from each of the main networks, which distributed the invitation.

When asked which issues they were most interested in, the top three choices were climate change (69%), followed by conservation/biodiversity/ecology (54%) and waste management (47%) (refer to Appendix N for a full list).

When asked which one or two areas/topics they felt capture what they're most interested in or care about, 24% nominated conservation/biodiversity/ecology, followed by energy efficiency/renewable energy (15%), consumption/waste reduction (15%) and climate change/adaptation (13%). These areas are somewhat correlated with the issues they're most interested in.

This is also confirmed by the degree to which they felt their interests aligned with their current roles, where the participants scored a mean of 7.5 (on a scale from 0 to 10). Further, a relatively large number of participants (48%) had been working in the area they are most interested in or care about for 10 years or more, compared to 30% for 3-9 years, and only 20% for two years or less. The potential relationships these demographics have with the participants' experiences of burnout is discussed in section 4.3.5.

4.2.4 Questionnaire participants' work environments

4.2.4.1 The challenges faced at work

When asked which were the top one or two key challenges currently faced at work, the number one challenge was competing priorities (54%), followed by lack of time (48%), then lack of resources (46%), and finally lack of support from executive/management (38%).

Table 4.2 over page lists the challenges the participants could choose from in the questionnaire.

Table 4.2 – frequency of challenges faced by the questionnaire participants

Top challenges faced at work	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Competing priorities	21	54	49
Lack of time	19	48	44
Lack of resources	18	46	42
Lack of support from executive/management or influential individuals	15	38	35
Need for further skill and/or knowledge development	8	22	20
Opposition from executive/management or influential individuals	8	21	19
Other, please specify	5	14	13
Lack of support from team members or colleagues	5	12	11
Opposition from team members or colleagues	2	4	4
There are no challenges	0	0	0
Total	100		237

[1]percentage of choices out of total choices or count (e.g. 49/237 x 100 = 21%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 91 respondents (e.g. 49/91 x 100 = 54%)

*participants could choose more than one challenge

For those who selected 'Other', examples included a lack of leadership and action, a lack of planning and policy leadership especially at a government level, and precarious employment.

The challenge of facing a lack of resources, in particular limited financial resources within not-for-profit organisations, was also mentioned by the interview participants. For example, Jack felt overwhelmed by his day-to-day activities due to a lack of time and a sense of "not wanting to rock the boat" by asking for things such as time off and training.

Several other interview participants also mentioned how sustainability and climate change were not considered priorities by their senior/executive management, and this lack of consideration was reflected within the broader community. This led participants to feel as though not enough was being done to address the issues and that their work wasn't being valued.

4.2.4.2 Levels of satisfaction at work

Despite these issues and concerns, overall the participants had relatively high levels of satisfaction with their roles, where 71% were either satisfied or very satisfied. However, when asked about satisfaction with the levels of support received at work (in general), although 60% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support, 24% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This suggests that although the participants were mostly satisfied with their roles, there appear to be discrepancies in how they viewed the levels of support they received at work. This reflects one of the key challenges for participants (including a lack of time, resources and support from senior/executive management), which perhaps exacerbate the number one issue of 'competing priorities'.

It also reflects systemic sociocultural, political and economic concerns, and a lack of leadership more broadly. For example, one participant described it as, "government backflips [and] lack of clear leadership and policy, politics basically".

How these broader sociocultural concerns influence practitioners experience of burnout, hopelessness and despair is discussed in-depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.2.4.3 Reasons for thinking about leaving work

When asked if they thought about leaving work and if so how frequently (where 0 is 'never' and 10 is 'all the time'), the mean was 4.5. Twenty three percent of participants nominated from 8 to 10, and 36% nominated from 0 to 2. This presents a slight skew towards 'not thinking about leaving work'. Interestingly, if they did think about leaving work, the top reason was for a higher paying job. This finding is also reflected by those who nominated 'Other', where financial and job security reasons were the primary reasons for thinking about leaving work. As one participant noted:

> …precarious funding means that my role is temporary and needs to be re-approved every couple of months. [This] has been going on for five years and the regular uncertainty is too hard on my family and well-being.

Table 4.3 lists the reasons provided as options in the questionnaire and their ranking by participants.

Table 4.3 – reasons for thinking about leaving work for the Sample

Reasons for thinking about leaving work	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
I'd like a higher paying job	16	40	29
Other, please specify	15	37	27
I'm looking for work that is more meaningful	12	30	22
I'd like to gain skills and experience in a different role	12	29	21
I'm looking for work that is more challenging	11	27	20
Degree of alignment with my interests and/or passions	10	23	17
Degree of support for my role	7	18	13
I don't enjoy the day-to-day nature of the work	7	18	13
Degree of alignment with my values and/or ethics	6	14	10
I don't get along with my boss	2	4	3
I'm not happy in my role in general	1	3	2
I don't get along with my colleague(s)	1	1	1
Total	100		178

[1]percentage of choices out of total number of choices or count (e.g. 29/178 x 100 = 16%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 73 respondents (e.g. 29/73 x 100 = 40%)

*participants could choose more than one reason

A lack of support and direction at work, in particular from senior/executive management was also mentioned as a reason for wanting to leave, which reflects one of the top four challenges they face (mentioned above).

The third most common reason for thinking about leaving work was to look for more meaningful work. This was also one of the most cited reasons for those with indications of burnout (discussed in section 4.3.5.6). However, the desire for more meaningful work was not reflected in the findings from the interviews (or indeed the coaching sessions). Here the participants felt they were working in the area that they are passionate about, but were still suffering some kind of existential crisis or burnout. Why this might be the case is discussed further in the following section.

4.3 The participants' experiences of burnout

4.3.1 Overview

This section presents the research findings about the practitioners' experiences of burnout and discusses possible causes of burnout in relation to the challenges they face and other variables, such as levels of experience, the number of years in a role, values and interest alignment, and managerial support and commitment to sustainability.

Section 4.3.2 provides an overview of indications of burnout for the Sample group (i.e. all questionnaire participants). It focuses on those who had clear indications of burnout compared to those who did not show indications of burnout. These findings are discussed further in sections 4.3.3 to 4.3.5 according to the profile analysis approach discussed in section 3.6.1.2.

4.3.2 The survey results for the Sample group

As described in section 3.6.1.2, a 16-statement survey on work-related feelings developed by Maslach and Leiter (1986/2016) was used to assess indications of burnout amongst the participants. Eighty-eight participants completed the survey. The mean for each of the 16 statements and a total average or mean score for each subscale (i.e. exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy) were calculated for each participant and for the entire sample. The total and average scores for the exhaustion subscale were 11.2 and 2.2 respectively, for inefficacy they were 9.3 and 1.6, and for cynicism they were 10.2 and 2.0.

Refer to Table 4.4 over page for a full break down of these results. As mentioned in section 3.6.1.2, only three of the 16 statements can be provided in the table for copyright reasons.

Table 4.4 – MBI-General survey results for the Sample

No.	Subscale	Statement	Mean	Total score	Total average score**
1	Exhaustion	I feel emotionally drained from my work	2.3	11.2	2.2
2			2.8		
3			2.6		
4			1.8		
6			1.7		
5	Inefficacy*		0.8	9.3	1.6
7			1.4		
10		In my opinion I am good at my job	1.1		
11			1.9		
12			2.5		
16			1.6		
8	Cynicism		1.9	10.2	2.0
9			2.1		
13			1.8		
14			2.3		
15		I doubt the significance of my work	2.1		

Note: the number for each statement represents the position of the statement in the survey

*Inefficacy equates to the reversed score of the efficacy scale

**Total average score equals the total score divided by the number of statements (e.g. 11.2/5 = 2.2)

Using the 0 to 6 frequency scale in Table 3.2 (and discussed in section 3.6.1.2), these results indicate that the Sample group felt exhausted slightly more than once a month or less (a score of 2.2), cynical once a month or less (a score of 2.0), and ineffective between a few times a year or less and never (a score of 1.6).

Using the High, Moderate and Low categories (as outlined in Table 3.4 in section 3.6.1.2), the total scores for each subscale indicate that exhaustion is on the low end of moderate (at 11.2), cynicism is moderate (at 10.2), and inefficacy is low (at 9.3). These results suggest that as a group the participants were experiencing low to moderate levels of exhaustion, moderate levels of cynicism and low levels of inefficacy. In other words, although they were somewhat tired, exhausted and cynical about work, they felt relatively effective and accomplished at what they do.

As previously noted, scores for each subscale were not combined to form a single burnout score as this would misrepresent the three-dimensional perspective of burnout as designed by Maslach et al. (1986/2010: 44-45 & 72). Also, due to the small size of the sample (88), the scores are primarily used to make comparisons *within* the sample (i.e. they are not representative of a broader population). However, normative data from other research studies is used to help interpret the results.

4.3.2.1 Comparing the results to normative data

These results can be compared to normative data from two very large databases compiled by Leiter and Schaufeli (refer to Table 4.5). These databases combine data from multiple countries (including Australia) and numerous occupations that were collected by several international scholars and shared with Leiter and Schaufeli from 1996 to 2015 (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 46).

Table 4.5 – normative data from the Schaufeli and Leiter databases

	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional efficacy*
Schaufeli database	N = 28,018	N = 28,036	N = 28,018
Mean	2.1	1.7	4.3
Leiter database	N = 19,782	N = 19,716	N = 19,825
Mean	2.5	1.8	4.4
Combined	N = 47,800	N = 47,752	N = 47,843
Mean	2.3	1.7	4.3
Sample	N = 88	N = 88	N = 88
Mean	2.2	2.0	4.5

*Scores are provided for efficacy and not inefficacy

In comparison with the Sample group in this study, it appears that the Schaufeli database more closely resembles the participants' roles. White collar (non-profit) and white collar (profit) workers represent 6% and 15% respectively in this database, however police officers represent 20%. Nurses and health care workers represent 40% of the Schaufeli database and 25% of the Leiter database (Maslach et al., 1986/2016: 47-49). Clearly, these professions do not represent the kinds of roles or

professions of the participants in this study, therefore comparisons between the sample and these databases must take these differences into consideration.

When compared to the mean scores from the Schaufeli database, exhaustion for the Sample group is marginally higher (0.1), cynicism is slightly higher (0.3) and efficacy is also marginally higher (0.2) than the population.

When compared to the mean scores from the Leiter database, exhaustion is lower (0.3), cynicism is slightly higher (0.2) and efficacy is also marginally higher (0.2) than the population. The lower levels of exhaustion may perhaps be explained by the higher percentage of nurses and social care workers represented in this database who tend to display high levels of exhaustion and burnout (Papathanasiou et al., 2014: 406; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 294 & 313).

When compared to the mean scores of the combined databases, exhaustion is marginally lower (0.1), cynicism is again slightly higher (0.3) and efficacy is marginally higher (0.2) than the population.

These scores suggest that although the participants are not feeling more exhausted than the norm, they are feeling slightly more cynical. This may reflect the nature of the participants' work, where they feel that not enough is being done to address issues such sustainability, climate change and social injustice. It may also be that the lack of support felt by participants, in particular from senior management, which was identified as one of the top challenges they face, may be compounding this feeling of cynicism. The higher levels of efficacy perhaps reflect the relatively high levels of satisfaction and interest and skill alignment in their roles. In other words, the participants' levels of inefficacy are not necessarily related to their levels of exhaustion and ability to do their job, but instead to cynicism related to the lack of commitment to critical issues from their organisations. The numerical differences between the scores is extremely small and so no conclusion can be drawn. They are

useful, however, in helping to understand the nature of burnout amongst the participants compared to the broader population.

4.3.3 Using a profile analysis approach to interpret the results

As discussed in section 3.6.1.2, a profile analysis approach was used to examine the data from the MBI survey in the questionnaire. The total sum and mean scores for each of the subscales were calculated for each of the 88 participants and classified as either High, Moderate or Low to form a list of profile combinations. These combinations were then identified as one of six profile types (i.e. Burnout 1, Burnout 2, Disengaged, Overextended, Ineffective and Engaged) and then sorted on a continuum from Burnout to Engaged. A visual representation of this continuum is provided in Appendix Q.

An Engaged profile is represented by highly positive scores on each of the exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy subscales, and the Burnout profile is represented by highly negative scores on the three subscales (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 90). Due to the difference in inefficacy scores for those in the Burnout group, I created two sub-groups – *Burnout 1* and *Burnout 2* – to highlight this difference in levels of burnout. It also helps to point out that those in the Burnout 1 group have the highest scores on all three of the subscales. The intermediate profiles including Overextended, Disengaged and Ineffective are also determined according to their level from high to low on each subscale, as previously outlined in Table 3.3.

The participant numbers and mean scores for each of the profile types are provided in Table 4.6 over page.

Table 4.6 – participant numbers and mean scores for each profile

Profile types	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Inefficacy	No.	%
Burnout 1	High	High	High	10	11
Mean score*	4.4	4.4	3.0		
Burnout 2	High	High	Moderate to Low	7	8
Mean score	4.0	3.8	1.4		
Disengaged	Low to Moderate	High	High to Low	12	14
Mean score	1.7	4.1	1.6		
Overextended	High	Low to Moderate	High to Low	5	6
Mean score	4.1	1.7	1.5		
No profile**	High	Low	Low	3	3
Ineffective	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	High	13	15
Mean score	1.7	1.4	2.6		
No profile**	NA	NA	NA	28	32
Engaged	Low	Low	Low	10	11
Mean score	0.5	0.3	0.3		
			Total	88	100
Sample group	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	88	100
Mean score	2.2	2.0	1.6		

*Mean score is from 0 to 6

** The 'No profile' groups represent other potential intermediate profiles that have not yet been explored by Maslach and Leiter (1986/2016: 90).

The results show that twenty eight percent (i.e. 11 + 8 + 6 + 3 = 28%) of participants scored high on the exhaustion subscale, 33% of participants scored high on the cynicism subscale, and 31% of participants scored high on the Inefficacy subscale. Cynicism scored the highest across the three profile groups with the highest levels of burnout. This reflects current findings by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 98), which suggest that cynicism could be more central to burnout than previously thought. Cynicism seems to be more closely linked to poor quality social relationships and lack of resources (one of the key challenges for the participants), which can lead to reduced levels of job satisfaction and performance (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98).

The majority of participants (57%) scored in the high category for at least one of the dimensions of burnout, and 24% of participants scored in the high category for at least two of the dimensions, with 19% of participants scoring in the high category for both exhaustion and cynicism. According to Maslach and Leiter (2008: 510), if scores are high for either exhaustion or cynicism or both together, then these patterns can be seen as a potential "early warning" sign for burnout, although this pattern could also represent the "aftermath of burnout", where things are starting to improve but one of the dimensions is still a problem (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 99). Importantly, this means that participants in the Disengaged, Overextended and Ineffective profiles (i.e. they scored high on at least one of the three dimensions) could be seen as either moving towards or away from burnout after having suffered from it (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 99).

On the extreme ends of the continuum there are equal numbers of participants who are in the Burnout 1 (10) and Engaged (10) profile groups (i.e. 11% of the Sample group respectively). If high levels of exhaustion and cynicism are considered strong indicators of burnout, then it would seem reasonable to include those in the Burnout 2 profile (i.e. representing indicators of moderate burnout). This brings the total percentage of participants in the Burnout 1 and 2 groups to 19% (mentioned above). Further, if those who are on the continuum from Disengaged to Ineffective are included (57%) and compared with those on the continuum from Engaged to Ineffective (43%), it can be seen that over half of the participants (i.e. close to 60%) scored in the high range for at least one of the dimensions of burnout. This perhaps represents a less than optimal experience for a majority of the sample. Therefore, it appears that the challenges the participants face at work are having a greater impact on their experiences of burnout than their self-reported levels might suggest. This may partially be explained by 'social desirability', as discussed in section 3.6.1.1, where participants may have provided answers that present themselves in a positive

way. These findings and the potential causes of burnout are explored in the following sections.

4.3.4 An overview of possible causes of burnout

As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, there is a large body of research into burnout, including its potential causes and effects. According to Schaufeli and Buunk (2003: 394), however, conclusions about these potential causes and effects cannot be drawn because the vast majority of research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal in nature (i.e. the research represents particular points in time rather than longer periods of time) (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304). Further, the longitudinal studies that have been conducted suggest reciprocal relationships between burnout and its potential causes (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304). For example, exhaustion may be both a cause and a consequence of burnout. In other words, multiple variables such as workload, poor relationships or lack of resources interact with each other over time. Therefore, the nature and experience of burnout is in reality far more complicated than simple "cause and effect" relationships (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 394; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304).

According to Schaufeli and Salanova (2014: 316), likely causes of burnout include high job demands (such as a high workload, pressure and long hours), and poor job resources (such as a lack of support from management). These causes are described by Leiter and Maslach (1997; 2016: 91) as "mismatches" between the individual and their workplace environments. These include:

1. work overload (e.g. too much to do with insufficient time and resources)
2. lack of control (e.g. a lack of involvement in the decision-making process)
3. lack of rewards (e.g. inadequate financial reward and/or recognition)
4. lack of community (e.g. unsupportive relationships or social isolation)
5. lack of fairness (e.g. unequal treatment and respect)

6. value(s) conflict (e.g. differences in work requirements and values alignment) (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 414; Maslach & Leiter, 2008: 500).

According to Chen and Gorski (2015: 377), in addition to these more general feelings of being overworked and underappreciated, the causes of burnout for activists in particular include infighting within organisations or movements, deep sensitivities to injustice, and a lack of attention to burnout and self-care within communities.

4.3.5 Potential relationships in relation to burnout

The following section provides a more in-depth discussion of the results for the Burnout 1 and 2 and Engaged profile groups, including examination of potential relationships with factors that may exacerbate or lead to burnout. The contrasts between the two ends of the continuum from Burnout to Engaged help to highlight these relationships. The relationships examined include the:

1. participant's demographics, including the length of time working in a role or career, the level of their role, and sector
2. degree of interest alignment in their role
3. degree to which the participant sees their work contributing to a broader social movement
4. levels of organisational and management commitment and support
5. challenges faced at work such as financial concerns
6. levels of satisfaction, intentions to leave and the desire for more meaningful work
7. skills, networks, resources and experience
8. levels of personal sustainability.

These variables were chosen based on whether I felt a discussion of the relationship with each participant helped to explain their experiences of burnout, and if they could be ascertained within the initial stages of the coaching process.

"Selective dropout" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 394) also needs to be considered in discussing potential causes of burnout. This is a pattern where those who are burnt

out tend to leave their jobs so that those remaining are likely to be older, more experienced employees who are "relatively healthy survivors" (Karasek & Theorell 1990 cited in Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 394). This is particularly relevant to the relationships regarding length of time in a role and/or career. This points to an important limitation in conducting surveys that aim to capture accurate representations of those suffering burnout.

As mentioned, no conclusions about cause-effect relationships can be drawn from these results. The potential relationships discussed form part of a contextual analysis, which helps to elucidate the participants' working environments and explore how the challenges they face and other variables might be affecting their experiences of burnout. As such, all causes are considered *possible* causes and all relationships are considered *potential* relationships.

4.3.5.1 How demographics relate to burnout and engagement

Similar to the overall Sample group, the participants in the Burnout 1, Burnout 2 and Engaged groups were mostly female between the ages of 35 and 44, with high levels of education. Refer to Appendix R for a summary of the key demographics for the participants in these three groups.

Note: Where the results from the Burnout 1 and 2 groups have been combined to form one group in the following discussion, this is referred to as the *Burnout 1 & 2* group. Also, **bold text** is used in quotes to highlight key words and ideas.

The length of time working in role

Eighty-eight percent of participants in the Burnout 1 & 2 group had been in their role for five years or less compared to 70% of those in the Engaged group. This indicates a relationship between levels of burnout and the number of years in a role, where levels of burnout decrease as the number of years in a role increase. These findings are confirmed by other studies, for example, where studies of nurses have shown that as the length of time working in a role increases, levels of job satisfaction

increase and levels of burnout decrease (Hayes, Douglas, & Bonner, 2015: 595). Wilson et al. (2008 cited in Hayes et al., 2015: 595) attribute this to higher levels of pay, greater autonomy, more opportunities for promotion and better work-life balance. These findings are also reflected in the interview findings. For example, Cam (an interview participant), described how it took him a while to learn how to avoid burnout by reorienting his priorities (i.e. putting his health and family and friends first in terms of work-life balance), as he explains:

> It was just flipping some things around in terms of work-life balance, so that I had my priorities a bit clearer. It's hard because…I'm so passionate about creating change towards sustainability and I see this injustice around the place, and there's always more work to do in that space and you **can never be doing enough.** So how do you balance that drive to be doing more with the fact that you're not giving enough time to actually live your life now?
>
> So it's trying to get a better balance of that. Knowing that I'm not going to solve all the problems in my lifetime and to at least be making some progress in the right direction. But put some limits around that because you'll **burn out** otherwise.

The length of time in a career

Forty seven percent of the Burnout 1 & 2 group have worked in the area they care about for two years or less, and 35% have worked in the area for 10 years or more. This is compared to 0% and 70% respectively for the Engaged group.

These results indicate a relationship between the number of years worked in the area the participants are most interested in or care about (i.e. their career) and burnout. Similar to the relationship between the number of years in a role and burnout, this suggests that the longer an individual has been working in an area they are interested in, the less likely they are to suffer from burnout.

These results reflect studies that have found higher levels of burnout amongst early career professionals aged under 30 who tend to have relatively lower levels of work experience (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 394). In other words, more experienced individuals are perhaps more likely to be in positions of management, and therefore

have greater access to and control of resources, a more pragmatic understanding of work and change processes, and greater capacity to address difficult situations.

Level of role

Only 10% of the Burnout 1 group were in management positions compared to 40% for those in the Engaged group who are in a management or higher role. This reflects the number of years working in the areas they care about, which appears to demonstrate a relationship between levels of burnout and engagement. In other words, there are a higher number of early career participants in the Burnout 1 & 2 group compared to the Engaged group where the majority have greater than 10 years' experience in the areas they care about.

Surprisingly, however, 67% of the Burnout 2 group are in management positions. On first reflection, the results for the Burnout 1 seem to be at odds with the results for the Burnout 2 group. However, this may be explained by the low to moderate levels of inefficacy (i.e. moderate to high levels of perceived efficacy) for the Burnout 2 group. This suggests that burnout for this group could be more related to conditions such as the nature of their work, workload etc. than to their position.

Another factor may be that despite greater levels of autonomy for decision-making, managers often have limited control if their areas of responsibility are interdependent with other areas of the organisation (Maslach & Leiter, 1997: 164). These factors could be considered mismatches in workload and control. This may be the case for the Burnout 2 group where 27% of the participants work in the not-for-profit sector (discussed further below). Individuals in this sector are vulnerable to work overload, as not-for-profit organisations tend to have fewer resources than other sectors and, at the same time, higher expectations (Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44). The discrepancy between high expectations, ideals and aspirations and the realities of the working environment is one of the most common explanations for burnout (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 312). The relationship between high expectations and

burnout forms one of the key findings that emerged from the coaching sessions, and is discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

Sector

Forty-two percent of participants in the Burnout 1 group work for government, and 52% in the Burnout 1 & 2 group work either directly or indirectly for government compared to 27% of those in the Engaged group. Further, there is a greater number of participants in the Burnout 1 & 2 group working in the not-for-profit sector, compared to the Engaged group, where more participants work in the corporate sector or as a sole enterprise.

These results indicate a relationship between sector and levels of burnout, in particular those working for the government sector. In the United States, studies have found that despite "acceptable levels of job satisfaction" amongst employees, burnout is a major threat to government (or public service) organisations (Bright, 2008: 150). Indeed, some studies have shown that burnout and exhaustion are the two main reasons for individuals to leave their public sector roles (Kim 2004 cited in Bright, 2008: 151). Further, studies into the attitudes and behaviours of those working in the public sector have shown that their motivation is characterised by "altruistic intentions" to serve the public interest (Bright, 2008: 151). Although this may act as an initial attractant to the public service, this interest can be short lived if the workplace environment is unfavourable or does not meet their needs "to meaningfully contribute to the public good" (Bright, 2008: 163-4).

In addition, 27% of the those in the Burnout 2 group work in the not-for-profit sector where much of the research on burnout has been conducted. Here individuals not only tend to have access to fewer resources (such as time, finances etc.), which impacts workloads, but their high expectations, drive and idealism can often lead them to "overextend" themselves (Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44). This may also be coupled with conflicts in values where individuals can lose sight of the "bigger

picture" or their long-term goals, leading to a loss of meaning in work (Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44).

These factors may partially explain why levels of satisfaction are low and levels of intention to leave are high for those in the Burnout 1 & 2 group, where the primary reason for wanting to leave is to look for more meaningful work (discussed further in section 4.3.5.6). In other words, conditions for those in the Burnout 1 & 2 group (whether working for a not-for-profit organisation, or directly or indirectly for government) may not be meeting their high expectations regarding change, and therefore do not support their need to make a meaningful contribution.

4.3.5.2 The degree of interest alignment

The mean score for the Burnout 1 group was 5.0 and 5.6 for the Burnout 1 & 2 group, compared to 8.8 for the Engaged group.

These results suggest there is a relationship between the degree of alignment between what the individual cares about in their role (i.e. what they value in their work) and levels of burnout. In other words, the more an individual's interests including what they value or care about are aligned with their role, the more likely they are to feel engaged in that role and less likely to suffer from burnout.

This finding reflects studies over the last decade or so that have shown that value congruency is key to engagement and burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Dylag et al., 2013; Brom, Buruck, Horváth, Richter, & Leiter, 2015: 61). This is particularly the case for activists, where burnout is most commonly caused by a conflict in values (Rettig, 2006: 17). According to Rubino, Luksyte, Perry and Volpone (2009: 291), working in a job that is incompatible with one's interests, values and abilities ultimately leads to burnout because working in a role that is a poor fit for one's values and abilities requires extra energy and effort, leading to exhaustion. And working in a role that is not compatible or of great interest can lead an individual to feel ineffective when they struggle or fail to succeed in the role (Rubino et al., 2009: 291). This could also be

the case (mentioned above), where an individual is working on issues they care about and expectations for change are not being met.

Moreover, there is often no "refuge" for those working on social issues when they leave the office, leading individuals to question their ability to achieve change more broadly (Sonenshein, Decelles, & Dutton, 2014: 31). For example, Sally (an interview participant and political activist) described her experience as:

> Things happened that upset me and clashed with my **values** that [made] me not be able to sleep at night…it's at the back of my brain and my brain is still ticking over. It's trying to solve it as a problem. I can't work out what the problem is so I can't get passed [it]…I'm having all these reactions, but not knowing what exactly it was…If you have enough of those overlaid with each other, you live in this **constant** feeling of **stress** and **tension**…You just have all of the feelings all of the time. It was completely **debilitating**.

So, although a higher degree of alignment with interests and values in a role may lead to increased engagement, it may also include high expectations, which if unmet can lead to increased doubt regarding an individual's ability to affect change. This doubt, coupled with anxiety regarding the urgent need for change, was a common theme amongst the coaching participants and is discussed further in Chapter 6.

4.3.5.3 Perceived levels of contribution to a broader social movement

The participants were asked firstly, about the degree to which they viewed sustainability as being part of a broader global social movement, and secondly, about the degree to which they viewed their work as contributing to some kind of broader movement. Interestingly, the mean score for the Burnout 1 & 2 group for the first question was 9.1 compared to 7.6 for the Engaged group.

This indicates that the Burnout 1 & 2 group felt that sustainability is part of a broader social movement. It may also indicate higher levels of commitment to being part of a social movement. In other words, the Burnout 1 & 2 group may identify more with their work as a "calling" or vocation, and therefore have higher expectations and emotional attachment to their work (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 100).

According to Schabram and Maitlis (2017: 605), those who enact their calling as identity are more likely to burnout. This may partially explain the difference in results between the Burnout 1 & 2 and Engaged groups. For example, Phyllis (an interview participant and activist) felt despair and was broken-hearted in trying to change systems, as though she is working in the "wrong way". As she described:

> I feel a bit in **crisis** myself, reflective of the system in crisis...I think I'm dancing a tightrope between **despair** and empowerment...the despair is that I wish for a stronger social movement. I wish for stronger engagement of the community to participate and be engaged in a process of determining how worlds work, democratic processes, economic process, this sort of thing.
>
> I'm trying to challenge systems, and it feels like… we can't do it. We need to organise. We need the power of people, and that's part of that perception of feeling **tired**… I feel **down-hearted** and **broken-hearted** and sometimes just straight delusional about these systems that we can't… we just throw our hands up and we can't intervene in the system, or I'm just doing it in a, going about it the **wrong way**.

The results from the second question regarding the participants' perceived contribution to a broader movement may also partially explain the relationship above. Here the Burnout 1 group had a relatively low mean score of 4.7 compared to 8.6 for the Engaged group. Although the Burnout 1 group viewed sustainability as contributing to social change (or perhaps because of that view), they perhaps did not feel as strongly that their individual work is contributing to change. This could be due to high expectations that are not being met, leading to high levels of inefficacy and cynicism, and manifesting as self-doubt regarding their capacity to affect change more broadly (as suggested in the previous section).

4.3.5.4 Levels of organisational and management commitment and support

Organisational commitment

The Burnout 1 group scored 4.0 compared to 8.5 for the Engaged group. This indicates a potential relationship between the degree to which the participants feel their organisation is committed to sustainability and levels of burnout. This result is

also supported when the mean score for the Burnout 1 & 2 group of 5.7 is compared to the mean score of 8.5 for the Engaged group.

This result is not nearly as clear for the Burnout 2 group, however, with a mean score of 7.9, which is almost double the score for the Burnout 1 group (i.e. 4.0). This may be explained by the participants' work sectors. In the Burnout 1 group, 42% work in the government sector and 25% in the corporate sector, whilst in the Burnout 2 group, 27% work for in the not-for-profit, 27% in the academic and none in the corporate sector. A higher percentage of participants in the Burnout 2 group work for not-for-profit and academic organisations. These organisations may have cultures that are more aligned with the values and expectations of the participants, which may explain the difference.

Management commitment

When asked to think about the degree to which they felt their senior managers were committed to sustainability, the results indicate an inverse relationship between the level of senior management commitment to sustainability and burnout. Here the mean score for the Burnout 1 & 2 group is 5.4 compared to 8.3 for the Engaged group.

This suggests that a perceived lack of support from management can lead to decreased levels of engagement. Again, however, the Burnout 1 group differs significantly to the Burnout 2 group with mean scores of 3.8 and 7.7 respectively. As well as the relationship with sector described above as a potential influence, this could be explained by the higher number of participants in the Burnout 2 group in management positions (i.e. the participants were assessing their own commitment to sustainability as managers). Similarly, the significantly higher mean score for the Engaged group may be due to the higher number of participants who are in management positions who are, again, assessing their own levels of commitment.

The significant gap between the scores for the Burnout 1 and Engaged groups may also be explained by the difference in the expected levels of commitment to sustainability from management and the participants' own levels of commitment, that is, the level of commitment from management had not met the high expectations of the participants based on their own high levels of commitment.

This is supported by Visser and Crane (2010: 18), who found that sustainability managers may at first be inspired by the perceived alignment of their values with an organisation's values but over time may become frustrated by perceived contradictions between their ideals and the organisation's less ambitious goals. Indeed, passion, commitment and motivation can quickly turn to frustration if organisations fail to comply with their professed values (Wright & Nyberg, 2012: 1575). In other words, failure to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability quickly leads to frustration for individuals who have chosen to work for an organisation on the basis of the sustainability values of that organisation. Further, this frustration can turn to burnout if the organisation fails to support their initiatives (Wright, Nyberg, & Grant, 2012: 1460). This was the case for Travis (an interview participant and co-founder of a not-for-profit organisation) who described his experience of burnout and reasons for leaving the organisation:

> I got really **cynical** about the political process [within the organisation] and thought... it was kind of a struggle… I got to the point where… I started with a pure kind of **hatred of apathy**. You know, like… "what's wrong with you, you're avoiding your responsibilities as a citizen, it's our job to engage". [But] after eight years I began to see apathy as a completely rational response to a system that is impervious to your efforts to affect it. To some extent, being an active citizen was almost an abusive relationship, where you kept coming back, hoping that they would be better…I was beginning to feel pretty chronically **burnt out**.

In other cases, there may also be individuals who are trying to change an organisation's values, commitment and culture from the inside (i.e. they're choosing to work for organisations where they're aware of the mismatch in values). These individuals gain a sense of self-actualisation and purpose by attempting to shape

new value systems through their work (Hoffman, 2010: 332). As "change agents" providing new insights and innovations for the organisation, these individuals can gain significant satisfaction through a sense of mission and purpose in their work (Wright et al., 2012: 1462). However, as "outsiders within", these individuals may also face potential marginalisation if their ideas are sufficiently disruptive, or may lose their sense of identity in the process of "fitting in" with the organisation's agendas (Wright et al., 2012: 1453). This can also involve "significant emotional labour" when individuals working to address issues of personal concern often have to argue with and convince their colleagues of their initiatives, whilst facing criticism and rejection (Wright et al., 2012: 1469). This was particularly the case for Deidre (an interview participant and environmental consultant) who felt she had to constantly convince her colleagues why they needed to comply with certain regulations.

> I got tarred with… labelled a "**difficult person**". That's the thing that you deal with most of the time, is that they [referring to colleagues] don't get the complexity, they don't want to get the complexity, and it's just, "the environment people are difficult and you're trying to stop me".

A lack of congruence in values, combined with a lack of support and commitment from management and/or colleagues (i.e. a mismatch in social relations leading to a sense of isolation and being perceived negatively), are potential causes of burnout.

4.3.5.5 The challenges being faced at work

As mentioned in section 4.2, the participants were asked to nominate the top one or two key challenges they currently faced at work. The top challenges for the participants were: 1) a lack of resources, 2) competing priorities, 3) a lack of support from executive/management, and 4) a lack of time.

For the Burnout 1 & 2 group, the number one challenge was a 'lack of resources' compared to 'competing priorities' for the Engaged group. The relationship between a lack of resources (e.g. time, knowledge etc.) and overwhelming job demands (i.e. competing priorities), and the likelihood of burnout is well documented across

occupations (Rubino et al., 2009: 290). Studies by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 98) demonstrate a link between a lack of critical resources and cynicism, leading to reduced satisfaction, efficacy and eventually burnout. This relationship is reflected in the high inefficacy scores for the Burnout 1 group.

For the Burnout 1 & 2 group the second highest challenge was a 'lack of support from executive/management or influential individuals', compared to a 'lack of time' for the Engaged group. Again, these results align with research by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 98), which shows that cynicism is also linked to the quality of social relations in the workplace (mentioned above). In particular, poor quality relationships or "workplace incivility" (e.g. demeaning remarks or ignoring colleagues) can lead to lower levels of well-being, job satisfaction, and higher levels of intentions to leave (Holm, Torkelson, & Bäckström, 2016: 75; Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). This is particularly the case for sustainability practitioners who often face marginalisation in the form of "rebuffs and rejection" especially in relation to environmental concerns such as climate change (Wright et al., 2012: 1469). For example, Laurel (an interview participant) described her experience working in the sustainability team of a large corporation:

> …we're already on the **back-foot** feeling… in terms of how people view you… [the] perception that sustainability teams sit around doing nothing or doing fun stuff. Like running the little cute community programmes or changing the bins and the lights… It felt like a little treadmill… just **exhausting** when you put so much energy into making something happen and constantly **fighting** these little fires all over the place. It just felt like a lot of energy for not a lot back, either personally or the broader team impact [italics added].

4.3.5.6 Levels of satisfaction and intentions to leave

Unsurprisingly, the results indicate that levels of satisfaction in the role, and levels of burnout and engagement are related. Fifty percent of the Burnout 1 group were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied compared to 0% for the Engaged group. These results reflect findings by Maslach and Leiter (2016: 97) and others (Rothmann 2008; Hayes, Douglas, & Bonner, 2015) that confirm the relationship between levels of

satisfaction and burnout. However, it is still not clear whether dissatisfaction leads to burnout or if burnout leads to dissatisfaction (Rothmann 2008: 14). This is most likely to be a reciprocal relationship.

Levels of satisfaction with support from management and intentions to leave

In relation to levels of satisfaction with support provided by management, 70% of participants in the Burnout 1 group were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, compared to only 10% who were dissatisfied in the Engaged group (90% were either satisfied or very satisfied). This reflects the finding that one of the top challenges the participants faced was a lack of support from management.

These results indicate a lack of congruence between the needs of those in the Burnout 1 & 2 group and the support provided by their organisations, which had led to low levels of satisfaction. As a result, there were higher levels of intentions to leave for those in the Burnout 1 and 2 groups with mean scores of 8.6 and 6 respectively. In particular, there was a marked difference between the Burnout 1 group and the Engaged group, with a mean score of 1.6. This indicates a relationship between levels of burnout and intentions to leave.

Levels of satisfaction and intentions to leave

This finding supports research by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 97) that confirmed a relationship between levels of burnout, and levels of satisfaction and intention to leave a job. In particular, exhaustion and cynicism were strongly negatively correlated with job satisfaction and had moderate positive correlations with intentions to leave (Alarcon, 2011: 555). Not surprisingly, the reverse is also the case. Studies show that individuals demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction and lower turnover intentions when the conditions of their working environment satisfy their needs (Bright, 2008: 150; Hayes et al., 2015: 594-595). For example, satisfaction levels increase and the likelihood to leave decreases as the congruence increases between an individual's characteristics (e.g. goals, skills and values) and their organisation's characteristics (e.g. goals, resources and values) (Bright, 2008: 152). This congruence

involves both the alignment of characteristics (i.e. similar values and goals) and the capacity to satisfy those characteristics or needs (i.e. the resources and culture of the organisation) (Bright, 2008: 152). In particular, values congruence (discussed above) has been found to be the most consistent and effective predictor of levels of satisfaction, commitment and intention to remain with an organisation (Westerman & Cyr, 2004: 258).

When asked about their reasons for thinking about leaving work, the most common reason in the Sample group was to leave for a 'higher paying job'. Financial reasons were also the most commonly cited reason for those who nominated 'Other' in the Sample group. However, the top reason for thinking about leaving work for the Burnout 1 & 2 group was 'looking for work that is more meaningful'.

The desire for a higher paying job

The desire for a higher paying job can, in part, be explained by the relationship between the degree to which practitioners feel they have sacrificed potential earnings working in their current role and levels of burnout.

The Burnout 1 & 2 group had a combined mean score of 6.6 compared to 4.4 for the Engaged group, suggesting a relationship between perceived levels of sacrifice and burnout (i.e. those in the Burnout 1 & 2 group feel they have sacrificed earnings more than those in the Engaged group).

These results may reflect the greater number of participants in the Engaged group who are in management positions and therefore were likely to be earning higher incomes. Interestingly, 93% of participants in the Sample group who worked in government, not-for-profits, academic organisations or were a sole trader felt they had sacrificed earnings (i.e. 93% scored 7 to 10), compared to only 7% of participants who work in the corporate sector who scored seven. This indicates that those not working in the corporate sector felt more strongly that they had sacrificed earnings. As the majority of those in the Burnout 1 & 2 group did not work in the corporate

sector where salaries are generally higher, this may well explain why financial reasons such as the desire for a higher paying job were cited as the most common reason for thinking about leaving work. Although this perceived level of sacrifice may not lead to burnout, it may be the case that stress regarding personal finances can exacerbate experiences of burnout.

The desire for more meaningful work

This finding supports the idea that those experiencing burnout may not only be suffering from a crisis about their work in general (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 386; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 296), but more specifically, a "crisis of meaning" in their work (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). Pines (2000: 634; 1993/2017: 61) argues that for individuals who seek existential meaning and significance from their work, and therefore have high hopes, expectations and passion for their work (such as purpose-driven change agents and activists), then burnout is more likely to occur if their experiences fail to meet their expectations.

This relationship is reflected in the results for the Burnout 2 group, where the lack of alignment with interests was considered the top reason for leaving, along with a desire for more meaningful work, and was the second highest reason for the Burnout 1 & 2 group. These results also support the finding of a relationship between the degree of alignment with interests and values, and levels of burnout discussed above. It seems reasonable to argue that for the participants suffering burnout as congruence in values and interests with their work widens, and therefore levels of satisfaction decrease, then the likelihood of burnout increases. This in turn leads individuals to think about leaving for more meaningful work that is more aligned with their values, interests and goals.

Although a lack of resources was considered one of the top challenges at work, this was not given as a reason for thinking about leaving. For the Burnout 1 group, a lack of support was considered one of the top reasons but was not in the top three reasons for the Burnout 1 & 2 group. According to Alarcon (2011: 555), research shows a

strong relationship between a lack of resources and reduced levels of personal accomplishment or efficacy, so as work demands increase and resources decrease, feelings of inefficacy increase, job satisfaction decreases, and intentions to leave and burnout increase. However, a weak relationship exists between intentions to leave and personal accomplishment (Alarcon, 2011: 556). This suggests that although a lack of resources and reduced levels of efficacy are factors in the burnout process, individuals may not value accomplishment as much as they consider other aspects of the job (such as their levels of energy or exhaustion) when thinking about leaving (Alarcon, 2011: 556). This provides some explanation for why a lack of resources was not considered by those participants suffering burnout in this study as being one of the top reasons for thinking about leaving their job.

4.3.5.7 Skills, networks, resources and experience

When asked to sum up how they felt about the skills, networks, resources and experience they needed to be effective in their work, the Burnout 1 and 2 groups scored lower on all four factors compared to the Engaged group.

Firstly, the Burnout 1 group scored a relatively high mean of 7.2 for skills and 6.3 for experience. However, these were both considerably lower than the Engaged group with 8.2 and 8.5 respectively. This difference may reflect that 70% of those in the Engaged group had been working in their area for 10 or more years compared 40% of the Burnout 2 group.

Secondly, the score of 4.0 for resources/tools for the Burnout 1 group compared to 8.1 for the Engaged group again reflects the finding that a lack of resources and support from management were the key challenges faced at work.

Finally, a large majority of the participants (78%) belong to a sustainability related group, professional association or community. As expected, they primarily belonged to the EIANZ (35%) and CSL (18%) networks. These results indicate a positive relationship between belonging to networks and burnout: those in the Burnout 1 & 2

group scored 5.7, compared to 8.6 for the Engaged group. Further, the Engaged group had the highest percentage of participants belonging to a group at 100% compared to the Burnout 1 group, which had the lowest at 67%. This suggests that those who are not members of a network are likely to have higher levels of burnout.

Despite this, the Burnout 1 and 2 groups did have relatively high levels of group, network or community membership, which suggests that other factors such as those discussed above may have a greater influence on burnout than whether or not an individual belongs to a professional group or network. The support that participants found by belonging to a group is discussed further in section 4.4.2.3.

4.3.5.8 Levels of personal sustainability

In the social movement literature, personal sustainability refers to the conditions which enable those interested in creating change to remain effective and to "keep on going" (L. Cox, 2009: 52), that is, without "dropping out", "drifting away" or burning out, which is common in social movements (Fillieule 2005 cited in L. Cox, 2011: 2). According to Chen and Gorski (2015: 368), burnout is the inverse of persistence or sustainability and in this sense, personal sustainability is a crucial problem for social movements, most notably in relation to burnout and dropout (L. Cox, 2009: 53).

Unsurprisingly, the Burnout 1 group had a very low mean score of 2.9 for personal sustainability (or 3.1 for the Burnout 1 & 2 group) compared to a high score of 8.5 for the Engaged group. These results indicate a relationship between the degree to which an individual feels they are positioned to work in a way that will be personally sustainable over the long term, and their levels of burnout or engagement. Thus, high levels of burnout are accompanied by low levels of personal sustainability (and vice versa). For example, Stella (an interview participant) felt that had she taken greater care for herself and been less emotionally attached to her work, she would not have burnt out, as she explains:

> …the whole **self-sustainability** thing… [I] didn't allow that "me" time to cook a proper dinner and do the things that… if I had done… I wouldn't have felt so

> **burnt out**. I would have been "this is work, if I just detach from it a little bit… it's not part of my whole, my everything" and I enjoy these simple but important things, I would have been less consumed by it and less eaten away at it.

How personal sustainability and self-care can be supported in order to address burnout is discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.3.6 Summary of potential relationships in relation to burnout

The findings for the Sample group indicate that the participants were not feeling particularly exhausted, had only moderate levels of cynicism and felt relatively effective at work. This reflects quite high levels of satisfaction in their roles, however at least 19% showed indications of burnout (i.e. high on all three subscales or dimensions), 24% scored in the high category for at least two of the dimensions (i.e. they fit within one of the Overextended, Disengaged or Burnout profiles), and 57% were in the high range for at least one dimension (i.e. they fit within one of the Ineffective, Overextended, Disengaged or Burnout profiles). Therefore, it appears that the challenges the participants faced at work may perhaps be having a greater impact on their well-being and/or effectiveness (i.e. as represented by the varying degrees of burnout) than their levels of satisfaction might suggest. For the participants showing indications of burnout, potential relationships evident in patterns from the data are included in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 – potential relationships in relation to burnout

Factor or workplace condition	Potential relationship
• length of time working in a role and career	• levels of burnout decrease with the length of time in a role or working in an area an individual cares about
• level of role	• levels of burnout decrease as position level increases (e.g. moving into management positions)

• sector	• levels of burnout increase when working in the not-for-profit sector and either directly or indirectly for the government sector
• alignment of interests and values	• levels of burnout increase as the degree of congruence between interests and values with the organisation decreases
• the degree to which participants see their work as making a contribution	• perceived levels of contribution (i.e. levels of efficacy) decrease as levels of burnout increase. This includes the degree to which participants are emotionally attached to or invested in the need and urgency for change
• levels of organisational and management commitment and support	• levels of burnout increase as levels of organisational support and commitment decrease
• the challenges faced at work	• the top challenge for those suffering from burnout is a lack of resources, followed by a lack of support from management
• financial concerns	• levels of burnout increase as the degree to which an individual feels they have sacrificed earnings increases
• levels of satisfaction and intentions to leave	• levels of burnout increase as levels of satisfaction decrease, which leads to increases in intentions to leave. The top reason for thinking about leaving work for those suffering from burnout is to look for more meaningful work
• skills, networks, resources and experience	• levels of burnout decrease as levels of skills, networks, resources and experience increase
• the degree to which an individual feels they are positioned to work in a way that is personally sustainable over the long term	• high levels of burnout are accompanied by low levels of personal sustainability

4.4 The kinds of support practitioners found helpful

4.4.1 Overview

This section details the findings and discusses the kinds of support (such as coaching, networks etc.) that participants felt helped them in the past to overcome their challenges, and what kinds of support they felt would be useful for their self-care and effectiveness journeys in the future.

4.4.2 The kinds of support the participants have found helpful in the past

When asked what kinds of support the participants had found helpful to overcome challenges at work in the past, the majority (59%) cited talking to friends, family and work colleagues as the most useful, followed by mentoring and professional/career coaching (36%), training and professional development (31%), and belonging to a professional/support network (29%). Some responses are likely to have been influenced by the examples of support listed in the questionnaire, and potentially the levels of interest in coaching as the questionnaire foregrounded coaching as a useful intervention (refer to the cover page of the questionnaire in Appendix F). Table 4.8 below shows the full list of possible responses.

Table 4.8 – kinds of support the participants found useful in the past

Kinds of support found helpful in the past	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Talking with family, friends and colleagues	20	59	51
Mentoring and coaching	12	36	31
Training and professional development	11	31	27
Belonging to a network and community	10	29	25
Mindfulness and meditation	9	27	23
Support from management and colleagues	8	23	20
Planning and goal setting	6	17	15
Health and fitness (e.g. yoga)	5	15	13
Reading, research and education	4	13	11
Self-reflection and personal development	4	12	10
Other (e.g. flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, self-care)	10	28	24

Total	100		250

[1]percentage of choices out of total number of choices or count (e.g. 51/250 x 100 = 20%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 86 respondents (e.g. 51/86 x 100 = 59%)

*participants' responses were qualitative

The top four responses are discussed further below, except for training and professional development as the need for professional development to improve effectiveness is considered to be self-evident.

4.4.2.1 Support from family, friends and colleagues

Being able to talk with family, friend and colleagues was the primary source of support for the participants.

Studies on activist burnout by Gorski and Chen (2015: 399), found that activists mostly seek support from family and friends because they often feel they cannot find the support they need from the activist movements they are working for. This lack of social support is often the symptom of a broader "culture of martyrdom" within social movement organisations that at best devalues, and at worst, shames self-care or conversations about burnout (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 399-400). This culture of martyrdom, which can manifest in individuals as the "need to save", is discussed further in Chapter 6.

4.4.2.2 Support from coaching and mentoring

A high percentage of participants (68%) in the Sample group had not participated in coaching. Only 32% had experienced coaching, primarily in the form of career coaching (39%) or life coaching (29%). The highest percentage of those who had not participated in coaching was for the Burnout 1 group (80%).

When asked about the techniques or tools the coach used that they had found useful (e.g. goal setting, scale questions, life mapping and mindfulness), the participants noted life and career mapping as the most useful (42%), followed by goal setting (35%) and mindfulness (23%), as shown in Table 4.9 over page.

Table 4.9 – coaching techniques that were helpful for the Sample group

Techniques or tools used by the coach that were useful	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Life and career mapping	20	42	11
Goal setting	16	35	9
Mindfulness	11	23	6
Visioning and visualisation	9	19	5
Questioning and reflection	7	15	4
Listening, talking and communicating	5	12	3
Other (e.g. journaling, clarifying values and strengths, getting to know feelings/intuition etc.)	32	69	18
Total	100		56

[1]percentage of choices out of total number of choices or count (e.g. 11/56 x 100 = 20%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 26 respondents (e.g. 11/26 x 100 = 42%)

*participants' responses were qualitative

These coaching tools or techniques primarily helped the participants to focus their attention on what they wanted to achieve and clarifying their direction. For example:

> I can see my decisions before me more **clearly** and now I must take some tough decisions about which path is right for me. Acceptance that I can't do everything. More **calm** in knowing that I'm doing something to resolve [the] deadlock.

They also helped with self-reflection and awareness as noted by one participant:

> [They] allowed me to intensely investigate my conscious and subconscious **expectations** and behaviours.

In turn, these reflective processes helped participants to clarify what was most important to them, gain perspective, and feel more confident and empowered in their decisions. For example, the process helped with:

> find[ing] more **clarity** and a feeling of ease with my current concerns as well as my future career and personal plans. I identified some behaviours or thought processes that were not helpful. I felt more **empowered** and in touch with my needs and dreams.

and,

> increased **confidence** and **acceptance** of my own choices – both what I'd chosen in the past and what kinds of things I was interested in and learning not to judge those preferences negatively by standards that weren't my own. I learnt how to bring my own **values** to the fore as a lens through which to see the world and my own actions. It's meant that I've been able to make changes in my job and other areas of life more easily and to see the **bigger picture**.

In general, the interview participants found that coaching helped them to explore and clarify their sense of self, build their sense of confidence, self-care and personal sustainability, communicate more effectively with others, and gain a broader sense of perspective in relation to creating change.

Coaching and personal sustainability

Scores for personal sustainability were only slightly higher for those who had experienced coaching (6.1), compared to those who had not (5.9). This was surprising, as one might assume that personal sustainability would be considerably higher for those who had received coaching. This may suggest that the participants had not received the kinds of support they needed in order to address more deeply ingrained ways of thinking and feeling that may lead to issues such as burnout.

A large majority of the participants (77%) listed life/career mapping and goal setting as the top two most helpful techniques they experienced in coaching. On their own, these techniques would not be sufficient to address issues such as burnout and other unhelpful ways of thinking and behaving. Other factors such as the nature of the coaching (e.g. if it was career or life coaching) or the number of sessions also need to be considered. This finding points to a potential need for coaching that can address aspects of personal sustainability, the focus of this study.

4.4.2.3 Support from professional networks and community

What the participants found most useful from their networks was information and advice, and discussions with likeminded individuals to "bounce ideas off". Importantly, they provided a sense of belonging and community that also acted as sources of motivation and inspiration. This sense of community also helped the

participants not to feel alone in what they were trying to achieve. As participants explained:

> …if you feel you're part of something and can have **psychological safety** in that place, that for me is the best support there is.

and,

> …community, morale, cheerleaders for me and the work I do, confidants; we feel like family, they give me **resilience** as I am **not on my own**.

Importantly, it provided them with the motivation and encouragement to not "give up" and to "keep on going". As one participant noted:

> …meeting with other people from the industry [helps] to **inspire** and **motivate** me by reminding me why I do this, and that other people care too.

This finding was also reflected by interview participants who felt that talking with family, friends and like-minded colleagues was key to supporting their resilience and personal sustainability. For example, Ariana (a manager for a not-for-profit) felt:

> the support that was being provided by both colleagues and friends and family… helped me have mental balance in order to **keep on going**… And so I'm very clear that's made me a more resilient individual but I can't be a resilient individual… I'm only **resilient amongst** the **community** and the people that are around me. That's how I've been able to be resilient.

Belonging to a group also supported participants to be more effective in their roles by helping to improve their problem solving and collaboration skills, understanding of attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, and strategic career planning and decision making, such as whether to leave a job or change career direction. For example, one participant felt supported to try a new role with their existing organisation and as a result felt:

> much clearer on the type of role and workplace I wanted to look for and why and have recently found a job in that field that is well suited to my personality and workplace needs.

Despite such benefits reported by some participants, only 13% reported regularly asking members of their network for support, while 36% sometimes, and 52% rarely (if ever) asked for support. In summary, 88% of participants only sometimes (if ever) asked for support, so although the large majority of participants belong to a group, network or community, relatively asked for support on a regular basis. Burnout 1 group was the least likely to ask for support: 56% never asked for support compared to only 10% for the Engaged group. This relationship could perhaps be explained by the possibility that those suffering from burnout did not feel able or were unwilling to ask for support at a time when they would likely have most benefited from it.

4.4.2.4 Support from mindfulness and meditation

Meditation and mindfulness was found useful by 27% of participants. As one participant commented:

> Mindfulness meditation…helps with **stress management**, knowing what to prioritise and being present for others. Through this technique I have been able to slow down natural tendencies to fill down time with "busy work" and become more strategic. It helps on a daily basis when I am pulled in multiple directions.

As Anna (an interview participant) described it, mindfulness can help manage burnout through inward attention by:

> going inwards and asking myself questions and looking at kind of how I'm feeling and processing that internally... **self-talk** as well. Recognising how I'm feeling and then saying, "All right. It's okay. We're going to move through this". So, kind of…the **outer me** talking to the **inner me**, almost. Especially in the situation that I'm in now with the **burnout** levels.

These findings are supported by research by Jacob et al., (2009) that points to the potential of mindfulness/meditation practices as beneficial to the well-being of ecologically minded individuals. How this dialogue between the inner and outer parts of an individual can be supported in relation to burnout, self-care and effectiveness is discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.4.3 The kinds of support the participants would find helpful

Firstly, when asked what kinds of support the participants would find most helpful to be more effective now and in the future, the most cited response was coaching and mentoring (36%). Although this might appear to be an unusual response, perhaps it is not surprising given the previous discussion about coaching and how it had helped the participants. This was closely followed by training and development (31%), and improved leadership and support from management (26%). Improved leadership and support from management is not surprising, considering that a lack of support from management was nominated as one of the key challenges the participants face.

Table 4.10 provides a full list of the kinds of support that participants believed would be helpful at that time or in the future.

Table 4.10 – kinds of support that would be useful now and in future

Kinds of support to be more effective at work now and in the future	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Coaching and mentoring	19	36	29
Training and professional development	16	31	25
Improved leadership and management support	13	26	21
Networks and community of like-minded individuals	10	19	15
Improved resources (financial, time, staff etc.)	8	15	12
Support to clarify career values, direction and purpose	6	11	9
Personal development and sustainability (e.g. confidence and resilience building, life mapping and counselling)	4	9	7
Political leadership and support	4	7	6
Financial and job security	4	7	6
Other (e.g. autonomy, improved work-life balance, support from colleagues, collaborative partnerships etc.)	16	3	26
Total	100		156

[1]percentage of choices out of total number of choices or count (e.g. 29/156 x 100 = 19%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 81 respondents (e.g. 29/81 x 100 = 36%)

*participants' responses were qualitative

These kinds of support are similar to the kinds of support that participants had found helpful in the past. However, coaching and mentoring, and more professional development were the two most cited kinds of support that were consistent for both the past and the future. Further, talking with family, friends and colleagues did not appear in this list, which suggests that coaching and mentoring, and more professional development were what the participants felt they needed, and had not received in the past and were not receiving at the time of the research. Alternatively, perhaps talking with family, friends and colleagues could be considered an assumed form of ongoing support.

Secondly, when asked what kinds of support would help the participants to be more personally sustainable in their work over the long term, the most cited response was improved personal finances and job security (18%). Refer to Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 – kinds of support to be more personally sustainable for the Sample

Kinds of support to help be more personally sustainable in your work/career over the long term	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Improved personal finances and job security	12	18	14
Coaching and mentoring	11	17	13
Training and professional development	8	13	10
Support from network and collaboration opportunities	8	13	10
Flexible working conditions	8	13	10
Time off to improve work-life balance, avoid burnout and think creatively	7	11	8
Improved resourcing (i.e. funding, staff, time etc.)	7	11	8
Support for personal development and self-care	7	11	8
Other (e.g. support clarifying values, purpose, direction)	32	51	39
Total	100		120

[1]percentage of choices out of total number of choices or count (e.g. 14/120 x 100 = 12%)

[2]percentage of choices out of 76 respondents (e.g. 14/76 x 100 = 18%)

*participants' responses were qualitative

As one participant noted:

> Some **job security** would make a huge difference. I know I am close to being burnt out so being able to take some time off without having to worry about things folding while I'm away would help.

Further, as was the case for one participant, much of the frustration in relation to securing income is compounded and/or conflated with broader systemic social and economic issues. As she commented:

> Some goddamned effing **financial income** [would help]… We live in the second least affordable housing market on [the] planet. If not for maternal "family money" to support some ongoing health issues… I would not be having private health care… The ecocidal, corporate, tax evading, obsolescent, pathologically obscene Apple wants to charge me more than [the] replacement cost of my COMPUTER to replace [the] broken screen. I cannot afford that!

Flexible working conditions (such as flexible working hours and being able to work from home) were also cited along with more expected kinds of support such as training and development, and opportunities to network and collaborate. This flexibility would allow participants to more effectively balance their work and family lives, which in turn would help to avoid burnout.

Others viewed their personal sustainability as connected to job satisfaction, also a systemic issue, as one participant stated:

> A huge increase in job satisfaction would be required. This is partly a local problem and partly the "**big picture**". Working in government today, one feels like a member of a threatened species. In saying that, I am nonetheless flattering myself, as the government and industry probably view me as [a] pest that should be exterminated.

Importantly, support for mental health and recognition of the challenges working to create change was also noted. For example:

> …more formal recognition that people who work in advocacy and campaign roles get **burnt out**. So maybe some **counselling**.

and,

> …increased awareness, support for and normalisation of **exploring** for **oneself** what actions are required [to] have, manage and maintain **personal sustainability** and **well-being**, which without this we can't make the social and environmental change we need in community and business.

This idea of clarifying oneself in relation to values and purpose in order to support personal sustainability or self-care forms part of the key findings arising from the coaching sessions, and is discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.5 Chapter summary

The findings indicate that the participants did not feel particularly exhausted, had only moderate levels of cynicism and feel relatively effective at work. This reflects relatively high levels of satisfaction in their then current roles. However, at least 19% showed indications of burnout, 24% scored in the high category for at least two of the dimensions, and 57% were in the high range for at least one dimension. This suggests that the challenges the participants faced at work were perhaps having a greater impact on their well-being and effectiveness than their levels of satisfaction might suggest.

In the past, the participants had mostly found support from family, friends and colleagues, followed by mentoring and coaching, professional development, and belonging to a network and/or community. Almost one third of participants had found mindfulness and meditation to be helpful practices. These kinds of support helped them with career planning, to be more effective at work, and provided them with motivation and encouragement to "keep on going" (L. Cox, 2009a).

The majority of the participants had experienced coaching, which helped them to clarify their values, sense of self and work-life goals, feel more confident and empowered, and to be more effective at work. However, there was no clear evidence that coaching was effective in improving the participants' personal sustainability. This may reflect upon coaching generally (i.e. types of coaching experienced) and the kinds of learning processes used, which tend to focus on goal

attainment (Grant & Green, 2018: 348) rather than on processes that might help shift unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving.

The participants felt that more coaching and mentoring, training and development, and improved leadership and management support would help them to be more effective in the present and in the future. They also felt that improved financial and job security, more flexible working conditions and work-life balance would help them to be more personally sustainable over the long term.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is rather substantial literature that describes the challenges faced by activists and social workers, including research into their experiences of burnout (L. Cox, 2011; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Gorski, 2019; Gorski et al., 2019). However, there is a need for further research that is both historically and culturally specific regarding the experiences of those working to create change (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 387). This research builds on this knowledge both by exploring the challenges and experiences of burnout for change practitioners working in Australia, and by developing a more nuanced understanding of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98) and the kinds of support practitioners need to be more effective and personally sustainable. Self-care and how effectiveness of practitioners can be better supported through the coaching process is discussed further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, provides detailed cases of five participants that describe and discuss the focusing and coaching process.

5. Discussion of the focusing and coaching processes

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides discussion of the process and findings from the coaching sessions in relation to the second part of the research question:

- How might focusing be used within a coaching context to: a) address burnout, and b) support the self-care and effectiveness journeys (characterised by transformative learning experiences) of practitioners more generally?

Firstly, it provides detailed case studies of five participants (Stella, Holly, Alyssa, Phyllis and Theresa) that describe the inner work, self-care and effectiveness aspects of their coaching journeys. Secondly, it provides overviews of the participants' backgrounds and the challenges they faced at work, with five examples or excerpts that show how focusing processes and reflective dialogue supported their transformative learning experiences. Finally, it provides a discussion of the key findings and process learnings that emerged.

5.2 Context for the coaching cases

As mentioned in section 4.2, Stage 3 of this study involved conducting 52 coaching sessions with 11 participants over 18 months, from early 2017 to mid-2018. Each session was approximately 1.5 hours, equating to approximately 78 hours of coaching in total.

Similar to the questionnaire and interview participants, the coaching participants were practitioners from a range of backgrounds, organisations and sectors, in roles ranging from professionals, technical specialists and managers, to social entrepreneurs and activists. Their roles worked either directly or indirectly to address environmental/social issues, and ranged in levels of experience and seniority. The majority of the participants who took part in coaching were early to mid-career professionals. Table 5.1 over page summarises the participants' demographics, including sector, role, the number of years worked in the area they are interested in, and the number of coaching sessions they had.

Table 5.1 – summary of demographics for the coaching participants

Name*	Gender	Age	Sector	Role level	Yrs in role	Yrs in career	No. of sessions
Stella	F	25-34	Acad./Tertiary	Spec/Prof	3-5	3	4
Holly	F	25-34	Sole trader	Owner/Mgr	3-5	7	10
Claire	F	25-34	Corporate	In-between	NA	6	2
Caroline	F	25-34	Sole trader	Principal	3-5	8	2
Doug	M	25-34	Sole trader	Founder	1-2	4	1
Theresa	F	25-34	NFP	Executive	<1	7	7
Nadia	F	35-44	Corporate	Senior mgr	1-2	≥10	1
May	F	35-44	Government	Manager	3-5	3-5	1
Alyssa	F	35-44	Corporate	In-between	NA	≥10	11
Phyllis	F	35-44	Social ent./NFP	Spec/Prof	<1	≥10	12
Nigel	M	55-64	Government	Exec.	1-2	≥10	5

*The names provided are pseudonyms.

The number of sessions was determined by the participants according to their needs and availability (i.e. the participants could request follow-up sessions, which were not instigated by me). This non-directive approach was important for creating a coaching environment that closely reflected a more typical coaching process in a non-research context. It also explains the range in the number of coaching sessions for each of the participants.

Of these 11 participants, I facilitated focusing processes with six participants (Stella, Holly, Phyllis, Alyssa, Claire and Caroline). Of the five that didn't experience focusing, three (May, Nadia and Doug) had only one coaching session and therefore did not have time to be introduced to the process. The other two (Nigel and Theresa) were introduced to focusing at a theoretical level, but the need for a focusing process either did not arise or was not needed in order for them to achieve what they wanted from the coaching process.

5.3 Coaching cases

The following five cases describe the coaching journeys for Stella, Holly, Alyssa, Phyllis and Theresa. They include:

- descriptions of the participants' backgrounds with the source of the data (from the questionnaire and interviews) provided in brackets;
- focusing excerpts from the coaching sessions ranging from low to high levels of experiencing according to the Experiencing (EXP) scale, as described in section 3.8.2;
- discussions of each excerpt including key findings and examples of reflective dialogue; and
- a brief summary of the remainder of their coaching journey.

These participants' journeys were chosen because they provided clear evidence of the contributions that focusing can make to the coaching process. They were identified via a number of factors, including: the levels of experiencing they achieved during their sessions; the clarity of the focusing process (steps in the participants' process, focusing techniques etc.); and the insights and felt shifts that best represent examples of inner work or transformative learning experiences. Appendix S provides a table that summarises the key coaching sessions for the participants and assigns levels of experiencing (according to the EXP scale) for phases within each session.

The various terms used to explain the focusing process are described in section 2.5.2. An example of the kinds of focusing process used in these coaching sessions is provided in Appendix A.

Note: The source of a quote is provided in brackets, for example, (interview). Also, **bold text** is used throughout the excerpts to highlight key words and ideas that link to the findings and discussion.

5.3.1 Case No. 1 – Stella's journey

5.3.1.1 Background

Stella is a passionate advocate for co-designing experiences and solutions that increase the well-being of people and the planet. She had recently resigned from her role as a sustainability manager for a large organisation and was on a sabbatical. Although she was working with a passionate and supportive team, she felt burnt out

from the experience of trying to create changes within the organisation. She was feeling ineffective and frustrated due to a lack of time and resources (questionnaire) and felt her "[work] environment had become toxic and her values didn't align". She described herself as "becoming allergic to work" (interview).

Stella's participation in the questionnaire coincided with her leaving the organisation. She scored in the high range for exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy, which indicated she was suffering from burnout according to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (described in section 3.6.1.2). In the questionnaire, she noted that she would like coaching to help her find "an organisation that aligns with my values and purpose", and to learn how to be more personally sustainable.

She also participated in an interview in which she confirmed that she was feeling exhausted and needed some "nourishing time" (interview). She had previously used meditation and talking with friends as ways to overcome challenges, and to "give my body and… mind a rest from being in overdrive" (interview).

Stella had previously participated in coaching, which helped her to gain a more objective "helicopter/holistic" view of her career and personal development journey (interview). Specifically, the process of "stepping back and questioning" helped increase her self-awareness and learn about who she was (interview). She also felt more "grounded and confident" in herself. She described the coaching process as:

> not like going to see a psychologist. It's about unleashing your own human potential…**nurturing yourself** and giving yourself the space to reflect on your life and where you are going, and respect for yourself enough for you to do that, and realising…you have everything you already need inside of you [and] allowing you to access that.

Despite this level of self-awareness, Stella was still feeling in need of support to help clarify how she could fulfil her purpose and become more personally sustainable.

As part of this study, Stella participated in four coaching sessions over a 6-month period. I introduced her to the focusing process in the first session.

The following excerpt is from coaching session no.3 and is an example of a high level of experiencing. It was chosen because it provides a good example of the micro-steps taken by Stella leading to a more significant, transformative shift or realisation, and examples of how the focusing process was facilitated, including typical focusing questions. The entire transcript is approximately 12 pages in length separated into two columns including dialogue between me and Stella, and annotations explaining the process. Read in full, the excerpt provides a sense of the arc of the entire process (about 15-20 minutes in real time) and an experiential sense of what the participant experienced.

As this study was part of my own journey to improve my practice of incorporating focusing into the coaching process, the transcript notes a few missed opportunities where I could have more closely followed Stella's felt sense as it emerged. The process of analysing and reflecting on the transcripts helped me to identify these missed opportunities, which led to improvements in my practice.

5.3.1.2 Focusing excerpt 1 from session no.3

This was the third focusing session with Stella and therefore she was familiar with the process. It began with some focusing instructions to draw Stella's attention inwardly to her body. These focusing instructions were learnt from my Focusing training (mentioned in section 3.4.2.2). This way of entering into focusing incorporates aspects of 'Wholebody Focusing' developed by Kevin McEvenue (1994; 2014: 19), an Alexander Technique and Focusing trainer.

Stella relatively quickly engages with the felt sense, which she refers to in the third person. She uses images and words such as "it's" and "like" to locate and describe the felt sense that is forming, and *resonates* by pausing to check what her bodily response is to these words in order to clarify and *receive* the felt sense.

J1:	Just noticing your breath. Noticing the breath going in your nose, past the back of your throat, deep down into your lungs. Just noticing that space in your chest area and your stomach. Just becoming aware of that space and maybe asking yourself the question, "What does my body have or would like me to know?" [focusing question]	I draw Stella's attention to her body, in particular her breath and ask her a focusing question. This question may seem strange at first, but Stella is familiar with the process and what the question means.
	In your own time, perhaps just describe whatever emerges, that might be most useful for you to know, today.	I wait in silence for Stella to respond. This could be a few moments to a few minutes depending on the individual.
S1:	Yeah, this one's like really strong and intense and it came before you asked the question and I tried to detach from it and ask myself the question, but it still wouldn't go away. [laughs to herself]	Stella already has a strong feel for the felt sense drawing her attention even before the question is asked and so there is no pause or waiting for it to emerge.
J2:	Yeah.	I acknowledge I've understood her.
S2:	It's like a really intense **energy** and **feeling** in my heart but it's not where my actual heart is. It's in my, like this…sort of like…just...	Stella is engaging with the felt sense indicated by her pausing and trying to find the right location and words to describe "it".
	If you'd imagine where a child would draw a heart on a person, before they know anatomy. It's like, it's like…my sternum, right, right like, **right in my centre** but just below my [chest]. It's like an intense, not fire but like an energy like a really strikingly burning ball of something there.	Stella locates the felt sense in the centre of her body and uses imagery to describe it. Interestingly, this area is where Gendlin (1996: 64) argues the felt sense forms, "usually (with some exceptions) in the centre, the abdomen, the solar plexus, the chest or the throat…One can get a felt sense if one senses for the quality that comes *in the middle of the body*".
J3:	Okay, so there is a really intense energy where your heart is…and so I'm just wondering is it okay to just sit with that for a moment? Just allow space for that. [focusing instruction]	Repeating back and allowing space welcomes the felt sense and supports Stella to resonate the words with her felt sense – an example of *reflective listening*. I'm acknowledging Stella's felt sense and have invited her to "pause" on the felt

		sense by asking "is it OK to sit with it?". This gives her the option to say "no, it's not OK" if that's what she senses.
S3:	Mmmm [affirms] [silent pause]	I'm careful to provide Stella with time/space for her to be with the felt sense and not rush the process.
J4:	And so is there something else about that, about that intense energy?	After a while Stella hasn't said anything. For some individuals there may be a tendency to "drift off" into more of a meditative state. So, after I sense there has been enough time, I ask her to describe the felt sense to make sure she hasn't drifted off and to keep the process moving forward.
S4:	Yeah, it just like, it doesn't seem to be, it's not expanding or contracting or moving. It feels like it's really meant to be there, like it's...even though it feels intense, I feel really comfortable with it…um…	Again, Stella is checking what the right words are to describe her felt sense…what "it" feels like.
J5:	So it's meant to be there and you feel comfortable with it.	Again, repeating back the words helps Stella to resonate the words with her felt sense – this process of acknowledging, repeating and/or synthesising what is said is repeated throughout the session.
S5:	Yeah, it's more intense than, yeah anything else I've picked up before. It feels like it's like being injected with adrenaline. It's just like adrenaline and yeah, oxytocin and just like all these, yeah, all these things. I feel like, you know that image of someone with all their chakras. I feel like it's like a **chakra that's on fire**, it's lighting up.	Stella has a very strong image or symbolisation of the felt sense as a "chakra that's on fire".
J6:	So, it's like adrenaline and oxytocin and the chakras just lighting up.	
S6:	Not all of them, just like...well maybe all of them but that one is just like fully engaged.	I repeated back "chakras" instead of "chakra". Stella notices this subtle

J7:	So, it's fully engaged.	difference and checks with her felt sense to correct this.
S7:	It's in its full force, it's just like…on.	
J8:	Hmmm… [silent pause]	
S8:	It's really consistent. It's not, it's just like yeah. It's not like pulsating, it's just almost like how the sun is there like a **ball of energy** that glows and is on fire just like, you can't turn the **sun** off, right. [giggles to herself]	A micro step where the chakra has now become like the sun – a ball of energy.
J9:	Okay, it's sort of like the sun, like a ball of energy…	I paraphrase rather than reflect word for word.
S9:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J10:	And so do you have a sense of anything else about that ball of energy as you notice it?	I invite Stella to see what else is there about this ball of energy to keep the process moving forward.
S10:	Yeah nothing's coming really to me other than that…it's just…it's just there and it's pushing me to be awake, I guess. It's like it's got a **sense of alertness** to it.	Even though Stella says nothing comes in response to the question as she sits with it something new does emerge, "it's pushing her to be awake" and has a "sense of alertness to it".
J11:	So it has an alertness to it.	
S11:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J12:	So is it okay, just to be there with it? Perhaps sit next to it. [a focusing instruction]	I sense this new quality of the felt sense is perhaps not fully formed and invite Stella to pause and be with it in order to strengthen her handle of it. I experiment with a new instruction to "sit next to it".
S12:	Like pull myself out of my body and sit next to my body next to it or just sit with it in my body?	Stella is new to focusing and so the question seems strange and she asks for clarification. Perhaps it would have been better not to ask her to "sit next to it" but to "be there with it" or "sit with it" as she understands this question.

J13:	Yeah, sit with it in your body, so just noticing it from afar and being aware that you are noticing it…	This is the start of the process in developing Stella's explicit awareness of the distance between "her" and "it" (i.e. her observing the felt sense).
S13:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J14:	And do you have a sense of what it feels like to *be* there with it?	
S14:	Yeah, I like it. It feels good and meant to be there.	
J15:	So it feels good and it's meant to be there.	
S15:	Yeah, it's not like the other ones that have more of a yin and yang kind of vibe to them. Or it's not an explicit yin and yang vibe. I feel like it's the sun and it's powerful and if you fully touched it…it would…it could burn you but also its way more positive. It's providing more **light**, **energy** and **growth** but yeah, just yeah. You don't want to touch the sun by hand. [giggling to herself]	Stella's giggling indicates there is something interesting about the qualities of this powerful energy she is sensing and the idea that although it is a positive energy it can still "burn".
J16:	Yeah, so there is light energy and growth. So do you have a sense of, that sense of it being there? So you say it's meant to be there. If you were to ask it, what do you think it would...or do you have a sense of what it would say?	There are a couple of paths we could follow, which I miss – this idea "you don't want to touch the sun" and "it's meant to be there". However, the questions I ask are enough for her to carry her felt sense forward.
S16:	I don't know if this one's entirely right or if it's just me… You're on the right track and this is right and just…it's like this, you know Donnie Darko channel thing that comes out their belly? It's not…have you seen that movie? It's not…	Stella is exploring her felt sense and what she is describing isn't "entirely right" as she senses there is more and is searching for the right words and image. She finds the image from Donnie Darko as a handle on the felt sense.
J17:	Yeah.	
S17:	It's not the same thing coming out of my belly but it's like my heart being **pulled** into my **purpose** and my **direction** and it's that kind	A change step here as the idea of her "heart being pulled into [her] purpose and direction" emerges. This is an important step as clarifying her purpose

	of...Donnie Darko's belly with a sun bursting out of your heart, pulling you towards your purpose and making you…um…to be on your **life journey**, I guess.	and direction in life was one of the reasons she wanted to participate in coaching. I remember this and sense an opportunity to see what it might have to say about her purpose.
J18:	Mm-mm, so it feels like it's pulling you towards your purpose.	
S18:	Hhhmmm…I still have control over that journey, it's not rigid, it's just yeah. I feel like it's a thing that's driving up and pulling me in the right direction, but I still have some element of, wiggle room and **free will** as well. I don't feel constrained by it.	Stella responds to hearing the words "it's pulling you" by clarifying her feel of this pulling sensation (i.e. she still has free will and control over this sense of being pulled).
J19:	So if you were to think about the qualities of that, this ball of energy, what kinds of qualities would you say it has?	Another missed opportunity to follow this newly emerging sense of being pulled towards her purpose.
S19:	Strength and vitality, I guess. Yeah, I don't know if energy is a quality per se but yeah, it's definitely got a s*** load of energy in there. Yeah…it's not **qualities** that are coming to mind but yeah, it's sort of like direction and purpose and all of those words that I guess I've used. Yeah **powerful**, it's like powerful I guess is a kind of a quality…it's powerful.	Despite this, Stella is able to use the question to clarify her felt sense that it's not "qualities" that come to mind per se, but it does feel powerful, which she then senses as a quality.
J20:	So it's got a powerful quality. There's energy and vitality and strength and you also describe the relationship as one where it's flexible, you're still in control.	I recognise I missed the opportunity from before but come back to it by reflecting Stella's sense of being in control.
S20:	Yeah, like it's still pulling me towards my purpose and my purpose feels **pre-defined**, but I feel like I get some…I don't feel trapped or constrained but it's, everything is pre-defined for your long journey…I still get to consciously make decisions but it's like it's pulling me towards this	Another change step, Stella can see now that although her purpose feels somewhat pre-defined, like being pulled towards a magnet, there are many ways to get there.

	purpose **magnet** and there's **many ways** to get to that magnet.	
J21:	Okay, so there's something about a purpose magnet that you're being pulled towards.	My "okay" acknowledges that a felt realisation has emerged and I reflect it back so she can anchor it.
S21:	Now that I know the magnet is like facing north, there's many ways to get north but I can't go south anymore.	Stella's process speeds up as the meaning of her felt sense becomes clearer. There is a sense of forward movement as she acknowledges there is no going back.
J22:	So there are many ways of moving north towards the purpose magnet.	
S22:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J23:	So if you were to turn towards the purpose magnet, do you have a sense of what that is like?	This question helps to create a different perspective towards the felt sense in order to see what else might be there and deepen her understanding of it.
S23:	There's like abundant but grounded and like homely and also powerful and, but calm at the same time. Peaceful and tranquil um…and a sense of ahhh…**huge change** but **equilibrium** as well. So like the change part is like **consciousness shifting** and **transformation**…um…but then the equilibrium, and that creates, you know that, that always creates tension and the opposite of equilibrium but then that's with the, you know at that point it restabilises and it's like not the garden of Eden but like if the garden of Eden was a feeling, of just like **blissness**, it's that.	Stella lists the qualities of the pulling sensation and then a big step emerges, an 'aha moment' where she can sense the huge change that comes with it – it feels like "consciousness shifting and transformation" but then it restabilises to a calm, blissful, equilibrium. Although what she is saying doesn't quite make sense, this does not affect the process. It is not necessary for me to understand the content of what she is saying.
J24:	Hmmm so, it feels abundant and grounded, homely, powerful, calm, peaceful, tranquil, sort of like a consciousness shifting.	I notice this is a potentially significant moment and so I carefully repeat some of the key words back to Stella so she can resonate these words with the felt sense.
S24:	Yeah.	

J25:	Do you have any other sense of what that purpose magnet is for you?	
S25:	Well, I feel like, because I know or I think I know what my **purpose** is, actually I know what my purpose is…I shouldn't say I think I know what it is…this whole like restoration and **regeneration** living, thriving ecosystem space. So yeah, it's hard not to yeah, I guess use those words and it's just **full of potential** and looking at things, in, in very different ways and [inaudible recording] the same things.	Stella is passionate about regenerative systems, and now she has a felt sense of that as being her purpose and being full of potential.
J26:	So, I'm just conscious of not moving ahead too fast. So is it okay just to spend time with this purpose magnet? Just being there with it and sensing what it feels like.	I sense that Stella may have gone into "thinking" about her purpose and invite her to slow down and stay with the felt sense so she can anchor it in her body.
S26:	It's really funny because even though I've described it as a magnet and that something I'm being pulled towards and the part, like the ball of energy that I have that's pulling me towards it, it doesn't have that same, itself, it doesn't have that same sense of ... I can't explain it…[*checking the felt sense*]…this part, it's like I feel like I'm being pulled towards it but it's just, it's staying there so it's not that it's less powerful or less energetic but it's just, **it is, just is**…and it's just there, whereas the part that I feel myself feels more energetic and more, it moves but it doesn't move inside of me but it's yeah, I'm being…It can only pull me towards it. It's **never going to move**, is the thing I guess. I'm picking up out of that.	Something new is emerging and she is having difficulty describing it. However, her sense is that her purpose is something that is part of her and is "never going to move".
J27:	So, it just *is* and how does it feel to actually be there with it?	

S27:	Yeah…it's just like **home** but it's, there is also, even though that it feels like home but the **journey** and the energy and the getting to that space is more…um…not more homely but just, there is this sense of jour…of not focusing on the magnet and the getting home but the journey to get there is really coming up [*the new felt meaning is emerging*]. It's like…um…the **richness** of that. Like the space…the magnet is, is abundant and epic and **thriving** but the richness of that energy between the two spaces is really lighting up and really important.	Another big felt realisation where she is differentiating between her purpose, which feels homely and the journey to her purpose, which is where the richness is.
J28:	Okay, so there's something about this space which feels homely and there's also this journey which that ball of energy is pulling you on or taking you on. So, is there something about the richness of that?	I sense we have some qualities of this difference between her purpose and the journey, but some clarification of the meaning would help.
S28:	Yeah, I guess it's like a, it's this weird feeling of **appreciating that richness** even though it isn't home and that home's always going to be there and I'm going to be tracking towards that but it's there. The reward isn't going home, **the reward *is* the richness** and having that richness in... like a store you know, like the more richness that I can soak up and be present for and mindful of and, as opposed to focusing on the getting home is really important, it's really yeah, it's like…	Another step as the felt meaning emerges as she realises the reward isn't about achieving her purpose or getting home but is the richness of the journey itself.
J29:	Okay, so the reward is the richness. So it's being present in the richness rather than focusing on getting home.	
S29:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J30:	And so I'm just wondering is it okay just to sit with that for a moment?	This is an important realisation, so I invite her to be with it.

S30:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J31:	[silent pause] How does it feel for you to be there noticing that?	Again, I allow Stella to be in silence with this new felt knowing before I continue the process.
S31:	It's just yeah still really strong and it's like, it feels just like f***ing powerful and okay but also yeah the powerfulness is yeah, it's just intense but…there and on.	
J32:	So if you could ask it or being in that space of appreciating that the reward is the richness, what do you think that it would have to say for you? [a focusing question]	I'm aware of the time at this stage and so ask a question that might help clarify the meaning and bring some resolution to the process.
S32:	Appreciate the f***ing journey and not the endpoint because you're going to get the endpoint dude [laughing] **It uses my language**.	The message from the felt sense is clear. Stella also makes it clear she can distinguish between herself and her felt sense – "it uses my language".
J32:	ah OK It uses your language.	
S33:	[laughing] It's a bit cheeky.	
J33:	Yeah. It's a bit cheeky…and so just notice that actually. Just take time to notice that it uses your language and it's a bit cheeky. [silent pause]	I'm keen for her to become aware of this distinction – the experiential distance between her and the felt sense, and invite her to notice this.
	So, I'm just conscious that we've got a couple of minutes left and in that time, is there anything else that you feel would be useful for you to know from that, being with that?	A focusing question used towards the end of a session to check if there is anything else that requires attention from the felt sense. In this case there is something else.
S34:	Well, yeah I guess that, what just came…what I just said about my language and cheeky, revealed that even though it's quite powerful and this intense sun, f***ing feeling it's pulling me towards this f***ing magnet, it's awesome…it gave a sense of also **vulnerability** and not...being	Stella also notices a quality of vulnerability about this cheeky aspect of the felt sense.

aware of that vulnerability of it as well.

J34: So being aware of that vulnerability.

S35: Yeah because once something's labelled like a powerful force and sun, it's easy to forget that there's the potential…everything has a little bit of vulnerability as well and so hearing it speak using my language and being a bit cheeky made me realise that there's...It's like a child, there is still a **child-like vulnerability** aspect that needs to be acknowledged, to it too.

Again, Stella refers to the felt sense as "it" speaking. She describes this vulnerability as having a child-like quality that needs to be acknowledged so I'm keen to give it plenty of space.

J35: Okay so there is like a child-like vulnerability that needs to be acknowledged.

S36: Yeah, it doesn't feel like it's a huge part of it but it's just knowing that and not just, not neglecting that.

J36: Mmmm…so not neglecting that…and so do you have a sense of how you could do that?

This question helps to create some forward movement and action from the message not to neglect it.

S37: Just being yeah, being I think it's part of the **conscious journey** part and it's, as much as it's a huge energy and fire pulling me towards the magnet it's the bit that I feel like I have the control over bits of the journey and the path to get to that north magnet space and the vulnerability child-like **human aspect** of it…

…it needs to be taken into consideration as opposed to this, in the day to day movement of the north space as opposed to just letting the energy, just pull there, completely like it's still, the energy is so strong like it's going to pull me there regardless but **nurturing** that day to

Here Stella is developing a felt understanding of how to nurture or take care of herself (i.e. of being conscious and mindful of the vulnerable child-like part of herself) on this journey towards her purpose.

	day vulnerable human aspect is really important.	
J37:	Okay, so nurturing that day to day human aspect. I'm just wondering is it okay just to notice that human aspect, and do you have a sense of any of the qualities of that human aspect?	
S38:	Yeah I guess that the qualities I've already mentioned is like humans, they're vulnerable…they're not…ahhh…they're not eternal like they can break, they can… they're…they're not like the sun that just exists.	Another step where she realises "ahhh" that she is "human" and the energy, purpose magnet, which is eternal is part of her, not her.
J38:	Okay and so I'm just wondering if it's okay to just be with that and perhaps put a pause on that feeling for the moment, knowing that we can come back to it later.	We have been focusing for a while now and I'm keen to not go too far beyond our agreed timeframe. I'm also conscious Stella might be getting tired. So I ask her to pause on the felt sense, letting her know we can come back to it anytime.
S39:	It's not liking to be paused [laughing]. It's like it's taking its time to want to turn off, like we'll just, yeah.	Stella clarifies that the felt sense is not keen to stop, it wants to take its time to "turn off".
J39:	So, it doesn't want to be turned off, is that what you said?	I didn't quite hear what she said and need to clarify.
S40:	No, it's just, like it's just pushing back a little bit. It's going to do it but it's…	
J40:	Oh okay.	
S41:	It's like, "I want to play."	
J41:	Okay, so it's pushing back a little bit. It still wants to play. So is it okay just to notice that and be okay with that in a sort of **gentle** way? [a focusing instruction]	I'm being careful to acknowledge the felt sense is not wanting to be rushed and ask if it's OK for her to be gentle towards it.
S42:	Yeah. Yeah approaching it like that in a less forceful way, like it responds better, to that.	Her response indicates I could have invited her to find an ending point in her process in a more gentle way. Stella has been sensing directly for a relatively long

J42:	Okay, so it responded better when you were less forceful.	time now and coming out of that requires a slow and gentle process.
S43:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J43:	So maybe just taking your time there and giving it that space and having that gentle approach to it.	
S44:	Mmmm [affirms]	
J44:	So if it's okay, I'd just like to draw your attention to your body, just noticing your body on the seat. Just noticing your breath. Noticing the sounds in the room and outside and in your own time, when you're ready, coming back into the room.	After a period of silence, I sense now is a good time to provide some instructions to help step Stella transition from an inward focus toward an awareness of her physical body and surroundings.
S45:	Well that one was f***ing gnarly. Yes. Oh my gosh, that one, far out. That was a powerful one, well for me, yeah…I'm a little bit blown away. It was weird to be in that space and also like **reflecting in real time** what that actually meant and just be like, f***.	Stella has come out of the focusing process and reflects on her experience. This was a very high level of experiencing for Stella and her words, "that was a powerful one" confirm this.

5.3.1.3 Discussion of excerpt 1

Stella started off with an image or sense of this ball of energy, which then morphed into a powerful magnet that was pulling her towards her purpose. In terms of process, I did not attempt to inquire about or discuss what this purpose was (i.e. the content) as this would have drawn Stella into analytical thinking and away from her felt sense. This is a critical difference to other methods that may seek, for example, to find the "root" causes or the "back story" of what is being described. This kind of inquiry might have led into a useful conversation (as would normally occur in a coaching session) to help clarify what her purpose was. However, in this case Stella is already familiar with her purpose, just not *how* to fulfil it. A far more nebulous situation that persisted despite Stella's high levels of self-awareness and reflection.

'Letting go' of the need to achieve outcomes

By staying with the whole of her felt sense, Stella started to develop a clearer sense of this energy as something that will always be there and that there were "many ways" to fulfil her purpose. After numerous steps or felt shifts, this evolved into a felt realisation that the "reward is in the richness" of the journey. There was a strong message to appreciate the journey and not to focus on achieving an outcome, knowing that she will eventually get there. This enabled her to let go of the need to achieve outcomes and be more open to what was emerging for her on the journey. The concept of 'letting go' is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Gaining an embodied understanding of self-care

Towards the end of the process (S35-37) there was a final realisation of the need to acknowledge the vulnerable, human and child-like aspects of herself on this journey. This was a significant step and an example of transformative learning where Stella experienced a shift in consciousness or way of being. This not only involved a new understanding of her situation (in relation to her life's work) but also a new felt/embodied knowing of the need to nurture and care for these more vulnerable aspects of herself on a daily basis. This was significant in the sense that she developed a clearer sense of how to "self-care" on the journey to achieving her purpose. Critically, this was a bodily felt understanding of self-care not just a conceptual understanding of the need for it (something she already knew but until now had not embodied). This in turn helped to answer one of the primary questions she had at the start of her coaching journey about *how* to support her personal sustainability. The power and transformative quality of this embodied learning was the explication of her own implicit knowing of how to self-care without the need for me to direct, suggest or imply how *I* thought she could care for herself.

Reflecting-in-and-on-process

Stella's final comment (S45) could be viewed as an interesting example of 'reflection-in-and-on-action' as described by Schön (1983/1991, 1995: 31), where she reflects on

how it was "weird to be…reflecting in real time what [the felt sense] meant". Only just having emerged from the process, Stella's felt sense is still strongly present and so she can both sense directly into and *reflect on* (in a more cognitive sense) her experience of the process. In other words, the process of felt sensing transitioned into a process of *reflecting-in-action*. This transition is similar to the process described by Schön (1995: 30) where:

> *reflection-in-action* begins when a spontaneous performance – such as riding a bicycle, playing a piece of music, interviewing a patient, or teaching a lesson [in this case engaging in focusing] – is interrupted by surprise. Surprise triggers reflection directed both to the surprising outcome and to the *knowing-in-action* that led to it. It is as though the performer asked himself, "What is this?" and at the same time, "What understandings and strategies of mine have led me to produce this?".

When applied to the current example, the reflection-in-action is enabled through engaging the felt sense (i.e. focusing) where each new step or realisation in the reflective process could be seen as a "surprise", which then triggers further steps. For example, Stella realises (as signified literally by an "ahhh" moment at S38) that she is "human" and the purpose magnet she is sensing is *part* of her, not the whole of her. In addition to being able to reflect "in action", Stella was then able to reflect on this process – reflecting *on* the reflection-in-action (Schön, 1995: 30) as the conversation continued. At this point Stella is not directly engaging her felt sense but is reflecting on her realisations while still connected to her felt sense of them in a less direct way. A process that could perhaps be more accurately described as reflecting-in-and-on-*process* than reflecting-in-and-on-*action*.

5.3.1.4 The remainder of Stella's journey

We ended Stella's coaching journey by reflecting on some of the key insights and themes that emerged for her. These included being more mindful of not needing to "fix/solve" other people's problems (i.e. being the "caretaker") and not having to "save the whole ecosystem" (session #4). This was coupled with the idea of how to

let go of expectations and the need to achieve outcomes, being comfortable with "not knowing", and being in "flow" (session #4), and in particular, how to develop a more gentle and friendly attitude towards her "achiever self" (session #4).

In response to these learnings, Stella decided to postpone further study and not apply for another career development program. Instead she decided to:

> practice sitting with [the learnings]… and allowing all of these things to be embedded and practiced rather than just trying to fill my cup with more s***. It was really awesome to go, you know what…I don't need to be an achiever… yeah" (session #4).

5.2.2 Case No.2 – Holly's journey

5.2.2.1 Background

Holly is a director for a social enterprise that created objects based on sustainability principles. She is passionate about holistic thinking, resource scarcity, and ecological and sustainable design.

Holly participated in the questionnaire and at that time scored in the high range for exhaustion, and in the moderate range for cynicism and inefficacy, indicating signs of burnout. Holly also participated in an interview where she explained that although she enjoyed her work and there was relatively good alignment with her values, she felt unsupported by her colleagues and that every day felt like a "battle" (interview). She was finding a few relationships at work challenging and communication had become a "big problem". Both she and her colleague were "exhausted…from trying to impose [each other's] way on the other" (interview).

Holly indicated her interest in coaching in the questionnaire, noting that she would like "help making tough decisions about direction, and re-organising the business in a more efficient and less emotionally draining way". Up until this point she had been using meditation and mindfulness to help "put less emphasis on work and work relationships…and to better look after myself on a day to day basis" (questionnaire). She was trying to learn how to recognise her feelings and who she was in situations,

sit with emotions, and be kinder to and less critical of herself. Based on these issues and her readiness for change, I felt Holly could benefit from coaching and being introduced to focusing.

Holly participated in 10 coaching sessions over a 10-month period. I introduced her to focusing in the first coaching session and facilitated three focusing sessions over the course of her journey. She really enjoyed the focusing process and due to her experience with mindfulness/meditation and creative practice, found it relatively easy to connect with the felt sense and to describe what was emerging for her. In between sessions we would primarily engage in reflective dialogue involving frequent pauses at 'aha moments' and silence to allow space for maintaining connection to the felt sense.

5.2.2.2 Focusing excerpt 2 from session no.3

This was the third coaching session with Holly and the second time she had been guided through the focusing process. She had experienced a significant shift in the previous session where she had a felt realisation that she could provide her own support (session #2 and #3). This was a transformative moment in starting to develop her explicit bodily awareness of how to provide her own self-care. We started the session by reflecting on this, also discussing one of her core values – fairness – which for her is about being acknowledged for the value of one's work (session #3). She felt that the competitive nature of work negatively impacts fairness by forcing people to "leave their humanness behind" (session #3) and admired those who can "show their humanity in their work" (session #3) as it is this quality she hopes to emulate. In essence, she wanted to explore how she could develop a workplace where people are more helpful and less critical of themselves and others.

The following excerpt (approx. 2 pages) is an example of high-level experiencing (refer to Appendix T for the full session). We started by exploring how she could be more herself at work and not let others make decisions for her. About half-way through the focusing process, qualities of lightness (H11) and playfulness (H12)

emerged, which I reflected back for her (J14). After a long pause (H14), Holly connected to a sense of herself that is free from social expectations (H15), and is associated with a happy place, her inner child (H16). This felt sense had qualities of another way of being in the world (H18) that helped her address her original question about how she could be more herself at work.

J14:	You're noticing what it's like to be yourself. There's a freeing, there's a lightness, and then there's a playfulness about that. So, is it okay to maybe step aside from that, and then notice if there are any other qualities of what it's like to be yourself?	I repeat her words and ask the question again in a slightly different way, making it clearer what the question is about.
H14:	[long pause] Maybe…I'm not sure. I can't get it out all…maybe a bit…um…**removed from the world**, like removed from other people.	Again, the long silent pause indicates Holly is sensing directly. This is also indicated by her not being sure about the qualities and difficulty in trying to describe what she is sensing. However, she manages to describe this sense of being removed from the world.
J15:	Okay, so there's a sense of being removed from the world. Just sitting with that. [pause] What is your sense of being removed from the world?	I give Holly space and time to be with the felt sense before asking another question to move the process forward.
H15:	It's more like not engaging with **social structures** or like the kind of **expectations** that are put on you.	A step, as she is able to clarify that it's more related to expectations from others.
J16:	There's something about you that feels removed, and that's something like not engaging with expectations and social structures. What is your sense of that part of you that feels that way?	I start to help Holly differentiate between her and *it* by referring to "something about you" and asking about that part in relation to how *it* feels.
H16:	It's just like my **happy place**... I don't know. It's like my **inner child** or	This is a big step where she connects her "happy place" with her "inner child". I

	something. Just not having to worry about that stuff.	could not have guessed that this part she is referring to is actually her inner child, who doesn't have to worry.
J17:	Oh. It's your inner child that doesn't have to worry about that stuff. I just invite you to really sit with that. That inner child that doesn't have to worry about that stuff. Just spend some time sitting there with that.	I sense the significance of this step and invite her to stay with her feel of the inner child that doesn't have to worry as a way to strengthen her felt sense of it.
	[pause] If you could maybe describe some of the qualities of that inner child, what would they be?	After a pause I ask her to describe the inner child to help deepen her experience.
H17:	It's like **trusting my own instinct**. Accepting whatever I need. **Accepting myself**, I guess, and having a lot of **energy to give**. Yeah. A lot of playfulness and light-heartedness.	Another step where it's about trusting in and accepting herself. This inner child has the qualities of lightness and playfulness she mentioned earlier with lots of energy to give.
J18:	There's qualities of trusting your instinct, and accepting whatever you need in yourself, and having the energy to give. There's a playfulness and a lightness to that. [pause] Are there any other qualities about the inner child?	
H18:	Being **independent**.	
J19:	Being independent. And so what is it about that feeling of being independent?	This quality of independence is different to the other qualities, so I ask a question to explore this.
H19:	[long pause 1min 30secs] I think maybe it's something about …um…feeling part of the **whole world** and the **whole ecosystem**, not just part of a human or a societal structure.	Here Holly makes a much broader connection between being independent and feeling part of the whole world/ecosystem. Here she situates her felt sense in a broader context.

J20:	There's something about that feeling of independence that is connected to being part of the whole world, like the ecosystem, not just the human, the society. [pause] There's something about that connection to the ecosystem that holds a special place for you. [pause]	I sense there has been a shift in Holly's process towards a felt sense that encompasses this larger perspective of herself – "that [she] holds a special place" for.
	When you're feeling that relationship and that connection, is it okay to ask how you would like to be with that? What kind of relationship, or how would you like to be with that inner child, that's connected to the world, the ecosystem?	I then ask a question to support her in deepening her understanding of the connection between the inner child and the external world.
H20:	I think I'd like to bring that, like **embody** that more. Bring that connection back. Bring it into that social structure more.	Holly senses she would like to bring her connection with the ecosystem back into her social world.

5.2.2.3 Discussion of excerpt 2

After the session we reflected on the process, as shifts and insights continued to occur. Holly occasionally "checks in" with her felt sense (i.e. reflecting-in-process) as we reflected on the insights and realisations that emerged for her during the process (i.e. reflecting-on-process). When asked what her sense of all of "that" was, Holly said she felt she could "access a different part of my brain…a kinder part". She then started crying, indicating a felt shift in response to this realisation that she can access a kinder part of herself. She went on to explain how her process felt different to other processes such as meditation.

> It was quite vivid for me. A lot of **imagery**, and a lot of places and **memories**…I was thinking a lot about **childhood**, or like my experiences…growing up, and lots of things. [*tears*] I don't know why that makes me upset, but yeah, I think there's something about imagining it or visualizing it that really helps me…It's quite different to meditation in that way.

Clearly a lot of memories and images connected to Holly's childhood formed part of her process and enabled her felt experience of this kinder part of herself. Importantly, as a facilitator of her process, I did not need to know these memories or events in order for her to experience her shift. Indeed, these memories and images form only a fraction of her whole felt sense and it would have been impossible for her to describe them all to me. Asking her about these memories (if they had arisen) or for her to explain them may well have prevented her from experiencing this bodily felt kinder part of herself. In other words, by drawing her away from her bodily felt sensing and into thinking/analysing she would most likely not have experienced the felt shift.

Awareness of this kinder part is similar to the experience that Stella had during her focusing process and it is interesting that both Holly and Stella were sensing aspects of their child selves or "inner child" when this kinder part of themselves emerged. Whether this kinder part is a quality of the child self or an attitude towards the child self is not important. As Gendlin (1996: 218) emphasises, a warm receptive attitude towards one's child part is what is important.

Finding a way of being that is less critical and more kind, open, curious and playful

As the conversation continued a clearer sense of curiosity emerged as a way of being that can enable Holly to connect with the world in a more open, kinder and less critical way. Refer to Appendix T (following the full version of excerpt 2) for this example of reflective dialogue with Holly.

This new "way of being in the world" is something Holly highlighted at the beginning of the coaching journey as something she would like to achieve and represents a clear example of transformative learning (i.e. a shift in her consciousness or felt understanding of herself in relation to the broader social world). It represents a new relationship with her "inner critic" that tells her how she should fit into "certain structures [and] ways of being" (H2). It enabled her to bring the connection

she has with the natural world to her social world, but in a way that is less critical, analytical and judgemental, and also more trusting, curious, playful and light-hearted (session #3) – a way of being that is kinder, more gentle, curious and open (reminiscent of the kinder part), which enables her to engage more effectively with her work and colleagues. Interestingly, it was her felt sense that was associated with her childhood memories of feeling safe that brought forth this sense of being playful, light-hearted and curious as a way of engaging more effectively with the world's problems.

This theme of experiencing felt understandings of the need to be more open, curious, kind and playful in the world was consistent across the other four coaching participants (Sara, Allyssa, Phyllis and Theresa) who also engaged in felt sensing. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6.

5.2.2.4 The remainder of Holly's journey

Developing a relationship with the inner critic, experiencing distance and becoming OK with not knowing

As part of the coaching process, many of our conversations involved discussing more tangible topics (such as what kinds of career opportunities would align more closely with her values and passions), and practical measures such as work-life balance and how to engage work colleagues more effectively. Our primary focus involved coming back to and reinforcing this rediscovered way of being, specifically, how she could continue to support herself in the world by trusting in her intuition, listening to her body, and being kinder to and less critical of herself. This involved developing a kinder, more gentle approach to her inner critic as she could see clearly how it affected her self-care and effectiveness in the world.

By the final session Holly looked physically different and more relaxed, and I could sense an inner calm. During this session she became quite emotional when talking about being uncomfortable with the uncertainty (i.e. she still desired more consistency and structure in her work/life). However, she was able to work through

her emotions in a way that was different to earlier sessions. As she described it, she is now able to observe her feelings of frustration etc. and not let them affect her "emotional landscape" (session #10). This in part was enabled by the process of "stepping back" and observing or experiencing the "distance" or difference between *me* and *it* as part of the focusing process. This enabled Holly to develop a felt sense of kindness towards herself and to make decisions without feeling "anxious and stuck" (session #10). As she described, it was like "observing a child have a tantrum [and] not holding on to it" (session #10). She further added that the process of *pausing* and *listening* – "dipping in and out" had changed the way she talks about what is going on internally, allowing her to feel what it's like to really listen and let what's "down here" (referring to the body) to emerge (session #10). For Holly, this was the "difference between talking from my memories or current understanding of what was happening in my life, and actually stopping to listen to what's going on right now" (session #10).

Although Holly hadn't decided exactly what she was going to do with the organisation or where she would like to go from there, she was "comfortable to sit in the not knowing space" and not force a decision (session #10). In essence, she decided to apply what she had learnt over the course of her coaching journey and allow the creative process to unfold in its own time.

5.2.3 Case No.3 – Alyssa's journey

5.2.3.1 Background

Alyssa is passionate about environmental sustainability, gender equality, women's rights, and the connection between well-being and sustainability. She had recently resigned from a sustainability management position in government where she had not felt supported, valued or recognised for her work.

Alyssa didn't participate in the questionnaire and therefore I had no data indicating her level of burnout. However, when she approached me for coaching, she said she

felt like she had "hit a wall" (session #1). She was also feeling low about sustainability in general, as though she had "lost the fight, and just wanted to be Alyssa for a while" (session #1). She was not sure if she wanted to return to the "fight" as she was "fed up with it", but she was feeling guilty for "turning my back on it" (session #1). Her goals were to clarify what she wanted to do next in terms of career, and learn how she could feel less self-doubt, gain confidence and be more "true to myself with others" (session#1).

In total, we had nine coaching sessions over a period of 10 months. I introduced her to focusing in the first two sessions. Refer to Appendix U for a different kind of focusing process conducted with Alyssa called *Blue Sky Focusing*, developed by Akira Ikemi (2014, 2015, 2015a) that incorporates aspects of Buddhist meditation.

5.2.3.2 Focusing excerpt 3 from session no.3

This was the third session and third time Alyssa had been introduced to focusing. This excerpt (approx. 4 pages) is an example of high-level experiencing (refer to Appendix V for a full version of the excerpt).

Alyssa prides herself on her analytical thinking skills, having previously asked, "How can you trust your feelings?", and although familiar with mindfulness and meditation, engaging with bodily sensed ways of knowing was new and challenging for her. I suggested starting with Gendlin's 'clearing a space' (J4-J9), as described in section 3.7.2.2 (also refer to step 1 in Appendix I). Clearing a space is a guided process that:

> begins with helping individuals find a way to focus internally in an accepting and nonjudgmental way while taking an inventory of their current felt issues or concerns and gently placing each concern **aside** for the moment. After one or more issues of concern are identified, the individual is guided to clear an **inner space** and to spend some time there. (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262)

This process helps to create *space* or "experiential distance" (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262) from feelings, thoughts, issues or concerns, and support an individual to sense

what most needs their attention (this concept is discussed further in Chapter 6). I assured Alyssa that we could come back to any of the issues that we "put aside" to help her trust that our intention was not to ignore any issues that may need attention. About half-way through the session Alyssa relaxed into her body, as indicated by a sigh (A13), which enabled a critical voice telling her she was "not doing enough, fast enough" to emerge (A14), which represent her ego and inner critic. After numerous steps Alyssa discovered their helpful intentions (A41).

Notice how Alyssa's insights emerged on their own, from her felt sense, with very little guidance. Clearly, each next step cannot be logically derived from the previous step. I had no way of knowing where or when the session will resolve, and my questions indicate that I'm closely following her process rather than trying to interpret or analyse the meaning of what she is saying.

A13: Yeah, and I sigh, so I'll like [sighs]…so I actually make that sighing noise with my breath.	Alyssa physically sighs as she really feels it in her body.
J14: Yeah, [sigh] so you make that sighing with your breath, and just really taking your time to feel that in your body…that sigh. And so, what is it, or what is it around that, that you feel when you make that sigh?	I sigh in response, mirroring Alyssa. This helps me connect with her as I continue to follow her process closely. I invite her to feel the sigh as a way to help anchor the felt sense. I then ask her to sense further around it to see if there is something more.
A14: I think that's me telling myself that **I'm not doing enough**. J15: Mm-hmm [affirms]. A15: Not doing enough or doing enough, **fast enough** or still lots to do and not keeping up.	This is a big step to identify a message it has for her that she's "not doing enough" but she continues to clarify there's a sense of time or urgency involved.
J16: Mm-hmm [affirms], so you're noticing that it's me telling myself that I'm not good enough or doing enough. A16: Mm-hmm [affirms].	This time I reflect back "I'm not good enough or doing enough". This is not completely accurate and isn't intentional. However, it reflects my sense of what she is saying.

J17:	Is it OK just to be curious about that, noticing who is saying you're not good enough or you're not doing enough?	I sense this could be a more sensitive area and ask her a somewhat awkwardly phrased question that invites her to be curious about her sense of not being good enough.
A17:	Hmmm…me?	Alyssa needs to clarify my question.
J18:	So you're noticing that it's me telling yourself you're not good enough. [long pause for approx.1 min 30 secs] I'm just wondering if you could share what's there for you right now?	There is a long pause as I'm leaving space for Alyssa to be with her felt sense. However, I'm concerned she might be drifting off and so I ask her a question to check she isn't.
A19:	I think it's my own…um...I think its self-esteem…self-esteem, **self-worth** or something along those lines that I need other people to see that I'm doing enough, or see that I'm productive, or to see that or to acknowledge that. It's almost like I'm seeking their, seeking **approval**, seeking **acknowledgment**.	Another step where she realises *it* (this sense of not doing enough) is related to her self-esteem/worth, and her seeking of acknowledgement that she is doing enough.
J20:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so really pausing there, slowing down, so there's a part of you that is seeking approval from others, from people around. I'm just wondering if it's OK just to be curious about that part of you? [pause] And it's OK to say no if it's not OK.	I sense this is an important step and want Alyssa to strengthen her felt sense of this new understanding, so I ask her to pause and slow down to anchor it in her body. I then ask if it's OK to be curious about it but I'm careful to give her the option to say no in case she doesn't feel OK to be curious about it [another focusing instruction].
A20:	[pause] I think it's almost like some people's approval is worth more than others, so those closest to me like my husband or my mum. Like I would absolutely be seeking their approval and acknowledgement. I guess I value that highly, more highly than other people's approval.	
J21:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so there's a difference in the kinds of approval, so more your mother's and your	Alyssa has differentiated the kinds of approval and acknowledgement she is seeking, and I want to help her strengthen

	husband's approval that's higher than perhaps other people's approval.	that clarification. Notice I'm not asking about the content or "back story" regarding her relationship with her husband or mum. This would disrupt the process and move Alyssa into "thinking" rather than felt sensing.
A21:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J22:	And I'm just wondering, is it OK to turn towards that part of you that is seeking approval and just perhaps describe, or if you have a sense of that part of you that is seeking approval.	Here I ask a question to support another way or perspective of being with the felt sense, and to again develop the felt understanding of the distance between "her" and "it".
A22:	Hmmm…I think it's **ego**.	Another step and Alyssa thinks it's her ego. There is no way of knowing what she is referring to here and instead of asking her what she means by ego, which again would move her away from her felt sense, I ask her if she could describe what it's like. I intentionally ask for a quality or something in order to keep it vague and provide her with as many options as possible to describe it.
J23:	Mm-hmm [affirms], ego. Is there a quality or something about that ego?	
A23:	I think it's very powerful.	I could have helped Alyssa to make more space for the ego and/or ask what other qualities it might have. However, I sensed that this "powerful ego" might have something to say and that at this point in the process it might help her find some kind of resolution. Also, our agreed time for the session is coming to an end.
J24:	Mm-hmm [affirms], it's very powerful. And do you have a feel or a sense that it has something to say to you?	
A24:	I just think it, it takes over so it…so it kind of wants to be in control.	
J25:	It wants to be in control.	
A25:	Yeah, it wants to exert its power and be…	
J26:	OK, so it wants to exert its power and be in control.	

	I'm just wondering if there are any other qualities around that? Or perhaps can you notice how you feel towards that part of you?	Again, I ask a question that helps to create space between her and it so she can start to develop a relationship with it.
A26:	I feel like it wants to ... although it's powerful and controlling, there's also an element of **protection**, it wants to protect me.	This is a significant and perhaps the most important step in her process. Alyssa can now see that although it is controlling it also wants to protect her. This is the start of her developing a different kind of relationship with this controlling aspect of herself that says she's not doing enough. This insight is highly unlikely to have been achieved through rational discourse.
J27:	It wants to protect you. Even though it's powerful and wants control, it also wants to protect you. Just really taking your time there, getting a really good sense of that feeling that it also wants to protect you. [pause] Is there anything else that you notice around the edges there?	I understand the significance of this shift and am keen to help her strengthen her felt sense of protection, so I ask her to pause. I also want her to further develop this relationship and ask her if there is anything else.
A27:	It doesn't want me to feel hurt.	
J28:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so it doesn't want you to feel hurt.	
A28:	It doesn't want me to feel pain or suffering or hurt, so it tries to protect me.	Alyssa is directly sensing it and clarifies *why* it wants to protect her.
J29:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so it doesn't want you to feel pain or hurt, so it tries to protect you.	
A29:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J30:	Just really taking your time with that. I'm just letting you know, we've got a couple more minutes to go. I'm just wondering if there's anything else there that requires your attention or would be useful for you to know?	Again, I'm supporting Alyssa to anchor this feeling in her body. We've come a long way and I sense this is a good time to bring the process to a close. However, I want to give her the

		opportunity to notice anything else that requires her attention.
A30:	Yeah, I guess I don't understand this **inner critic** and the ego, their relationship with each other. I don't get a sense of that at the moment.	Another step and a new aspect of the felt sense has emerged – the inner critic. Alyssa can sense there is a relationship between her ego and the inner critic, but she doesn't know what that is.
J31:	OK, there's a question, or you don't quite understand the relationship between the ego and the inner critic. Just really taking your time, there, there's no rush. Are there any qualities or when you put them side by side, is there something that you notice about them?	Again, I sense the significance of the inner critic emerging and am keen to let her know we have time.
		Numerous steps occur before a clear message from the felt sense emerges.
A41:	I think it's a message from them, that they're saying, "we're doing this to help you be a better person". Even if it's not helpful, the **intention is trying to be helpful**.	Alyssa is anchoring this feeling of the ego and inner critic's intention of being helpful even though it may not feel like that at times.

Developing a relationship with the inner critic and seeing its helpful intentions

It is interesting to see how Alyssa's first feeling "a little bit inadequate" (A8) morphed into a feeling of "not doing enough" (A14), and how this related to her need for approval and acknowledgement (A19). Further, she was able to find those aspects of herself – the ego (A22) and inner critic (A30) – that were driving this need for approval and acknowledgement. Most importantly, she was able to identify that although the inner critic and ego had "too much control" (A38), creating feelings of overwhelm, their purpose or intention was to be helpful and protect her (A26 & A31). This was a critical step towards developing a relationship with the inner critic and ego that helped to transform their influence. According to Langeveld and de Bruijn (2008: 9):

> recognizing one's critic as "a **helper** out of control" brings real **relief**. Identifying the originator of mental and physical distress as a critic often comes as a true

> revelation: "this is my critic, and it even wants to rescue me. I'm no longer at the mercy of this critic – I have a choice!"

Supporting an individual to find the "good intentions" of the inner critic can help to transform it into an ally, a powerful tool to help individuals to become "more deeply in touch with themselves and their inner wisdom" (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 9). An in-depth discussion on working with the inner critic is provided in Chapter 6.

Developing a curious and gentle approach to the inner critic

Alyssa and I continued to discuss the session and like Stella's and Holly's experience it was clear that she was still connected to the felt sense although in a less direct way. Reflecting on the process helped to clarify some of her insights and to allow new insights to emerge. Alyssa realised that what she felt in relation to the inner critic and ego comes from her mother and her intention to be helpful, wanting her to "have a better life and be the best I can be" (session #3).

She continued to reflect on how difficult it was for her to get to that place where she could develop a more curious and gentle approach to the inner critic and ego, and to see their helpful intentions. As she noted, initially when asked if she can be with the inner critic in a kinder, more gentle way, her felt response was "no, I don't know how to do this in a more gentle way", and how she "kinda had to really dig to get to that place" (session #3). She then acknowledged that she "would never have thought of ego as something that's protective" as she always thought of it as a "bad thing" (session #3). This new felt understanding might provide some relief regarding her feelings of inadequacy – of "not doing enough" – and associated feelings of exhaustion. This was a significant shift that would unlikely to have occurred through her own self-reflection or without some kind of prompting from a coach or therapist. Even if this were to occur, she would unlikely have been able to achieve a felt understanding of the inner critic and ego as protective.

5.2.3.4 The remainder of Alyssa's journey

By the eighth session Alyssa had decided to set up her own consultancy business and was enjoying the freedom and flexibility that came with that. This reinforced her feeling that she had made the right decision about leaving her previous job. She also publicly declared that she was planning to write a book about her struggles with mental health and working to create change. She noted that working in sustainability and dealing with issues such as climate change "involves all of me". This is reminiscent of Kovan and Dirkx's (2003: 110) activists' "integration of the self with their work", and so she also valued the "downtime of not thinking about it" (session #8).

By the final session, Alyssa's freelance business was doing well, however, she was finding the uncertainty of the work and the feeling of being an "imposter" challenging (session #9). The changes for her had been so significant she felt she sometimes didn't recognise herself, as she noted, "people see me as being brave making the change but I don't see that, I see myself as a risk taker whereas I used to be a planner…sometimes I don't recognise myself" (session #9). She had also been thinking a lot about voice, as she explained, "I've always been the shy one that toes the line and now I'm not…it feels like I'm trying on new personalities…redefining who I am and this feels like a privilege and it's also uncomfortable" (session #9).

Rediscovering oneself and rewriting the narrative

At this point in the session I invited her to do some focusing and the felt sense of "I don't recognise myself" emerged. This shifted to a realisation that it was not that she did not recognise herself but that she was starting to recognise parts of herself that had been "lying dormant" (session #9). This brought with it sadness, "that it has taken so long for me to recognise these parts of myself and also for other women who don't have a voice" (session #9). This felt shift helped to deepen her connection and empathy for women who don't have a voice, and to reconnect to her passion for gender equality and women's rights. She could now see how her journey had been a

process of rediscovery (similar to Holly's rediscovery of her childlike playful self), overcoming her "story of indoctrination" to live a certain way, and how this related to helping others discover their voice (session #9). This is a clear example of inner work as transformative learning.

5.2.4 Case No.4 – Phyllis's journey

5.2.4.1 Background

At the start of the coaching journey, Phyllis was working part time at a not-for-profit. She considered herself to be an activist with a passion for ecological or "new economics" and cooperatives.

Phyllis participated in the questionnaire and at that time scored in the moderate range for exhaustion, in the high range for cynicism and low for inefficacy, indicating signs of burnout (according to the Maslach Burnout Inventory). Although she was still suffering from exhaustion, self-reported adrenal fatigue and burnout, Phyllis explained that she was improving and was passed the worst of it. In other words, she was on the other side of burnout or was moving away rather than towards burnout. However, I felt that Phyllis was still showing clear signs of burnout as she would frequently refer to her levels of physical exhaustion and "broken heartedness with the world" – reflected by her high levels of cynicism. In addition, she was feeling alone in her fight against the economic system, describing it as feeling like "a one-woman protest" (session #1).

Phyllis was also finding it surprisingly difficult to find a job despite her relatively high level of skills, experience, qualifications and networks – reflected in her low levels of inefficacy. Her part-time position also meant that she was "living just above the poverty line". This exacerbated how she felt about her situation and, combined with her ongoing search for employment, she was feeling exhausted. In addition to the stress and anxiety caused by working for (and being fired from) a co-operative where she felt her manager was a "bully" and the associated feelings of "social

injustice" about the situation (interview, session #1), it was not surprising she was feeling burnout.

Phyllis nominated in the questionnaire that she would be interested in an interview and/or coaching sessions. During the interview she described herself as a "broken-hearted idealist" who was feeling "disillusioned with the world". She felt like the "bottom had fallen out" and she was a "flotsam floating in the ocean". Although she felt she was in crisis, she recognised she was ready for change but just didn't know how. She described it as wanting to move from despair to a more powerful narrative, an antidote to the "I burnout and reappear in a different place" narrative. She had a sense this would involve working with the inner critic, "rebuilding from the inside, finding a new equilibrium, a core rebuild, letting go of ingrained habits, developing a sense of detachment from work and a different way of being in the world". Clearly, Phyllis had already undertaken a considerable amount of self-reflection.

Overall, Phyllis participated in 12 coaching sessions over a 10-month period. Phyllis's process was truly transformative in the degree of change she demonstrated from the start to the end of her journey. Although quite a number of excellent examples of focusing and aspects of transformative learning emerged from her sessions, only one is provided in this section: excerpt 4 – *Coming home to self, letting go of the fight and overcoming burnout* (a full version is provided in Appendix W). Other excerpts and discussions that provide rich examples of low to high levels of experiencing, representing key stages in Phyllis's journey are also in Appendix W. These include:

- *Moving from storytelling to felt sensing*
- *Learning acceptance, patience and becoming OK with uncertainty*
- *The bodily felt shift of a new way of being in the world*
- *Anchoring the felt sense of a cellular level of presence*.

The excerpts are numbered to reflect the chronological order of the examples in Phyllis's journey.

5.2.4.2 Reflective dialogue and focusing excerpt 4 from session no.9

This excerpt (approx. 3 pages) is from the ninth coaching session and is an example of moving from storytelling to high level experiencing.

In the preceding conversation, we had discussed how focusing had provided Phyllis with the ability to put words to things that were difficult to describe, and therefore address difficult situations. For the first time in 20 years, she felt able to "resource myself verbally in language enough…to negotiate" her experiences of stress, anxiety and burnout more effectively (session #9). This had felt like a "coming home to myself… a new groundedness", which had enabled her to let go of a "perceived fight and struggle…to make myself enough" (session #9). As she explained:

> I didn't know how to surrender in the state [of burnout]… of utter exhaustion…So…coming home to myself feels **full-bodied**…where[as] I was feeling quite **empty bodied** because I was putting so much energy out. But it…was quite…desperate and frenetic (session #9).

Phyllis continues to describe her experience of burnout as an "existential crisis" in relation to her life, work, and "the death of the planet" (session #9). As she explained:

> I was feeling so **disempowered** and **disillusioned** and…**despairing**. I felt **hopeless** to have any impact to change things, and that was quite tightly spun around my feeling of…I wasn't feeling…like I'm describing now of coming home to myself, I wasn't feeling at home in myself at all (session #9).

Phyllis continued for some time to describe her experience of burnout, "coming home to self" (P2), and "broken-heartedness with the world" (P3), and the shame she felt for her cynicism, and lack of faith and hope (P3). Phyllis then mentioned that she would like to be more optimistic (P4) and I sensed this was a good opportunity to interrupt her storytelling and engage her felt sense about how she could be more optimistic.

J5:	So I'm just wondering if it's okay to pause there and ask yourself the question, or just feel what it's like to be more **optimistic**. Or what would it be like to actually have more faith and trust?	I interrupt the storytelling and invite Phyllis to feel what it's like to be more optimistic, and to have faith and trust in the world.
	Perhaps that might be a visual thing, or it might have a smell, or a taste. When you feel what it's like to be more optimistic and have more faith and trust, what is it that you feel about that, or see?	I'm keen for her to engage with the felt sense more directly and so provide explicit ways for her to engage somatically (i.e. through visual images, smell, taste etc.).
P5:	When you use the word optimistic first, I definitely had some…a sense of grief and tears, tears and grief, yeah, sadness. But not enough that it's…like it was just a wave.	Phyllis has come back to the felt sense as indicated by her closing her eyes, testing of her felt sense of the word optimistic and describing the tears and grief that came with that as a wave.
J6:	Okay, so it's a wave of tears and grief.	A step here where there's an aspect of giving herself permission to let go of the cynicism.
P6:	Of like again, this feels like an exercise in **giving permission** and allowing and **letting go** of **holding so tight** on the **cynicism**, and the fact that sometimes shit doesn't work, and sometimes shit doesn't work for a long time.	
J7:	So there's something about letting go of the cynicism and that holding tight.	
P7:	Mm-hmm [affirms]. [long pause and sigh] But…la la la la…also [pause] in this experience of coming home to myself, and the experience of the possibility of feeling more optimism and faith and trust…is a sense…hmmm…is the want to be able to anchor and ground in the **deepest sense of knowing**, and **deep time**. That is not…it's like…that western frames and practice of living in the suburbs and feeling f***in…or	The long pause and sighing indicates she is entering into a deeper level of felt sensing or a higher level of experiencing. She is sensing this deeper sense of knowing, like indigenous ways of knowing that are also deep in her core, and her impatience that conflicts with it.

being perpetually f***in busy doesn't accomplish.

I really understand that through, like **Indigenous ways of knowing**, who have always f***in known that, and it's deep in their core. It's actually deep in mine, but I spend so little time there that I forget, and it conflicts with a deep sense, a shallower sense than that, that I have of impulsive **impatience** all the time. It's like [sigh]…

J8: So there's something about this deep Indigenous knowing, that knowing that busyness doesn't work, being busy doesn't work. Then there's also this conflict, or this tension with impatience, this feeling of impatience.

P8: Mm-hmm [affirms]. Well the **deep time** experience, the deep time experience is like the most ultimate, **grounded**, and **earthed** beingness, which **transcends a lifetime**…like over epochs, and I get caught up in the dizziness of…what I'm trying to balance. When I can live in that space, I'm a lot more earthed and grounded, and there is no rush and impulsive anxiety, which is…

Here I am trying to describe…two different states of being, because the one I'm not describing, which is patently apparent in my life…is the one about **adrenal fatigue**, which is about fast and **highly anxious**, and a higher frequency than this really deep, deep core energetic frequency of the earth.

Phyllis is sensing the difference in the energic frequencies between the deep time, earthed and grounded way of being and the highly anxious, adrenal fatigue/burnout way of being.

J9: So we've only got a couple of minutes to go, and I'm just wondering if it's okay to find an endpoint with that.

The session has been going a lot longer than the agreed time. Although I'm keen to continue I'm also keen to support Phyllis in finding some kind of resolution to the process (if possible) and respect our agreed

	So this idea of the deep time experience, the ultimate grounded and earthed being-ness, which transcends a lifetime, or lifetimes and epochs. Then this other part which is the high-frequency, impulsive anxiety which is related to the adrenal fatigue. So just having those two there for you, how can you find an endpoint with all of that? Where would you like to ... Or how would you like to resolve those tensions, in a way?	timeframes, so I indicate the session is coming to an end and invite her to find an endpoint in her process.
P9:	Like associating with the deeply earth-grounded, longer wave frequency…what was I going to say? Is like much more calm, and unrattled, like it's so much more **resilient** and maybe this is like that's an extreme end of **coming home to myself** has been down that trajectory…compared to the high-frequency, highly anxious f***ing rushing, rushing-ness which has been…yeah, where I've been from. Where I've come from.	This is a big step where Phyllis has made the connection between this sense of "coming home to self", the deep earth-groundedness and being more resilient.
J10:	Okay. So there's a sort of longer wave frequency which feels **calm**, **unrattled**, and more **resilient**, which is more of this coming home to self. This different component which is the rushing, frenetic energy, and that's where you've been. So there's something about coming from that, to this longer wave frequency, which feels more grounded and earthed.	
P10:	Yeah, and the longer wave one is the association I would call with…well I use deep time as well as trust. Like that's the **ultimate trust**.	Another step, the deep time earth-groundedness is also the ultimate trust in the world.
J11:	Beautiful.	
P11:	Where the other one has been where I haven't been trusting, and it's been **exhausting**.	Another step, realising that her highly anxious, frenetic way of being is not only not trusting in the world but is exhausting.

J12: Yeah, okay. So there's the deep trust,
and the other one has been exhausting.

P12: Mm-hmm [affirms].

We continued to reflect on the process and Phyllis clarified her connection to the process of change, other ways of being and burnout, and acknowledged how transformative the experience had been for her. She had realised this new way of being is available to her all the time and will continue to have "ripple effects", where she feels she will be "engaged in the world, in a more effective way" (session #9).

We ended the session by reflecting on how felt sensing had supported this process by enabling her inner work, as she described:

> …in terms of the **not knowing**, like there's no way to quantify this, but I can feel the quality of it...What was before I came home to myself was...it felt like a really shallow coping mechanism, which I associate myself more with…the gift to be able to do and face **dark shadowy work**, and do it with conviction. I'm like it was so shallow, anxious coping that I've been in a space of doing for quite some time, which didn't feel so genuine or **authentic**, including of myself… because **I wasn't trusting life**.

5.2.4.3 Discussion of excerpt 4

Coming home to self as deep knowing and learning to be OK with not knowing

Phyllis clearly described two ways or states of being for her. The first way of being she had been living for many years was associated with being highly anxious and frenetic, shameful about feeling cynical and for lacking faith and hope, and feeling disempowered, disillusioned and despairing about her ability to influence change in the world. In essence, "not trusting in life and the world" had been exhausting and led her to suffer from adrenal fatigue and burnout.

The second way of being was associated with deep time, an "earthed-groundedness" that feels calm, unrattled, trusting and more resilient, and had a feeling of surrendering or letting go of the cynicism. In essence, this state felt like a "coming home to self" as a form of "deep knowing" and "deep trust" that was core to her being. This way of being resonates with Kovan and Dirkx's (2003: 115-116)

description of transformative learning as gaining a deep understanding of one's sense of self and work in the world, or as "being called awake, and…being called home". However, a key distinction is that the process of "coming home to self" for Phyllis was a *bodily felt* letting go of the feeling. In other words, it wasn't just an idea that it would be useful for her to let go of the feeling that she wasn't doing enough/quickly enough, and the frustration and cynicism that came with that. Importantly, this embodied understanding of the relationship between letting go of the cynicism will help her to address this core aspect of her experience of burnout.

Focusing processes supporting inner work as transformative learning

The process of felt sensing enabled Phyllis to confront the "dark shadowy" inner work needed to create this new way of being. The experiential nature of patiently waiting in a place of not knowing for the felt knowing or meaning to emerge helped Phyllis learn how to be more comfortable or OK with not knowing. This in turn enabled her to trust in the process of forward movement and not be fearful of "dark shadowy work", which according to Dirkx (Dirkx et al., 2006: 126) is a key part of inner work. This shift in her relationship with her internal world (for example, being able to notice, give space to and be kind to uncomfortable feelings) will enable her to be more effective and resilient in the external world. This is a clear example of transformative learning where being more comfortable with uncertainty will enable her to live and work in a more grounded way.

5.2.4.4 The remainder of Phyllis's journey

By the end of her coaching journey, Phyllis had made some major adjustments in her life. Most importantly, she obtained a new role in an organisation that was aligned with her values and experience, and this brought a huge sense of relief. However, she was still struggling with fatigue and exhaustion, which she attributed to adjusting to the daily work environment. A key difference to the exhaustion she previously suffered was she now had the "space to feel" (enabled by focusing) and was therefore able to more effectively address whatever needed her attention.

In her final session, the conversation moved towards making more explicit connections between her inner and outer worlds. We discussed the connection between the physical stresses from working in the city (such as catching public transport, crowds etc.) and her internal dialogue about how the economic system creates stressful working conditions (i.e. the need to work in order to survive), and how both these internal and external stimuli lead to feelings of exhaustion and fatigue. As we continued to reflect on how focusing can support a new way of being in relation to her role, the conversation unexpectedly morphed into a moment of high-level experiencing for Phyllis.

During this experience Phyllis gained a "cellular level" felt shift and a more "unshakeable" way of being that was like "presence" (session #12). This involved learning to be with herself and comfortable in that space, as she explained:

> …what has happened in that shift and in me…I think it's been a bit **demon slaying** on a **cellular level** about **being able to sit with myself**…and so, I'm not fighting…the reason I'm going into [felt sensing] so easily is because I'm not resisting it and I'm really comfortable in that space. I mean, that's it.

Refer to Appendix W for excerpt nine from this session – *Anchoring the felt sense of a cellular level of presence*.

Bodily felt cellular shift of presence and overcoming the "monkey mind"

This excerpt is a good example of Phyllis now being able to engage with the felt sense with minimal focusing guidance. Indeed, she is particularly able to directly engage the felt sense through imagery, which she had previously mentioned is her preferred way of doing so. As it was the final session, it was timely that Phyllis was able to arrive at this feeling of a "cellular restructure" that was now pointing her in the right direction. As she states, she had had to slay some "demons" on the way but now she is able to sit with herself without fighting and resisting. She reached a place that was still and calm, and more importantly felt more "unshakeable" and "self-assured". It also was a feeling of "wholeness" – a "warm, not a cerebral…bodily self-

affirmation…like all my cells are satisfied" (session #11), a "cellular level of presence, which is also the nature of the feeling". And it is this new way of being that has been able to quiet the "monkey mind", her previous default, a frenetic and over-thinking way of being. Her tears of relief indicate she experienced a deeply embodied sense of this presence.

The idea of presence and new ways of being are discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.2.5 Case No.5 – Theresa's journey

5.2.5.1 Background

Theresa was a senior manager for a not-for-profit organisation that educates about sustainable food systems. She is passionate about understanding people and their relationship with the planet and how we can work together to create social change.

At the start of her journey, Theresa was seeking support to clarify "where to next" in her career as she was thinking of leaving the organisation. After a few sessions she could sense some kind of direction emerging from a space between "idealism and pragmatism" and was content to "play in this space" for a while (session #3). However, she was unexpectedly offered an executive level role at her organisation, which created a significant amount of angst and doubt in deciding whether or not to accept the role. Although she could see the role as a positive career development, she felt it was "less of an expression" of who she was trying to become (session #4). Previously, where there had been relief in deciding to leave, now she was having to "play with the tension of taking on the role" (session #4). This tension also revolved around her fear of becoming a "martyr in the role" (session #5), for example, not being able to maintain boundaries regarding hours and losing herself in the role. At this point she understood she needed to find a way to be "kind to the doubt" about the decision-making process (session #5). She already had plans to attend a retreat for change practitioners and decided to use this time to help clarify her decision.

Overall, Theresa participated in seven coaching sessions over an 8-month period.

Reflective dialogue without the use of explicit focusing guidance

The nature of my conversations with Theresa was slightly different to the other participants. Theresa was already familiar with the value and importance of inner work, in particular bodily awareness. She valued being listened to in a way that allowed pausing and silence to play a primary role in our conversations. She also valued me, as listener, to be there (or accompany her) in a way that didn't involve me trying to "figure out" what was going on for her or responding in a way that aimed to direct or guide her in a certain way. For this reason, the conversations were slow paced and naturally incorporated a relatively large amount of pausing and silence. This included me reflecting what she had said as closely as possible to enable her to check if what she had said felt "right" without me bringing in any interpretation of my own. As Gendlin (1996: 46) states:

> To reflect is thus a rare and powerful way to let clients enter further into their own experience. It is a way of being as close as possible to someone without imposing something on them.

Stopping, pausing and providing space for silence

This process of stopping, pausing, reflecting and providing space for silence supported Theresa to sense inwardly without having to explicitly enter into a focusing process. In other words, I did not feel focusing instructions were required as Theresa would spontaneously check in with her felt sense and explore how she felt about a situation. So although it could be argued that our conversations didn't display the same indicators of "high level" experiencing (such as the use of images or symbols as in previous excerpts), it was clear that Theresa was experiencing at a level that enabled her to find a "way forward" from her felt sense of the situation. This is demonstrated by her ability to clearly describe her experience of knowing something intellectually compared to her felt knowing of something.

A key feature of this "space for silence" is the feeling of not being rushed or pushed to resolve, make sense of, or to figure something out (session #6). This is clearly

different to many coaching and therapeutic techniques that seek to clarify and achieve goals or interpret what the client is saying. Theresa makes an interesting point that this is both a simple and sophisticated process. Indeed, the value is in the stopping or pausing in the presence of another where you can say what you need to, "into the silence" (session #6).

Appendix X provides an example of this process of reflective dialogue, which enabled her to clarify, consolidate and to carry forward the insights and felt realisations she experienced at the retreat. In this dialogue she describes her experience of gentleness to self and of its importance.

Learning gentleness and playfulness as ways of being more effective

Theresa made the connection between being gentle with people and silence, not being rushed and also being ready to "hear" something. It was the silence that enabled her to become conscious that she doesn't offer this gentleness to herself. This is because it was something "deeper than a voice" (an inner knowing) that needed the silence in order for her to "hear" what was emerging from within and not the thoughts or interpretations from somebody else. Importantly, being gentle with oneself is "vital to be able to experiment", explore and be creative (session #6). This ability to experiment and be creative is key to working more effectively to address complex problems, which she alludes to. This was a significant realisation that she could offer this gentleness to herself and the relief of letting go that came with it. Playfulness and having fun were also key to enabling change, as she explained:

> …a sense of **play** and **fun**, to me, is about **being a human**…when you play and have fun, you're most human and you're most able to **establish connections with people**…To change the system, people need to want to change it as opposed to...it needs to be a **positive affirmation** as opposed to a negative one. It needs to be desirable.

This is another significant insight connecting the changes needed at the micro-level (shifts in consciousness) to support changes in systems at the macro-level. In other

words, having the capacity to play and have fun are integral to enabling exploration and experimentation (fundamental to change processes), and also to establishing connections with people that encourage their own desire for change.

5.2.5.2 Excerpt 5 from session no.6

The following excerpt (approx. 2 pages) is an example of reflective dialogue where Theresa was able to sense her way through a situation without engaging in an explicit focusing process. I asked Theresa how she felt about her decision to accept the new role and how she could be "kind to the doubt" (session #5) about the decision. She realised that this doesn't necessarily involve "letting go" of the doubt but learning to "carry it" (T3), and this involves learning to be gentle to herself, of which playfulness is a key part (T13).

T1:	Yeah. I think I've found some **kindness for the doubt**.	This idea of being "kind to the doubt" emerged during the previous coaching session.
J1:	Yeah.	
T2:	That was it. That was what the feeling was, that in coming back [to the role], I wasn't going to fake it. I wasn't going to pretend I always wanted this job or I was 100%, "this is the best thing that's ever happened in my life". I was like…I'm not gonna…I can do this role if I'm myself. I'm not going to sit and fake anything.	
J2:	Yeah.	
T3:	Yeah, so I think I came back and I told people…that I realised that I had to grieve [the decision to accept the role].	At this stage I'm not too sure about what she feels she needed to grieve but I assume it's the decision to accept the role.
	Somebody said, "Let it go," and I was like, "Yeah. No, **it's actually not about letting it go** though. **It's about carrying the doubt** with me. Because if I tell the doubt to piss off, it doesn't really work."	This is a significant insight into kinds of "letting go". In this instance, it wasn't about letting go of the doubt but about being OK with the doubt. Specifically, being able to carry and be kind to the doubt.

J3:	It's about carrying the doubt with you and being kind to the doubt. Do you feel as though you have a felt sense of that, or is it still in here? [I point to my head] Or do you feel as though you've got that? [I refer to the body]	Here I check to see if Theresa has a felt sense of being kind to the doubt. She has already indicated she has from earlier in the conversation. However, I am keen to give her the space to check and confirm.
T4:	No, it's in me, it's not in my head. [long pause] and that…I think that came through ... I don't know. It just feels right to say it. I think that came through grieving it for some reason. For some reason, the word **grief** feels right. I had to sit in a room full of people and cry for a bit, and then realise that they weren't going to have the answers for me. Yeah.	Theresa checks in with the felt sense. After a long pause where she is sensing directly, the word grief emerges, and she checks to see if that's the right word. Another step where she reflects on the realisation that those in the circle (at the retreat) were not going to be able to provide answers regarding her decision.
J4:	So there was the grieving of the doubt. Is that right?	I'm still not clear on what she feels grief about and ask her to clarify.
T5:	Um I think it is grieving… I don't know. It felt like I was grieving this decision to stay, or maybe it's more like **grieving the decision not to go**. That I had felt like I was on this path, which was maybe more of a **heart decision**, and that **I was saying no to this heart decision**, at least for this moment.	She is not so sure herself if grieving is the right word. As she sits with the felt sense a step comes as a clarification. It's actually grieving the decision not to leave the organisation as she had previously planned, which felt more like a "heart decision". This is an important clarification that her feeling of grief wasn't so much about accepting the role but not taking her original path to leave.
J5:	Okay.	
T6:	For me. I think I came back and…it felt like I kind of…I tore something. I think I tore a bit of me in doing that. And it's not that it can't be fixed, but there was like a tear.	Theresa describes her felt sense symbolically as a tear.
J6:	The grieving was about the decision of not taking the path of the heart decision, at least for the moment.	I missed an opportunity here to follow and reflect her sense of the tear. Instead I reflect back her feeling of grief about not taking the path of the heart decision.

T7:	Hmm.	
J7:	There's a part of you, or sorry, not a part of you, there's a realisation that… [pause] there were two paths that you could have taken. One was a heart path and one was not as much of a heart path?	I sense I haven't followed Theresa as closely as I could have as indicated by her "hmm", and so I pause and slow down so I can be more careful with the question and not put too much of myself in here.
T8:	Yeah. Not a heartless path though. There's definitely heart still here.	Even though I missed an opportunity at J6, the question is still helpful to clarify that her decision to accept the role is still a path with heart.
J8:	Right, okay.	
T9:	But maybe slightly less of a heart path.	
J9:	But having made that decision, which you know, or there's a sense of you that accepts that it's temporary, is that the right word?	
T10:	Yeah.	
J10:	In that process, there was a tear. There was a part of you that was like it's like a tear in that decision, and needing to grieve around that…	I'm able to come back to the sense of the tear.
T11:	Hmm. Yeah, that's it. [long silent pause]	There is a kind of relief that this feeling of the tear has now been acknowledged. I sense this is an important place to provide the space for silence Theresa values so much.
J11:	Is part of the way forward in that, is learning to be gentle to self, and having fun? …is that how you can be with that decision, by, by…I'm not going to fake it? That was the decision, I'm going to go into this role and I'm going to be who I am. Does that sound right?	After a long pause, I sense an opportunity for forward movement in relation to the grief, and offer this idea of gentleness and fun back into the conversation.
T12:	Yeah.	

J12:	Then, so it's not a tangent, but a side to that is this situation or event where you did the presentation, and so part of that conversation was how to be playful, which is linked in a way, to this idea of gentleness. Is that right?	
T13:	Yeah. Yep totally...yeah, the **gentleness and the play are totally intertwined**.	A big step where she confirms that gentleness and fun are intertwined as a way of being.

5.2.5.3 Discussion of excerpt 5

Learning to be with uncertainty in a gentle and playful way supports effectiveness

Gentleness and play being intertwined was a significant realisation for how Theresa can "be with" the doubt about her decision in a different way. She was keen to point out a key distinction that it was not about "letting go" of the doubt but learning to "carry" the doubt – learning how to be with a decision that doesn't feel quite right (i.e. acting in a role that may be less of a "heart path") and remaining committed to the work. This learning to be with doubt or uncertainty in a way that is gentle and playful is core to being able to sustain commitment and effectiveness over the long term. Theresa further clarified the connection between what was occurring at a micro-level and influences from society at a macro-level. She argued that because society is not comfortable with uncertainty and qualities such as being gentle and playful (particularly in the workplace), it "wants us to deviate from" these qualities (session #6). Therefore, learning to be OK with uncertainty in a gentle way enables fun and playfulness, and this in turn improves effectiveness in decision-making and collaborating with others. Theresa further explained that having a felt understanding of the difference between knowing something intellectually and knowing something bodily had changed her ideas about certainty. For her, it is in her body that she feels certainty, something she "knows to be true" – it is her "inner teacher" (session #6). Being able to distinguish and find this feeling of certainty will be invaluable in her decision-making processes and her ability to deal with uncertainty.

5.2.5.4 The remainder of Theresa's journey

After a few months in the new role, Theresa was feeling overwhelmed and exhausted by the workload and feeling a lack of support from the board (session #7). Even though she was able to apply her learning about being with uncertainty, she was struggling with the sense of loneliness that she felt because of this lack of support. As she explained, "I'm OK with the not knowing, it's the loneliness, sense of doing it alone that is the problem, that I'm meant to have the answers" (session #7). This led her to question her abilities and feel that she was not capable of doing the job and that "someone else would be better" (session #7). I reflected some of this back to her and brought in her idea about doing what makes your "heart sing" from the retreat she attended, and she replied, "it's been a while since I've had that heart singing feeling" (session #7).

I then asked her how she could bring some of that heart singing feeling into her work. Her general sense was that the "heart singing stuff is hard when my heart is not singing" (session #7). However, she did feel as though she could at least hold the question about how to honour the "heart singing stuff" even in the midst of the daily need to address problems (session #7).

We continued to have a critical discussion about the roles, expectations and assumptions of those on the board and how these link to broader questions about hierarchy, authority and the systems we are working to transform. We ended with Theresa feeling that everything we had been discussing was more tangible and workable, as she explained, "it's a bit more prod-able…like it's taken form…something I can work with…it feels good to challenge some of those assumptions…I'll let you know when I figure it out [*laughing*]" (session #7).

5.3 Chapter summary

The five cases presented in this chapter demonstrate how two approaches to transformative learning – perspective transformation that emphasises the cognitive and rational dimensions of learning, and an embodied, experiential approach that

focuses on the role of inner work – can be supported by focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue in the coaching context. This approach does not preference any one technique but instead follows the needs and desires of the individual (i.e. being *whole* person-centred) in any particular moment. This may involve focusing processes only (which may or may not involve the use of images) or reflective dialogue only (which may or may not be critically reflective) or a combination of the two. In any case, each of the processes used can supplement the other as a means to deepen and enable transformative learning experiences. The key findings that demonstrate how embodied, transformative learning can be achieved include:

- gaining embodied understanding of what is known conceptually such as letting go of the fight or the need to achieve, and learning how to take care of oneself;
- reflecting-in-and-on-*process* that reflects Schön's (1995: 30) concept of reflecting-in-and-on-*action;*
- listening to one's critical inner voices (Dirkx, et al. 2006: 127; Scharmer, 2009: 42) or developing a relationship with the inner critic (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 112; 1996: 248; Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 3) and becoming aware of its helpful intentions;
- experiencing experiential distance (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 72; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262) so that a problem, issue or concern can be attended to without being overwhelmed by the feelings associated with it;
- letting go of the known (Scharmer, 2009: 184; Ikemi, 2015: 72) or becoming OK with not knowing, uncertainty or the unknown (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 22-23; Burrows, 2015: 133), and letting the new felt meaning emerge or come (Walkerden, 2005: 182; Scharmer, 2009: 199; Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14); and
- finding ways of being that are less critical of self and others, and more kind, open, curious and playful in order to improve self-care and effectiveness.

These findings in conjunction with the findings from the other six coaching participants (i.e. the entire coaching cohort) provide the basis of the four key themes and process learnings, which are discussed at length and supported by data from the interviews in the following chapter, Chapter 6.

6. Discussion of the findings and key themes

6.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides findings and discussion of how focusing processes can be used within a coaching context to support self-care and effectiveness journeys (characterised by transformative learning experiences) for practitioners. It continues to build on the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5, focusing on providing in-depth discussion about the key themes that have emerged from the coaching and interview findings.

Firstly, I provide an overview of the findings including the four key themes and process learnings. Secondly, I discuss the key themes and process learnings supported by data (including quotes) from the interviews and coaching sessions.

6.2 Overview of the findings and context for discussion

6.2.1 Overview of the key themes and process learnings

The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 provide both evidence for and descriptions of *how* the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners can be supported by focusing within a coaching context. The examples from the coaching process provided in this and the previous chapter describe aspects of the process that are less well developed in the theory of perspective transformation described by Mezirow (1991) and others. Like Mezirow and Dirkx, the forms of transformative learning reflected in the inner work of these practitioners reflect deep shifts in their frames of reference, habits of mind and ways of being. These shifts in consciousness or ways of being occurred, for most of the coaching participants, as an incremental process of learning, reflection and change involving a multitude of experiential micro-steps, 'aha moments' and felt shifts that were enabled by the focusing process. How these steps occurred was of course unique for each individual, and for each and every moment. As an outsider, we can only ever gain a glimpse of the whole of someone's process or experience from what they are able to express or describe for us. Additional transformative learning experiences and insights were also supported

by reflective dialogue. These transformative learning experiences were represented in the participants' inner work, self-care and effectiveness journeys that resulted in fundamental changes to the way they relate to their work and lives in general (i.e. their ways of being in the world).

The findings that emerged from the coaching sessions have been compiled into four key themes that represent the culmination of explicit references by the participants to aspects of inner work, significant conceptual and embodied insights, and/or shifts in consciousness or ways of being. They are further supported by examples from the interviews with other practitioners, and the coaches and therapists. Clearly, these themes are not generalisable. However, they do point to how focusing processes and reflective dialogue might be used within other adult learning contexts (such as coaching) to support the inner work (as transformative learning) and self-care for practitioners working in this space.

Even though there may be a great deal of overlap between each of the themes, I have attempted to develop themes that most accurately reflect the experiences of the coaching participants by attempting to represent what is said during the sessions as literally as possible. I have also supported these with findings from the interviews and questionnaire participants in relation to their experiences of coaching in the past. This process helped to triangulate the data, as discussed in section 3.7.3.

The themes incorporate both participant *learning outcomes* and the *process learnings* that supported them. Although it is difficult to separate process from outcomes (for example, an embodied shift is both a learning outcome and micro-level process learning), I have attempted to demonstrate: a) *what* learning outcomes occurred, and b) *how* these outcomes were enabled by focusing and reflective processes.

Although the learnings outcomes and process learnings have been summarised and separated in sections 6.2.1.1 and 6.2.1.2 for clarification, they are not discussed in isolation but are discussed simultaneously throughout this chapter.

6.2.1.1 Key themes – learning outcomes

In the context of coaching, focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue can enable transformative learning as inner work, including the prevention or amelioration of burnout, and the improvement of personal sustainability, self-care and effectiveness of practitioners. The findings indicate that this can be achieved by:

1. clarifying sense of self (including values, beliefs and assumptions, purpose etc.) in relation to life, work and broader sociocultural-political contexts.
2. developing relationships with aspects or parts of self (such as the inner critic) that are connected to unhelpful ways of thinking, feeling and behaving (such as "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough").
3. enabling kinds of 'letting go' (such as expectations of self/others, cynicism, the need to save etc.), becoming more comfortable with 'not knowing' and uncertainty, and 'letting come' the new felt meaning.
4. supporting shifts in consciousness or ways of being in the world that are less critical, and more kind, open, curious, fun and playful.

These themes should be viewed as steps or parts of an iterative and cyclical process of learning and reflection rather than stand-alone events or experiences, similar to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle as part of the coaching process mentioned in section 2.6.3. For example, the process of developing a relationship with parts or aspects of oneself (such as the inner critic) can lead to the process of 'letting go' of judgement and a consequent embodied shift towards a more open, curious and less critical way of being. Critically reflecting on this felt shift can in turn lead to further insights regarding the original source of this judgement, and its relation to one's being in the world and broader sociocultural contexts. For example, being judged by a parent might have led to a predisposition to judge self (i.e. from the inner critic) and others, which led to being less open, curious and kind towards those with differing opinions, and in turn impacting on one's ability to engage effectively with others to

solve complex social problems. This is certainly not a simple linear process of cause and effect, but an infinitely complex and iterative interaction of micro-processes.

6.2.1.2 Process learnings

The findings indicate that focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue can support transformative learning (as inner work) by enabling individuals to:

- experience a felt/embodied understanding of what they conceptually know (and have often known for many years);
- experience distance or space (i.e. experiential distance) between themselves and their feelings, thoughts, issues or concerns;
- bring to explicit awareness what is implicit in their consciousness by using imagery, and/or verbalising ideas, thoughts, feelings, sensations, situations etc. that may be difficult to describe;
- learn how to trust in their bodily felt sense of a situation, what needs their attention, or what may be emerging from within;
- move from storytelling to felt sensing (i.e. from lower to higher levels of experiencing);
- clarify ideas, thoughts etc. whilst supporting new insights to emerge through the process of reflecting-in-and-on-*process* (i.e. reflecting on micro-processes whilst still connected to the felt sense although in a less direct way); and
- engage in sense/experiential meaning making (i.e. making sense of changes, felt shifts or insights and integrating these new experiences more effectively).

6.2.2 Context of the discussion

In discussing the themes, I draw heavily on the work of Dirkx (2003, 2006, 2008, 2012a, 2014) and others with a similar approach to transformative learning (discussed in section 2.3.3). I also refer primarily to Gendlin's (1962/1997, 1996) writings and others such as McEvenue (1994, 2014) and Walkerden (2002, 2005), in discussing the focusing and reflective process as discussed in section 2.5.3.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, my research interests are closely aligned with those of Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 100) who studied the role of learning in sustaining the commitment of environmental activists working in non-profit organisations. I felt the description of transformative learning provided by the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education: as a deep shift in consciousness that alters one's way of being in the world and "sense of possibilities for social justice…personal joy" (Morrell & O'Connor, 2002, p. xvii cited in Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 102) was an accurate and comprehensive reflection of the learning experiences of the practitioners I was coaching (refer to section 2.3.3 for the full description). I also felt the definition provided by Yorks and Kasl (2006) in their examination of expressive ways of knowing (mentioned in section 2.4.1) as reflective of the kinds of transformative learning that have emerged from this study. The authors define transformative learning as:

> a wholistic change in how a person both affectively experiences and conceptually frames his or her experience of the world when pursuing learning that is personally developmental, socially controversial or requires personal or social healing. (Yorks & Kasl, 2006: 45-46)

I have used these descriptions to frame the discussion of the findings in Chapter 5 and in this chapter.

It is important to note that as practitioners, the participants of this study already had a deep understanding and experience of many of the components of the Centre's description. Specifically, the participants:

a) were familiar with their relationship with others, society and the natural world (e.g. human potential, better societies and nature conservation were often the inspiration for their work);
b) had a deep understanding of issues of power and alternative systems (e.g. gender equality, sustainable economic, food, waste systems etc.);
c) had awareness of their bodies and the importance of work-life balance, mindfulness etc. (e.g. many practiced some form of meditation or yoga); and

d) had deep knowledge of environmental and social justice issues.

This knowledge and understanding was the culmination of many years of critically reflecting on and working to address these issues. However, most of the participants were showing indications of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy) and feeling they weren't "doing enough, quickly enough". This feeling of not "doing enough, quickly enough" is in some ways different to Maslach's definition of inefficacy or feeling ineffective (discussed in section 3.6.1.2). It is not the case that the participants feel as though they don't have the skills, experience or ability to do their work, and in fact the majority of the questionnaire participants scored highly on perceived levels of skills and experience (section 4.3.5.7). Instead, they feel ineffective in the sense they don't feel they are doing enough to create the kinds of change required (in particular regarding climate change) and within the timeframes needed to avoid looming environmental and social crises. This is a subtle yet critical distinction as it may be a characteristic of practitioners working in this space where the nature of the problems is global, complex and relentless, and where the impact of their work may never be seen. This contrasts to social work practitioners, for example, from whom the burnout theory originally emerged, where a lack of skills and resources to conduct their work were of primary concern (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 386).

This feeling of not "doing enough, quickly enough" was common amongst the practitioners, often leading to additional feelings of disillusionment and despair. As Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 113) found, it is a common experience for activists to find themselves having to "juggl[e] the hope and despair" that comes with their work. These feelings were often the result of and/or exacerbated by the feeling of not being properly supported at work (for the participants in this study), in particular by management, and being overwhelmed by both a lack of resources and time (discussed in section 4.3.5.4). For many, they were either tired of "fighting" or struggling against the system (in both their personal and professional lives), were

attempting to find roles that were more aligned with their values and life goals, and/or were wondering how they could continue to work in more personally sustainable ways. Although the participants were well-versed in the social justice and change aspects of transformative learning, they were less familiar with the relationship between their inner processes and their ways of being in the world, and how inner work could influence their resilience and effectiveness in relation to their work. This psychosocial understanding of how culture and society influences our ways of being (and vice versa) emphasises the importance of "transformation as a shift in consciousness – on our self-understanding – and how this shift… shapes our being in the world" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 102). However, even if the participants had this understanding, they had few if any opportunities to engage in the kind of embodied learning processes employed in this study that could shift what they might have known conceptually (in some cases for many years, even decades) but hadn't experienced in an embodied way.

6.3 Key themes – learning outcomes and process learnings

In this section, the four key themes are discussed by first providing an overview and contextual analysis of the theory in relation to each theme, followed by a discussion of the findings from coaching sessions, interviews with practitioners and coaches/therapists and the questionnaire (where relevant), ending with a summary of the discussion.

6.3.1 Clarifying sense of self within broader sociocultural-political contexts

Theme 1: Clarifying one's sense of self (including values, assumptions and beliefs, purpose etc.) in relation to life, work and broader sociocultural-political contexts.

> "There is so much need in the world – it is impossible to meet it all. Tapping into our individual passions and interests in relation to the issues at large helps sustain energy, hope and action and prevents the issues from becoming overbearing." (Goldberg, 2013: 173)

6.3.1.1 Overview

The process of clarifying one's sense of self incorporates and is connected to aspects of all the other themes. However, it differs in the sense that it represents the preliminary stages, steps or groundwork for "knowing oneself" (Tennant, 2005: 108; 2012: 107), and for enabling the other (perhaps more subtle and therefore challenging) stages or steps to evolve, even though the other steps are not a prerequisite of this step.

Clarifying one's 'self' involves not only clarifying values, assumptions, beliefs and other aspects related to one's life and work but also in relation to broader social contexts. This includes reflecting upon the cultural roots and socio-political norms that determine one's perceived sense of self (i.e. identity) and social world. In turn, an individual gains a deeper understanding and more realistic perspective of their role in working to create social change. This process was, in most cases, the first step in developing relationships with the participants, and identifying their life and career goals as part of the preliminary stage of the coaching process. This part of the cycle was the least reliant on embodied processes as it mostly involved reflective dialogue. However, the key difference in this study was the embodied learning the participants experienced through the focusing process, which helped them to experience a felt understanding of different ways of being in connection to broader sociocultural-political contexts. In some instances, the participants were able to explore their implicit, bodily felt experience of certain situations in their life and work without the need to critically reflect on the causes (a requirement of transformative learning), yet still experience a felt shift or gain fresh insight.

According to Tennant (2005: 108; 2012: 107), nearly all designs for transformative learning have a dimension of "knowing oneself". Therefore, this theme is likely to be the most familiar and least surprising for adult learning academics, particularly for those amongst the Transformative learning community. This is because assumptions about self and identity, including how individuals are formed and their capacity for

change are implicit in processes and practices of transformative learning (Tennant, 2005: 103). According to Cranton (2016: 105), it is the responsibility of Transformative learning practitioners to help individuals examine their previously unassimilated beliefs and assumptions, which she refers to as "uncritically assimilated perspectives". Importantly, this examination needs to be done in relation to the social contexts in which they were formed. Indeed, Newman (2008: 288) raises concerns about the use of practices such as mindfulness and meditation to support self-development (in particular within transformative learning) without including critical examination of the self in relation to others and the "outside world". He argues that if participants fail to examine their engagement with the outside world and their relationships within it, then their sense of self will be diminished, and they will be less rather than more conscious (Newman, 2008: 288).

As part of the transformative coaching process used in this study, increasing self-awareness and critical self-reflection played a core role. As mentioned in section 3.4.2.2, space for dialogue was provided as part of each session including: *self-reflection* – to reflect on positions, behaviours, goals and self-concepts (Stelter, 2014a: 52); *values clarification* – to reflect on and clarify values to help navigate one's personal and professional life (Stelter, 2014a: 54); and *meaning-making* – to integrate past and present experiences with expectations and ideas about the future (Stelter, 2014a: 54).

However, the key difference in the coaching methods used in this study was the explicit use of focusing to support these processes. This supported the process of reflection to become reflecting-in-and-on-*process* (as described in section 5.3.1.3), and the process of meaning-making to become 'experiential meaning-making' (Stelter, 2014a: 55). This enabled the participants to experience an embodied, felt understanding of the implicit meaning of the practices and habits embedded in their actions, and within the broader sociocultural context of their lives (Stelter, 2014a: 55). Similar to 'sense-making' approaches to addressing complex problems, an

experiential meaning-making process enables an individual to "sense" or "feel" their way through ambiguous situations where analytical thinking may not be sufficient, and so gain a sense of direction and articulation that in turn supports action and change (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005: 419; Metcalf & Benn, 2013: 372).

6.3.1.2 Findings from the coaching sessions

Each of the coaching participants were at various stages in their careers and therefore were looking for different kinds of support from coaching. For example, some needed support in addressing burnout and personal sustainability whilst others needed support in clarifying what to do next in their careers. However, most had already done significant work in clarifying their values, beliefs and sense of purpose. Further, the nature of their work meant that they already possessed deep knowledge of sociocultural-political systems and an environmental or "planetary consciousness" (O'Sullivan, 1999; Ettling, 2012: 546). What they needed to develop was an explicit awareness of the interrelationship between their inner and outer processes, systems and worlds. The emerging theme of "clarifying sense of self" was not so much focused on clarifying values, beliefs and sense of purpose (although this did form part of it), but on clarifying *how* they could continue to sustain their sense of self through the work they are passionate about and clarifying *how* they could fulfil their sense of purpose through meaningful work that aligns with their values and beliefs. This reflects the findings of Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 114), where the activists' stories revealed their struggles to maintain their commitment and passion, and "to answer the call within their work". Like the participants in this study, the activists' learning was embedded in the historical and social contexts of their lives (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 114). This learning involved a gradual rather than epochal "unfolding of the self" that was characterised more by ongoing dialogues with images arising in one's consciousness (similar to engaging with the felt sense) rather than self-reflection and analysis (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 114).

Similarly, experiential meaning-making played a key role in enabling the participants to transform what they knew conceptually into a felt understanding of other ways of being in relation to work, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Stella – case No.1 in Chapter 5

Stella had previously participated in coaching, which she felt helped her to increase her self-awareness, a process she described as "learning about how you are". It also helped to provide her with a sense of perspective or "helicopter view" of situations – being able to step back and reflect on why she was thinking or feeling a certain way (interview). Despite having high levels of self-awareness, Stella felt she still needed support to help clarify *how* she could fulfil her purpose, with which she was already familiar, and also improve her personal sustainability. From the focusing process (involving numerous felt shifts) Stella was able to gain insight into the need to appreciate the journey towards her purpose (i.e. the "reward is in the richness") rather than focus on achieving outcomes. This had the additional benefit of relieving the pressure or 'letting go' of her need to achieve as discussed in section 5.3.1.3. This idea of 'letting go' is discussed further in section 6.3.3.

Example 2: Holly – case No.2 in Chapter 5

Reflective dialogue with Holly involved discussions about one of her core values, fairness. This led to her realisation about the importance of being recognised for one's work. She could see how her sense of fairness was related to her feeling frustrated and critical of colleagues who did not recognise her value. Further, she reflected on the competitive nature of work as being fundamental to the problem, as it forces people to "leave their humanness behind". By clarifying how her sense of fairness was influencing how she felt towards her colleagues and how this related to the nature of work, Holly was able to develop a kinder and less critical approach towards her colleagues (discussed in section 5.2.2.3). This idea of developing a more open, kinder, less critical approach is discussed further in section 6.3.4.

Example 3: Alyssa – case No.3 in Chapter 5

Alyssa's journey felt like "trying on new personalities", redefining who she was and rediscovering part of herself that had been "lying dormant" (discussed in section 5.2.3.4). This helped her to deepen her understanding and reconnect with her passion for gender equality and supporting women's voices. By clarifying and overcoming her own "story of indoctrination" (how her story of self was formed by sociocultural frameworks) she could more clearly see how she could empower others through her work.

Example 4: Phyllis – case No.4 in Chapter 5

For Phyllis, clarifying her sense of self felt like a "coming home to self", which characterised the start of her journey. Phyllis was a self-proclaimed "broken hearted idealist" who was suffering from burnout. This was primarily driven by the exhaustion and futility she felt in fighting the system, leading her to feel cynical and disillusioned about her ability to influence the urgent change she feels is needed. The act of stopping, pausing and paying inward attention felt like "coming home to herself", a place where she could be "in my body rather than in my head, or out there in the world". In other words, her constant attention "out there in the world" led her to feel "disempowered, disillusioned…despairing…[and] hopeless to have any impact to change things". The process of contextualising her feelings and paying inward attention were the first steps in her inner work. The next step was learning to let go of the cynicism and the need to know, and trust her felt sense of a situation (discussed in section 5.2.4.3).

Interestingly, Phyllis's experience may help to partially alleviate Newman's (2008) concern about practices such as mindfulness that focus on self-development or inner work. For Phyllis, her constant focus on the external world and seemingly endless critical analysis of its problems led her to feel exhausted, disillusioned and burnt out. So an experiential process that supported inward bodily attention was exactly what she needed, rather than *more* critical self-reflection.

Example 5: Theresa – case No.5 in Chapter 5

For Theresa, clarifying a sense of self involved exploring how to not "lose herself" and become a "martyr" in her role. This involved discussions about the roles, expectations and assumptions of those on the board in her organisation and how these link to broader questions about hierarchy, authority and the systems we are working to transform. By the end of her journey she could see how her fear of losing herself in the role or deviating from her "core" was connected to "how much society wants us to deviate from that [core]". Although she didn't find a place of certainty, Theresa had found a place of being more comfortable with 'not knowing' how she could manage her role (discussed in section 5.2.5.5).

Reflecting-in-and-on-process

As discussed in section 5.3.1.3, in many cases (but not all) it was the nexus between focusing processes and reflective dialogue that enabled this kind of sense-making to take place. Most of the critically reflective dialogue occurred after the focusing session, where the practitioners could reflect on broader sociocultural concepts (such as the nature of work) whilst still connected to their felt sense of the situation in a *less direct* way.

This kind of reflecting-in-and-on-*process* formed part of all the coaching sessions I conducted with the participants. It involved enabling the participants to make explicit their implicit or tacit knowing of how engaging with the felt sense can support them to be more effective in their daily practices. As Schön suggests (1995: 31), in this way "the newly generated practice knowledge" or insights that emerged from the focusing process could be "modified and incorporated into the practitioner's repertoire so as to be available for projection to further situations". For example, for Stella this meant learning how to appreciate the "richness of the journey" and nurturing the "vulnerable, human aspect" of herself along the way. This kind of embodied knowing may differ from Schön's process in the sense that what emerges may either not yet be known, or it is cognitively known but not yet

bodily felt. This was particularly the case for Phyllis, Theresa and Alyssa (refer to sections 6.2.3 – 6.2.5) who experienced felt shifts from something they conceptually knew (in some cases for many years) to a deeper, bodily felt understanding.

6.3.1.3 Findings from the interviews with practitioners

As mentioned in section 4.4.2.2, clarifying one's sense of self with the support of coaching was also a key benefit for the interview participants, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Lucy

For Lucy (a coach/practitioner), time in nature, a process she described as "pulling myself towards myself", provided her with time to think without being distracted:

> … [there is] so much learning in going somewhere in **nature**, being quiet and doing a bit of a scan on yourself and thinking…where does it hurt? Where does it feel good? ...from an **emotional perspective**. Why would I react about a certain thing that way? What is driving that? Just being really reflective on your own behaviour…whatever has upset you, what's triggered something particular?

This time in nature allowed her to "mull over all the stuff" that was worrying her and put things into perspective within the context of her passion for connecting people with nature.

Example 2: Susan

For Susan (a senior manager in government), coaching enabled her to better understand her motivations and purpose, which she called her "self-awareness journey". She shifted from "I hope…[and] think I'm capable of making a difference" to having "the confidence to step up, get out there and do what I can to create change". By understanding her role within a community of like-minded individuals and a broader social movement, she gained the confidence and support needed to continue her work.

Example 3: Ariana

For Ariana (a manager for a not-for-profit organisation), participating in coaching enabled her to reframe her view of herself as an individual working to create change to that of an individual working in community to create change. As she explains:

> …access to those very strong **emotional experiences** which also helped me have mental balance in order to keep on going to do the… work. And so I'm very clear that's made me a more **resilient** individual but I can't be a resilient *individual*… I'm only resilient amongst the **community** and the people that are around me… that's how I've been able to be resilient.

Importantly, her "emotional experiences" provided her with a deeper understanding of her resilience or self-care and the role that community plays in supporting it.

Example 4: Mark

For Mark (a manager in a social enterprise), self-reflection is a cyclical process of bringing awareness from the inner world to the outer world:

> …it's like going to the depths… bringing that awareness back into the **outer world** and then **going within** again and listening to what wisdom is in there. And then being able to take up something bigger, greater in the outer world because of that… The cycle sort of continues… what we're able to achieve out here is directly…connected to this development that we have **in here**.

Here Mark demonstrates his understanding of the connection between knowing oneself and what one manifests in the outer world, and the cyclical nature of this process of self-awareness and creation.

6.3.1.4 Findings from the interviews with coaches and therapists

The interviews with coaches and therapists showed that clarifying one's sense of self was also a key one of their key recommendations for practitioners, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Travis

Travis (a conscious leadership coach) believes "the coach is acting as a partner for the version of the person that can supervise their own growth. They're calling the person

into holding that meta-context for themselves". As such, a coach for practitioners should not only be able to support inner work but also understand the broader sociocultural-political contexts within which individuals are working.

Example 2: Sarah

Sarah (an eco-psychologist, Jungian psychotherapist) supports this view, arguing that:

> as a whole, psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalytic, the counselling community is not very politically aware and has had a long history of personalising or individualising issues over understanding them within the cultural context.

She views dealing with issues such as climate change as a "collective issue" where we need to support individuals to reframe how they view their work (e.g. "I'm responsible for stopping climate change", "I need to save the world") towards seeing themselves as part of a broader network or community. This involves a psychological shift from feeling individually guilty and responsible, to seeing oneself as an "agent work[ing] within the context of something larger". Further, the issues are so large and escalating in nature they are unlikely to be solved in one person's lifetime, so it's about finding where one's "passion lies…[and working] from that place…it's about finding a good fit and a realistic pace". In other words, it's important to reframe one's sense of self as working within community *and* have realistic timeframes regarding the process of change.

Example 3: Roger

Roger (a social/adaptive leadership coach) argues that having a clear, strong sense of self is key to being able to work in this field in a way that is personally sustainable over the long term. As he explains:

> having a **strong internal sense** of what you're there to do, how you are making a difference, how you are making progress, what sustains you, what keeps you in the game... If you're not able to do that… [then] people start to question themselves… "Am I making a difference? Is it all too hard? Should I go off and do something else?" That's where **burnout**, **cynicism** or exits start to happen.

He adds, practitioners often have unrealistic timeframes regarding the process of change, arguing that:

> often the kind of timeframes that [practitioners] have around what they're wanting to achieve are totally **unrealistic**. One of the things in coaching that I often have to do with people working in this realm is help them **reframe** their **timeframes**. If they're wanting to save the world in six months, they're going to be disappointed and they're going to crash and burn. If they see this as **lifelong** work, you're going to pace yourself in a different way, you're going to approach it in a different way, you're going to sustain yourself in a different way.

Like Sarah, Roger makes a clear connection between having realistic timeframes and the ability to continue working in this space. He believes that without a clear sense of self and realistic perspectives about the broader context of working to create change, practitioners will eventually burn out. This in part reflects the process of "seeing with new eyes" as described by Joanna Macy in the *Work that Reconnects*, where individuals gain a shift in perspective that is characterised by a more expanded sense of time and responsibility (Hathaway, 2017: 302).

Example 4: Lucy

Lucy (a career coach/practitioner), believes care needs to be taken not to succumb to the sense of urgency that we "need to act now". For her, taking the time and space to reflect, and to not try and "move through the hurt, grief and worry" is key to not "losing some of the texture than can provide solutions" to the problems we are facing. Again, taking the time for self-reflection is key not only to understanding oneself within broader contexts but also to finding solutions for complex issues.

6.3.1.5 Findings from the questionnaire

When the questionnaire participants were asked which coaching techniques they found useful (refer to section 4.4.2.2), life/career mapping was mentioned as being the most useful, followed by goal setting and mindfulness. The coaching process helped the participants not only to clarify their career goals and direction, but helped them to situate their work within a broader lifelong context. It also helped to support self-

reflection and increased awareness of values and previously unconscious behaviours, which gave them guidance to reframe life/career choices. For example:

> I learnt how to bring my own **values** to the fore as a lens through which to see the world and my own actions. It's meant that I've been able to make changes in my job and other areas of life more easily and to see the **bigger picture**.

6.3.1.6 Summary

In summary, these findings demonstrate how clarifying one's sense of self in relation to one's life/work within broader sociocultural contexts and realistic timeframes supported the coaching participants to maintain their commitment, resilience and confidence to continue their work. This in turn helped them to (in part) address unhelpful feelings such as guilt or an overdeveloped sense of responsibility (e.g. "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough"). Specifically, the findings demonstrate how clarifying one's sense of self can help support practitioners to:

- clarify how they can fulfil their sense of purpose through meaningful work that aligns with their values, beliefs and passions;
- reframe their sense of self from a lone individual (e.g. "I'm responsible for saving the world") to being part of a group, collective (e.g. "I am one agent working as part of a collective") or broader social movement (L. Cox, 2009: 55). That is, the power that comes from new identities, understandings and a sense of belonging to a collective (Kluttz & Walter, 2018: 101);
- develop more realistic timeframes regarding the process of change (Hathaway, 2017: 302) and understanding that they may never see the longer-term outcomes of their work; and
- gain a *felt* understanding of the connection between their inner and outer worlds, that is *experiential* meaning-making (Stelter, 2014a: 54). In other words, deepening one's awareness of the impact of external systems on oneself (such as subtly oppressive sociocultural-political and work systems), and gaining an internal felt understanding of how to prevent burnout (i.e. working with feelings of exhaustion, despair, disillusionment and ineffectiveness) and provide one's own self-care.

6.3.2 Developing relationships with aspects or parts of self

Theme 2: Developing relationships with aspects or parts of self (such as the inner critic) that are connected to unhelpful ways of thinking, feeling and behaving (such as "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough").

6.3.2.1 Overview

Developing relationships with aspects or parts of oneself (such as the inner critic, inner child etc.) was a key theme that emerged from the coaching sessions. This process helped the participants to identify unhelpful feelings or ways of thinking, behaving and being that were connected to these aspects. For example, some of the participants could see how their inner critic was leading them to feel as though they weren't "doing enough, quickly enough", which fed into a broader, cultural sense of urgency and working manically. For some, this process also involved rediscovering aspects of themselves that had been lying dormant. For example, the inner child reminded them how to be more curious and playful in their approach to work.

This kind of fine-grained discussion about aspects of oneself did not form a large part of the interviews with the practitioners. Although it was referred to as part of the interviews with the coaches and therapists. This was because the original aim of the interviews was to gain a broader view of the challenges the practitioners faced at work and the kinds of support they would find useful. The findings that form the basis of this theme did not emerge until the coaching sessions had been conducted.

6.3.2.2 Working with the inner critic

According to Gendlin (1978/1981: 112; 1996: 248), everyone has or has experienced the 'inner critic'. He originally described it as being an "unfriendly" attitude towards oneself (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 91) or a "harsh voice" that interrupts when one tries to listen inwardly (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 93). Later, he described it as "the experience of being attacked from within", which may be experienced as a "voice" (Gendlin, 1996: 248). However, he is careful to point out that this "nasty voice" is *not* your felt sense "speaking from within" but comes from the outside like an "angry parent" (Gendlin,

1978/1981: 112-113). According to Gendlin (1996: 249), the voice of the inner critic "contains a residue of parental preaching and criticism". In some instances, the critic has either taken the role of a critical parent or some authority figure, or has been created to protect the "vulnerable [inner] child" from experiencing feelings that would be unbearable for the child (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 6).

Others including Dirkx and Scharmer also refer to *voices*. For Dirkx, voices that form his own "inner world", often come with mixed and conflicting messages (Dirkx et al., 2006: 127). He says they "continuously nag me with questions about the meaning of my life, of the work that I do, of relationships. It calls into question my authenticity, my integrity, at times my very sense of who I think I am" (Dirkx, et al. 2006: 127). Although not referred to as the inner critic by Dirkx, it appears his voices are acting in similar ways to the inner critic as described by Gendlin. For Scharmer (2009: 42), the inner 'voices of resistance' – the voices of *judgement*, *criticism* and *fear*, are "three enemies that can block the entrance to deeper territories". These voices inhibit an individual from opening their *mind*, *heart* and *will*, which prevents them from accessing their creativity, presence, authentic selves and ability to step into the unknown (Scharmer, 2009: 42-43).

The inner critic makes you feel "small, wrong, unworthy, guilty and bad" (Langeveld & de Bruijn 2008: 3). It has little (if any) understanding or compassion, and if you feel bad it is likely to say, "it's your fault, you should have done…" (Gendlin, 1996: 248). Perhaps not surprisingly, this same unfriendly attitude one has towards themselves, is often experienced from society – you're lazy, selfish, too sensitive, not doing enough and so on (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 92). For example, Claire (one of the coaching participants) had a very clear connection between the "little voice saying you need to do something with your life" and feeling as though "my father isn't going to like me if I don't choose the right path" (session #1). This led her to have high expectations of herself resulting in perfectionism and an inability to make decisions for fear of making the wrong one (session #2).

In working with the inner critic, Gendlin (1996: 249) argues that cognitive therapy aims to show the client that the messages from the inner critic are wrong or unreasonable. Specifically, it aims to combat the assumptions implied in the inner critic's messages (Gendlin, 1996: 249). However, the key difference with focusing is that it provides another way of working with the inner critic, that does not require "combating" or reflecting on these assumptions (Gendlin, 1996: 249). The experiential process enables an individual to recognise the *manner* in which the messages are delivered and experienced that make them so destructive, and not just the *content* of the messages (Gendlin, 1996: 249). That is, to work out what the voice of the inner critic *implicitly* contains.

Gendlin's original advice in dealing with the critic was to "wave it away" or put it off to the side (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 113). However, some found this approach to be insufficient and over time other approaches were developed. For example, Weiser Cornell (1996: 70) explains how simply acknowledging and saying "hello" to the critic can be helpful. Muller (1995 cited in Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 6) suggests learning how to be with the critic in a "friendly way…making room for it and building a relationship with it". This may lead to discovering that the critic is actually trying to help and protect you, but in an unhelpful "attacking" way (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 6). By empathizing with the fear "underneath" the attacking, we can help the critic to shift and transform into a "helper and protector" (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 7). In other words, by acknowledging the critic in a friendly way one can learn to see it as having "good intentions" (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 9).

Jaison (1992 cited in Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 4) emphasised learning how to distinguish the critic from one's "true self" and how to create "distance between you and your critic". He recommends to practice stopping the critic when it appears and assuring it that what it has to say will be considered at some time in the future, just not now (Jaison 1992 cited in Langeveld & de

Bruijn, 2008: 4). The process of distancing 'me' from the inner critic also enables the individual to build relationships with other aspects or parts of themselves such as the inner child, which can then be explored. For example, the process of clearing a space (discussed in section 3.7.2.2 and further in 6.3.3) can help an individual learn how to place issues "at the right distance away" or "outside the body", which creates a sense of self that is larger than or not limited by one's issues or concerns (Klagsbrun, 2008: 218). This in turn provides space to develop relationships with these issues or aspects with an "attitude of compassion [and] self-acceptance" or a "friendly acknowledgement of whatever is there" (Klagsbrun, 2008: 218). This is particularly useful when working with the inner critic, because:

> while critical and judgmental attitudes close off lines of communication and increase stress levels, a **welcoming attitude** allows us to hear from parts of ourselves that have been previously inaccessible and brings some softening and stress relief. (Klagsbrun, 2008: 218)

This approach can be a powerful tool for identifying and naming troubling issues, aspects or feelings (such as fear, anger and despair), and 'letting go' of these in order to access a deeper source of knowing.

6.3.2.3 Findings from the coaching sessions

The process of working with the inner critic and developing relationships with aspects or parts of oneself emerged as a key theme in the findings from the coaching sessions, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Stella

Stella was able to identify a "child-like vulnerability aspect that needed to be acknowledged" as part of the "powerful force" that supported her on her journey towards her purpose (session #3). This is similar to the "vulnerable child" as described by Langeveld and de Bruijn (2008: 6) above. This awareness led to a felt

realisation of the need to nurture this "vulnerable human aspect" of herself on a daily basis (discussed in section 5.3.1.3).

Stella had conceptually known the importance of providing self-care for many years. She led a healthy lifestyle and understood the benefits of mindfulness practice. Despite this, she was still suffering from burnout and was looking for ways to improve her personal sustainability. By building a relationship with this child-like, human aspect of herself she was able to experience a bodily felt sense of how to provide her own self-care.

This reflects the findings of Sodhi and Cohen (2012: 130) whose social work participants were able to identify their bodies as guiding them to initiate self-care. They argue that practitioners need to learn to trust their somatic sensations (i.e. bodily reactions, feelings etc.) in order to integrate embodied knowing into their practices (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012: 131). This will enable them to identify and better understand situations that "trigger" uncomfortable sensations, and in turn support them to become more effective practitioners (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012: 131).

Example 2: Holly

Holly was also able to reconnect with her inner child, which for her was a "happy place" where she didn't have to worry about social expectations (session #3). She was then able to sense her inner child as being separate from yet connected to the world in a way that was more curious, grounded and trusting. This way of being was unburdened by self-criticism (coming from her inner critic) or the need to critically analyse everything, allowing her to be more in the moment. By developing a relationship with her inner critic, Holly was then able to identify its critical voice and notice unhelpful thoughts and feelings when they arose, and how these impacted her inward attention. In turn, this enabled Holly to see how her inner critic was affecting her self-care and effectiveness at work (discussed in section 5.2.2.3), for example, feeling critical of and frustrated with her colleagues, which led her to feel exhausted and ineffective.

The focusing process also enabled her to gain a felt understanding of a "kinder part" of herself. This kinder, more open and curious part of her is what she feels will enable her to engage with the world in a different way – a way of being she acknowledges has "always been there". Interestingly, this reflects the process of 'contemplative knowing', described by Gunnlaugson (2011: 5) as carefully attending to one's thoughts (through practices such as mindfulness, focusing etc.) in order to access a "more clear, wise, and compassionate source of knowing that is always already present".

Example 3: Alyssa

The inner critic formed a large part of Alyssa's process from the start of her journey. She felt strongly that she wasn't "getting [things] done fast enough", which left her feeling ineffective and inadequate (session #3). The inner critic also led her to feel that she needed other people to see and acknowledge her achievements (i.e. that she was doing enough). By building a relationship with her inner critic she could see how it was working in partnership with her "ego". She then quickly realised that her ego was connected to a much deeper and more embedded need for approval from her mother. She was then able to differentiate the subtly different needs of the critic and ego. Most importantly, although they were "powerful and controlling" she could see how they wanted to protect her from pain and suffering (session #3). Indeed, she could see how their purpose was to help her to be a better person (i.e. their intention was to be helpful) (discussed in section 5.2.3.4). Again, this demonstrates the transformative shift (both as perspective transformation and felt shift) in being able to see the inner critic as a "helper" or "protector" (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 7).

Reflecting on the process, Alyssa acknowledged that she "would never have thought of the ego as something that's protective", highlighting the importance of the experiential process for enabling this felt realisation to emerge.

Example 4: Phyllis

Phyllis had a particularly strong inner critic that (like Alyssa) made her feel she wasn't doing enough, quickly enough. Her inner critic created a "sense of obligation" to be doing more and acted as "the card of judgement", which prevented her from ever feeling at "ease" (session #1). She also felt shame and guilt for her levels of cynicism, and the lack of "faith and hope" she had for society's ability to address the various issues she was concerned about (she felt guilty for being a "broken hearted idealist"). Further, she could see how the inner critic was acting in the background as a kind of "handbrake" on her passion, which was exhausting and was in part responsible for her feeling burnt out (session #1).

For Phyllis, her transformative moment in addressing her burnout occurred when she gave herself permission to "let go" of the cynicism (session #9). She experienced a bodily felt sense of letting go of her constant need to be "doing" something to create change (discussed further in section 6.3.3), and the cynicism that accompanied her inability to create "enough" change. By letting go of the cynicism and feeling of not doing enough, the sense of urgency associated with it was able to evolve into a "deep time experience". This experience felt like a "coming home to self" – a more "calm, unrattled and resilient" way of being (session #9) (discussed in section 5.2.4.3). This was accompanied by a more "earth-grounded energy" compared to the "frenetic energy" she normally experienced.

Example 5: Theresa

Towards the end of her coaching journey, Theresa realised that although she was "very gentle with other people", she doesn't offer this to herself, in fact she "slams herself" (session #6). This reflects Gendlin's (1996: 249) experience that "many lovely, sensitive people are inwardly brutalised and oppressed by their [inner critics]. They would never treat others as their [inner critic] treats them". However, Theresa described her inner critic as not "feel[ing] like an inner voice… it's deeper than a voice", it felt like an absence of offering gentleness to herself (session #6). A subtle yet

important difference that echoes Gendlin's (1978/1981: 91) point, that for some, the inner critic is a "voice" and for others it is something else like an "unfriendly" attitude. This insight was something Theresa had known intellectually for years but had not had a felt understanding of. A sense of relief came with this felt understanding, something she described as "like letting go" (session #9). As Gendlin (1996: 20) describes, it is the relief that comes when one brings that implicit something into explicit understanding and awareness – that "ahh that's what that is" moment. She could now see how offering gentleness was not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. Further, as discussed in section 5.2.5.5, she could see how gentleness not only supports self-care but also creativity, experimentation and therefore effectiveness in the workplace.

6.3.2.4 Findings from the interviews with practitioners

Although the practitioners were familiar with practices such as mindfulness and meditation, they were not familiar with focusing as a practice and so most of the conversations did not involve discussions about micro-level processes, such as developing relationships with aspects of oneself. However, there were some discussions about the benefits of inner awareness and internal processes (such as self-reflection, mindfulness, meditation etc.) as part of one's self-care.

Like the coaching participants, many of the interview participants expressed their sense of frustration, despair and hopelessness regarding the lack of change, in particular the urgency in relation to climate change. This was often exacerbated by heightened levels of anxiety, guilt and/or responsibility they felt about needing to create change. These feelings would manifest as physical, psychological and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, burnout and so on. To help address these feelings many of the practitioners engaged in some form of self-care activity such as self-reflection, reading personal development or 'self-help' material, talking with colleagues, mindfulness, meditation, counselling, coaching, physical exercise, yoga or

other self-care activities. These practices helped to improve their levels of self-awareness and reduce stress as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Anna

Anna (a young corporate professional) was suffering from burnout and would engage in "self-talk", which she described as "the outer me talking to the inner me". This involved "going inwards and asking herself questions" to see how she was feeling and to process things.

Example 2: Lucy

Lucy (a coach/practitioner) would also engage in self-talk, which involved imagining being at a board room table with "many parts" or aspects of herself (e.g. the inner child, heart, head or future self) and each having a seat at the table. She would then go around the table listening to each voice and then make a collective decision about a situation. This "higher level approach" would enable her to appreciate the complexity of situations, acknowledge her feelings and process them in a more holistic way.

Example 3: Mark

For Mark (an owner/manager of a social enterprise), swimming was a form of mindfulness like "presencing" – similar to Scharmer's (2000: 13; 2009: 163) notion of 'presencing', which he described as "dropping into my body…[and] feeling a lot more integrated and present". During this time, instead of "fighting" something that was troubling him, he could be in relationship *with* and work through it.

Example 4: Liam

Liam (a manager in a large corporation) has conducted a great deal of inner work to identify what drives him, and what gives him a sense of purpose. He feels this kind of work is particularly important for sustainability practitioners who are passionate about and invest a lot of themselves in their work and are often emotionally attached to their projects. To support his inner work, Liam practices regular meditation to

help build a relationship with his "ego", which enables him to be more aware of how it influences his attitudes towards work. For example, he was able to "separate [his] ego" from his work so that if a project fails then it is the project and not him that fails. He acknowledges this involves "constant work… [and] awareness of self within situations". Significantly, this doesn't involve shutting down critical self-talk but instead involves "being aware that the process [of critical self-talk] is occurring". In other words, he notices and observes the critical self-talk (or the inner critic) when it emerges in order to work with it more effectively. This is perhaps a step in the process of finding the helpful intention of the inner critic described above.

Although the practitioners found these practices helpful, it appears they were either maintaining the status quo regarding unhelpful feelings or using them to prevent themselves from becoming more anxious, disillusioned or depressed, but they did not necessarily help them to *transform* unhelpful thoughts and feelings.

6.3.2.5 Findings from the interviews with coaches and therapists

Like the interviews with the practitioners, the interviews with the coaches and therapists tended to explore more generalised themes, such as what they felt was needed to provide greater support for practitioners. Because of the diversity of their backgrounds and approaches (including a lack of familiarity with focusing), most of the conversations didn't involve in-depth discussion about micro-processes. Specifically, the theme of developing relationships with aspects of oneself, such as the inner critic or inner child, was not explicitly discussed. However, becoming aware of aspects of oneself in relation to unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour that were adversely affecting practitioners' work-life experiences was discussed, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Example 1: Stefan

Stefan (an executive/career coach, counsellor) made a distinction between seeing aspects of oneself as either fixed or in process. He believes we tend to "see others or bits of ourselves as nouns, as things, as opposed to seeing ourselves, and bits of

ourselves, and indeed the world as verbs. Everything is in process of some sort. And it's quite a subtle thing". He feels his role is to help people see the "fixed idea" they may have of themselves in order to facilitate the process of change. This is particularly relevant to practitioners who view themselves as needing to "save the world". Their work can become overly personal to the point where, if an initiative doesn't work out, "it's not just another project that doesn't get up". Instead, it becomes "my attempt to save the planet isn't working", which leads to feelings of failure, cynicism, ineffectiveness etc.

Example 2: Roger

Similar to Stefan, Roger (a social/adaptive leadership coach) felt that those working in this space tend to have an exaggerated sense of responsibility for others and a need to save the world. He argued that practitioners need to become more realistic about what they can achieve, but also identify what they are responsible for (for example, you can have a responsibility *to* an issue, but you are not responsible *for* the issue). This includes practitioners taking responsibility for themselves and their own well-being. In his experience, this has provided "a great sense of relief, …liberation, and ironically, [enables the individual] to become much more effective". Importantly, he argued that when individuals start to self-care and "hold the pressure [of their work] in a lighter way" they become more effective.

Roger also believed that "a lot of people working in this space have a very harsh [inner critic]... Even though they can be very compassionate to others, they're often not very compassionate to themselves, often very stern to themselves internally". This echoes Gendlin's comment in relation to the inner critic (see above), that sensitive people often treat themselves in ways they wouldn't treat others. Theresa's experience (above), where she realised that she offers gentleness to others but not to herself, is a case in point.

Example 3: Lucy

For Lucy (as coach/practitioner), building a relationship with that part of herself that needed to "save" was key in helping to improve her coaching practice. Instead of feeling the need to know all the answers to her coachees' questions, she provides self-reflective processes that support them to be present with their emotions (rather than reacting to them) and understand how these emotions influence their lives. In other words, it was more empowering to support individuals to "figure it out for [i.e. save] themselves". As mentioned in section 2.6.4 and 2.6.7, holding a person-centred, non-directive approach is central to effective coaching and this can be supported by a Focusing-oriented approach. By starting from a position of 'not-knowing' and framing the client's experience as interaction first, the coach or therapist is freed from having to be a "psychological detective" (Krycka, 2014: 58).

Example 4: Martin

For Martin (an eco-psychologist/psychotherapist), it was not uncommon for those working in this space to externalise problems (e.g. "corporations… are wrecking the world") and develop manic defence mechanisms in response (e.g. "the planet needs to be saved and we need to do it now"). He believes activists need to develop a "mature sense of responsibility" where one "can hold…anger and passion around the issues, but also respond sensitively with care". This involves building relationships with aspects of oneself, in particular anger and grief, in order to develop an approach to themselves that is more caring, loving and sensitive.

This sentiment is echoed by Gillespie (2014: 120), who argues that for practitioners, the manic activity of "keeping busy" helps to numb the pain and repress thoughts and feelings, in particular about losses associated with climate change. Randall (2009: 123) suggests that recognising and acknowledging the potential relationship between this manic response and grief, could provide some relief for activists and support a more realistic approach that is more effective in the long term.

Example 5: Natalia

Natalia (a transpersonal coach/counsellor) described her experience working with a sustainability practitioner who was in conflict with her manager and was thinking of leaving the organisation. After a few sessions where they worked on clarifying her sense of self (similar to the process described in section 6.3.1 above), the practitioner realised that her values didn't align with those of her manager or the organisation. This helped her to "deepen into her values" and understand that she wanted work with "a deeper sense of personal meaning and… relationship to life and the issues of the planet". Instead of supporting her decision to leave, this clarification led her to see how remaining in the organisation was an "opportunity to be of service".

Natalia then began to support her in developing relationships with aspects of herself to see how she could work in a new way. This involved working with her values through imagery and archetypes, which helped her to understand her "protector" and "nurturer" selves. This led her to being able to provide her own self-care:

> instead of escaping, she was able to **self-soothe**. Instead of resenting and fighting on the edges, she was able to have really strong boundaries… and self-integrity. She'd be able to stand up for herself. That **authentic-self** became something that she was then able to own.

Significantly, from this place of authenticity she was able to enter into:

> a deeply settled place, she settled down in…her *whole* self. It was like a **coming home to herself**. That's a massive **transformation** from victim to OK-ness. It was deep OK-ness so that was her first transformation. They were all little transformations but that was the first big arrival of a whole **new consciousness**… a whole new **way of being.**

This is also reminiscent of Phyllis's experience of "coming home to self" described above as feeling like a deeply grounded, settled and new way of being.

She then recognised the need to connect her inner processes of change with her external or organisational processes of change. In other words, she was now working with "systemic consciousness about the micro, meso and macro" process levels of

change. In addition, this understanding of her own journey of transformation helped her to appreciate the difficulty of personal change, which then enabled her to engage with others in more compassionate and effective ways.

These findings demonstrate how the need or compulsion to 'save' others and the planet, and the associated feelings such as anxiety, worry and despair about not "doing enough, quickly enough" were common amongst the participants. This issue was also highlighted as an area of concern amongst the coaches in working with practitioners in this space. Importantly, these are personal and social issues that can only be addressed at multiple levels (i.e. from the micro to the macro). A brief discussion of these relationships is provided below.

6.3.2.6 Overcoming the need to 'save' within a culture of 'martyrdom'

> "We exhaust ourselves in order to be good people and do good, to make sure that the voice of the poor is heard, to bear witness to the atrocities of the world. It's a heavy burden, and we can't always keep it up. The very same people who want to do good and be good end up denying their own needs or being unkind, or both – some kind of **martyrdom complex** kicks in." (Pigni, 2016: 160)

As highlighted in section 2.3.1, there is an extensive body of research examining the challenges faced by activists working in social justice movements and organisations (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 367). Historically, research into social movement activism has tended to focus on more "rational" rather than "emotional" aspects of mobilisation, participation and commitment (Brown & Pickerill, 2009: 26). More recently, research has focused on the role of emotions, and burnout in particular, amongst activists (Maslach & Gomes, 2006; Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Gorski & Chen, 2015), including personal sustainability within social movements (Rodgers, 2010: 275). In examining the emotional and cultural problems within social movement organisations, Rodgers (2010: 277) highlights a "culture of selflessness" that is common amongst them. This culture is also reflected in research by Gorski and Chen (2015: 399-400) who found

that a "culture of martyrdom" exists amongst social justice education activists. They argue that a combination of:

> the **strong emotional investment** that carries activists into movements and at least in part drives their social justice work, plus a **culture of martyrdom** built in part out of this emotional investment, plus a deep understanding of injustice and its impact, plus a lack of attention to **self-care** among activists—is a sort of script for social justice activist **burnout.** (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 400)

This culture at best devalues and, at worst, shames attention to self-care or conversations about burnout (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 399-400). Activist burnout is therefore a product of individual, organisational *and* sociocultural issues that needs to be addressed at multiple levels.

Although examining the cultural characteristics of organisations was not the focus of this study as it was in Chen and Gorski's research, the findings of their research are reflected in the experiences of the participants and findings of this study. For example, one of Chen and Gorski's research participants described their burnout as being "born out of a sense of urgency about the issues and passion about the issues" (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 378). Others attributed their burnout to feeling overworked and underappreciated (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 377), similar to Holly and Alyssa's experiences (described above) of feeling unacknowledged for their work. In other words, like the participants in this study, their deep sensitivities to injustice made the slow process of change difficult to bear. And when coupled with inadequate self-care and feelings of "not doing enough", disillusionment and hopelessness towards their work (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 397), the participants suffered from anxiety, depression and burnout (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 377-378).

Ironically, the idea of martyrdom or self-sacrificing and not taking care of oneself is part of the "dominant paradigm" within the broader system of injustice the activists are fighting against (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 401). This sentiment is echoed by Theresa (discussed above) who felt that by becoming a "martyr" in her role and therefore "deviating from her core" is what the dominant social system actually wants.

However, as Chen and Gorski (2015: 382) argue, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the culture of martyrdom is imposed upon activists as passive victims. Indeed, activism is often the "playground" for individuals to act out "inner polarities and unprocessed tensions" (Nair, 2004: 30). For example, one of the participants in their study felt that her "ego gets in the way", and that by learning to let go of her ego she could mitigate her burnout and in turn become a more effective activist (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 401). This reflects the sentiments of Liam (mentioned above) who had spent considerable time reflecting on how his ego manifested unhelpful ways of thinking and feeling.

Clearly, a more complex understanding of the role that activists' "deep sensitivities" and unacknowledged emotions (such as grief and loss) play in relation to their work is needed. However, simply recommending the need to identify and understand the influence of one's deep sensitivities, inner polarities or unprocessed tensions regarding their work is insufficient. Instead, what is needed are processes that enable individuals to:

- identify and acknowledge these unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling and understand them within broader sociocultural contexts;
- build relationships with those parts of themselves (such as the inner critic) that may be connected to these ways of thinking/feeling;
- explore and discover the helpful intentions that may be behind these parts; and
- experience each of these micro-processes/steps in an embodied sense in order to be able to 'let go' of these unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling.

6.3.2.7 Summary

In summary, the findings demonstrate how developing relationships with aspects of oneself (such as the inner critic) helped the coaching participants to identify unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling connected to those parts, which were leading to issues such as manic activity, burnout, ineffectiveness etc. This process also supported the participants to discover (or rediscover) aspects of

themselves (such as the inner child), and experience other ways of being. Specifically, the findings demonstrate how developing relationships with aspects of oneself can support practitioners to:

- acknowledge and identify the "unfriendly" attitude or "harsh" voice of the inner critic (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 91-93; Dirkx, et al. 2006: 127; Scharmer, 2009: 42) in order to work with and discover its implicit, and often helpful intentions (such as wanting to help, protect etc.) (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 9);
- experience less critical, and more open, curious and kind parts of themselves in order to develop other ways of being in relation to their work and others;
- engage with and trust the felt sense, embodied ways of knowing etc. in order to identify and better understand uncomfortable situations in relation to work and more effectively provide one's own self-care;
- recognise unacknowledged tensions (such as "not doing enough, quickly enough") and associated feelings (such as anger, despair, grief etc.), and understand them within broader sociocultural-political contexts; and
- identify the need to 'save' others and/or the planet and its connection with parts of oneself (such as the inner critic) or broader social paradigms (such as martyrdom or self-sacrificing) in order to work with and 'let go' of these needs and expectations (Gorski & Chen, 2015: 401).

6.3.3 Enabling kinds of 'letting go', being with 'not knowing' and 'letting come' the new felt sense

Theme 3: Enabling kinds of 'letting go' (such as expectations of self/others, cynicism, the need to save etc.), becoming more comfortable with 'not knowing' and uncertainty, and 'letting come' the new felt meaning.

6.3.3.1 Overview

Enabling kinds of 'letting go' (such as expectations of self/others, cynicism, the need to know, save and so on) is a micro-process and outcome that emerged as a key theme in the findings from the coaching sessions. I highlight *kinds* of letting go as the process was uniquely and subtly different for each of the coaching participants

depending on *what* they were letting go of. The process was also accompanied by a micro-step towards becoming more comfortable with 'not knowing', and 'letting come', a new felt meaning. As mentioned in section 6.3.2 above, this process of letting go often occurred after the participants developed relationships with aspects of themselves such as the inner critic (although it wasn't dependent on this process step). This in turn enabled them to identify habitual and unhelpful ways of thinking and feeling, and in some cases the helpful intentions of the inner critic.

Of course, learning to 'let go' is a great deal easier to talk about as a concept than it is to achieve in practice. It seems obvious that practitioners would benefit from letting go of the anxiety and worry associated with the issues they are working to address. Although a coach or a therapist might be able to see that, for example, letting go of high expectations of self and of others that cause anxiety might be beneficial, it would simplistic and in some cases counterproductive to suggest this to the individual. In some cases, these expectations may be deeply connected to one's sense of identity, and in other cases letting go might not be what is needed. So, how does one actually *let go* of high expectations, worrying about the planet, or critical thoughts that say you're not doing enough? The following discussion about the concept of letting go and the examples of letting go experienced by the coaching participants will help to address this question.

6.3.3.2 The concept of 'letting go'

> "Although we need to know that what we pour our hearts and minds into is effective, at some point, **letting go** of the results is also called for to enable us to continue sanely." (Shields, 1994: 129)

The concept of 'letting go' has existed for centuries in various forms depending on the theory, tradition or practice in which it was developed. According to Rosch (2007: 262), all of the mindfulness-based therapies recognise the need of letting go or "surrendering to one's experience". For example, learning to let go of attachments and expectations – "letting go, letting be", forms part of the central tenets of

Buddhism (Alexander, 2008). Cultivating the attitude of letting go or 'non-attachment' is also fundamental to mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1990/2013). According to Kabat-Zinn (1990/2013: 29-30):

> **letting go** is a way of letting things be, of accepting things as they are. When we observe our mind grasping and pushing away, we remind ourselves to let go of those impulses on purpose, just to see what will happen if we do. When we find ourselves judging our experiences, we let go of those judging thoughts. We recognise them and we just don't pursue them any further. We let them be, and in doing so we **let them go**. Similarly, when thoughts of the past or of the future come up, we let go of them.

The Buddhist meditation practice of 'letting go, letting be', 'distancing' and the focusing practice of 'clearing a space' are all ways of enabling the micro-process of letting go (Ikemi, 2015: 72). As previously mentioned, Gendlin developed clearing a space as a way to gently invite the participant to pay attention inwardly, sense what is needing their attention, and when some concern comes, letting there be "a little space between you and that" (Gendlin, 1996a). This process not only helps to allow unhelpful thoughts or uncomfortable feelings to "flow through", but also creates a protected space for the felt sense to emerge (Gendlin, 1996: 55). This protected space enables the individual to work on a problem as a "whole" from a distance (Gendlin, 1996: 93). This "inner act of *distancing*" allows an individual to engage with a concern or problem close enough to "feel it" but far enough away not to be overwhelmed by it (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 72). In other words, there is an inner process of creating distance between 'me' and 'it' so that the problem can be attended to without being overwhelmed by the feelings associated with it. This process of creating space or "experiential distance" (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262) from the problem enables an individual to experience what it is like to let go of the problem, which in turn clears a space for the felt sense to emerge.

Clearing a space differs from meditation in that one's attention is directed fully to the issue or concern, observing "how the body is carrying the issue" (Klagsbrun, 2008: 220). According to Walkerden (2002: 39), focusing involves "relaxing into a kind of

unformed spaciousness" [italics added] in order to engage the felt sense of an issue. In contrast, Buddhist meditation practices tend to take us in the direction of *spaciousness* (Walkerden, 2002: 39), allowing thoughts to come and go without attending to them. As Robinson (2004: 117) points out, there is no "goal" in meditation. However, the process of learning how to allow thoughts to come and go without attending to them is *not* an explicit process of focusing.

6.3.3.3 Letting go, being with the unknown and letting come

Letting go has also been described phenomenologically as a process of "slowing down" mental activity in order to reach a particular state of consciousness – the 'intuitive state' (Petitmengin-Peugeot 1999 cited in Walkerden, 2005b: 181). It can also be a process of "letting go *into* deeper states of *not knowing* [italics added]" (Burrows, 2015: 133). For Weiser Cornell (1996: 22-23) developing an attitude of 'not knowing' can be challenging and uncomfortable due to our cultural bias for clarity. However, having the ability to be in a state of not knowing can foster a more curious, open and interested approach to what one doesn't know (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 22). In other words, learning to let go into a state or space of not knowing enables one to be more open and curious towards the vague, hard-to-describe felt sense, and the implicit knowing that is coming into awareness (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 23).

There is also a subtle yet important difference between letting go into a state of not knowing and 'letting come' the implicit knowing into awareness. Whereas in Buddhist meditation practice there tends to be a focus on the intricacies of letting go, in focusing there is a particular focus on the intricacies of 'letting come' (Walkerden, 2002: 44). Letting come implies the carrying forward of the felt sense or letting the implicit knowing that has not yet been symbolised to come into awareness (Walkerden, 2002: 44).

Building on Buddhist traditions, Scharmer's Theory U describes the disposition of 'letting come' as involving:

> a recursive movement of attention towards abiding in **presence** and being with the **unknown** – that is, entering into a receptive state of **listening** for new meaning, knowledge, and insights to emerge in one's awareness. (Varela & Scharmer 2000 cited in Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14)

It involves shifting one's attention from "looking for something" to "letting something come to you" or letting something be revealed (Depraz et al., 2003 cited in Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14). For example, the activists in Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 115) study demonstrated "a kind of contemplative attitude, a letting go, listening deeply to their being in the world". This enabled what was previously unknown to emerge into consciousness.

Scharmer (2009: 184) distinguishes 'letting go' as letting go of the known or "the old and surrendering to the unknown", from 'letting come', which involves being with the unknown and letting the new ideas emerge from within (Scharmer, 2009: 199). For Scharmer (2008: 54), 'generative listening' facilitates this process by connecting individuals to their "deeper source of knowing, including the knowledge of [their] best future possibility and self". Learning to *listen* (including to the voices of resistance mentioned in section 6.3.2.1), *observe* and *sense* with an 'open mind', 'heart' and 'will' (Scharmer, 2008: 56-57) enables an individual to understand their inner space or the field from which one is operating (Scharmer, 2008: 54). Although, generative listening appears to share similarities with focusing, it is not described with the same level of phenomenological precision and rigour provided in Gendlin's writings, nor has it been researched to the extent that Focusing theory and practice has.

6.3.3.4 Findings from the coaching sessions

The following examples help to explain how the process steps of letting go, being with the unknown and letting come were experienced by the participants. Like the examples of the inner critic provided in section 6.3.2, the following are examples where participants have explicitly used the words letting go or let go.

These are examples that most accurately reflect the experiences of the participants in *their* words, with minimal interpretation provided.

Example 1: Stella

For Stella, there were two kinds of letting go processes or outcomes. The first involved letting go of her "achiever self", and the second involved letting go of her "problem solver self". As discussed in section 5.3.1.1, each of these selves had different qualities, which she was able to identify during the focusing process and then clarify during the reflective dialogue afterwards.

Firstly, the focusing process enabled Stella to gain a felt sense of the space between herself and the "magnet" pulling her towards her purpose, which felt like "home". This led her to realise the need to appreciate the journey towards her purpose and not focus on the "endpoint". Combined with this sense that she will eventually arrive at this endpoint, she was able to let go of the expectations she had for herself (her achiever self). She could now see the value in allowing herself to "do nothing" (in a literal sense) as a form of self-care, and how being with the unknown in a way that was more like being in "flow" could help her to be more effective.

During the reflective dialogue, Stella was able to see how her need to "fix or solve other people's problems" and "save the whole ecosystem" led her to "spend a lot of energy owning people's stuff", which she found exhausting. She described this need as coming from her "saviour", "caretaker" or "problem solver" selves, which she developed growing up with a parent who works in the medical profession (and whose job is to "fix or solve" people's health problems). She could also see how her need to "save" was related to broader cultural norms such as being the expert, and expectations regarding the giving/receiving of advice. Combined with her embodied experience of letting go of her need to achieve, she was then able to let go of her need to fix, solve, save. Further, reflecting on her felt sense of the child-like, vulnerable, human aspect of herself (mentioned in section 6.3.2), she could see how developing a

more open, gentle, patient and friendly approach would help continue to support this process of letting go.

Importantly, Stella's process of letting go did not involve having to develop a relationship with an inner critic. Indeed, an inner critic or critical voice did not emerge as part of her process. Instead, her need to achieve was in part connected to her need to fix problems, which she identified as having been learnt in childhood. Significantly, she was able to identify these aspects of herself (including their roots and manifestations) without any need to critically analyse the content.

Secondly, the focusing process provided her with the "experiential distance" (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262) she needed for the felt meaning or message (i.e. to appreciate the "richness" of the journey) to emerge or let come. The distance also helped her to experience the felt sense that she was not her achiever self, which up until this stage she had strongly identified as being who she was. This is a significant shift in Stella's felt understanding of her self-identity. In other words, the experience of distance enabled her to *notice* thoughts and aspects of herself as being separate to her, and then to be able to *describe* them (their qualities and nature), and to let the felt meaning come into being.

The subsequent micro-step in letting go of her achiever and problem solver selves was elucidated during the reflective dialogue in the coaching session that followed. It helped to clarify that her sense of letting go was not just a conceptual idea but one that emerged in the context of her felt understanding of the need to nurture herself. This will be key in enabling her to address feelings of burnout, and to support her personal sustainability (at the micro-level) over the long term.

Example 2: Phyllis

For Phyllis, as discussed in section 5.2.4.2, there were multiple kinds of letting go of what she described as the "inner critic", being a "martyr" at work, "fighting" the system and the cynicism attached to it.

Firstly, this involved letting go of "some deep stuff" and "ingrained habits" to enable new possibilities to emerge:

> It's like letting…enabling a different physiological map for myself...It's the same sort of feeling when the **inner critic** has such a grip on yourself that you can't actually get any fresh air away from it. It's a bit like I'm just shaking some deep stuff off...It's the feeling of different **possibilities** for me, if I allow the **space** to consider them. It's a **letting go** of ingrained **habits**, indentured habits. It's like, oh, well what about these possibilities, which are freely available? (session #1)

This process of letting go of ingrained habits (similar to Mezirow's habits of mind) also feels like the process she experienced working with the inner critic. Her sense of allowing space and feeling different possibilities is descriptive of experiential distance providing the space needed to enable new felt meanings to emerge.

Secondly, Phyllis's process involved letting go of her feeling "anchored" or "tethered" to her work like "some martyr", as she explains:

> there's a dissonance and a total irony and paradox for me around...I'm still trying to **let go** and give myself **permission** and convince myself to let go of the foci I've had…[I] still feel quite **anchored** and committed to…the co-op stuff. Phyllis you've got to let go of that energy. I don't think it's good, tethering yourself to it like some **martyr.** (session #1)

Here Phyllis is giving herself permission to let go of the burden of responsibility she has towards her co-operative work. Although she is still committed to the work, she can see how being a "martyr" in her role is not good for her as it leads to disillusionment, cynicism and despair when expectations are not met.

Thirdly, her process involved letting go of the "fight and struggle":

> …the process of **coming home to myself** has also been about…a massive level of acceptance, and of **letting go**, including letting go of a perceived **fight** and **struggle** out there to make myself enough. (session #9)

As described in section 6.3.1, Phyllis was feeling exhausted, disillusioned and cynical from her fight against the system, and so the process of coming home to herself felt like letting go of this fight and giving herself "permission" to let go of the cynicism

she had been holding onto so tightly. It also involved letting go of the fight to make herself "enough" (i.e. letting go of the need to achieve outcomes for the cause). This process of letting go enabled her to sense or let come a new way of being that was more "calm, unrattled, and resilient" – a feeling of trust in something deeper than herself. Similar perhaps to a deep source of knowing described by Hendricks (2003), Kovan and Dirkx (2003), Krycka (2012), Tobin and Tisdell (2015) and others.

Importantly, the process of focusing helped her to experience this trust in her body, which then enabled her to let go or relax into the space of the unknown. The key distinction here was that her experiences of letting go emerged from her bodily felt sense of what she needed and not some external source (such as a suggestion from a colleague or therapist). This enabled her to do the kind of "dark shadowy" inner work (discussed in section 5.2.4.3) she needed to address her feelings of cynicism and burnout, and to enable more calm and resilient ways of being.

Example 3: Theresa

Theresa's realisation that she could offer herself gentleness in relation to her work was a significant realisation that brought a sense of relief – *like* letting go. This gentleness also enabled her to play, have fun and be more her "true" self at work (session #6). She could see how this would help her establish connections with people more effectively, which she describes as being "incredibly powerful if we want to change systems" (session #6).

Theresa was also able to clarify the difference between letting go of something and learning to "carry the doubt" about a decision (i.e. being with uncertainty). In deciding to accept her new role, Theresa felt unsure about the rightness of the decision, which felt "slightly less of a heart path". A colleague suggested she "let [the uncertainty] go". However, she realised that it was not about "letting it go" but about being able to "carry the doubt" with her, and that telling the doubt to "piss off" did not work (session #6). This was a significant realisation in understanding the need to notice and be with the doubt, rather than putting it aside or letting it go. In other

words, she found another way of being *with* the doubt by acknowledging it. Being able to acknowledge the doubt and foster a more gentle and playful way of being, will enable her to remain committed to her work despite the uncertainty.

6.3.3.5 Findings from the interviews with practitioners

Although the process of letting go was not discussed in the interviews, there was a clear desire amongst practitioners (at the conceptual level) to learn how to "let things go" (e.g. worrying about climate change and the state of the planet.), and emotionally distance themselves from negative situations and people at work in order to be effective over the long term (i.e. not burn out). For example, Travis (a founder of a social enterprise) talked about his passion for his work and how he needed to "recalibrate his care factor" about certain issues:

> my problem… was I couldn't quite figure out the right amount, **caring enough** to be effective… not having quite so many emotions about how it was all going, and just [not] worrying about it.

In most cases, the practitioners managed to let go or de-stress by talking with colleagues, spending time in nature, and practicing some form of mindfulness, meditation or yoga in order to slow down, clear the mind and be present. Jess, for example, practices "stepping away" or "stepping back" from issues or difficult people at work in order to observe and reflect on how she is responding emotionally. This helps to address her feelings of hopelessness and feeling overwhelmed:

> … if you can **observe**, "this is a point in time where I can have an impact on what happens next"… you're observing that **choice** between fire and water, when the flames of anger are in front of you.

This ability to observe and reflect on what's going on in the present enables her to pause the anger and choose to be "what I want the world to be" (i.e. happy, calm and peaceful). She explained that being able to let go or "detach a little bit actually allows me to feel more fully. Because I can actually allow myself to grieve and allow myself to cry truly and fully, because I know it's not forever".

This is another kind of letting go or experiential distancing where the process allows her to observe her feelings and emotions as being separate from her which, ironically, enables her to feel the emotions more fully, knowing they're not "forever". For Jess, this practice is an investment in her self-care and well-being.

For others it was learning how to let go of the "fight". Similar to Phyllis's experience described above, Amanda was feeling burnt out in her waste management role in local government. She described this as being, in part:

> too fused to the concept that "I [am] right and they [are] wrong"…I couldn't let go of that battle. That I was fighting the **good fight** and that I should win.

In other words, by viewing her role as "fighting the good fight", Amanda was creating a 'me versus them' scenario with her colleagues and the system. This led to daily struggles in her engagements with others, resulting in her feeling exhausted, ineffective, and burnt out.

6.3.3.6 Findings from the interviews with the coaches and therapists

The discussions with the coaches about letting go or learning to be with the unknown were mostly at the conceptual level, providing examples of their experiences in working with clients, and what they thought practitioners needed to let go of in order to be more effective and resilient, rather than *how* the process of letting go occurs in an experiential sense.

Example 1: Sandra

For Sandra (an executive/career coach), the moment of letting go was a physiological one where "the body would relax… [and] you could see the moment physically. Sometimes it was a jolt, but sometimes it was just like an 'ahhhh', letting go". She described the process as also being like an 'aha moment', where relaxing and letting go enables the "knowingness" to emerge like a "light bulb" (similar to letting come). This deeper understanding then enables a "release and a moving on in a different way", a forward movement towards a different way of being.

Example 2: Debbie

Debbie (a social/adaptive leadership coach) spoke about letting go of the need to know or "befriending the unknown". She believes that the complexity of our work environment creates uncertainty, anxiety, stress and a great deal of "interior struggle". By developing a relationship with the unknown, individuals are more able to manage themselves when faced with their inability to create change or solve a problem for example. This means they are less likely to bury themselves in their work as a coping mechanism for managing stress and therefore less likely to burnout. Further, the ability to pause in silence, step away and "take stock of what's going on, to achieve flow in the workplace rather than pushing, controlling and struggling with something that is clearly not going anywhere" is key to supporting resilience.

Example 4: Sarah

Sarah (an eco-psychologist, Jungian psychotherapist) felt that practitioners need to let go of feeling responsible for the world's problems – "being the hero, the saviour, the warrior". Instead, they need to "understand themselves in a much more ecological sense of being part of a network... and coming to a point of being able to accept, maybe… for some people, surrender". This means viewing oneself as being part of a collective and letting go of an overdeveloped sense of personal responsibility. Sarah believes this sense of ecological connectedness involves:

> a psychological shift…that fits in with the **individuation** model, as well as **conscientization**, the idea that you're not so much the individual, you are an agent and that you work within the context of something larger.

This aligns with Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 115) who argue that transformative learning and the process of individuation "arise from a deep, dialectical engagement both with the world and one's self". It is through this process that one begins to see oneself, not as an isolated individual, but as being deeply connected to all of life

(Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103). Thus, through the process of individuation, individuals start to recognise their deep connection to something larger than themselves.

Example 3: Roger

Like Sarah, Roger (a social/adaptive leadership coach) believed that practitioners' passion and commitment to their work, combined with idealism, high expectations and a reluctance to provide self-care, leads to burnout. He felt that cynicism, in particular, "is a really bad place to end up" and that practitioners often have an "overdeveloped sense of responsibility" for issues, feeling "it's up to me to save the world" or "it's our responsibility to stop this oblivion". This not only impacts their personal sustainability but also their effectiveness in working with others:

> …if somebody is carrying that, then it's almost like they can never **let go** of the issue in any situation, professional or even personal, "I've got a **responsibility** to be doing everything I can to be convincing you and you and you, that you've got to change your ways". If you're carrying that around almost 24/7, it's going to wear you out eventually and people also can start saying, "Get me out of here".

This description also reflects the experience of others such as Phyllis and Amanda (above), whose inability to let go of the "good fight" was leading to conflicts with colleagues at work.

Roger wondered how practitioners could let go of this sense of responsibility or be in a way that was "100% committed but 0% attached". As he ruminates:

> Where I think it becomes a problem is when people are both **100% committed** to achieving something and they're **100% attached** to doing that… I think that puts a huge amount of internal pressure and we become really attached to outcomes that we can't control. When we become attached to outcomes that we can't control, we're going to become disappointed in an ongoing way, and that disappointment leads to **burnout** and **cynicism**. Where, if we hold it **lighter**, if we're…"I'm committed to that and I work with commitment to that, but in terms of outcomes, in terms of what happens, I can't control those, so I'm as attached as I can be". I suspect only Zen Buddhist masters ever reach 0%, but people can at least... I talk about "how do we **turn that down?**".

In other words, by letting go of their attachment to outcomes ("turning that down"), practitioners can remain committed to their work in a "lighter" way. This is reminiscent of the activists in Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 115) study who "learned to be in the world but not of it". Holding things more lightly can also help to improve a practitioner's ability to work with others (so they do not appear to others as "holding the moral [high]ground").

This idea of "detached concern" as a form of "self-protection" emerged from the burnout research as a way to manage the risk of burning out (Hoffarth, 2017: 36). Indeed, Maslach regarded self-protection as a form of social change in and of itself (Hoffarth, 2017: 38). In other words, developing a kind of "detached concern" or being committed yet not attached to outcomes, not only supports personal sustainability but can be considered an act of social change in and of itself.

6.3.3.7 Letting go of the need to 'save' and developing a 'lighter' way of being

As discussed in section 6.3.2.4, overcoming the need to 'save' others and/or the planet emerged as a key finding from the coaching sessions and interviews with the coaches and therapists. Further, the process of noticing what is emerging (via focusing) without the need to 'solve', was fundamental to enabling the participants to experience what it would be like to *be* in a way that was not characterised by the need to 'save'. Significantly, this enabled them to *experientially* let go of this need, which was often something they knew conceptually that they needed to let go. This process is reflected in a study by Goldberg (2013: 162), who researched how to work with urgent problems without becoming "paralysed in the process". She found that learning how to let go of attachment to outcomes (like Roger's argument above) was one of her most important insights:

> It is about doing all I can do, in the knowledge that the outcome may not be the one I hope for… This principle was remarkably easy for me to embody once I realised that I would be able to handle the emotional pain of such an outcome. It has probably been my greatest **liberation** and has brought a **lightness** to the way I now engage with the issues. I am no less **committed** to doing what I can to

> make a difference, but I no longer feel the **sole burden of responsibility** and do what I can in the full knowledge that it may not be enough. (Goldberg, 2013: 173)

Learning to let go is therefore a *felt* experience that not only provides a sense of liberation and relief but enables a practitioner to continue working with issues in a lighter way. Importantly, rather than being a process of giving up or becoming less committed to an issue as some might assume, the process of letting go actually supports a continuation of the work. As Goldberg (2013: 174) explains:

> What has changed through this process is my relationship with the issues. I have managed to imbue the gravity of the issues with a **lightness of being**, while still being able to stare the issues square in the face.

By letting go of the "sole burden of responsibility" (Goldberg, 2013: 173), practitioners can be liberated to engage with issues in a lighter and more effective way, even with the knowledge that they may never see the outcomes they are working to achieve.

6.3.3.8 Summary

The findings demonstrate that most of the coaching participants' experiences of burnout, disillusionment and despair were in part linked to high expectations of self and others, and an overdeveloped sense of responsibility for solving the world's problems. Focusing provided them with the experiential processes needed to have an embodied understanding of what it feels like to let go of something (such as unhelpful thoughts/feelings), relax into the unknown (or learn to be OK with not knowing) and let come the new felt meaning. Specifically, the findings demonstrate that focusing processes can support practitioners to:

- experience the distance between 'me' and 'it' (i.e. a problem, concern, issue) so that the issue can be attended to without feeling overwhelmed (Gendlin, 1978/1981: 72; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262). This process of putting an issue to the "side" enables an individual to experience what it is like to let go (in a bodily sense) of the issue and help "clear a space" for the felt meaning to emerge (Gendlin, 1996a; Klagsbrun, 2008: 213; Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262);

- experience letting go of uncomfortable thoughts/feelings (e.g. "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough", "I'm responsible for saving the planet"), which is often associated with a sense of relief (Hendricks, 2007a: 271). This in turn can enable individuals to see what is "underneath" these thoughts/feelings (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 7), in order to transform them into other ways of being (such as gaining a sense of being connected to a community, movement or something larger than oneself); and
- relax into the unformed spaciousness (Walkerden, 2002: 39) and learn to be with or "let go into" the unknown or not knowing in an open and curious way (Ikemi, 2017: 10; Burrows, 2015: 133). This enables the felt sense to be "carried forward" (Gendlin, 1996: 15), bringing into conscious awareness what is emerging from within (letting come) (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 22; Walkerden, 2002: 44; Scharmer, 2009: 199; Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14). It also supports practitioners to become OK with uncertainty, which helps to address feelings such as anxiety and worry that may be associated with not knowing.

6.3.4 Supporting ways of being that are more kind, open, curious, fun and playful

Theme 4: Supporting shifts in consciousness or ways of being in the world that are less critical, and more kind, friendly, open, curious, fun and playful.

> "I can know all of the techniques there are to know in the world, but the way I use myself in the process of social change is key to my **effectiveness**. I cannot make meaningful connections with others until I'm in meaningful connection with myself." (Freeman, 2006: 64)

6.3.4.1 Overview

This idea of learning how to be more kind, open, curious, fun and playful as new ways of being in relation to work was a surprising finding that emerged from the coaching participants. In some respects, this can be considered the transformative learning outcome or new ways of being that resulted from the micro-steps described in the themes above. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the idea did not

emerge from the interviews with the practitioners, although it did emerge from the interviews with the coaches in a limited way.

The following discussion describes each of the qualities of being more kind, open, curious, fun and playful as they are referred to in the Transformative learning, Focusing, and activist and social movement literature.

6.3.4.2 Being open and curious

The concept of openness or being more open to new and different perspectives, ways of thinking, experiences, learning and change has a long tradition. In 1980, Rogers (1980: 350-351) provided a list of qualities, which he felt the "person of tomorrow" would need to possess in order to live in a radically different world of the future. At the top of this list was the quality of 'openness', which he described as being open "to the world – both inner and outer…open to experience, to new ways of seeing, new ways of being, new ideas and concepts" (Rogers, 1980: 350). As well as placing great emphasis on openness, Rogers also emphasised "trust in one's organism" as characteristics of the fully functioning person (Aoki & Ikemi, 2014: 34). He believed openness to experience was the opposite of defensiveness (Rogers, 1956: 21) and trusting in one's organism was learning to trust the body as "a suitable instrument for discovering the most satisfying behaviour in each immediate situation" (Rogers, 1956: 22).

According to Hart (2004: 29), supporting an "inner opening of awareness" enables a corresponding opening towards the world, and in turn enables our worldview, sense of self, and relationships to be transformed. Having more open perspectives or becoming more open to and inclusive of others' perspectives, values and beliefs are desired outcomes from transformative learning (Stuckey, Taylor, & Cranton, 2013: 212). As Mezirow (2003: 58) explains, transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to being "more inclusive, open, discriminating, reflective, and emotionally able to change". This supports individuals to learn to act on their own values, purposes, feelings and meanings

rather than those that have been uncritically assimilated from others (Mezirow 2000: 8 cited in Hoggan, 2016: 66). Further, having an open mind, being able to listen empathically, "bracket" premature judgment and seek common ground are key sensitivities for enabling critical discourse (Mezirow, 2003: 58). In other words, people are more likely to engage in transformative learning experiences if they do not "cling as tightly" to their current ways of meaning making (Hoggan, 2016: 67). And in becoming less judgemental, and more empathic and open to considering others' perspectives, practitioners can become more adept at positively influencing the process of transformative change (Gunnlaugson, 2005: 343).

The process of becoming more open in an experiential sense is intricately and comprehensively explained by Focusing theory. As McEvenue (1994: 3) explains, the experience of the body opening up to itself is like a metaphor for how our lives want to unfold and move towards wholeness. In this sense, focusing is "a method of relating skilfully to our bodies, mind, and life situations in a conscious way that supports life forward movement" (Fleisch & Whalen, 2012: 106). It involves spending time with a "bodily sensed inner-directed movement that seems to have the knowing and wanting to take us to where new life energy is needed the most" (McEvenue, 1994: 7). This inner-directed movement provides a safe space between 'me' and "my stuff" that enables movement from what is "familiar and comfortable to what is new… unfamiliar and often uncomfortable" (McEvenue & Fleisch, 2008: 181). And this allows for old "holding patterns" (or habitual ways of thinking and being) to be transformed into "new ways of being-in-the-world" (Fleisch & Whalen, 2012: 106). The grounded presence in the body that focusing provides, makes it easier to stay with a "pre-verbal process" that leads to the emergence of the felt sense/meaning (McEvenue & Fleisch, 2008: 183). Here, the challenge is for the individual to trust the body and be *open* to emerging possibilities.

6.3.4.3 Being kind and friendly

Focusing aims to develop a welcoming, friendly attitude, known as the Focusing-oriented attitude (as described in section 2.6.8), toward one's felt sense of an issue or situation (Rappaport, 2010: 139-140). Having a "friendly attitude" towards the felt sense is just as important for the one doing the focusing as is it for the therapist (Gendlin, 1996: 55). One can learn to develop a friendly, welcoming attitude, which helps to provide a safe or protected space for the felt sense to emerge. Instead of being critical towards whatever emerges (for example, uncomfortable feelings such as anger or frustration that might emerge), one can learn to welcome what comes (Hendricks, 1986: 162). With repeated experience one comes to know that what might appear to be "negative contains positive life energy that is only twisted or blocked" (Gendlin, 1996: 56), for example, being able to find the helpful intentions of the inner critic as previously described.

6.3.4.4 Being fun and playful

> "It is important to realise that the struggle is long, so you have to take care of your body. You have to have **pleasure**, **joy** and **humour** in your life, otherwise you just become bitter and full of sadness. Pleasure is what fuels us. Sometimes when we are doing this work, it can feel like we are not allowed to feel anything but pain, yet having done this work for a long time, if you want to keep going you need to have joy, as that's what will keep you motivated to go back."
> (Ensler cited in Kahlia, 2019)

Having fun and being playful is generally referred to in its more literal sense within the activist literature. For example, Wettergren (2009: 6) describes fun as a protest tool for "culture jammers" and social movements. Fun (including humour) not only helps to mobilise others, gain trust and facilitate the reception of messages, but also acts as a reward for the protester in and of itself (Wettergren, 2009: 8). Used thoughtfully, humour can further help to reduce tensions during conflict, build rapport and a sense of connectedness, and alleviate burnout (Zimmerman, 2006: 277). While some also argue for the need

to have fun and celebrate accomplishments (Minieri & Getsos 2007: 269 cited in L. Cox, 2009b: 46), others argue for the need to find both meaning and joy as a strategy for preventing burnout (Pigni, 2016: 72).

The idea of being fun and playful in this study is used in the more subtle, experiential sense of how one can find a more fun and playful or more light-hearted *way of being* in the midst of the ongoing struggle for change, as opposed to having more fun or engaging in playful activities (although these activities may play an important role in enabling these qualities). This in turn supports more effective ways of engaging with others (being less critical, judgemental, and more open, inclusive) and also the prevention of burnout (by working in less emotionally exhausting and more light-hearted ways).

Becoming more fun and playful as a new way of being in relation to work may also be akin to understanding one's possibilities for "personal joy" (in an ontological sense) as defined by Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 102) and others (O'Sullivan et al., 2002: 11), or learning to "live with joy" (Hoggan, 2016: 68). In other words, fun and playfulness are not just about having fun for fun's sake but enabling personal joy in the process of creating change. It is about liberating oneself from the stereotype that social change should be "ultra-serious and humourless" or that one must "suffer for their cause", and instead learning a new way of working that is both an expression of one's values and of joyous involvement in the world (Rettig, 2006: 14-15).

6.3.4.5 Findings from the coaching sessions

The following examples help to demonstrate how the participants were able to shift towards being more kind, open, curious, fun and playful.

Example 1: Stella

Stella was able to let go of her need to achieve and 'save' by developing relationships with her "achiever" and "problem solver" selves (section 5.3.1.4). By reflecting on her

felt sense of the child-like, vulnerable, human aspect of herself, she could see how developing a more open, gentle, patient and friendly approach would help continue to support this process of letting go. Her ability to stop and notice thoughts or feelings that may be uncomfortable as they arise will in turn help her to continue developing this more gentle, friendly and less critical approach towards these thoughts or feelings. This will be key not only in helping her to address her experience of burnout and personal sustainability, but it will also help her to be more effective when engaging with others.

Example 2: Holly

By reflecting on her values in relation to broader sociocultural contexts, Holly realised that her core value of fairness was leading her to feel frustrated and critical about her work colleagues and the nature of work more broadly. Through focusing, Holly was also able to develop a relationship with her inner child, enabling her to have a felt experience of being connected to the world in a way that was more curious, trusting, light-hearted, playful. Further, Shields (1994: 128) suggests that connecting with the inner child with its enormous reserves of energy, joy, playfulness and ability to "bounce back" can help to prevent burnout.

As discussed in section 5.2.2.3, Holly was also able to see how her inner critic was leading her to be critical in general, which affected her self-care and effectiveness in relation to her work. She could see how noticing this critical voice when it emerges, combined with her felt sense of a kinder, more open, curious and playful part of herself, will enable a different way of being.

Example 3: Alyssa

As previously mentioned, the inner critic formed a large part of Alyssa's process. By developing a relationship with her inner critic and ego she could see how they were leading her to seek acknowledgement and approval through her constant need to achieve. However, through the focusing process she could see beyond the critic's need for control and sense that its actual intention was to help her become a better

person. This was a significant insight that enabled her to develop a kinder and more gentle approach to her inner critic. Further, as mentioned in section 5.2.3.4, Alyssa described the process of rediscovering parts of herself that had been lying dormant as "trying on new personalities" and redefining who she is – a new way of being. By deepening her empathy and compassion for those who don't have a voice, she was able to reignite her passion for gender equality and women's rights.

Example 4: Phyllis

As part of her journey, Phyllis underwent a profound wholebody transformation from feeling burnt out to (as described in section 5.2.4.4), a "cellular restructure" of self in "presence". Initially, this involved clarifying her sense of self in relation to the broader sociocultural context she was in and paying inward attention, which felt like "coming home to self". She then developed a relationship with her inner critic, which enabled her to let go of the sense of frustration and cynicism she had in relation to her inability to create "enough" change. This process of letting go then enabled her to sense a new way of being that felt more "earth-grounded" and trusting, lighter and more engaged with the world, and more "calm, unrattled, and resilient". Importantly, the process of focusing helped her to experience this new way of being as a bodily "self-affirmation". She describes her transformation as a "cellular level" shift and a more "unshakeable" way of being that is like "presence". This new way of being helped to slow down her default way of being, that was driven by "frenetic energy" and an over-thinking "monkey mind".

This process of transformation can be compared in part to Mezirow's description of transformation as "a structural reorganisation" in the way a person sees themselves and their relationships (Mezirow, 1975: 162 cited in Cranton, 2016: 16). It can also be compared to the quality of 'wholebody presence' described by Whalen and McEvenue (2009: 6 cited in McEvenue, 2014: 22) as:

> a reorganization process at a bodily level which touches all layers and levels of the human being, from the sub-molecular to the firing of **cellular** tissue processes which impact physical, psychological, and energetic function,

or, as described by Scharmer (2009: 39), "connecting to the deepest source, from which the field of the future begins to arise – viewing from the source". Indeed, Phyllis has previously connected to her sense of "deep knowing and trust" in her process of "coming home to self", and so it could be argued that this idea of presence could be Phyllis's way of describing her connection to her deepest source, which is the felt sense of her wholeness. Scharmer (2009: 141) would perhaps call this "self-transforming presence", in which Phyllis was able to access the full potential of her inner sources to embark on a journey of transformation towards her true or authentic self (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103; Cranton & Roy, 2003).

Example 5: Theresa

Theresa realised that she could offer gentleness to herself and this was accompanied by a sense of relief, *like* letting go. She could see how being gentle towards herself was vital for enabling her to be herself, and also to experiment and be creative at work. As discussed in section 5.2.5.5, being gentle, playful and having fun were key qualities for establishing connections with people in the process of change. Theresa was also able to clarify how letting go was different to learning how to "carry the doubt" or be OK with the uncertainty of her decisions. She could see how learning to be with uncertainty in a gentle and playful way will enable her to remain committed and work more effectively over the long term.

6.3.4.6 Findings from interviews with practitioners

Although the idea of being more open, curious and playful, was not explicitly discussed as part of the interviews with practitioners, these qualities did emerge in a few of the conversations regarding their effectiveness in communicating with others. For example:

Example 1: Stella

Stella described her past experiences with coaching as helping her to "have more open conversations and relations with people" because it enabled her to notice how she was feeling in any given moment and how it was influencing her. This provided her with the ability to "tune in to [her]self" and communicate more effectively.

Example 2: Cam

Cam commented that when he is stressed he becomes "closed off", which leads him to not being able to communicate well and to not be "fun around". For Cam there is a connection between being open and his ability to have "fun" and in turn communicate with others more effectively.

Example 3: Mark

To support safe spaces for collaboration, Mark approaches meetings with "an open mind, heart, and open hands". This enables different views and "versions of the truth" to be heard and acknowledged. He feels this is "the space that [is] missing in the world right now". And in practicing this with his own business he has found himself on a "journey of [needing to be] open to that, being open to that constantly. Going deeper and deeper and deeper with it". This approach seems to combine the principle of engaging 'head, heart, hands' for enabling Transformative Sustainability Learning as described by Sipos et al. (2008), and the capacities of an 'open mind', 'open heart' and 'open will' as described in Theory U (Scharmer, 2009: 41). Mark's appreciation of the constant process of going deeper reflects the core requirement of inner work as transformative learning.

6.3.4.7 Findings from the interviews with coaches and therapists

The coaches and therapists primarily talked about how practitioners could continue to work in a more effective and personally sustainable way, which was also the primary concern of practitioners. There was a common theme of how to continue the work in ways that don't lead to burnout, and also support more effective engagement with others as part of the change process. For example:

Example 1: Stefan

Stefan highlighted the need to have fun, and maintain compassion and equanimity in the face of suffering, as he explains:

> [there is a need to maintain] mental balance in your life. Even if you think that the planet is doomed, don't forget to have **fun**… It's why, I think, great spiritual masters always seem to be having a giggle somewhere behind the scenes. There's a certain absurdity to the whole situation…when you look at really good representations of the Buddha, he always seems to have a slight smile on his face. Because he can look at the world, and see all of the suffering, and still have **equanimity** about it. And infinite **compassion** towards the suffering. But the Buddha himself doesn't become drawn into the drama. And that's probably a good model for **sustainability**. How do you deal with the infinite suffering you see of the beings on the planet as climate change kicks in and still maintain your equanimity about it. And go, "Ahhh yeah, and that too".

This sentiment is also echoed by Byrnes (2012: 25), who argues that transformative learning can develop the ability for practitioners (in her case teachers) to practice "compassion, integrity and mindful awareness". Mindful awareness is a quality that "requires openness to the present moment with a perspective of equanimity that is driven by a sense of wonder" (Byrnes, 2012: 34). This sense of wonder is reminiscent of developing a sense of curiosity. Further, compassion involves:

> being **open** to and moved by the suffering of others, so that one desires to ease their suffering. It also involves offering others patience, **kindness** and **non-judgmental** understanding, recognizing that all humans are imperfect and make mistakes. Similarly, **self-compassion** involves being open to and moved by one's own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and **kindness** toward oneself, taking an understanding, non-judgmental attitude toward one's inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one's own experience is part of the common human experience. (Neff, 2003: 224)

As was found in this study, what is common to developing both mindful awareness and compassion is a way of being that is more open, kind and less judgemental of oneself and others. It is interesting, although perhaps not surprising considering the methods used, that this way of being emerged as one of the key themes from the coaching sessions.

Example 2: Roger

As previously mentioned, Roger believes that practitioners often have an "overdeveloped sense of responsibility" for issues, where they feel "it's up to [them] to save the world". By learning to "hold the pressure in a lighter way", one can learn to laugh about the situation a little bit more and become more effective by "not acting as compulsively". As a "compulsive rescuer" one feels the need to always be helping others, and this can become unhealthy, whereas maintaining healthy boundaries and being able to "say no" is empowering. By holding things more "lightly" and letting go of attachment to outcomes, practitioners can remain committed to their work in a way that is not only more personally sustainable but also more effective in engaging with others – for example, they are less likely to appear as "holding the moral [high]ground" or being "self-righteous".

Example 3: Natalia

Natalia described how one of her clients experienced numerous incremental transformations that led to a "new consciousness… a whole new way of being". She described this as being like "the petals of the lotus flower opening". By becoming "more curious" and "opening to [her] embedded consciousness" she then enabled more transformations or "mini-miracles" or synchronicities to occur. This sense of curiosity and openness enabled her to be more effective in working with colleagues:

> She was **open-hearted** and she didn't care about people's shadow. She knew it could come up but she knew how to have conversations, which said... "we need each other"... Life wasn't frightening anymore. Life was an **adventure**.

This sense of being more curious, open and seeing life as adventure, enabled Natalia's client to be more open-hearted in engaging with colleagues who challenged her, and to "bring her values" into the workplace and "dance lightly in the divine comedy of it all", knowing that she didn't have to have "effort and struggle" in the process. This new way of being helped her to trust the creative process, enabling her to work in a way that did not exhaust her, and in turn, address her issues of burnout.

Example 4: Martin

Martin (an eco-psychologist/psychotherapist) believed that inner work is key for activists to develop a more "mature sense of responsibility" where they can respond with sensitivity and care. For him this includes a "kind of spiritual dimension", involving moments of not feeling separate from the world one is caring for. He believes that this kind of "epiphany or calling" where one feels deeply connected to their work is both inspiring and has the potential to sustain oneself through difficult times. This involves a shift in consciousness, or what Martin describes as "reorienting our entire sense of what it is to be human, what it is to live on this planet, what it is to reciprocate with what we call the environment, the rest of the world". This (in part) reflects Kovan and Dirkx's (2003) description of activists' profound learning as a recognition of their work as a "calling or vocation". It also reflects Ettling's (2012: 546) call for transformative learning practitioners to develop a planetary consciousness – "a consciousness that nurtures and affirms our place as beings in the universe, striving to create a just and peaceful planet".

6.3.4.8 Summary

In summary, the findings demonstrate that focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue supported shifts in consciousness or ways of being for the coaching participants that were less critical, and more kind, friendly, open, curious, fun and playful. These were achieved through a multitude of incremental micro-steps or transformative micro-processes such as clarifying one's sense of self within broader contexts, developing relationships with aspects of oneself (such as the inner critic or inner child), and letting go of habitual ways of thinking/feeling, relaxing into the unformed spaciousness and letting come the new felt meaning. Specifically, the findings demonstrate how focusing combined with reflective dialogue can support practitioners to:

- experience the body *opening up* to itself (McEvenue, 1994: 3), relax into the unformed spaciousness, not knowing or pre-verbal process, and sense the

emerging felt meaning (for example, through the use of imagery) (Gendlin, 1962/1997: 76; Walkerden, 2005: 177; Fleisch & Whalen, 2012: 106). This in turn can support individuals to be more open to transformative learning experiences and other ways of being;

- develop an inwardly gentle, friendly and welcoming attitude that provides a safe space for the felt sense to emerge. This can enable issues or problems and their associated feelings to be attended to (Hendricks, 1986: 162; Klagsbrun, 2008: 218). Over time this process can support individuals to develop a kinder, more curious and gentle approach to self and others;
- understand the relationship between inner and outer processes such as the influence of the inner critic on how one experiences themselves and others. This in turn can enable an individual to see the value in less critical and judgemental, and more empathic and open approaches to others' perspectives, values, and beliefs – key to enabling critical discourse and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2003: 58; Gunnlaugson, 2005: 343).
- experience letting go of habitual ways of thinking/feeling such as high expectations, feelings of responsibility etc., which enable individuals to experience a "lighter" way of engaging with issues (Goldberg, 2013: 173) that is more connected to their sense of joy, fun and playfulness. This lighter more "detached" way of being can in turn help prevent burnout (Hoffarth, 2017: 36), and enable more effective engagement with others, the communication of messages, and support creativity and experimentation in the workplace.
- experience 'self-transforming presence' (Scharmer, 2009: 141) or the connection to one's deepest source of knowing and being in the world (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115; Scharmer, 2009: 39; Krycka, 2012: 10; Tobin & Tisdell, 2015: 228). This can lead to wholebody shifts in ways of being, including physical, psychological and energetic re-orientations in how one *is* (McEvenue, 2014: 22), and sees themselves and their work in relation to human and planetary systems. That is, a more expansive, ecological and planetary consciousness (O'Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Lange, 2012, 2015; Hathaway, 2017).

6.4 Chapter summary

The findings of this study demonstrate how focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue can enable transformative learning as inner work, including the prevention of burnout, and the improvement of personal sustainability, self-care and effectiveness of practitioners. Specifically, practitioners can be supported to:

- "know oneself" (Tennant, 2005: 108; 2012: 107), clarify their sense of self in relation to their life/work within broader sociocultural contexts and develop realistic timeframes. This can help address unhelpful feelings such as guilt or an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, which in turn can sustain their commitment and confidence to continue their work;
- develop relationships with aspects or parts of themselves (such as the inner critic) and identify unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling connected to those parts (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 9) which may be leading to issues such as burnout. This process can also support practitioners to discover (or rediscover) aspects of themselves (such as the inner child), and experience ways of being that are less critical, and more open, curious, kind, compassionate and playful towards self and others, which can in turn help to prevent burnout (Shields, 1994: 128).
- gain an embodied understanding of what it feels like to let go of unhelpful thoughts/feelings, relax into the unformed spaciousness or unknown (Walkerden, 2002: 39; Ikemi, 2017: 10; Burrows, 2015: 133), learn to be OK with uncertainty/not knowing, and let the new felt meaning come (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 22; Walkerden, 2002: 44; Scharmer, 2009: 199; Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14).
- experience incremental steps or transformative micro-shifts (Lange, 2012: 203; Cranton, 2016: 27) towards ways of being that are less critical of self and others, and more kind, friendly, open, curious, fun, playful and light-hearted. Put in another way, these transformative shifts in consciousness can support more effective ways of being, self-care and personal sustainability over the long term.

These findings and their contribution to the Burnout, Transformative learning, Coaching, and Focusing literature (including a proposed framework for practitioners) are discussed further in the following chapter, Chapter 7.

7. Implications for theory and practice

7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the implications for theory and practice in relation to the research question:

- How might focusing be used within a coaching context to: a) address burnout, and b) support the self-care and effectiveness journeys (characterised by transformative learning experiences) of practitioners more generally?

Firstly, I discuss the contribution of the findings from this study to the Burnout, Transformative learning, Coaching, and Focusing literature. Secondly, I discuss the implications for practitioners in fields of adult learning (such as coaches, facilitators etc.), and provide a framework and model as guides for those working or wishing to work with practitioners in a supportive capacity.

7.2 Contribution to the Burnout literature

> "Unfortunately, too many activists fall prey to **burnout**. It takes its insidious toll physically, emotionally and in relationships, not to mention the cost of lessened effectiveness. We become disillusioned, embittered and frustrated because the needs of the **inner being** are ignored. These needs have a way of insisting, eventually, to be met. It is ironic that while many dedicated people are passionately trying to bring about wholeness, justice and sustainability in our **outer** world, in their **inner** worlds there may be fragmentation, injustice and oppression." (Shields, 1994: 28)

As mentioned in section 2.2.5, the vast majority of both the academic and practitioner literature focuses on the symptoms and causes of burnout and providing generic recommendations on how to prevent it by developing self-care strategies (such as regular exercise, work-life balance, finding support groups and so on). Indeed, there is little research examining the impact of specific types of micro-level interventions (such as focusing, mindfulness) that could help to mitigate burnout and support well-being (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 367). There is also a broader recognition within the activist or social movement community that supporting individuals through individual self-care strategies is insufficient to address the systemic causes of

burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997: 79; Gorski et al., 2019: 377). Importantly, care needs to be taken not to inadvertently place the onus of responsibility regarding burnout on the individual. This has led to a call for more research into the influence of broader social and organisational factors (such as toxic workplace cultures and the broader sociocultural, economic systems that lead to these, infighting, marginalisation, and a lack of attention to mental health and well-being), in particular, within the not-for-profit sector and social movements (Downton & Wehr, 1998: 531; Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44; Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 46-47; Gorski et al., 2019: 377). Accordingly, there is a need to build a more nuanced understanding of burnout, in particular the impacts of cynicism and inefficacy in relation to particular professions (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98) and a need for more contextualised research that looks at the experiences of burnout for practitioners working to create change and considers how burnout can be addressed at all levels, from the micro to the macro.

The findings of this study contribute to the Burnout literature by providing more contextualised research pertaining to the participants, with a particular focus on micro-level strategies for mitigating burnout and supporting self-care. Specifically, this study provides rich descriptions of the kinds of thoughts/feelings and symptoms associated with the participants' experiences of burnout (e.g. feeling exhausted, cynical, ineffective, disempowered, hopeless, despairing), and how focusing processes combined with reflexive dialogue supported the kinds of *inner* self-care (such as shifting unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling) that can help to sustain commitment and personal sustainability over the long term.

Although multiple factors in relation to burnout were examined as part of the questionnaire, I have chosen to focus on how the findings contribute to personal factors of burnout (such as values and expectations) that can be more easily addressed in a one-to-one coaching context, rather than social factors (such as a lack of support, the nature of work etc.) that need to be addressed at a broader systemic level, and have been well researched and discussed elsewhere (Maslach & Leiter,

1997, 2005, 2006; Plyer, 2009; L. Cox, 2009, 2010; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Gorski & Chen, 2015, Gorski, 2019, Gorski et al., 2019).

7.2.1 Burnout is a slow process that practitioners are often unaware of

As discussed in section 4.4.3, the findings show that at least 19% of the questionnaire participants show indications of burnout (i.e. scoring in the high range on all three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy – the three sub-scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory). Further, an additional 5% of participants (i.e. 24%) scored in the high range for at least two of the dimensions, and 57% of participants scored in the high range for at least one dimension. This indicates that the challenges the participants face are having a greater impact on their well-being than might be suggested by their self-reported levels of satisfaction (refer to section 4.3.3). This is useful to know as it suggests that practitioners may not be aware of their symptoms of burnout, supporting research that shows burnout is a "long-term process" (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 28) that develops slowly over years or even decades, which individuals are often unaware of (Rettig, 2006: 19-20). Given this, it is useful for a coach (for example) working with practitioners in this space to be able to recognise potential indications of (or movement towards) burnout in order to help prevent it.

7.2.2 Developing a more nuanced understanding of burnout

Significantly, the participants' experiences of burnout were not only related to their direct workplace environments, but also to their feelings of frustration, hopelessness and despair about the lack of change (e.g. in relation to climate change) more broadly. This was most clearly demonstrated by the inefficacy results where, despite scoring highly in relation to skills and experience, the participants often talked about the feeling of not "doing enough, quickly enough". In other words, there are factors influencing the participants' levels of inefficacy that are not related to their perceived ability to do their job. As mentioned in section 6.2.2, this in some ways differs to Maslach's definition of inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2016: 39), which refers to how

effective (or ineffective) an individual feels in relation to their work. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that the participants feel as though they don't have the skills, experience or ability to do their work. Instead, their sense of ineffectiveness is potentially more related to their high levels of cynicism regarding the broader lack of change – a sense that may be likened to a state of "quiet desperation" (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). This is a subtle yet critical distinction as it is perhaps more characteristic of the nature of the work, which involves working with complex and urgent social problems that one may never see fully resolved, and the emotional and psychological burden this entails.

7.2.3 Clarifying interests, values and expectations in relation to burnout

As discussed in sections 4.3.5.2 and 4.3.5.3, the results from the questionnaire suggest that the more aligned the participants' interests are with their role (i.e. what they value in their work), the more likely they are to feel engaged in the role and less likely to suffer from burnout. However, the results also suggest that the more strongly the participants felt part of (or their work contributes to) a broader social movement, the more likely they were to suffer from burnout. These findings reflect studies that have shown that value congruency is a key factor in both engagement *and* burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Dylag et al., 2013; Brom et al., 2015: 61). This is because practitioners working to create change tend to be driven by their values, and therefore tend to have higher ideals and expectations (Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44). According to Pines (2000: 634; 1993/2017: 61), for individuals who seek existential meaning and significance from their work, burnout is more likely to occur when their experiences fail to meet their expectations. In other words, an idealistically motivated individual is more likely to burn out when their high ideals and expectations are not met by the realities of work (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 312). Over time, practitioners lose sight of the "bigger picture" (Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44) and experience a crisis or loss of meaning in relation to their work (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). Schaufeli and Buunk (2003: 411-412) describe this as a process of

"progressive disillusionment", where practitioners slowly lose the idealism and spirit that once drove them to work for social change (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 368). This relationship between high ideals, expectations and burnout is supported by the findings from the questionnaire participants, where those suffering from burnout had high levels of feeling part of a social movement *and* high levels of cynicism (refer to section 4.3.5.3), potentially representing a loss of idealism and meaning in their work. This in turn led to the search for more meaningful work, which was cited as one of the key reasons for wanting to leave their role.

This relationship was also supported by the experiences of the interview and coaching participants (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) who, despite working within their chosen areas of interest (or because of it) and having high levels of skills and experience, described feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, disillusioned and despairing. According to Maslach and Gomes (2006: 43) this can also (in part) be explained by the deep levels of understanding and sensitivity that practitioners (in particular social justice and human rights activists) have in relation to issues of social injustice and oppression. This consciousness leads to increased levels of stress and "self-inflicted pressure" to create change (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 43; Chen & Gorski, 2015: 368). As Chen and Gorski (2015: 376) found, activists described feelings of debilitating hopelessness and despair as they questioned whether what they were doing was having any effect on the issues they were trying to address. As the findings of this study suggest, practitioners with deep sensitivities coupled with high ideals and expectations can experience feelings of inefficacy and cynicism when faced with the realities of both work and the slow process of change. These can manifest as feelings of self-doubt, hopelessness, grief and despair regarding society's capacity to engender change within the timeframes required.

In addition to a more nuanced understanding of the role that values, expectations and deep sensitivities play in relation to burnout, a deeper understanding of the role of unassimilated beliefs and assumptions (Cranton, 2016: 105) or habitual ways of

thinking/feeling play in relation to burnout is also needed. Although the participants are aware of and benefited from self-care strategies such as maintaining work-life balance, belonging to a community, mindfulness, meditation etc. (refer to section 4.4.2.4), they were less aware of the reciprocal relationships between their inner and outer worlds, and how embodied learning or experiential processes could help to address issues such as loss of meaning, inefficacy and burnout and associated emotions (such as anger, grief and despair) in relation to their work. For example, most of the coaching participants were able to shift habitual ways of thinking/feeling, which they had been aware of, in some cases for many years (refer to section 6.2.2). Clearly, simply identifying and critically reflecting on these thoughts/feelings does not guarantee a change in thinking, feeling or behaving. As this study demonstrates, it can be helpful to support an individual to gain an embodied understanding of how their deeply rooted values, expectations, and habitual ways of thinking/feeling are connected to their experiences of anxiety, burnout and depression., including within broader sociocultural contexts. This kind of fine-grained discussion of embodied micro-processes that encompasses a more nuanced understanding of practitioner burnout, and *how* focusing, transformative learning and coaching can help address burnout and support self-care is not evident in the Burnout literature. How this can be achieved in practice, for example, letting go of the need to 'save', giving permission for self-care, and developing more open, curious and playful ways of being, is discussed in the sections below.

7.3 Contribution to the Transformative learning literature

> "Being in reciprocal relationship to everything makes the suffering of others our suffering, whether or not we sometimes turn away from it because it is so painful to bear. Rather than being a problem, however, that can be a strong motivating factor for both inner and outer **transformation**." (Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 12)

This study helps to address the gap in the literature regarding how embodied, experiential learning processes can support dialogue between an individual's inner and outer worlds. It does this by demonstrating *how* focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue can support the inner work (as transformative learning), self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners working to create change. This is evidenced by the detailed examples and rich descriptions of how focusing can be conducted within coaching, and numerous examples of learning outcomes such as changes in an individual's frames of reference, habitual ways of thinking/feeling, and embodied shifts in consciousness or ways of being.

7.3.1 Inner work supported by focusing processes and reflective dialogue

Like Kovan and Dirkx's study (2003: 115), in this present study, it was in the inner work of the participants that evidence for transformative learning was found. For example, the activists that Kovan and Dirkx worked with demonstrated "a kind of contemplative attitude, a letting go, listening deeply to their being in the world and seeing what ha[d] previously been unseen and unknown" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). This meant their journeys were characterised more by observing and listening to the "images" that came into consciousness than reliance on critical reflection and self-analysis alone (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). Although not the same, this process closely reflects the participants' experiences in this study, who learnt through focusing how to observe and notice habitual thoughts/feelings, let go or relax into the unformed spaciousness, and engage with the felt sense that was emerging into consciousness. Combined with a kind of reflective dialogue or reflecting-in-and-on-*process* (a term I proposed and discussed in section 5.3.1.3) where the participants were still connected to their felt sense but in a less direct way, insights could be clarified and/or continued to emerge. Similar to what Gunnlaugson and others might describe as 'generative dialogue' (Isaacs, 1999; Scharmer, 2000, 2003 cited in Gunnlaugson, 2007: 135), this process helped the participants to deepen their felt understanding of themselves and how they interacted with their workplaces and

broader sociocultural contexts. In other words, focusing helped to enable a kind of embodied or generative dialogue between the participants' inner and outer worlds. Like Kovan and Dirkx's activists, the participants' experiences suggest that inner work as transformative learning emerged from "a deep, dialectical engagement" with their inner and outer worlds (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 115). This interaction between the inner and outer worlds is demonstrated by key findings of the study where the participants were able to:

Theme 1 – clarify sense of self within broader social contexts

- improve their understanding of self and identity within the context of organisational and social change (Chappell et al., 2003; L. Cox, 2009). This involved clarifying their sense of self (including values, beliefs and assumptions, purpose etc.) in relation to life, work and broader sociocultural-political contexts, and gaining an embodied understanding of these relationships. They were able to reframe their sense of self from that of lone individuals struggling with issues and emotions (such as the anxiety, grief, burnout and despair) to understanding themselves as being part of a collective or broader social movement. In addition, some recognised how these movements were also influencing their experiences of anxiety and burnout. This in turn enabled them to develop more realistic expectations and timeframes regarding the process of change.

Theme 2 – develop relationships with aspects or parts of self

- recognise and integrate conscious and unconscious elements of themselves (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 103; Dirkx, 2012a: 117, 2012b: 403). This involved developing relationships with aspects or parts of themselves that were connected to unhelpful ways of thinking (such as "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough", "I'm responsible for saving the planet") or uncomfortable feelings (such as cynicism, anger and despair). The participants described their experiences as a process of identifying and in some instances rediscovering parts of themselves (such as the inner critic or the inner child), building relationships with these parts in order to better understand their impacts (such as manic activity, experiences of burnout), and finding and experiencing (in a bodily sense) the positive or helpful qualities of these parts (such as being more open, kind, curious, or playful),

Theme 3 – let go, be with the unknown and let the new felt sense/meaning come

- let go, be with the unknown and 'let come' the emerging felt sense. This involved experiencing the distance between 'me' and 'it', what it *feels* like to let go of unhelpful thoughts or uncomfortable feelings, and how this was often accompanied by a bodily sense of relief. This then enabled a relaxing into the unformed spaciousness and learning to *be with* the unknown or 'not knowing' in a curious way that in turn opened the way for *letting come* of the new felt sense/meaning.

  This process is reminiscent of the activists in Kovan and Dirkx's (2003: 115) study, who demonstrated a "contemplative attitude, a letting go [and] listening deeply" (described above). The authors describe this as an "ongoing dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of the self", where the activists' openness to continual learning and to acknowledge "not knowing", enabled them over time to become increasingly aware of those aspects of themselves of which they were previously unaware (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 107-108). Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 115) further describe this as involving "ongoing dialogues with the images that arise from the pieces of our being", and one way the activists did this was by connecting with nature. However, it was not clear *how* these ongoing dialogues or the process of inner work could be done in practice, either on one's own (e.g. how does connecting with nature facilitate this process) or supported in a learning context. The findings of the present study help to address this gap by explaining the process of inner work at a micro-processing level and demonstrating how it can be done by using focusing within a coaching context.

Theme 4 – develop more open, curious, kind and playful ways of being

- develop a more open and hopeful approach to change, and connection to a deeper, more profound source of knowing and learning, which "is at the heart of sustained commitment" (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 101). This involved shifts in ways of being that were less critical, and more kind, open, curious, fun and playful. These were achieved through a multitude of incremental micro-processes such as

experiencing the body opening up to itself, developing a kinder, more curious and gentle approach to self and others, and letting go of habitual ways of thinking/feeling in order to experience (if only temporarily) a more joyful and playful way of being. For some participants, their experiences were characterised by bodily shifts as they connected to a deeper, embodied source of knowing that felt like "coming home to self". In other words, the participants experienced transformative shifts in consciousness that led to more open, curious, kind and playful ways of *being in the world.* Together these qualities support more effective ways of being with self and others, helping to sustain self-care, effectiveness, and therefore personal sustainability and commitment over the long term.

7.3.2 The experiential difference that enables more open, curious, kind, playful and authentically hopeful approaches to change

> "The centrality of *Being* the change, *Being* the transformation, *Being* the new action or skill. This is a state of **authenticity** that is distinct from cognitive knowledge, or simply knowing something." (Strozzi-Heckler, 2014: 44)

Significantly, the embodied process enabled the participants not only to deepen their understanding in a critical sense, but also to experience in a bodily sense what they already knew and, in some cases, knew after many years of self-reflection on their issues or concerns. They gained a *felt* understanding of their experiences of anxiety, burnout or despair in relation to social factors (such as oppressive workplaces, and sociocultural, political and economic systems), and this, as explained in section 2.4.2.1, is *the* experiential difference (Gendlin, 2018: 68). Krycka (2012: 1) argues that embodied understanding and change is "far more generative than change that involves merely altering or shuffling around existing schema or concepts" (refer to sections 2.4.2.1 and 2.5.3.3). This emphasises the *process* of change rather than on achieving *outcomes*. Transformative learning processes can enable learning outcomes that involve conceptual shifts in perspective, but it is the *embodiment* of these learning insights that may play a critical role in enabling transformative (and more permanent) shifts in ways of being.

This experiential difference also helps to address mind/body, rational/non-rational thinking dualisms (discussed in sections 2.4.2.1 and 2.5.3.2), and the call for more holistic, embodied and contemplative approaches to knowing and learning that can support individuals in developing the more expansive, ecological and planetary consciousness (O'Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Lange, 2012, 2015; Hathaway, 2017) they need to cope with new global contexts that are fundamentally complex and radically uncertain (O'Hara, 2006).

Indeed, Selby and Kagawa (2018: 13) argue that intuition and embodied ways of knowing are key to being able to confront and work with uncomfortable emotions (such as grief, anger and despair) as a prelude to developing "authentic hopefulness" in a climate-changing world. This argument draws on the work of Macy who described authentic hope (or "active hope") as being founded on a clear view of reality *combined* with a deep, embodied engagement with the emotions that emerge from such a view (Macy & Johnstone, 2012: 37). Rather than denying or suppressing these emotions, embodied ways of knowing can enable individuals to *experience* these emotions in order to clarify their meaning, value and purpose, and ultimately motivate and sustain action (Selby & Kagawa, 2018: 14). For O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004 cited in Hathaway, 2017: 301-302), this means moving beyond despair towards an expansive, ecological sense of self and vital awareness of relationships and process. This was certainly the case for the participants in this study who were able to create *experiential distance* between themselves and their uncomfortable emotions (e.g. experiencing the insight of "ahhh, that's what that is"), *let go* and relax into (or *be with*) the unformed spaciousness of *not knowing*, and *let come* the new felt sense of the *whole* situation, enabling transformative shifts to occur. In other words, they were able to connect with deeper more expansive sources of knowing, and develop more open, curious, kind, playful and authentically hopeful approaches to change. This not only improves effectiveness in working with others, but also helps to address

burnout and despair in order to sustain commitment over the long term, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

7.4 Contribution to the Coaching literature

> "Linking the coachee's **personal change** to **system change** helps such activity to have more impact and increases the likelihood of more sustainable long-term change. Learning ways of accelerating depth transformation is an urgent and important calling." (Smith & Hawkins, 2018: 244)

There are calls within the Coaching community (as there are in Transformative learning) for more holistic approaches that engage all domains of learning, including experiential, embodied ways of learning (Longhurst, 2006: 72; Drake, 2011: 139; Hanssmann, 2014: 25; Jackson, 2017: 256; Jackson & Cox, 2018: 219).

Transformational learning is widely acknowledged within the Coaching literature, but little is known about *how* such learning can be fostered and achieved in practice (Moons & Kingdom, 2016: 45). Further, studies into coaching tend to focus on how coaches can provide the "conditions" for transformative shifts to occur (e.g. developing an empathic, compassionate orientation) or on stages of development, rather than on the experiential micro-processes that can support the critical reflection required for learning to be transformative. Moreover, concepts such as embodiment or embodied ways of knowing are largely absent from the Coaching literature (Jackson, 2017: 256), even though they are being discussed and explored within emerging approaches to coaching such as somatic (Strozzi-Heckler, 2014), ontological (Sieler, 2018), presence-based (Silsbee, 2008), experiential-existentialist (Madison, 2012) and third generation (Stelter, 2014) coaching.

This study contributes to the Coaching literature by providing evidence and examples for *how* focusing processes can facilitate embodied, experiential ways of knowing within a coaching context that can support transformative learning and change. Further, as a transformative learning theory and practice underpinned the

coaching framework used in this study, its contribution to the Coaching literature can be considered through the lens of the Transformative learning literature discussed above.

7.4.1 Moving from storytelling to experiential meaning-making

This study demonstrates how individuals can be supported to clarify their values, beliefs, assumptions and purpose in relation to their life, work and broader sociocultural-political contexts, and to deepen their sense of self through experiential meaning or sense-making (discussed in sections 2.5.1 and 6.3.1.1). Like sense-making, experiential meaning-making enables an individual to "sense" or "feel" their way through a situation where analytical thinking may not be sufficient (Weick et al., 2005: 419; Metcalf & Benn, 2013: 372).

For Stelter (2014a: 53-56), experiential meaning-making is an essential aspect of the coaching dialogue. When combined with clarification of values and identity through narrative conversations (i.e. storytelling), individuals experience a deeper, felt understanding of the inherent meaning of their habitual ways of thinking and acting within the broader cultural landscape of their lives (Stelter, 2014a: 55-56). Stelter (2014a: 55) suggests that working with the felt sense is one potential way of enabling experiential meaning-making. However, other than referring to Gendlin's focusing, he does not explain how a coach can facilitate this process in practice.

As part of the transformative coaching framework employed in this study, clarifying one's sense of self (Theme 1) involved the participants in critically reflecting on their values, assumptions and beliefs in relation to their life and work situations, and broader sociocultural-political contexts. In most cases, this represented the preliminary stages or steps in the coaching process, where the participants began to make sense of their situations or concerns, identified their life and career goals, and developed a relationship with me as their coach. However, as mentioned, the key difference in this study has been the experiential meaning-making the participants

experienced through focusing. This enabled the participants to gain a felt understanding of their situations and alternative ways of being within their life and work contexts.

In some instances, the participants were able to explore their bodily felt experience of certain situations without the need for critical self-reflection, yet still experience a felt shift or gain fresh insight. In other instances, the participants were able to reflect on their stories or narratives in an experiential sense, often as part of a reflective conversation directly following a focusing session while still connected to their felt sense but in a less direct way (see section 7.3.1 above). This "zig-zagging" (Gendlin, 1962/1997: 4; Hendricks, 2007a: 283) between the felt sense and reflective thought helped to generate fresh insight and a deep, embodied understanding of themselves within the broader landscape of their life and work. It also helped the participants to learn the difference between reflecting on an event or situation (i.e. storytelling) and moving forwards towards an embodied understanding of a situation (i.e. experiential meaning-making).

7.4.2 Working with emotions in a safe and person-centred way

A key contribution of this study is that it demonstrates how one can work with unhelpful thinking and strong, uncomfortable feelings in a safe and gentle way. Emotions are recognised as playing a fundamental role in coaching, yet very few researchers have examined any aspects of emotion from a coaching perspective, including the motivations and drivers associated with them (E. Cox, 2017: 272). Although efforts have been made by Bachkirova and Cox (2007), J. Rogers (2012), E. Cox (2003), Stelter (2014) and others to examine how emotions can be worked with in coaching as a core coaching skill, a widely-held view within the Coaching community is that working with emotion is primarily the domain of therapists (E. Cox, 2017: 284) (as discussed in section 2.6.2.1). Askew and Carnell (2011: 124), for example, suggest that rather than "managing" emotions, the role of the coach is to help the coachee to use their emotions as a means of working towards transformative

learning. Other than suggesting that the coach can share an "empathic statement or hunch" about the situation with the coachee (Askew & Carnell, 2011: 124), *how* working with emotions can be done in practice is not discussed in detail. This presents a problem for transformative coaching where engaging with uncomfortable or strong emotions is a fundamental (and indeed welcome) part of the transformative learning process.

The focusing processes used in this study were the key difference that enabled working with uncomfortable emotions in a safe and gentle way. By following a participant's bodily felt sense of what was arising regarding a situation or issue, moment by moment, the need for questions aimed to uncover or make sense of past experiences was not required. Of course, the participants were free to tell their story if they wanted to, but by putting the coachee's lived experience as "interaction" or process first (Krycka, 2014: 58), questions attempting to uncover the "content" of a story (such as childhood experiences) were not needed. As discussed in sections 2.6.7 and 3.7.2.2, focusing is inherently a kind and respectful process (Hendricks, 2007a: 272) that provides a safe environment for the coachee to engage with uncomfortable or unhelpful emotions if, and when they are ready. How focusing facilitated the process of working with uncomfortable emotions (such as anger, grief and despair) is discussed in section 7.2 above.

A Focusing-oriented approach to coaching that builds on the findings and learnings of this study is proposed in section 7.6 below.

7.5 Contribution to the Focusing literature

> "Go far enough on the **inner journey**, they all tell us – go past ego toward **true self** – and you end up not lost in narcissism but returning to the world, bearing more gracefully the responsibilities that come with being human." (Palmer, 2000: 73)

Although this study does not propose new developments in Focusing theory, it does contribute to the literature by providing evidence and examples for how focusing

combined with reflective dialogue can be practiced within a coaching context to support practitioners' journeys of personal change. In particular, it supports the view held by Hendricks (2003), Omidian and Lawrence (2008), Krycka (2006, 2012; 2014), Lawrence (2012), Johnson et al. (2018), Walkerden (2005, 2019) and others that embodied processes such as focusing can also be used to support social change. Hendricks (2003) argues that in addition to supporting individuals to live from a deeper place of knowing and improving professional practice, focusing can also act as a "force for peace" (see section 2.5.3.3). When an individual's ability to "pause the ongoing situation and create a space in which a felt sense can form" is supported, we increase their capacity to recognise when they are being emotionally manipulated by external authorities, cultural roles and ideologies, and the internal oppression of self-attacking and shame (Hendricks, 2003: 1, 2009: 151). This provides a similar function to transformative learning, however, the emphasis in focusing is on the embodied, experiential process of personal change from which further actions can then be taken, rather than on critical shifts in perspective.

Krycka (2012) proposes a model of personal and social change which he calls "peacebuilding from the inside". Building on Gendlin's (1962/1997) conceptualization of life as an ongoing process, this model articulates how intrapersonal, interpersonal and social agency can be framed as a single ongoing process of life (Krycka, 2012: 1). This process "begins with the lived body from within and then doubles or opens to further revisions as we re-reference (double back onto) our lived bodily awareness of the changes or direction in which our emergent in-dwelling thinking and behaving takes us" (Krycka, 2012: 4).

Again, this process is reminiscent of the activists' process in Kovan and Dirkx's (2003: 107) study, where their ongoing dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of themselves was embedded in the "everydayness" of their work. The key difference, however, is that Krycka's (2012: 10) model provides a framework for *how* movement that starts from the "inside" (with dialogue between conscious and

unconscious aspects of oneself) and extends insights found in this *inner* dimension to the broader sociocultural-political or *outer* dimension can be supported. This echoes the process of reflecting-in-and-on-*process* (described in section 5.3.1.3), where the participants were able to reflect "in action" on the insights that emerged from their focusing process, that is, reflecting on their reflection-in-action (Schön, 1995: 30), whilst still engaging their felt sense but in a less direct way. It is also similar to generative dialogue (Gunnlaugson, 2007), sense-making (Weick et al., 2005: 419; Metcalf & Benn, 2013: 372) and experiential meaning-making (Stelter, 2014a: 55) approaches (discussed above) to addressing complex social problems where analytical thinking may not be sufficient.

Specifically, Krycka's (2012: 5) model outlines an approach for thinking and doing that is recognised as authentic, responsive and ethical. This model is reflected in the coaching process used in this study (refer to section 3.7.2) and the resulting findings. It involves linking embodied knowledge that is internally generated from an individual's "first person authentic and responsive" spaces as part of the focusing process, with conceptual knowledge that is "third person reflexively ethical" generated from rational discourse (Krycka, 2012: 5). This process helps to overcome "predetermined cognitive boundaries that exist in the embodied or rational forms of thinking and behaving" in order to produce new, innovative ways of engendering social change (Krycka, 2012: 5). In other words, it supports deep, reflective listening and a new logic of knowing that is not limited by dualistic concepts (such as rational/irrational, mind/body) and positivist ways of thinking.

In this way, peacebuilding or social change as a *whole* process can be more comprehensively articulated and demonstrated. For example, in discussing issues of burnout, the participants could identify (starting at the intrapersonal level or inner world) the harsh inner voice or inner critic that led them to feel as though they weren't "doing enough, quickly enough", and how this influenced unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling (such as anxiety, anger, grief and despair) that ultimately led to

burnout. Further, learning how to create experiential distance and let go of the inner critic's demands and relax into the unformed spaciousness of not knowing, enabled them to be open and responsive to new and effective ways of being that were more curious, kind and less critical of self and others. This in turn enabled the participants to experience an authentic, embodied sense of self-care and hope that can better sustain them over the long term.

These insights were then extended through reflective dialogue to the sociocultural level (the outer world) where participants could identify the hegemonic nature of their work practices, relationships and environments, leading to further insights regarding the root causes of their experiences of burnout. The participants confronted hegemony from the intrapersonal through to the social level, enabling social change from the "inside out". Importantly, the personal freedom and possibilities for action that this process generates helps to achieve the emancipatory aims that are core to transformative learning (Hoggan et al., 2017: 57). How this study builds on this model in practice is described below.

7.6 Further implications for practice – working with change practitioners

As mentioned in section 1.5, one of the primary aims of this study was to build on existing research that supports the self-care and effectiveness journeys of those working to create change, and provide theory that is practical and useful for other adult learning practitioners. This helps to address the need for more research that provides guidance for transformative learning practitioners, particularly those in disciplines outside of education (Cranton, 2016: xii). I have developed a model that integrates the findings from this study and existing theoretical concepts and practice traditions as guides for practitioners working in this space. The aim of this model is not to simplify but to provide a practical framework to help make sense of a complex, nebulous and at times enigmatic area of adult learning and change.

7.6.1 Focusing-oriented transformative coaching – a practice model

> "The felt sense is the engine of change, personally and socially." (Krycka et al., 2014: 274)

Focusing-oriented transformative coaching is a model that addresses the need for more research about how embodied, experiential learning can support whole-person learning in practice (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015), including within coaching contexts (Longhurst, 2006; Askew & Carnell, 2011; Drake, 2011; Madison, 2012; Hanssmann, 2014; Stelter, 2014; Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Cox, 2018; Smith & Hawkins, 2018). It is underpinned by Focusing, Transformative learning and Coaching theory and practice. The core elements of this model draw on:

1. the concept of personal and social change as an whole or single ongoing process, building on Krycka's (2012) model;
2. inner work as transformative learning (Dirkx 2000, 2003, 2014), in particular perspective transformation, emancipatory action and self-directed learning that are central to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981, 1985; Cranton, 2016: 16); and
3. transformative approaches to coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Lasley et al., 2011; Sammut, 2014; Smith & Hawkins, 2018), including experiential meaning-making as central to the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2014).

Together these elements provide a holistic, person-centred model that can support inner work (characterised by transformative learning experiences) through focusing and reflective dialogue in order to achieve both personal *and* social transformation (i.e. from the inside out). This is achieved in the following ways:

Firstly, inner work provides a more holistic and integrated view of transformative learning that can accommodate the intellectual, emotional, moral *and* spiritual dimensions of one's being in the world (Dirkx et al., 2006: 125). Focusing is an embodied, experiential process that supports inner work by facilitating the dialogue

between and integration of an individual's inner and outer worlds (Dirkx et al., 2006: 126). It enables transformative learning to become an embodied process, not solely changes in perspective or conceptual understanding.

Secondly, focusing can support experiential meaning-making as an essential element of the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2014a: 55-56). By supporting an individual to move from storytelling to felt sensing (i.e. from lower to higher levels of experiencing) (Hendricks, 2009: 130), an individual can learn to differentiate between a purely conceptual understanding and a deeper, experiential understanding of a situation. When combined with the clarification of values, interests, purpose and other concerns, through reflective dialogue, an individual can gain an embodied understanding of their ways of being and acting within the broader cultural landscape of their lives.

Thirdly, the process of felt sensing –what Kovan and Dirkx (2003: 115) might refer to as "sitting, observing and listening to the *images* that come to populate one's consciousness [italics added]" or "establishing ongoing dialogues with the images that arise from…pieces of our being" – enables transformative shifts in consciousness or ways of being to occur. Focusing brings clarity and structure to this process of observing, listening and tuning into the inner world that Dirkx describes, and provides an avenue for dialogue between one's inner and outer worlds.

Importantly, the critical dimension of transformative learning helps prevent a new insight, pattern or concept that emerges from the inner world from being either mistakenly viewed as a "datum of existence" (Krycka, 2012: 5), or being "reduced to a faith, prejudice, vision or desire" as Mezirow might describe (Dirkx, et al., 2006: 133). At the same time, focusing helps individuals not to lose touch with the *feel* for one's patterns and concepts about living (Krycka, 2012: 5), which can occur if the critical dimension of transformative learning is privileged.

Finally, focusing supports working with habitual ways of thinking (such as "I'm not doing enough, quickly enough") and feeling (such as anger, grief, disillusionment

and despair), and the "disorienting dilemmas" and strong emotions that may arise during the transformative learning process. By being able to "pause" emotion or cognitive speculating, an individual can sense the *whole* of the situation or problem from which the emotion arises, and bring what is implicit into explicit awareness (e.g. through imagery, symbols, words) so that fresh insights and new possibilities can emerge (Hendricks, 2007: 43, 2007a: 279). Emotion is part of the pattern that generates the situation or problem, and so simply feeling an emotion cannot change the pattern from which it arises (Hendricks, 2007: 43) (discussed in section 2.5.3.1). Further, by enabling an individual to create experiential distance between themselves and their thoughts or emotions, for example through the process of clearing a space (Gendlin, 1996a), an individual can discover in an embodied way the difference between 'me' and 'it'. This can support an individual to *let go* and relax into or *be with* the unformed spaciousness of *not knowing*, and let the new felt sense/meaning come. Significantly, this then enables transformative learning experiences to emerge from authentic, open and responsive spaces that can lead to shifts towards new ways of being-in-the world (Freiler, 2008: 39; Fleisch & Whalen, 2012: 106).

7.7 Limitations of the research

Qualifications and limitations of the research include the following:

- As mentioned in section 1.4, the aim of this study was not to measure or prove that transformation had occurred for the participants over the long term. It was neither a longitudinal study nor did it aim to measure transformative learning outcomes. This would have required the use of a typology such as the one proposed by Hoggan (2016), which suggests that learning outcomes (such as changes in thinking, feeling, behaving) need to be assessed by depth (evidence of deep impact), breadth (evidence of impact in multiple contexts), and relative stability (evidence that change is not temporary), in order for them to be justifiably considered transformative (Hoggan, 2016a: 79).

Instead, the aim was to examine experiences of transformative learning with a focus on the micro-level processes leading to experiences that the participants described as or implied to be transformative. Further, due to the participants' existing knowledge and experience in working with environmental and social issues, the aim of the study was not to assess their critical understanding of those issues, but to better understand how embodied learning could support *inner work* as transformative learning. The focus was on exploring how embodied understanding can be supported through more holistic ways of knowing, rather than on deepening conceptual, critical understanding (as called for by the Transformative learning community). This emphasis might attract criticism from some who preference the critical domain of perspective transformation and call for research that can justifiably demonstrate whether or not learning outcomes are indeed transformative. However, as this study has demonstrated, this is not an either-or situation, but one where focusing combined with reflective dialogue supported embodied shifts in perspective *and* ways of being, not simply changes in conceptual understanding alone.

- As discussed in section 3.6.2, there were relatively few respondents to the questionnaire (i.e. 97 useable responses of 105 respondents), and more sophisticated statistical tests (such as p-value or Chi-square validity tests) could not be used. The findings are therefore limited to the group of individuals who responded to the questionnaire. This limits the usefulness of these findings as generalisable claims about a particular population cannot be made.
- As mentioned in section 4.3.4, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the potential causes and effects of burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk 2003: 394) because the vast majority of research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal in nature (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304). Further, the longitudinal studies that have been conducted suggest that there are reciprocal relationships between burnout and its potential causes (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304) as burnout is far more complex than a simple "cause and effect" relationship (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003: 394; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014: 304). For these reasons, the study did not draw any

conclusions or make claims about cause-effect relationships regarding burnout. Instead, discussion of the findings referred to *possible* causes and *potential* relationships. These potential relationships were useful in helping to provide a more contextual understanding of the participants' working environments, the challenges they face, their experiences of burnout and how they might be addressed. This is particularly the case for the coaching participants who had also participated in the questionnaire, and whose burnout results from the questionnaire formed part of the preliminary coaching conversation.

- As mentioned in section 3.5.1.2, one of the aims of the coaching sessions was to explore the social realities of the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in relation to their work. This required me (as researcher) to establish trusting and ongoing relationships with the participants in order to conduct the finer-grained research required. Therefore, a relatively small number of participants (11 practitioners) were selected for coaching and, due to the nature of the coaching process, the number of sessions and the length of the relationship could not be predicted. Only five participants received five or more sessions – Phyllis (12), Alyssa (11), Holly (10), Theresa (7) and Nigel (5) – with an overall average of five sessions. Although the number of participants who participated in coaching was small, the overall number of coaching sessions was relatively large (52 coaching sessions equating to approximately 78 hours). This provided rich descriptions of the participants' experiences, enabling a fine-grained examination of how focusing could support transformative learning within the context of coaching.

7.8 Chapter summary

This chapter detailed the study's contributions to the Burnout, Transformative learning, Coaching and Focusing literatures and especially to the development of theory and practice in these fields. These contributions include:

- providing a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of practitioners' experiences of burnout and how it can be addressed (Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 46-

47; Brown & Pickerill, 2009: 28; Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98; Gorski et al., 2019: 377). In particular, it demonstrates how micro-level strategies can address burnout (such as clarifying and revising one's interests, values and expectations regarding change) in order to sustain commitment and personal sustainability over the long term (L. Cox, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Chen & Gorski, 2015).

- demonstrating how focusing processes, combined with reflective dialogue can support the inner work, self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners through transformative learning. In particular, it has shown how clarifying an individual's sense of self and developing relationships with aspects of oneself that are connected to unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling can enable an individual to let go and relax into an unformed spaciousness of not knowing that allows a new felt meaning emerge. This in turn can lead to shifts in consciousness or ways of being that are less critical, and more kind, open, curious and playful.
- providing evidence and examples for how focusing processes can facilitate embodied, experiential ways of knowing that can support transformative learning within a coaching context (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Drake, 2011; Hanssmann, 2014; Stelter, 2014; Jackson & Cox, 2018; Smith & Hawkins, 2018). In particular, how to move from storytelling to experiential meaning-making (Stelter, 2014a: 55-56) and how to work with strong emotions in a safe and person-centred way (Gendlin, 1996: 297; Hendricks, 2007: 44; Joseph, 2018: 54). The study's contributions to the Coaching literature can also be found through its contributions to the Transformative learning and Focusing literatures.
- providing a practice model – *Focusing-oriented transformative coaching* that can be used by coaches or adult learning practitioners interested in supporting change practitioners. In particular, how embodied, experiential practices might be supported to address issues such as anxiety, burnout and despair, and enable both personal *and* social change as one ongoing process (Hendricks, 2003; O'Sullivan & Taylor, 2004; O'Hara, 2006; Lawrence, 2012; Krycka, 2012; Hathaway, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018; Selby & Kagawa, 2018; Walkerden, 2019).

8. Conclusion

8.1 Overview

This chapter concludes by providing a summary of the key findings, implications for further research and some final thoughts.

8.2 Summary of the findings and implications

Overall, the study provided an analysis of the challenges that practitioners face, with a particular focus on their experiences of burnout and how they might be addressed. It also provided an in-depth and granular exploration of how inner work as transformative learning might be supported by focusing processes and reflective dialogue within a coaching context.

Firstly, the study found that there was a higher prevalence of burnout, or symptoms associated with burnout, than was reported by the participants in the questionnaire (discussed in section 4.3.3 and 7.2.2). This points to the insidious nature of burnout (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993/2017: 28) that can develop slowly without practitioners being aware of it (Rettig, 2006: 19). It was found that when practitioners with deep sensitivities, high ideals and expectations are faced with both the realities of work and the slow process of social change, they can experience strong feelings of inefficacy and cynicism. This manifests as self-doubt, hopelessness, grief and despair, especially regarding society's capacity to address complex issues such as climate change within the timeframes required.

Moreover, although the participants are aware of and benefited from self-care strategies such as maintaining work-life balance, belonging to a community, mindfulness, meditation etc., they were less aware of the reciprocal relationships between their inner and outer worlds, and how embodied learning or experiential processes could help to address issues (such as loss of meaning and burnout) and associated emotions (such as anger, cynicism, grief and despair) in relation to their work.

This study therefore helps to address the need for a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of practitioners' experiences of burnout, and how it might be addressed (Downton & Wehr, 1998: 531; Maslach & Gomes, 2006: 46-47; Brown & Pickerill, 2009: 28; L. Cox, 2009: 56; Maslach & Leiter, 2005: 44, 2016: 98; Gorski et al., 2019: 377). Inner work or micro-level strategies (such as clarifying one's interests, values and expectations regarding change) in order to sustain commitment and personal sustainability over the long term may be of particular value in addressing this need (L. Cox, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Chen & Gorski, 2015).

Secondly, the study demonstrated that focusing processes combined with reflective dialogue can support *inner work* as transformative learning (Dirkx 2000, 2003, 2012, 2014), and the self-care and effectiveness journeys of practitioners. This was evidenced by helping the participants to deepen their embodied and conceptual understanding of themselves (through their inner worlds), and how they interact within their workplace environments and broader sociocultural contexts (through their outer worlds). Specifically, clarifying one's sense of self within social contexts (Tennant, 2005: 108; 2012: 107) and developing relationships with aspects of one's self (such as the inner critic) that are connected to unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling (Langeveld & de Bruijn, 2008: 9) can deepen their understanding of their experiences of burnout.

Thirdly, the study demonstrated how focusing can support *experiential meaning-making* as part of the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2014). When combined with the clarification of self and identity through narrative conversations (storytelling), the participants were able to experience a deeper, embodied understanding of the inherent meaning of their habitual ways of thinking/feeling and acting within the broader landscape of their lives (Stelter, 2014a: 55-56). This process also helped the participants to learn the difference between reflecting on an event or situation and moving on from storytelling towards an experiential, embodied understanding of a situation (i.e. experiential meaning-making). Similar to sense-making approaches to

addressing complex problems (Weick et al., 2005: 419; Metcalf & Benn, 2013: 372), this experiential meaning-making process enabled the participants to *sense* or *feel* their way through their issues or concerns where self-reflection had previously not been sufficient to change their situation or enable them to find a new way forward.

In addition, the study provided evidence and examples of how focusing can be used to work with strong, uncomfortable emotions that are part of the transformative learning process (Dirkx, 2006: 23) within a coaching context in a safe and gentle way (Longhurst, 2006; Askew & Carnell, 2011; Drake, 2011; Madison, 2012; Hanssmann, 2014; Stelter, 2014; Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Cox, 2018; Smith & Hawkins, 2018; Joseph, 2018: 54). For example, by following the participants' bodily felt sense of what arose regarding a situation or issue, that is, putting the participants' lived experience as "interaction first" (Krycka, 2014: 58), as coach I was "freed" from having to understand the content of a situation, and therefore did not need to ask questions aimed to uncover or make sense of an experience or story.

Fourthly, the study shows how the combined application of Focusing and Transformative learning theories and practices, offers a new way of conceiving, articulating and demonstrating the process of both personal *and* social change (Hendricks, 2003; O'Sullivan & Taylor, 2004; O'Hara, 2006; Omidian & Lawrence, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Krycka, 2006, 2012, 2014; Hathaway, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018; Selby & Kagawa, 2018; Walkerden, 2005, 2019). For example, in discussing issues of burnout, the participants could identify at the intrapersonal level the harsh inner voice or inner critic that led them to feel as though they weren't "doing enough, quickly enough", and how this influenced unhelpful ways of thinking/feeling and their relation to burnout. These insights were then extended through reflective dialogue to the sociocultural level, where they could identify the hegemonic nature of workplace practices, relationships and environments, and how this also fed into their experiences of burnout. In other words, the participants confronted hegemony from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal and sociocultural levels, therefore

supporting social change from the inside out (Hendricks, 2003: 1, 2009: 151; Krycka, 2012: 7; Walkerden, 2019: 11).

In addition, the participants learned how to create *experiential distance* (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 262), between themselves and their uncomfortable emotions, *let go* and relax into (or be with) the unformed spaciousness of *not knowing* (Walkerden, 2002: 39; Ikemi, 2017: 10; Burrows, 2015: 133), and *let come* the new felt sense/meaning of the *whole* situation (Weiser Cornell, 1996: 22; Walkerden, 2002: 44; Scharmer, 2009: 199; Gunnlaugson, 2011: 14). This in turn enabled them to be open and responsive to or let new and more effective ways of being emerge that were more curious, kind and less critical of self and others. Significantly, this enabled the participants to experience an *authentic*, embodied sense of self-care and hope that can better sustain their passion and commitment to change over the long term (Macy & Johnstone, 2012: 37; Selby & Kagawa, 2018: 13).

Finally, to help address the need for more research that will provide guidance for adult learning practitioners (Cranton, 2016: xii), a *Focusing-oriented transformative coaching* model based on the findings of this study is provided. This model is underpinned by Focusing, Transformative learning and Coaching theory and practice. In particular, it draws on:

1. the concept of personal and social change as an ongoing process, building on Krycka's (2012) model – *peacebuilding from the inside;*
2. inner work as transformative learning (Dirkx, 2000, 2003, 2012, 2014), in particular perspective transformation, emancipatory action and self-directed learning that are core to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981, 1985; Cranton, 2016: 16); and
3. transformative approaches to coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Lasley et al., 2011; Sammut, 2014; Smith & Hawkins, 2018), including experiential meaning-making as central to the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2014).

Together these elements provide a holistic, person-centred model that can enable inner work (characterised by transformative learning experiences) supported by focusing and reflective dialogue in order to achieve both personal *and* social transformation.

This area of new theory and research lies in the convergence of transformative learning, focusing processes and coaching practice that can more effectively support inner work for those working to create change. The research findings demonstrate that embodied, experiential processes are powerful tools for enabling participants to access more holistic ways of knowing, which are core to enabling transformative learning and change. When combined with a critical and felt understanding of the broader sociocultural, political and economic contexts within which one's experiences are situated, authentically transformative shifts in consciousness and ways of being can occur.

8.3 Implications for further research

There are many potential implications for further research in the Transformative learning, Burnout, Coaching and Focusing fields that arise from this study. The following key recommendations are proposed:

- conducting research into the challenges and experiences of burnout for practitioners working in specific areas (such as climate change) in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the dimensions of burnout, and in particular, inefficacy and cynicism (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 98). This may involve conducting a questionnaire with a sample from which more generalisable claims can be made, a longitudinal study involving qualitative interviews and/or coaching sessions with practitioners, and more in-depth examination of their workplaces and social contexts. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of burnout and self-care across various organisations, communities and movements (Chen & Gorski, 2015: 387), the usefulness of the Maslach Burnout Inventory as a measure and/or predictor of burnout, and for tailoring interventions to address specific challenges (Leiter & Maslach, 2016: 99);

- conducting research into the effectiveness of focusing and/or coaching in supporting practitioners to achieve transformative learning outcomes over the long term. This may involve a longitudinal study, for example using Hoggan's (2016: 72) typology and criteria (discussed in section 7.6), to measure the transformative learning outcomes of participants, including broader impacts in relation to their workplace environments, communities and systems. It may also involve localised research to examine thoughts, emotions and experiences that are specific to practitioners working in specific fields (such as climate change, areas of oppression, and conflict and violence), and how these individuals can be supported in both individual and group learning environments. This would help to deepen our understanding of the transformative learning process, and the role of focusing in supporting change from the personal to the social (Krycka, 2012; 2014);
- conducting research into the transformative learning experiences of practitioners working in other countries and/or practitioners from non-Western backgrounds (Taylor & Cranton, 2012: 572) working in Australia. This would help to deepen our understanding of cultural differences and similarities regarding challenges and ways to address those challenges. For example, how could the Chinese or Daoist concepts such as 'wu wei', which has multiple meanings including 'effortless action', 'non-doing' and 'embodied mind' (Slingerland, 2003: 8; Budriūnaitė, 2014: 5) contribute to our understanding of how to address burnout and support well-being (Mak, Cheung, Mak, & Leung, 2014: 173). Further, how could this more nuanced understanding better support practitioners to be more effective in enabling change in their country of origin; and
- conducting research into the 'coaching interaction' – the point where the consciousness of the coach and the coachee come together, interact and communicate (Fillery-Travis & Cox, 2018: 527). This may involve examining how focusing processes are experienced by both the coach and coachee, and how these interact with other processes such as generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2000, 2003; Gunnlaugson, 2007) and experiential meaning-making (Stelter, 2014a: 55-56).

8.4 Afterword

> "With so much suffering and destructiveness all around us, **optimism** is an insult to those who suffer. But **pessimism** is an insult to life. Life always has its own forward direction, whatever else may also be occurring." (Gendlin, 1996: 23)
>
> "**Hope** locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act." (Solnit, 2016: xii)

As I write these final thoughts, I continue to struggle (similar to the participants) with the very issues and habitual ways of thinking/feeling that have formed the centrepiece of this study. With the endless news cycle of "doom and gloom", mentioned at the start of this thesis, there appears (on the surface) to be little hope for the kinds of change I would like to see in the world. However, by acting as companion for the coaching participants in this study, I have been better able to understand my own journey of change and the potential for change more broadly. By experiencing the participants' transformative experiences moment-by-moment, I was able to fully appreciate the wonderous nature of change. This has given me some comfort, knowing that life is never fixed, change is *always* possible, and hope truly does exist in the spaciousness of uncertainty. Indeed, what have I learnt from my own focusing practice is not just a skill, but a code for living. My job now is to extend the skills, knowledge and experiences found on this research journey to my own journey of personal and social change, where I hope (and pray) it will be of use.

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Appendices

Appendix A – a short experiential exercise

This exercise is adapted from a workshop presented by Greg Madison at the Society for Existential Analysis Annual 2014 Conference, Ann Weiser Cornell's (1996) book – *The Power of Focusing*, and my own focusing practice.

This exercise aims to explore a problem, concern or situation you may currently have, and for you to gain a felt sense of the concern, not just thinking about it. It includes some guiding questions and instructions, which help you to follow your body's sense of the situation. If you have a range of concerns, then for the purposes of this exercise, perhaps choose a low to medium level concern rather than a high level concern. It might be a problem at work, a concern about a family member, something that is troubling or unsettling you but is not overwhelming.

Perhaps read through the exercise first to familiarise yourself and then follow the instructions as you remember them. Find a quiet space without distractions. You might want a pen and paper ready for you to jot down whatever comes during or at the end of the exercise. If you are familiar with meditation, be careful not to become too relaxed and drift off. The aim is to remain aware of your body sensations.

1. If you are sitting in a chair, take a few moments to make yourself comfortable and perhaps close your eyes if that feels comfortable or gaze at a point in front of you.

   Notice your feet on the floor and the shape of your body on the chair. Feeling the support of the chair for your body. Noticing your back and your shoulders and your arms. Noticing your neck and your head and your scalp and your breath. Noticing the breath going in, deep into your lungs. Taking your time to relax and pay attention to your breath…take a few deep breaths.

   Now bring your attention to the middle of your body including your throat, chest, stomach, abdomen…be aware of any tightness, constriction or peacefulness that might be there. Notice especially the space between your chest and your abdomen, and just pausing there for a moment.

2. Now ask yourself, what needs my attention right now?

   There may be some feelings or something that arise as you think about what needs your attention. Take your time to notice what this something is like. It might be unclear, subtle, fuzzy or it might be clear and definite. It may be a subtle feeling like a "jittery" sensation, or a generalised feeling such as tired or a little bit anxious, or it might be an image of something.

3. What feeling comes there as you think about what needs your attention?

If you have a clear problem, concern or something that needs your attention, then focus on the feeling that comes with that. Or if you only have a generalised feeling then focus on that. If you decided on a particular issue but something else is drawing your attention, then follow that.

4. Really welcome the feeling, be curious without expectation, no thinking is required. If some doubts or critical thoughts come to mind, just notice them and give yourself permission to be OK with them. Perhaps put them aside for the moment, knowing you can come back to them at any time. Just let your attention come fully to the feeling.

5. Just staying with the feeling, ask yourself, what does this really feel like to me?

   It might feel tight, scary, warm or loving…Let words, memories, images, sensations arise from this whole feeling of your concern…you don't need to understand what comes to you…it doesn't have to make sense.

6. If you find yourself not liking what comes, perhaps you could just say "hi" to it or put a gentle arm around it or gently put it aside…and when you are ready come back to the feeling of the concern.

7. Really make a space for this feeling to come. See if you can sense what is happening inside of you as you sit with your concern, how would you describe the feeling?

   You might start with a few words about it such as "it's a jittery feeling in my stomach", an anxious feeling about my concern or perhaps nothing. It can be anything.

8. Once you have some kind of description, check it with the feeling, show it back to the body to check if it really resonates. Continue to sense for just the right description for it. You may try multiple words before you find the right ones. For example, "jittery feeling" might become "tight, angry jittery feeling". Take your time here…there is no need to rush.

   Checking with the body helps you to stay grounded in your body and for the process to move forward. Your body will feel that you are listening to it, which helps to develop a trusting relationship with your inner felt senses.

9. Now I'd like to invite you to firstly wonder, what is this feeling *really* about for me?

   It could even lead into a memory or story about yourself in some way… But ask the question directly into the body feel, not your thinking. Again, just be curious, nothing has to come, but something just might emerge from the feeling itself as if in response.

10. Secondly, I'd like to invite you to really feel into your concern…what does the feeling tell you about what is really happening from *its* perspective?

    When you make the inner shift from sensing how the felt sense feels to you, to sensing how *it* feels, you are closer to hearing its message.

    Take your time to *really* feel into this. After some time, you might ask, what does it need from me right now?

    An answer might come straight away or may not come at all. Take your time, until something emerges and ask again what it needs the most. An insight might suddenly emerge or a feeling of "ahhh" that's what that means, a sense of relief might come with this felt shift.

11. The exercise is coming to an end soon. Ask your felt sense, is it OK to stop in a minute or so? Perhaps ask if something more needs to be known.

    Make a mental note of what comes to you…it may be a feeling, image, thought or action for you to do.

    If there are still some lingering feelings or thoughts that need your attention, give yourself permission to put them aside for now, knowing you can come back to them later. Or you could ask it, how would being OK with all of this feel right now? Just wait and let your body show you.

12. Finally, taking your time to find an ending point in your process that feels comfortable for you. When you're ready…take a few deep breaths.

    Take moment to thank yourself and your body. And in your own time, open your eyes and come back into the room.

Feel free to jot down any notes about what came to you.

Take time to enjoy any relaxed, warm or pleasant feelings that you may have experienced from the exercise. Invite them to fill your body as fully as they want.

The felt sense doesn't stop at the end of this exercise. You may continue to notice feelings, thoughts, sensations over the next day or so.

Appendix B – example of a focusing session using Gendlin's six inner steps

The following dialogue – adapted from a session provided by Focusing-oriented psychotherapists, Kevin Krycka and Akira Ikemi (2016: 252-253), represents a clear example of these six steps. It demonstrates how change is accomplished by attending to one's felt sense of a problem or situation, pausing with it, and following the steps of change that emerge. Here the client (i.e. the Focuser) attends to a felt sense of something tightening up. The therapist (i.e. the Listener) empathically guides the focuser toward acknowledging the felt sense in the present moment. Note the physically felt relief the client expresses after the therapist reflects the client's own gesturing for a second time.

Client: I was thinking about what to talk about before getting here…in the car. I got here a bit early, and so I had some time to think.

Therapist: Uh-huh. And something came to mind while you were getting ready to come up?

Client: Well, yes, but I'm kind of not sure about it.

Therapist: Okay, so some hesitation…or "not sure" about it. Let me check first: Do you want to take a minute now to check with yourself to make sure this is the right topic – to see if it's okay on the inside to talk about this now?

Client: Yeah, let's do that.

Therapist: Okay, so take a moment to settle back and get comfortable…feeling yourself sitting in the chair…feeling your body resting against the seat and your arms…feeling how they feel. [*After a pause, noticing the client's shoulders have dropped a little and he has shifted in his chair several times*] So, if you can, find just the right way to sit in the chair so you can be okay.

Client: I don't really feel all that comfortable, but I don't think it's about the chair.

Therapist: So, something is like an uncomfortable feeling…about the chair?

Client: Right.

Therapist: Let's make sure to go carefully here. You are having an uncomfortable feeling now, just noticing…this isn't about the chair.

Client: Right, right…it's more…than…that… [*pausing, then trailing off*]

Therapist: More than uncomfortable?

Client: Right, more like… [*takes a deep breath*] …more like a tight feeling right here. [*pointing to the middle of his chest*]

Therapist: Tight feeling…right here. [*mirror motion*]

Client: Ughhhh, it's not painful like pain or something, but tightening up…

Therapist: The feeling is like tightening up in your middle chest area?

Client: No, IT IS tightening up.

Therapist: Ah, okay, this something right here [*gesturing to the middle of the chest*] is tightening up right now as we're talking about it, right?

Client: Yeah, right. It's okay though, it's a bit better now.

Therapist: Okay, it's eased a bit now too.

This client had something important to talk about, which was at first unclear to him. The therapist, rightly, guessed that they should go slowly as they discovered together what the nature of the discomfort was. Inquiring more about the tightening would have been disruptive to the process at this stage. More than likely, asking questions about the tightening would have led the client to engage in analytical thinking, which would have disrupted the client's direct experiencing of the tightening sensation. Slowly guiding the client to pay attention to subtle bodily feelings, pausing, helping the client find the right words or expression for what he/she is experiencing, and following their shifts in perception as they move forward in small step changes are the basic elements of the Focusing-oriented therapy approach (Krycka & Ikemi, 2016: 252-253).

Appendix C – examples of holistic approaches to coaching

Integral coaching (Hunt, 2009: 6; Snorf & Baye, 2009: 61) – founded on Ken Wilbur's (2008) Integral theory, this approach argues that for change to occur in a way that is embodied and sustained it needs to include all four perspectives on human development and change – as represented by Wilbur's AQAL (all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types) model. This includes working with energies from the 'subtle realm' as part of the 'somatic line' of development (Divine 2009: 47). For example, Snorf and Baye (2009: 62) who have developed *Coaching for climate change* using the Integral coaching framework, believe that "real-world" change can only occur if an individual's way of being (i.e. the embodied perspective of the climate change practitioner) is addressed and worked with. Addressing issues such as burnout in practitioners emphasizes the importance of relating micro to macro within the full scope of climate change initiatives (Snorf & Baye, 2009: 80). However, how to apply micro-level processes that enable embodied learning and change is not discussed in detail.

Somatic coaching (Strozzi-Heckler, 2014: 34 & 46) – involves working with the unity of a person's being, primarily through the body (including somatic awareness, opening and practice), with the intent to transform individuals and society for a new way of being in the world.

Ontological coaching (Sieler, 2018: 95) – involves facilitating changes in a client's 'way of being' in order to improve the quality of their personal and professional lives. An individual's way of being is a dynamic interplay of language (how we speak and listen), emotions/moods and physiology (Sieler, 2003/2007: 8; 2018: 95), which can be observed through paying careful attention to the body. For example, observing breathing, muscle tension, movement, posture etc. (in addition to language and emotions) when reflecting on a problematic issue (Seiler, 2003/2007: 20-21; 2018: 102).

Presence-based coaching (Silsbee, 2008: xii) – involves developing the quality of 'presence' that is self-generating, self-healing and self-educating. Similar to mindfulness, this approach involves developing somatic awareness through body-scan exercises and practices such as yoga.

Mindful compassionate coaching (Hall, 2015: 3) – draws on mindfulness, compassion, and the body's wisdom to help clients turn towards, safely be with and transform difficulties.

Experiential-existential or embodied coaching (Madison, 2012: 118) – drawing on Gendlin's Focusing-oriented theory, this approach involves "prioritizing implicit experience over explicit technique or predictable outcomes". Rather than avoiding uncomfortable feelings, an embodied coach would invite a client to be with those feelings (in a focusing way) in order for new meaning to emerge (Madison, 2012).

Coaching for Emancipation or social change (Shoukry, 2016: 15; 2017: 176) – empowering individuals and communities in contexts of oppression. It involves understanding the implications of social change, in particular conflict, and addressing the emotional barriers to change (Shoukry, 2016: 24).

Third generation coaching (Stelter, 2014a: 28-29 & 57) – involves the co-creation of meaning through collaborative, narrative dialogue involving the inner (including embodied, sensory-aesthetic experiences and the felt sense) and outer lives of the coach and coachee. An example of third generation coaching is Narrative coaching, which helps the coachee to shift their stories in order to generate new options and results (Drake, 2011; 2018). For Stelter (2014a: 52), having sociocultural and social-psychological knowledge and perspectives are important for coaches to understand the kinds of challenges facing individuals and society today. Further, being able to work with a coachee in an experiential or embodied way can support the integration of individual and sociocultural processes through *meaning-making*, which is fundamental to the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2014a: 54).

Appendix D – information and consent forms for practitioners

Form for interviews

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Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7991

Email: greg.walkerden@mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name: Dr Greg Walkerden

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title: Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project:

Supporting the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace

You are invited to participate in a study that aims to explore how coaching might support the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace. The significance of this research is that it will help to address the need for new knowledge and evidence-based research in the field of sustainability learning. A handbook including detailed descriptions of coaching processes and documented case studies will be developed as a resource for educators, coaches and practitioners. It is also hoped that this research will help to stimulate dialogue within the transformative learning and coaching, and sustainability leadership and organisational change communities about how they might support transformative changes in the way we live and work.

The study is being conducted by Jeremy Mah [redacted], as part of my PhD research under the guidance of Dr Greg Walkerden (Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies, Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University, E: greg.walkerden@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 7991) and Associate Professor Kate Lloyd (Senior Academic Developer for PACE, Macquarie University, E: kate.lloyd@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 1965).

The research will involve semi-structured interviews to explore what challenges you may be facing, what kinds of support (such as coaching) you feel have helped you in the past, and what changes have occurred as a result. A focus group session will be conducted after all the interviews to encourage more indepth discussion and collective learning about the specific challenges that practitioners face and how to better support professional practice. If you decide to participate, there will be no additional involvement from you after the interview and focus group (unless you have opted into the coaching process).

The interview and focus group session will be audio recorded which will assist the analysis of research data. These audio recordings will be available only to Jeremy and stored on a password protected PC. During the research analysis phase, complete transcripts of the interview and focus group session including quotes or reflections from you may be shared with Greg Walkerden and Kate Lloyd.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of a thesis, paper, presentation and/or handbook. This will include descriptions of the learning process and outcomes which may be supported by quotations of your experiences. For example, you may describe how an exercise used in a coaching session assisted your process of self-reflection and this may be used as a quote to support the research findings. A final draft of the findings will be provided as an opportunity for you to provide any feedback and to ensure the findings accurately reflect your experience.

The main risk for you, as a participant, is that personal information may be revealed in quotes that you would prefer to remain private. The research process will protect your privacy in the following ways:

- In the majority of cases, quotes that are written up will be de-identified. This means that I will not use your name or any personal details that can identify you, or the details will be changed so they will not identify you.
- If a quote cannot be de-identified, your permission to use this information will be sought prior to its use.

You are under no obligation to participate in the research process as described above, and if at any stage during the program you feel uncomfortable with your participation you are free to withdraw from the process and request your information not to be used in any way without having to give reason and without adverse consequence. If by any chance the interview and/or focus group session evokes any uncomfortable feelings or distress about an experience at work, we will refer you onto the appropriate professional.

When research outputs from this research are published, you will be informed via email of their availability. If your email changes and you wish to be kept informed of any publications, please send me your contact details to be updated.

I, *(participant's name)* have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's signature: _____Date:_____

Witness's name:_____
(Block letters)

Witness's signature: _____ ___Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Form for coaching

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Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7991

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Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name: Dr Greg Walkerden

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title: Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies

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Supporting the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace

You are invited to participate in a study that aims to explore how coaching might support the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace. The significance of this research is that it will help to address the need for new knowledge and evidence-based research in the field of sustainability learning. A handbook including detailed descriptions of creative arts exercises and documented case studies will be developed as a resource for educators, coaches and practitioners. It is also hoped that this research will help to stimulate dialogue within the transformative learning and coaching, and sustainability leadership and organisational change communities about how they might support transformative changes in the way we live and work.

The study is being conducted by Jeremy Mah [redacted], as part of my PhD research under the guidance of Dr Greg Walkerden (Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies, Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University, E: greg.walkerden@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 7991) and Associate Professor Kate Lloyd (Senior Academic Developer for PACE, Macquarie University, E: kate.lloyd@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 1965).

The research will involve observing and describing the learning experiences during the coaching session. If you decide to participate, there will be no additional involvement from you. The only addition will be audio recordings of the meetings which will be used to assist the analysis of research data. These audio recordings will be available only to Jeremy and stored on a password protected PC.

During the research analysis phase, complete transcripts of the coaching session including quotes or reflections from you may be shared and discussed with Greg Walkerden and Kate Lloyd. Information collected from material outputs from the coaching meetings (e.g. mind maps) will be used to support the findings. As such, we request your permission to use this information for the purposes of the research.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of a thesis, paper, presentation and/or handbook. This will include descriptions of the learning process and outcomes which may be supported by quotations of your experience. For example, you may describe how an exercise used during the coaching session assisted your process of self-reflection and this may be used as a quote to support the research findings. A final draft of the findings will be provided as an opportunity for you to provide any feedback and to ensure the findings accurately reflect your experience.

The main risk for you is that personal information may be revealed in quotes that you would prefer to remain private. The research process will protect your privacy in the following ways:

a) In the majority of cases, quotes that are written up will be de-identified. This means that we will not use your name or any personal details that can identify you, or they will be changed so they will not identify you.
b) If a quote cannot be de-identified, your permission to use this information will be sought prior to its use.

You are under no obligation to participate in the research process as described above, and if at any stage you feel uncomfortable with your participation you are free to withdraw from the process by requesting your information not to be used without having to give reason and without adverse consequence. If by any chance the coaching process evokes any uncomfortable feelings or distress, we will refer you onto the appropriate professional. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable after a session with the audio recording of an exercise where you divulged personal information, then you are free to request this recording to be deleted without giving reason and without adverse consequence.

When research outputs from this research are published, you will be informed via email of their availability. If your email changes and you wish to be kept informed of any publications, please send me your contact details to be updated.

I, *(participant's name)* have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's signature: _____Date:_____

Witness's name:_____
(Block letters)

Witness's signature: _____ ___Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix E – information and consent form for coaches and therapists

Department of Geography and Planning
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7991

Email: greg.walkerden@mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name: Dr Greg Walkerden

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title: Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project:

Supporting the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace

You are invited to participate in a study that aims to explore how coaching might support the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace. The significance of this research is that it will help to address the need for new knowledge and evidence-based research in the field of sustainability learning. A handbook including detailed descriptions of coaching processes and documented case studies will be developed as a resource for educators, coaches and practitioners. It is also hoped that this research will help to stimulate dialogue within the transformative learning and coaching, and sustainability leadership and organisational change communities about how they might support transformative changes in the way we live and work.

The study is being conducted by Jeremy Mah [redacted], as part of my PhD research under the guidance of Dr Greg Walkerden (Senior Lecturer in Environmental Studies, Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University, E: greg.walkerden@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 7991) and Associate Professor Kate Lloyd (Senior Academic Developer for PACE, Macquarie University, E: kate.lloyd@mq.edu.au, P: 02 9850 1965).

The research will involve semi-structured interviews to explore what kinds of support (i.e. coaching methods, techniques, processes etc.) you feel have helped your coachees/clients who work in the field of sustainability and what changes have occurred as a result. You will also be invited to nominate and approach one or two of your coachees who you feel would be willing to participate in an interview. A focus group session will be conducted after all the interviews to encourage more indepth discussion and collective learning about the specific challenges that coaches and sustainability practitioners face and how to better support professional practice. If you decide to participate, there will be no additional involvement from you after the interview and focus group.

The interview and focus group session will be audio recorded which will assist the analysis of research data. These audio recordings will be available only to Jeremy and stored on a password protected PC. During the research analysis phase, complete transcripts of the interview and focus group session including quotes or reflections from you may be shared and discussed with Greg Walkerden and Kate Lloyd.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of a thesis, paper, presentation and/or handbook. This will include descriptions of the learning process and outcomes which may be supported by quotations of your experiences. For example, you may describe how an exercise used in a coaching session assisted your process of self-reflection and this may be used as a quote to support the research findings. A final draft of the findings will be provided as an opportunity for you to provide any feedback and to ensure the findings accurately reflect your experience.

The main risk for you, as a guest facilitator/participant, is that personal information may be revealed in quotes or intellectual property shared that you would prefer to remain private. The research process will protect your privacy and intellectual property in the following ways:

- In the majority of cases, quotes that are written up will be de-identified. This means that we will not use your name or any personal details that can identify you, or the details will be changed so they will not identify you.
- If a quote cannot be de-identified, your permission to use this information will be sought prior to its use.
- If we intend to describe a learning process that includes your intellectual property, this will be ascribed to you and permission to use this information will be requested before its use.

You are under no obligation to participate in the research process as described above, and if at any stage during the program you feel uncomfortable with your participation you are free to withdraw from the process and request your information not to be used in any way without having to give reason and without adverse consequence.

When research outputs from this research are published, you will be informed via email of their availability. If your email changes and you wish to be kept informed of any publications, please send me your contact details to be updated.

I, *(participant's name)* have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's signature: _____Date:_____

Witness's name:_____
(Block letters)

Witness's signature: _____ ___Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix F – copy of the questionnaire

Cover page

Before you start, here is some information about the questionnaire.

Aims of the questionnaire

This questionnaire is being conducted as part of a research project at Macquarie University. It aims to better understand how we can use methods such as coaching to support your resilience and effectiveness in the organisations and systems you seek to transform.

What you will be asked to do

This questionnaire asks about the challenges you face, what kinds of support you feel have helped you in the past, and what kinds of support you feel would help you now and in the future.

The questionnaire takes approximately **15** and **20 minutes** to complete. Note: You can save your results and come back to it any time before the completion date.

Your participation is voluntary

By completing the questionnaire, you will be indicating your consent for the researchers to use your data in their research. However, your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer.

An option is provided at the end of the questionnaire for you to participate in an interview and focus group, and/or coaching sessions in which case you will be required to provide your name and contact details so we can follow you up.

Your confidentiality

Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous (unless you provide your contact details). This means that we will not use your name or any personal details that could identify you. All data from this research will be kept on a password secured PC and will only be discussed amongst the research team.

Access to the final results

Upon completion of the project, the researcher will prepare a report based on the research findings. If you have provided your contact details you will be notified when this is available so you can request a copy.

Appendix G – list of profiles on the Burnout to Engagement continuum

Profile types[1]	No.	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Inefficacy
Burnout 2	27	High	High	High
Burnout 1	26	High	High	Moderate
	25	High	High	Low
Disengaged	24	Moderate	High	High
	23	Moderate	High	Moderate
	22	Moderate	High	Low
	21	Low	High	High
	20	Low	High	Moderate
	19	Low	High	Low
Overextended	18	High	Moderate	High
	17	High	Moderate	Moderate
	16	High	Moderate	Low
	15	High	Low	High
	14	High	Low	Moderate
	13	High	Low	Low
Ineffective	12	Moderate	Moderate	High
	11	Low	Moderate	High
	10	Moderate	Low	High
	9	Low	Low	High
	8	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	7	Moderate	Moderate	Low
	6	Moderate	Low	Moderate
	5	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	4	Moderate	Low	Low
	3	Low	Moderate	Low
	2	Low	Low	Moderate
Engaged	1	Low	Low	Low

Table 4.4.2 – list of profile combinations

Appendix H – interview script

Introduction and aims of the research

Hi, how are you doing? Thanks again for agreeing to be interviewed. As you might recall, when I previously called to introduce myself and explain the research, the purpose of this interview is to understand what changes in the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners have occurred as a result of coaching and what specific processes you use helped to support these changes.

The significance of this research is that it will help to address the need for new knowledge and evidence-based research in the field of transformative and sustainability learning. A handbook including detailed descriptions of coaching processes and documented case studies will be developed as a resource for educators, coaches and practitioners. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Sustainability background

1. Can you please tell me a bit about your work and what your role involves?
    a. What aspect of sustainability are you most passionate about and why?
    b. What initially attracted you to sustainability?
    c. How long have you been working in this space?
    d. Previous to working in sustainability, what was your professional experience?
    e. Did you have to undertake any additional professional development? How did it help you?
    f. When you talk to people who aren't familiar with what you do, how do you describe it to them?
    g. Do you see yourself as contributing to a broader social movement?
    h. Do you belong to any community groups or professional associations?
    i. Have you found them to be supportive? If so how?

Workplace environment

2. I'm curious to learn more about your working environment and some of the challenges you face at work.
    a. How would you describe your colleagues' attitudes to the work that you do and sustainability in general?

b. Can you think about an example of a change initiative you tried to implement? What happened?

c. What kinds of support do you think would have been helpful then?

d. What kinds of support have you actually used in the past? How did they help?

History with coaching

3. What do you think coaching involves and have you participated in coaching before? For example, executive coaching…

   a. What was the nature of that coaching?

      Prompt: How would you describe the techniques/processes your coach employed?

   b. How many coaching sessions did you have and over what period of time?

   c. What helped / what didn't help?

What were the learning and change outcomes from the coaching process?

4. What has changed for you as a result of your coaching experience?

   a. Would you describe any of those changes or experiences as being transformative? If so, how do you feel the change was transformative in particular?

   Prompts:

   - Can you tell me more about that, why that's important to you?

   b. What can you tell me about when the changes occurred/over what period did the changes occur?

   - Short-term (during and immediately)
   - Medium-term (in the next few months)
   - Longer-term (6 months +)

5. **How did the coaching help?**

   a. Can you remember any methods, exercises or aspects of the coaching process you found were particularly helpful?

   Prompt:

   - What did you like most about the coaching?

- What didn't you like?
- Can you tell me more about that, how do you think it helped you?

Supporting effective

b. How do you feel the coaching process has helped you to be more effective at work?

Supporting resilience

c. How do you feel the coaching process has helped with your personal sustainability?
d. Finally, are there things you feel would have helped for the coaching to support you better?

Attribution to the coaching

6. In terms of the changes you described, do you think any of them would have happened anyway (i.e. if you were not involved in the coaching process?) If so, which ones?

Prompts:

- Where do you think you would be now if you hadn't been involved in the coaching process?

7. What other factors, beyond the coaching process, do you think could have influenced the changes you've experienced?
8. Are there other organisations, groups or programs that you are involved in. What do they provide for you?

Other beneficiaries and/or outcomes from the coaching

9. Do you think there is anyone aside from yourself who was affected by your involvement in the coaching process as a result of your involvement in the coaching process? If so, what changes did each of these different people or groups experience?

Prompts: family, employers, friends, business partners, clients, the environment, the broader community.

In summary

10. I'd like you to imagine you have been asked to give a speech about your coach and your coaching experience to your coach's community.

a. How do you describe the ways that the coaching experience impacted on your life and/or work?

b. How do you describe the essence of what occurred within yourself?

Thank you, referral and next steps

11. Thank you so much for your time and for contributing to the research.
    a. Have you found this to be a useful experience?

    b. [if yes] Do you know of anyone else who is a sustainability practitioner who might be interested in participating in this study?

    c. Would you be willing to contact him/her and/or email my contact information if you think he/she might be interested?

Thanks again. You have a been a great help and I'll send you a summary of the research findings at the end of the study.

Appendix I – Gendlin's six steps of focusing

1. Clearing a space

What I will ask you to do will be silent, just to yourself. Take a moment just to relax . . . All right – now, inside you, I would like you to pay attention inwardly, in your body, perhaps in your stomach or chest. Now see what comes *there* when you ask, "How is my life going? What is the main thing for me right now?" Sense within your body. Let the answers come slowly from this sensing. When some concern comes, DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back, say "Yes, that's there. I can feel that, there." Let there be a little space between you and that. Then ask what else you feel. Wait again, and sense. Usually there are several things.

2. Felt Sense

From among what came, select one personal problem to focus on. DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back from it. Of course, there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about – too many to think of each one alone. But you can *feel* all of these things together. Pay attention there where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. Let yourself feel the unclear sense of *all of that.*

3. Handle

What is the quality of this unclear felt sense? Let a word, a phrase, or an image come up from the felt sense itself. It might be a quality-word, like *tight, sticky, scary, stuck, heavy, jumpy*, or a phrase, or an image. Stay with the quality of the felt sense till something fits it just right.

4. Resonating

Go back and forth between the felt sense and the word (phrase, or image). Check how they resonate with each other. See if there is a little bodily signal that lets you know there is a fit. To do it, you have to have the felt sense there again, as well as the word. Let the felt sense change, if it does, and also the word or picture, until they feel just right in capturing the quality of the felt sense.

5. Asking

Now ask: what is it, about this whole problem, that makes this quality (which you have just named or pictured)? Make sure the quality is sensed again, freshly, vividly (not just remembered from before). When it is here again, tap it, touch it, be with it, asking, "What makes the whole problem so ___?" Or you ask, "What is in *this* sense?" If you get a quick answer without a shift in the felt sense, just let that kind of answer go by. Return your attention to your body and freshly find the felt sense again. Then ask it again.

Be with the felt sense till something comes along with a shift, a slight "give" or release.

6. Receiving

Receive whatever comes with a shift in a friendly way. Stay with it a while, even if it is only a slight release. Whatever comes, this is only one shift; there will be others. You will probably continue after a little while, but stay here for a few moments (Gendlin, 1996a).

Appendix J – examples of the focusing EXP levels

Low EXP level

One day he [the doctor] called me and said, "I'm afraid she won't last long. It's spreading like wildfire". They couldn't get all of it. It was too late. And so that's about the extent of it, you know. She went into a coma, she lasted for about three or four months. Altogether from the time she became ill, the entire time was about two years. After he performed the operation he said, "I'm surprised she lasted that long". We didn't know it had gone all the way back. There was no sign of it, nothing. But it was there all the time. Can you imagine that.

Middle EXP level

A and I…spent about two hours talking over the luncheon about his problem. And I've never known him, until that time to be so low and despondent about his future in science. He said, "You won't believe this Dad, until I tell you, that it has been over six months since I had a test-tube in my hand"… and after listening *I was very much disturbed* by what he said because this was a very serious conversation, and it dealt with what I felt had to do with a decision he had to make regarding his work and his marriage, and they were both at stake…I said, "But A, don't you think if J were made to realize how desperate the situation is that she would elect to allow you to do more of your science?"…And there was silence for a moment or two and he shook his head, and said, "She will never change". Now when he said that I felt he had already made a decision…to divorce rather than to continue…*I felt absolutely consternated* by that because I knew they really loved each other, I knew they could have a harmonious relationship for many years to come if only she could understand.

High EXP level

It's almost like…it kind of feels like…sitting here looking through a photo album. And, like each picture of me in there is one of my achievements. And, I think [inaudible] because I wasn't achieving for me. I was always achieving for…someone else so they'd think I was good enough. It's like *it feels right to me to say…that…I don't know quite how to say it…It's like the feeling is there, but l can't quite put words on it. It feels right somehow to say it's like* I've chosen this man as my challenge… knowing that I'd be defeated. That this person wouldn't respond to me in the same way. So that I could kind of buy right back into the photo album being flipped through. I didn't have what it took (Therapist: Uhhum) to get what I wanted.

Reading these excerpts side by side one can see the differences in the manner of relating to felt experiencing. I will point out the linguistic and somatic markers of the EXP process for each level (Hendricks, 2009: 132-133).

Appendix K – ethics approval

Ethics approval 21 Sept 2016

Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>

Reply all

Wed 21/09, 10:34 AM

Greg Walkerden;

Arts Research Office;

Kate Lloyd;

Mr Jeremy Mah [redacted]

Ethics Application Ref: (5201600610) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Walkerden,

Re: ('Supporting the resilience and effectiveness of sustainability practitioners in the workplace')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval of the above application has been granted, effective (21/09/2016). This email constitutes ethical approval only.

If you intend to conduct research out of Australia you may require extra insurance and/or local ethics approval. Please contact Maggie Feng, Tax and Insurance Officer from OFS Business Services, on x1683 to advise further.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Greg Walkerden
Dr Kate Lloyd
Mr Jeremy Mah

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research

(2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 21st September 2017
Progress Report 2 Due: 21st September 2018
Progress Report 3 Due: 21st September 2019
Progress Report 4 Due: 21st September 2020
Final Report Due: 21st September 2021

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website: http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/resources

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not

be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz
Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee
Level 7, W6A Building
Macquarie University
Balaclava Rd
NSW 2109 Australia
Mianna.Lotz@mq.edu.au

Appendix L – potential risks to the participants and how they were negated

These risks were that the participants:

a) may have felt uncomfortable answering certain questions in the questionnaire, or uncomfortable feelings about an experience at work may have emerged during interviews and coaching sessions.

b) may have feel uncomfortable about audio recordings of the interviews and coaching sessions or knowing that their information may be used for research purposes.

c) may not have felt completely secure that their personal information would be effectively de-identified and that their information could unexpectedly become public.

These risks were mitigated by:

- explaining the benefits of the research and making it clear that participation in the research process was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the research process by requesting any information not to be used and/or audio recordings to be deleted (in the case of the coaching sessions only) at any time without having to give reason and without adverse consequence.
- providing Information and Consent forms outlining the aims and benefits of the research, the risks and how they would be negated, and how the participants could opt into and out of the research process.
- making it clear that if by chance the interview or coaching process evoked any uncomfortable feelings or distress, I would refer them onto the appropriate professional counselling service.

The participants were informed that their privacy will be protected in the following ways:

- That information that could identify participants would only be shared during conversations about the research with my supervisors, but this would not include audio recordings. Note: Greg and I concluded that this level of information

sharing is the best way to protect the integrity of the process for participants and that any impacts on the research analysis process was small.

- That for the most part quotes that are written up would be de-identified. This means that the participants' names or any personal details that could identify them would not be used, or personal details would be changed so they could not be identified (e.g. changing the name, sex etc.)
- If a quote could not be de-identified, their permission to use this information will be sought prior to publication in any papers, articles or the proposed handbook.
- That only I would have access to the questionnaire data and audio recordings, which would be stored on a password secure PC.

Additional risks in relation to the questionnaire were negated by:

- making it clear in the questionnaire that providing their name was optional. However, where they express interest in further participation and need to provide their name and contact details, the same measures would be followed as described above.
- making it clear they were free not to complete the questionnaire and/or to not answer all of the questions if they were not comfortable doing so.

Additional risks in relation to the interviews with coaches were negated by:

- highlighting that any intellectual property would be ascribed to the owner (i.e. the coach) and that permission to use this information/intellectual property would be requested before any publication.

Appendix M – British Focusing Association code of ethics

Purpose: The teaching of Focusing involves the transfer of certain skills from teacher to student that foster a healthy and creative relationship with the inner world of feeling, psyche and spirit. The facilitation of the Focusing process as undertaken by Focusing practitioners involves the sensitive support of a client in the exploration of their inner experiencing.

Relationship to counselling & therapy: Although teaching Focusing is primarily an educational activity and facilitating the Focusing process aims first and foremost to promote a relationship between the client/student and their own experience, therapeutic moments may arise in both contexts. However, I will only offer Focusing in a therapeutic or counselling framework if I am a qualified counsellor or therapist.

Attitude to students: I respect the free will, freedom of choice and dignity of all my Focusing clients and students, irrespective of their human differences from myself and amongst each other.

Boundaries: I will behave in a professional, responsible and compassionate manner, and will not abuse the power entrusted in me by Focusing clients or students for my own financial, emotional or sexual benefit. I am aware of the need for appropriate boundaries between teaching relationships, counselling or therapy relationships, and social relationships.

Self-disclosure: I will openly disclose details of my qualifications, training and experience on request.

Contracts: I will be clear about our agreement over the number and duration of sessions, my fees, and provision for cancellation of sessions.

Confidentiality: I will respect the confidential nature of all personal information I gather in the course of my work.

Consultative support: I will seek consultative support for my work from my colleagues as and when necessary, and be responsible for my continuing professional development. Also, my role as a Focusing teacher is very much based on my continuing to practise Focusing for myself.

Accountability: It is my responsibility to monitor my teaching and facilitation work and to be able to account to students, clients and colleagues for what I do and why I do it.

Competence: I am responsible for monitoring the limits of my competence, effectiveness and resources in teaching Focusing satisfactorily.

Feedback: I am open to feedback about my teaching/facilitation from students, clients and colleagues.

Disputes: In the event of a dispute arising on any of the above matters in the course of my work as a Focusing professional, I will discuss the matter openly with the person(s) concerned, and where necessary with other BFA members. If necessary, either party may seek BFA mediation.

BFA support: I am a member of BFA which supports me in my work. If I have a concern about any ethical issue, I will seek the views of my colleagues in BFA, and discuss it with them.

http://www.focusing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/BFAethics.pdf

Appendix N – rating of issues most interested in

Issues relating to sustainability most interested in	Percent (%)[1]	Percent (%)[2]	Count*
Climate change	8	69	63
Conservation/biodiversity/ecology	6	54	49
Waste management	5	47	43
Sustainable food production	5	44	40
Sustainability learning/education	5	44	40
Renewable energy	5	43	39
Social cohesion/inclusion/participation	5	43	39
Economic rights (poverty eradication, social equity)	5	42	38
Water management	4	41	37
Energy efficiency	4	41	37
Health/well being	4	41	37
Sustainability in general	4	41	37
Built environment	4	40	36
Human/cultural rights (equality, human dignity, non-discrimination)	4	40	36
Responsible/ethical corporate leadership and management	4	34	31
Corporate social responsibility	4	33	30
Sustainable/collaborative consumption	4	33	30
Personal sustainability	4	33	30
Sustainable manufacturing/production	3	29	26
Transport	3	27	25
Democracy/civic participation	3	27	25
Responsible/ethical investment	3	26	24
Social capital market development/social investment	2	15	14
Animal welfare	2	14	13
Other, please specify	1	11	10
Total	100		829

[1]percentage of choices out of total choices

[2]percentage of choices out of 91 respondents

*participants could choose more than one

Appendix O – summary of demographics for the practitioners from the interviews

Name*	Gender	Age	Sector	Role level	Yrs in role	Yrs in career
Lily	F	18-24	NFP	Spec/Prof	<1	<1
Jess	F	25-34	Corporate	Spec/Prof	1-2	3-5
Jack	M	25-34	NFP	Spec/Prof	1-2	1-2
Lucy	F	25-34	Corporate	Spec/Prof	1-2	≥10
Ariana	F	25-34	NFP	Manager	3-5	6-9
Mary	F	25-34	Acad./Tertiary	Spec/Prof	3-5	3-5
Helen	F	25-34	Sole trader	Owner/Mgr	3-5	3-5
Anna	F	25-34	Corporate	Spec/Prof	<1	1-2
Bella	F	25-34	Government	Spec/Prof	1-2	3-5
Susan	F	35-44	Government	Div. Head	1-2	≥10
Sally	F	35-44	Government	Manager	3-5	≥10
Brad	M	35-44	Corporate	Div. Head	6-9	≥10
Nicole	F	35-44	Corporate	Manager	1-2	≥10
Travis	M	35-44	Social ent.	Owner/Mgr	6-9	≥10
Mark	M	35-44	Social ent.	Owner/Mgr	3-5	6-9
Maddie	F	35-44	Govt. consult.	Owner/Mgr	1-2	≥10
Liam	M	35-44	Corporate	Manager	3-5	≥10
Philippa	F	35-44	Social ent./NFP	Spec/Prof	<1	≥10
Amanda	F	35-44	Government	Manager	3-5	3-5
Laurel	F	35-44	Social ent.	Manager	1-2	≥10
Natalie	F	35-44	Government	Spec/Prof	1-2	≥10
Darren	M	45-54	Government	Manager	3-5	≥10
Stephen	M	45-54	Acad./Tertiary	Spec/Prof	3-5	≥10
Dom	M	45-54	Acad./Tertiary	Manager	6-9	≥10
Deidre	F	45-54	Corporate	Spec/Prof	1-2	≥10
Cam	M	45-54	Acad./Tertiary	Div. Head	3-5	≥10
Thomas	M	45-54	Sole trader	Spec/Prof	1-2	≥10
Sam	M	45-54	Acad./Tertiary	Spec/Prof	3-5	≥10
Nathan	M	55-64	Government	Exec.	1-2	≥10
Daniel	M	55-64	Government	Spec/Prof	≥10	≥10

*The names provided are pseudonyms.

Appendix P – summary of demographics for the coaches and therapists

Name*	Gender	Age	Specialty	Years in practice
Karina	F	35-44	Holistic health coach	4
Max	M	35-44	Adaptive/Sustainability leadership coach	5
Martin	M	35-44	Ecotherapist, psychotherapist, coach	8
Sandra	F	35-44	Executive/Sustainability leadership coach	7
Julie	F	45-54	Transpersonal coach	6
Debbie	F	45-54	Social/Adaptive leadership coach	8
Travis	M	45-54	Conscious leadership coach	6
Kim	F	45-54	Executive/Sustainability leadership coach	6
Roger	M	45-54	Social/Adaptive leadership coach	18
Natalia	F	45-54	Transpersonal coach, counsellor	21
Joy	F	55-64	Career transition/Transpersonal coach	7
Stefan	M	55-64	Executive/career coach, counsellor	12
Sarah	F	55-64	Ecopsychologist, Jungian psychotherapist	21

*The names provided are pseudonyms.

Appendix Q – profile combination and type sorted by profile type

Profile combination	Profile type	No.	Total average mean
High High High	Burnout 1	27	4.9
High High High	Burnout 1	27	4.6
High High High	Burnout 1	27	4.6
High High High	Burnout 1	27	4.2
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.9
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.8
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.5
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.4
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.1
High High High	Burnout 1	27	3.1
High High Moderate	Burnout 2	26	3.7
High High Moderate	Burnout 2	26	3.6
High High Moderate	Burnout 2	26	3.3
High High Moderate	Burnout 2	26	3.2
High High Moderate	Burnout 2	26	2.5
High High Low	Burnout 2	25	2.9
High High Low	Burnout 2	25	2.4
Moderate High High	Disengaged	24	3.0
Moderate High Moderate	Disengaged	23	3.1
Moderate High Moderate	Disengaged	23	2.6
Moderate High Moderate	Disengaged	23	2.3
Moderate High Low	Disengaged	22	2.7
Moderate High Low	Disengaged	22	2.5
Moderate High Low	Disengaged	22	2.4
Low High High	Disengaged	21	2.9
Low High Moderate	Disengaged	20	2.1
Low High Moderate	Disengaged	20	2.0
Low High Moderate	Disengaged	20	2.0
Low High Moderate	Disengaged	20	1.9
High Moderate High	Overextended	18	2.9
High Moderate High	Overextended	18	2.6
High Moderate Moderate	Overextended	17	2.6
High Moderate Moderate	Overextended	17	2.2
High Low Moderate	Overextended	14	1.8
High Low Low		13	2.3
High Low Low		13	1.4
High Low Low		13	1.2
Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.2

Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.2
Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.2
Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.1
Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.1
Moderate Moderate High	Ineffective	12	2.0
Low Moderate High	Ineffective	11	2.4
Low Moderate High	Ineffective	11	2.1
Low Moderate High	Ineffective	11	1.4
Moderate Low High	Ineffective	10	1.8
Moderate Low High	Ineffective	10	1.6
Low Low High	Ineffective	9	2.1
Low Low High	Ineffective	9	0.9
Moderate Moderate Moderate		8	1.9
Moderate Moderate Moderate		8	1.8
Moderate Moderate Moderate		8	1.5
Moderate Moderate Moderate		8	1.5
Moderate Moderate Low		7	1.8
Moderate Moderate Low		7	1.7
Moderate Moderate Low		7	1.6
Moderate Moderate Low		7	1.4
Moderate Moderate Low		7	1.4
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.6
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.6
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.4
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.3
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.2
Moderate Low Moderate		6	1.1
Low Moderate Moderate		5	1.3
Low Moderate Moderate		5	1.1
Moderate Low Low		4	1.2
Moderate Low Low		4	1.0
Low Moderate Low		3	1.1
Low Moderate Low		3	1.1
Low Moderate Low		3	0.7
Low Low Moderate		2	1.1
Low Low Moderate		2	1.0
Low Low Moderate		2	0.9
Low Low Moderate		2	0.9
Low Low Moderate		2	0.9
Low Low Moderate		2	0.6
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.8

Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.7
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.5
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.4
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.4
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.4
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.2
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.1
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.1
Low Low Low	Engaged	1	0.0

- Originally, Leiter and Maslach (2016: 94), developed categories for 'Severe' and 'Moderate' burnout, however these categorisations didn't seem to produce a theoretically useful nor practical profile. So only a single Burnout profile was retained. However, for the purposes of this study, the subscale combinations between severe burnout (labelled *Burnout 1*) and Disengaged (i.e. no.25 and 26 highlighted in orange) have been labelled *Burnout* 2. This not only helps to represent these more moderate forms of burnout but captures the combinations between Burnout 1 and Disengaged that would otherwise not be included.
- The combination for no.22 does not fit within any of the profiles. However, because it contains both moderate exhaustion and high cynicism it has been included as part of the Disengaged profile. The combinations for no.19 and 13 (left uncoloured) also don't fit within any of the profiles but have not been incorporated into a profile as they sit in-between profiles. Further, no other profiles exist that attempt to describe individuals on the continuum from Ineffective to Engaged (i.e. the combinations for no.2 to 8 in the table that are uncoloured have no profile type). They also represent combinations on the engagement side of the continuum, which is not the primary focus of this study (i.e. the focus of this study is to support those who may be suffering from or transitioning towards burnout). As such, these intermediate combinations do not form part of this analysis.
- To date, the only intermediate profiles that have been researched by Leiter and Maslach (2016: 99) are the Disengaged, Overextended and Ineffective profiles. However, the authors acknowledge there are more intermediate states that require further research.

Appendix R – summary of demographics for the Burnout 1, Burnout 2 and Engaged groups

Name*	Gender	Age	Education	Sector	Role lvl	Yrs in role	Yrs in career
Burnout 2							
Paul	M	25-34	Bach. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	1-2	None
Cath	F	45-54	Postgrad. deg.	Govt/consul.	Spec/Prof	3-5	≥10
Tom	M	55-64	Postgrad. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	≥10	≥10
Rachel	F	25-34	Postgrad. deg.	Corp.	Spec/Prof	<1	1-2
David	M	45-54	Grad. dip/cert.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	6-9	≥10
John	M	35-44	Postgrad. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	1-2	≥10
Mario	M	45-54	Bach. deg.	Corp.	Spec/Prof	1-2	3-5
Ben	M	25-34	Bach. deg.	NFP	Spec/Prof	1-2	1-2
Monica	F	25-34	Postgrad. deg.	Acad.	Manager	1-2	1-2
Mary	F	25-34	Bach. deg.	Corp.	Spec/Prof	3-5	1-2
Burnout 1							
Adrienne	F	25-34	Postgrad. deg.	Cont.	Spec/Prof	1-2	None
Sonya	F	35-44	Postgrad. deg.	NFP	Manager	3-5	≥10
Kate	F	45-54	Postgrad. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	3-5	6-9
Pip	F	35-44	Postgrad. deg.	NFP	Manager	<1	<1
Audrey	F	18-24	Bach. deg.	Acad.	Manager	3-5	1-2
Gal	F	35-44	Bach. deg.	NFP	NA	<1	≥10
Emma	F	35-44	Postgrad. deg.	Acad.	Manager	3-5	3-5
Engaged							
Grace	F	35-44	Bach. deg.	Social ent.	Div. head	1-2	≥10
Charlotte	F	55-64	Postgrad. deg.	Sole trader	NA	<1	6-9
Amelie	F	35-44	Postgrad. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	3-5	≥10
Darcy	F	35-44	Bach. deg.	Corp.	Spec/Prof	3-5	≥10
Zac	M	55-64	Postgrad. deg.	Govt. cont.	Exec.	6-9	≥10
Sophie	F	35-44	Bach. deg.	Corp.	Manager	1-2	≥10
Ella	F	35-44	Bach. deg.	Govt.	Spec/Prof	<1	≥10
Liz	F	25-34	Bach. deg.	Corp.	Spec/Prof	1-2	3-5
Luis	M	45-54	Postgrad. deg.	NFP	Manager	6-9	6-9
Pete	M	55-64	Postgrad. deg.	Govt/consul.	Spec/Prof	≥10	≥10

*The names provided are pseudonyms.

Appendix S – levels of experiencing within coaching sessions

Who	Coaching session	Stage	EXP levels	Summary
Alyssa	Session #4	1. Reflecting on previous session	Low	• **Excellent example #2** (including me doing a good job) of clearing a space, focusing and high level experiencing about that part of her that makes her feel she is not doing enough, seeks approval and wants to be in control, also wants to protect her • Interesting exploration of the relationship between the **inner critic** and the ego – both have aspects of being **protective** • Evidence of shift in being able to have a kinder, more gentle approach to the inner critic
		2. Clearing a space & focusing	High	
		3. Reflecting on process	Medium	
	Session #5	1. Clearing a space & focusing	Medium to High	• Alyssa has relied strongly on her rational thinking abilities, so I start the session with a kind of clearing a space where I ask her to name all the things that are there in the space needing to be named. • We did a focusing session but it was disrupted a couple of times due to noise but there were some good insights that emerged, in particular, the idea that it's **not knowing** what the discomfort is that is the problem…not actually being uncomfortable as this can lead to growth, and also not being prepared for the unknown.
		2. Reflecting on process	Medium	
	Session #7	*1. Blue Sky Focusing*	High	• This process helped Alyssa to enter into a high-level experience that she described afterwards as being "**spiritual**" and "profound". • The significance of this process for Alyssa is that she had a felt sense of being cared for and that everything was going to be OK and this felt more than words can say. This was something new that she could carry forward with her into her work and all areas of her life, which may not have emerged from having a reflective conversation about her desire not to care so much about what people think. Interestingly, these **felt realisations** emerged as we continued to reflect on the process providing Alyssa with opportunities to pause and check in with the felt sense that was still present. If we had not continued after the process with this conversation these realisations may not have emerged on their own.
		2. Reflecting on process	Medium	

Holly	Session #3	1. Reflecting on previous session	Low to Medium	• **Excellent example #2** of focusing and reflecting on the process which helped to clarify some insights, realising what's new • Focusing session explored **inner child** – doesn't have to do any of that stuff, no expectations, qualities: o Trusting in instincts o Accepting whatever I need o Energy to give, playfulness o Being independent – being part of the world, ecosystem – curiosity, sense of listening, slower pace, grounded, trust in the world • Focusing allows her to access a **kinder part** of herself – this more open curious kinder aspect of her that is key to engaging with the world
		2. Focusing	High	
		3. Reflecting on process	Medium	
		4. Reflecting on process – clarifying insights	Medium	
	Session #10	1. Reflecting on process	Low to Medium	• **Excellent example #3** of reflecting on the focusing process and how it has enabled change • **Being OK with the unknown** and being in the unknown regarding work & not having a track record of making good decisions about career. However, getting better at sitting in the space of the unknown. • Pausing and listening, acting as a mirror was really powerful - "It's the difference between talking from your memories or your current understanding of what's happening in your life, and actually stopping to listen to what's going on right now" • Focusing enables you to **notice** and **observe** what is emerging
		2. Reflecting on process	Low to Medium	
		3. Reflecting on process	Medium	
Phyllis	Session #1	1. Storytelling – describing the scene	Low to Medium	• How to shift the **narrative** & links to social justice, **activism** & **burnout** • Linking current situation as being a "social justice issue", "I'm totally a **broken-hearted idealist**", **self-care** as a "rebellious act"
		2. Storytelling to reflecting	Low to Medium	

		3. Reflecting & felt sensing (dipping into)	Medium to High	• Difference to burnout? "I'm aware that I'm not fried at the moment. I'm not adrenally fatigued which is often what comes with these spaces for me. I'm not in that space. I'm in disillusionment, and wanting to ... **Disillusionment** and **disequilibrium**" • Trying to let go and not being a "**martyr**" to the cause • Journey of **self-knowing** – realisation…"My default, and particularly recently, because the pain and the disillusionment, I don't want to fucking feel. I don't want to feel, so I get overactive up here, and it's not okay to feel. The big shift this morning was like, "Start feeling." You know? The only way through this is to feel your way through this." • "Maybe my new mantra becomes self-care for self in the world"
		4. Introducing focusing	Low	
		5. Critical reflection to felt sensing	Low to High	
	Session #4	6. Reflecting on process	Low to Medium	Phyllis is struggling with: • being an **activist**, trying to "push systems" and being "bullied out of [her] workplace because [she is] too challenging" • her desire for clarity about her **direction** in life and work, and feeling like herself or inner work is like "wading through treacle" despite having developed a personal mission statement – "Supporting functional systems health", which is about supporting human (inc. personal), eco and organisational systems • a lack of **confidence** (e.g. around public speaking at a forum) and how this relates to tensions between "seizing opportunities", "expectations on myself" and self-protection…"it's really safe not to put my head up" • a feeling of being **overwhelmed** by the "barriers and constraints" she's been having to deal with in her coop work • the **uncertainty** of it all and how "being on the edge is inherently discomforting" • "crafting that personal narrative and then going out and having the conviction to say, "This is who I am, this is what I stand for. I know stuff about stuff and let's do."" Instead of having to "remodel myself to fit into a box" • "be[ing] **gentle** with myself" in doing this **inner work** and trying to figure things out.
		7. Critical reflection	Medium	
		8. Reflecting - realisation	Medium to High	
		9. Critical discourse – link to the broader context	Low	
	Session #6	1. Reflecting – story telling	Low to Medium	• "I feel like this has just been a **deep realignment**, which feels inherently amazing, but I'm still wrestling with this…or narratives about what to do, what drives me, what do I

		2. Reflecting – story telling	Medium	want to invest my energy in? I think that my total ... this thing about **coming back to self**, and persistently holding such big picture despondency by such macro picture shit that I can't actually do anything about, is to come back to self and what I construct in my life around me in terms of, is **meaning making** ... in spite of the fact that can't change policy, can't change climate denial, fucking whatever's going on up there, it's just like, live a good life and breathe".
		3. Reflecting – link to burnout	Medium	
		4. Reflecting – link to burnout & activism	Medium to High	
		5. Critical discourse – about the system	Medium	
	Session #9	1. Reflecting – story telling	Low to Medium	**Example of TL** (i.e. perspective transformation + felt sense of that): • started with "**coming home to self**" – session was an exploration/explication of this – feels like a groundedness in my body – reversal of the assumption of looking outside myself – struggling to find a meaningful job/high assumptions/being on the poverty line, social injustice of being bullied at work – exhaustion crept in – wasn't trusting life – now it has become I can let people in/I can trust life • it is also a deep acceptance and **letting go**/stop fighting, manically searching for a job – desperate frenetic energy, disillusionment, despair, chronic pain – not feeling safe in the world – notion of surrendering, feels safe, grounded, worthy of trust/**trust** in me
		2. Reflecting – coming home to self (Part 1)	Low to Medium	
		3. Reflecting – coming home to self (Part 2)	Low to Medium	
		4. Reflecting – existential crisis	Low to Medium	
		5. Reflecting – letting go	Medium to High	
		6. Critical discourse	Low to Medium	
	Session #10	1. Reflecting on process – difference between	Low	• **Self-care** – being in the body • Learning to differentiate between storytelling and experiencing, me and that/it in relation to overwhelming feelings

		storytelling & experiencing		• **Example #2** of a **felt shift** – themes are strongly related to Welwood 2002 – being with **uncertainty** and **not knowing**, letting go, seeing and feeling it, being in the stillness of the space • Embodied processes as a **radical act** • How to be with the unfinished project
		2. Storytelling to felt sensing & shift	Low to High	
		3. Reflecting to felt sensing (yo-yoing)	Medium to High	
		4. Critical reflecting on process	Low to Medium	
		5. Reflecting on process	Low to Medium	
	Session #11	1. Reflecting on process – whole body transformation	Medium	• Feels like the holding patterns in terms of the shift is over – getting out of the despondency & feeling disempowered – throwing rocks – shift towards **empowerment** & responsiveness – time for re-engagement/**re-emergence in the world** • Inner work has unplugged the deep hyper anxiety which was my default state & has been a shift in my energy – sense of **spaciousness internally** which has allowed me to feel into the new space • More **aligned** & therefore more engaging to others/community – feels like doors are opening – massive shift in attitude to more proactive, engaged & sense of relief that comes with that • **Shift is at a cellular level** – feel whole body self-affirmation – don't feel lonely anymore – realisation of the feeling emotionally insecure aspect, I'm not that person – shifting my **identity** in the world – a **different way of being** in the world – I'm conscious of how I'm perceiving myself differently – positively reaffirming myself • Positive self-talk is simpler/lighter – more space to engage – shift to being in my body and not being so heady & overthinking
		2. Reflecting on spaciousness	Medium	
		3. Reflecting to felt sensing (dipping in & out)	Medium to High	
		4. Reflecting – feeling the other side of despair	Medium	
		5. Reflecting on process – noticing creates spaciousness	Low to Medium	

	Session #12	1. Reflecting on previous session	Low	• **Excellent example #3** of moving into the felt sense and anchoring the feeling • Shifts have been at a cellular level – a cellular restructure of presence that has qualities of stillness and calm that feel more unshakeable now
		2. Critical reflecting & systems thinking – link to inner processes	Low to Medium	
		3. Reflecting to felt sensing – anchoring the felt sense	Medium to High	
		4. Reflecting on process	Low to Medium	
Theresa	Session #6	1. Reflecting on process – stopping & pausing	Medium	• This was the final coaching session with Theresa. The aim of the session was to reflect on the coaching process and what she found most useful, and the insights, learnings and changes that occurred. Theresa was already familiar with the value and importance of inner work, in particular **bodily awareness**. And so really valued being listened to in a way that allowed pausing and silence to play an important role in the conversation. In particular, just being there in a way that didn't require trying to "figure out" what was going on or responding in a way that could direct or guide her in a certain way. For this reason, the conversations were slow paced and naturally incorporated a relatively large amount of **pausing** and **reflective silence**, which supported Theresa to sense into her bodily feel of the situation but without having to consciously or explicitly enter into a focusing process. In other words, I did not feel focusing instructions were required as Theresa would spontaneously check in with her felt sense and explore how she felt about a situation [i.e. Stages 4 to 5 of the experiencing scale (Hendricks, 2002: 225)] without the need for instruction. So although it could be argued that these examples are not "high level" experiencing, it was clear that Theresa was experiencing at a level that enabled her to find a "way forward" that resonated with her felt sense of the situation as the conversation progressed.
		2. Reflecting on process	Medium to High	
		3. Reflecting on process	Medium	
		4. Reflecting on process	Medium to High	
		5. Critical reflection – link to systemic questions		

				• This session began by reflecting on the **bodily felt realisations** she had on a Parker Palmer retreat she recently attended in the US. In particular, the value in providing spaces for silence in dialogue and how much the **world needs this**, the importance of being gentle to self and the strength this requires, and **being ready to hear what "I" already know**. • **Example #1 & 2** – good example of knowing something intellectually vs emotionally – being ready to hear it & feeling it in the body. • **Quote** p.9: "it's actually not about letting it go though. It's about carrying the doubt with me." And being kind to the doubt. • **Good example #5** linking all of that back to broader systemic questions.
Stella	Session #3	1. Focusing	High	• **Good example of focusing** (but with missed opportunities) with Stella as the Focuser and myself as the Listener. Notice how Stella refers to the felt sense in the third person, and symbolises using images and words such as it's and like to locate and describe the felt sense that is forming, and resonates by pausing to check what the response in the body is to the words in order to clarify and receive the felt sense. • This was the third coaching session with Stella and the third focusing session I conducted with her as part of these sessions. As such, there a few **missed opportunities** or "paths not taken" where I could have more effectively followed Stella's felt sense as it emerged. However, as a practitioner in the process deepening my practice this was to be expected and acted as learnings that helped to improve my practice.

Appendix T – excerpt 2 from session no.3 with Holly

This excerpt is approx. 8 pages.

J1:	…bringing your attention to your breath. Just following your breath as it goes down deep into your lungs. Just following the motion of your breath as it goes in and out. Perhaps just asking yourself the question, how am I today? Just noticing, and asking yourself, how am I today? [pause] Just asking yourself, how am I, really? Just noticing what is there for you when you ask that question, how am I, really, today? [pause] Just noticing what comes up for you when you ask yourself that question...It might be a thought, or a word, or an image, and when you're ready, perhaps just describing that for us.	I guide Holly through some process steps to help her settle, become aware of her breath and sense into her body. I start first by asking her to ask herself – how am I today? This is a focusing question that aims to begin drawing attention to how she is currently feeling. I then invite her to ask herself – how she really is today. This question aims to deepen her awareness as a way to become closer to engaging the felt sense.
H1:	[pause] Today, I feel energized and sharp, but I'm also aware that I need a bit of space, time on my own.	
J2:	You feel energized and sharp, but you also need some time for yourself.	
H2:	Yeah.	
J3:	And so what is your sense or what is it that you feel about needing time for yourself?	Notice I don't ask why she feels this way but her sense of how she feels as a way to start deepening her felt sense.
H3:	Um…I think…just, yeah, too much um... not too much, I feel quite stimulated by other people, and I have some big things going on, and I	Already Holly has made a step towards clarifying this need to spend time for herself. It's actually about wanting the

	wanna make sure I'm making the **right decision** for myself.	space to make the right decisions for herself.
J4:	You've got some big things on, and you want to make sure you're making the right decision for yourself. I'm just wondering if you could just stay with that for the moment, that feeling of needing to make the right decision for yourself. [pause] What is your sense of that?	After reflecting back her words, I invite Holly to stay with this new understanding as a way to slow down and strengthen her felt sense of the situation.
H4:	It's about not letting others make decisions for me, and not feeling pushed around, I guess.	A step where Holly realises the "feeling of needing to make the right decision" is about not letting others make the decision for her.
J5:	Not feeling pushed around.	I only need to reflect a few key words.
H5:	[long pause] Yes. It's also about just…um…making decisions on my own **values**, and for maybe some consistency, or...yeah.	This long silent pause indicates Holly is engaging directly with her felt sense. Sitting in silence may be uncomfortable for some coaches but I am careful not to rush in and potentially disrupt her process. After a while, a step emerges where she senses a connection with her values or consistency. Her hesitation indicates she's not quite sure or that her thoughts aren't quite right.
J6:	There's something also about making decisions on your own values, and some consistency there.	I reflect the words so she can resonate them with her felt sense.
H6:	[long pause] Yeah. I think it's about creating a **safe space**, or somewhere I can come back to, like a **comfort zone**…doesn't rely on anyone else.	This idea of a "comfort zone [that] doesn't rely on anyone else" indicates Holly is directly sensing this safe space. She is exploring *how* she can prevent others from making decisions for her and feeling pushed around.
J7:	Something about creating a safe space for yourself. Do you have a	I could have reflected her words back, but I sense that something about this

	sense of what qualities that safe space would have?	"safe space" is worth exploring. So I ask a focusing question about the qualities of the felt sense.
H7:	It would be quiet.	
J8:	Quiet.	
H8:	And outdoors…like in the wilderness.	The wilderness is not normally associated with being safe. So I ask her to clarify what she senses as making this space "safe".
J9:	In the wilderness. What is it about that space which makes it safe?	
H9:	Something about **just being myself**. Not having to be anything to anyone or do anything.	Another step as she clarifies that "not relying on anyone" is actually about being herself. Notice how this thought doesn't logically follow on from this idea of a safe space.
J10:	Just being myself. I'm just wondering, is it okay to just pause on that for a moment, and feel what it's like to be yourself?	I sense that this is an important step and invite her to pause so she can hold or anchor that felt sense in her body.
H10:	[pause] It's kind of **freeing**, really. [tears]	Holly then starts crying indicating a felt shift has occurred.
J11:	It's kind of freeing.	
H11:	There's a **lightness** to it.	
J12:	There's a lightness to it.	
H12:	**Playfulness**, I think.	
J13:	Playfulness [pause] If you were to turn around and look at yourself, or your sense of yourself, what else, or what other quality is it like to notice that?	After pausing to give her space, I ask a question to support another way or perspective of being with the felt sense, and to start developing the felt understanding of the distance between "her" and "it".
H13:	I'm not quite sure what you mean.	Being new to focusing Holly doesn't quite understand the question. Asking someone to turn around and look at themselves can seem like an odd question for those unfamiliar with the language and process.

J14:	You're noticing what it's like to be yourself. There's a freeing, there's a lightness, and then there's a playfulness about that. So is it okay to maybe step aside from that, and then notice if there are any other qualities of what it's like to be yourself?	I repeat her words and ask the question again in a slightly different way, and making it clearer what the question is about.
H14:	[long pause] Maybe…I'm not sure. I can't get out it all…maybe a bit…um…**removed from the world**, like removed from other people.	Again, the long silent pause indicates Holly is sensing directly. This is also indicated by her not being sure about the qualities and difficulty in trying to describe what she is sensing. However, she manages to describe this sense of being removed from the world.
J15:	Okay, so there's a sense of being removed from the world. Just sitting with that. [pause] What is your sense of being removed from the world?	I give Holly space and time to be with the felt sense before asking another question to move the process forward.
H15:	It's more like not engaging with social structures or like the kind of **expectations** that are put on you.	A step as she is able to clarify that it's more related to expectations from others.
J16:	There's something about you that feels removed, and that's something like not engaging with expectations and social structures. What is your sense of that part of you that feels that way?	I start to help Holly differentiate between her and it by referring to "something about you" and asking about that part in relation to how *it* feels.
H16:	It's just like my **happy place**... I don't know. It's like my **inner child** or something. Just not having to worry about that stuff.	This is a big step where she connects her "happy place" with her "inner child". I could not have guessed that this part she was referring to is actually her inner child who doesn't have to worry.

J17:	Oh. It's your inner child that doesn't have to worry about that stuff. I just invite you to really sit with that. That inner child that doesn't have to worry about that stuff. Just spend some time sitting there with that.	I sense the significance of this step and invite her to stay with her feel of the inner child that doesn't have to worry as a way to strengthen her felt sense of it.
	[pause] If you could maybe describe some of the qualities of that inner child, what would they be?	After a pause I ask her to describe the inner child to help deepen her experience.
H17:	It's like **trusting my own instinct**. Accepting whatever I need. **Accepting myself**, I guess, and having a lot of **energy to give**. Yeah. A lot of playfulness and light-heartedness.	Another step where it's about trusting in and accepting herself. This inner child has the qualities of lightness and playfulness she mentioned earlier with lots of energy to give.
J18:	There's qualities of trusting your instinct, and accepting whatever you need in yourself, and having the energy to give. There's a playfulness and a lightness to that. [pause] Are there any other qualities about the inner child?	
H18:	Being **independent**.	
J19:	Being independent. And so what is it about that feeling of being independent?	This quality of independence is different to the other qualities, so I ask a question to explore this.
H19:	[long pause 1min 30secs] I think maybe it's something about …um…feeling part of the **whole world** and the **whole ecosystem**, not just part of a human or a societal structure.	Here she makes a much broader connection between being independent and feeling part of the whole world/ecosystem. Here she situates her felt sense in a broader context.
J20:	There's something about that feeling of independence that is connected to being part of the whole world, like the ecosystem, not just the human,	I sense there has been a shift in Holly's process towards a felt sense that encompasses this larger perspective of

	the society. [pause] There's something about that connection to the ecosystem that holds a special place for you. [pause]	herself – "that [she] holds a special place" for.
	When you're feeling that relationship and that connection, is it okay to ask how you would like to be with that? What kind of relationship, or how would you like to be with that inner child, that's connected to the world, the ecosystem?	I then ask a question to support her in deepening her understanding of the connection between the inner child and the external world.
H20:	I think I'd like to bring that, like embody that more. Bring that connection back. Bring it into that social structure more.	Holly senses she would like to bring her connection with the ecosystem back into her social world.
J21:	Just taking your time with that, what does it actually feel like to embody that? What are some of the qualities of embodying that connection that you'd like to bring back?	I realise I may have tried to move too fast or in a direction that wasn't quite right for Holly, so I slow the process down, following her instructions to connect back to the social aspect.
H21:	**Curiosity**.	New qualities start to emerge quite quickly. This is an example of an inner-outer process as one occurring.
J22:	Curiosity.	
H22:	A sense of **listening**.	
J23:	A sense of listening.	
H23:	I don't know how to describe it. Just kind of like a slower pace.	
J24:	A **slower** pace.	
H24:	Kind of like a **grounded** feeling, or sort of **trust in the world**.	A step where a sense of trust emerges but this time in relation to the world.
J25:	A grounded feeling that's like a trust in the world. I'm just wondering, is it okay just to pause on that? Just pause on what it feels like to be curious and listening, and more grounded and trusting. Just really feeling the whole of that, without needing to do	Again, I sense this is an important step and invite Holly to pause and anchor her body feel of the whole situation.

	anything with it, just really feeling what it's like. [long pause]	
	Just letting you know we've got a couple of minutes to go. Just sitting with that feeling. Is there anything else about that that you feel needs to be said?	Holly has come a long way in the process and the agreed time for the session is coming up and so I let her know. I ask a focusing question to check if there is anything else that needs attention.
H25:	I guess I just recognize that there's also this...like in feeling that…but imagining that there's also some other thoughts about how that's **not enough**, or it doesn't...it doesn't allow me to engage in certain things.	
J26:	There's another aspect of that that says it's not enough. It doesn't allow you to engage in the aspects. What is your sense of what it doesn't allow you to engage with?	I'm not quite sure what she has said here and awkwardly reflect her words back in order to clarify.
H26:	um…um…like news, [laughing to self] information and politics. Yeah.	
J27:	What is the quality of that that doesn't allow?	
H27:	Just kind of like an imaginative quality, or just kind of anything, like **trust**, and **imagination**, and **instinct**, that **kind of opposes logic** or ...	Another step where she has a sense of not being able to engage in news/politics and something that "kind of opposes logic" but I don't quite follow what she is saying.
J28:	Okay, so the trust, and the imagination, and your instinct, there's something that says that, that opposes…logic. What is your sense of…where that is coming from?	I'm lost a little bit in the process and ask another awkwardly phrased question.
H28:	[long pause] not sure	Holly is unsure. I can't tell if she's unsure about the felt sense, perhaps the question was pointing her to an uncomfortable place or if I've confused her with the question. So I go back a few steps and reflect back my sense of all of
J29:	There's something about the qualities of being a child with trust, imagination and instinct which help connect you to the ecosystem and the	

	world, but there's also a part that feels like it's not enough, doesn't allow you to engage with the news, information and politics. And so perhaps another way...is it okay to look at what could or what qualities would allow you to engage with news and information and politics?	that and rephrase the question referring to qualities, which she is familiar with and in a more "action-oriented" way.
H29:	[long pause] The same things, and **curiosity**.	
J30:	The same things. Curiosity.	
H30:	Like taking an interest in the world or having an interest in the world.	
J31:	Just sitting with that sense of curiosity, do you have a sense of what it is about that curiosity which could be different? What are the qualities of that sense of curiosity?	I sense there is something more to this quality of curiosity and ask a question to explore this.
H31:	It's like a sense of **not being burdened** by...um…I don't know what it is. Maybe **self-criticism** or like **worry**, or kind of **analysing** situations, or just **being in that moment** rather than feeling like I have to process everything all the time.	Another step in a more positive growth direction where she is sensing she would like to be unburdened by self-criticism, worry, analysing, and being more curious and in the moment.
J32:	Okay. Your sense is that there's something different about that curiosity which is different to the self-criticism, the analysing, so there's a quality of it that's different to the self-criticism and analysing, just being there, in the moment, being curious. [pause] What are, perhaps, the qualities that are different to the self-criticism and the analysing?	By summarising her words and asking another question I'm helping her to clarify the connection between the quality of curiosity and being more in the moment.
H32:	**Acceptance**…and um…something about just making decisions and moving on.	Again, this quality of acceptance has re-emerged.

J33:	Something about acceptance and making decisions and moving on. Just letting you know that there's a couple of minutes to go. Is it okay just to be with that curiosity and that acceptance, and making decisions and letting them go, knowing that we can come back to that at any time? [long pause] And so…just invite you to put a pause on that and know that you can come back to that feeling of the inner child, that curiosity, which is different, and that you can come back to that at any time. And just drawing your attention to your body, and the soles of your feet, just really feeling and sensing that space in your legs, the position of your body on the seat. Just feeling that support. Noticing your arms, and your shoulders, and your neck, and your head, and your scalp, and your eyes, and just drawing your attention to your breath. Just noticing that. Noticing the noises, the sounds in the room, and in your own time, coming back and opening your eyes. How are you going?	I would like to continue as this feels like another important step in her process. However, I am also keen to honour our agreed time for ending the session. So I gently let her know the session is coming to an end and letting her know we can come back to this place at any time. I then guide her through process steps to draw her attention to her physical body and environment and back into the room.
H33:	Good. Full of ideas.	Holly is back with eyes open.

Example of reflective dialogue with Holly

Note the lack of pausing indicates that although Holly is still connected to the felt sense, it is in a less direct way (i.e. she is reflecting-in-and-on-process rather than focusing).

H1:	I think I'd like to take some of that, like that **sense of curiosity**, or see if I can bring, take that with me a little bit, today and also not just to work,	Holly refers to the "sense of curiosity" that emerged from the session and how she intends to extend this new sense of

	but also maybe to other...like to home and social places. Yeah.	curiosity not only to work but also socially.
J1:	Great. Wow. Yeah. Wow. That's like...that's like…this is just a suggestion. That's a key, like a key thing for you, is sort of...The difference between the curiosity, that was different to the analysing, it sounds like…it sounds like it's **kinder**.	After I acknowledge the significance of this, I sense it would be useful to clarify this new sense of curiosity as being "kinder" in comparison to the more critical and analytical part of herself she had mentioned during the focusing session (at H31).
H2:	Yeah. Yeah. It is really like that. A sense of who I am, and then also this other **inner critic** voice that is telling me to fit into certain structures or certain ways of being. Yeah. It wanted to earn money, and be efficient, and all of this stuff.	She is connecting her inner critic with expectations around ways of being in the world and fitting into social structures i.e. her sociocultural context.
J2:	Yeah.	
H3:	Yeah.	
J3:	There's another part of you which is not that inner critic, which is more curious and **kinder**, and perhaps maybe **open**. Yeah.	I'm keen to help her anchor this more curious, kinder part of her by offering new words such as open.
H4:	Yeah.	
J4:	But it can be with the world, so that's how it is. It's not disconnected from the world. That ***is* the connection**.	A new realisation that this new way of being kinder and more curious *is* a new way of connecting with the world.
H5:	Yeah. Yeah.	
J5:	Wow.	
H6:	Yeah. Yeah. I think that's quite strong for me. Yeah.	
J6:	Yeah.	
H7:	I've got a really strong sense of connection with land or animals, and just the wider world in general. I've always had that. I don't know where it comes from. Yeah.	She confirms her sense of connection to the natural world…something that she's always had. However, now she has a way of connecting to the social world.

J7:	What it also allows you is that connection with the politics, and maybe those more difficult, prickly things that are hard to engage with.	Again, I'm drawing in what emerged from the session regarding her challenges in engaging with the more "prickly" aspects of the world such as the news, politics etc. and how this curiosity is a new way of being – connecting in a way that is kinder and more open.
H8:	Yeah. I think so.	
J8:	Which may be normally going into that more critical, analysing way of...the curiosity, that more kind, open curiosity, is a way of engaging in a different way.	
H9:	Yeah. Think so.	
J9:	It's already there.	I remind her that this way of being is something that she has a felt understanding of and she confirms by acknowledging that "it's always been there".
H10:	Yeah. **It's always been there**.	

Appendix U – example of Blue Sky Focusing with Alyssa

The following excerpt (approx. 2 pages) is an example of a different focusing process called *Blue Sky Focusing* developed by Akira Ikemi (2014, 2015).

Excerpt 4 from session no.7

This was the seventh coaching session with Alyssa and was the fourth time participating in a focusing process. As mentioned, although Alyssa was familiar with mindfulness and meditation practices, she still found the initial focusing sessions challenging. So for this session I decided to employ a different process.

The aim of the session was to explore Alyssa's desire to "not care about what people think so much" (session #1). This new process helped Alyssa to enter into a higher level of experiencing that she described afterwards as being "spiritual" and "profound" (session #7). During the process, Alyssa didn't provide a great deal of detail about what she was experiencing and there were a few extended periods of silence. At these points I thought she may have slipped into a more meditative state. However, as we reflected on her experience, realisations continued to emerge and as she described, her experience was much more profound than she was able to describe whilst *in* process.

We start with Alyssa reflecting on her felt sense of an "energy" that is looking out for her and is always present – a "kind of guardian" (session #7), which provides her with the "freedom to play [and] explore" (session #7).

J1: There's something about this feeling of always being present and not distracted, which this energy that is always there for you…which is something you can take from this.

A1: Yeah, it's kind of…it feels quite **spiritual** in a way. I guess, if I was religious…I'd probably say like, "It's like god is with me." But obviously it's not like a religious thing, is it. I'm not

	saying it's a religious presence or it's a godly presence…but I imagine it because I know a lot of people that are very, very religious. Like my mother-in-law being one of them and she'll always say things like, you know, "Well god is with me," and, "I can feel god," and those sorts of things. Do you find that as well? This kind of spirituality side to it?	
J2:	Yeah, yeah…absolutely. Is there, there's a question there around the feel of that **presence** I suppose, or that guardian that is there for you which feels quite spiritual and it's something that's part of you, would you say?	I'm keen to keep the focus of the conversation on Alyssa and so ask a question to hep her reflect on this sense of presence.
A2:	Mmmm [*a realisation in the tone of her response*] …yeah, because I'm not really religious in that sense so it's like believing in energies and flow of life in the universe but not necessarily, "That's god, or that's Jesus, or that's...Buddha, or whatever."	
J3:	What is your sense of the fact that it emerged from your body? Do you have a sense that, that is something you can **trust** in that sense, that presence?	I refer back to a question Alyssa had asked about how you know you can trust your feelings.
A3:	Mmmm…yeah, it is because I guess it's saying, "You're alright. You're going to be OK. Do what you got to do. **You're going to be OK**."	This is a significant realisation for Alyssa, having a felt sense of this presence that says, "you're going to be OK".
J4:	OK, so you're alright. You're going to be OK. Perhaps, do you think that could be a message?	I asked in the previous *Blue Sky Focusing* process whether the felt sense had a message for her and it didn't. She describes why.
A4:	Yeah. But I think what was nice about it is that came across without the actual words, do you know what I mean?	
J5:	Yeah.	

A5:	Because it was all...it wasn't literally saying, "Hey, you're going to be OK," but it came across without…in the energy and the feeling enveloped by it and security of being out to play and that sort of stuff, yeah.	Alyssa has a significant insight here into the difference between knowing something intellectually and feeling it as a bodily knowing.
J6:	Yeah. You had a felt sense of that.	
A6:	Mmmm [affirmation]	
J7:	You actually had a whole felt sense of that without the words or without the needing for words…	
A7:	Because when you kept saying to me, "What is it trying to tell you something?" I'm like, "No, I can't see any words. I can't hear any words." Do you know what I mean?	She explains how there were no words for the felt sense. It felt like the "message was blocked. It's almost like there could've been a message but I couldn't quite get to it" (earlier in reflecting discussion on process).
J9:	However, you did have a *felt* sense of all of that.	I emphasise the *felt*, bodily aspect of her felt sense.
A9:	Yeah, it's quite **profound** really. I'd be looking to just sit with it for a bit.	Alyssa indicates this has been a significant experience for her and she needs to sit with it for a while.

Discussion of excerpt 4

The significance of this process for Alyssa is that she had a felt sense of being cared for and that everything was going to be OK. More importantly, her felt sense was a bodily knowing that felt "more than words could say". This was clearly an example of transformative learning, which created something new that she can carry forward into her life and work. Again, these felt realisations emerged as we continued to reflect on the process providing Alyssa with opportunities to pause and check in with the felt sense that was still present. This may not have emerged from having a reflective conversation about how she could try not to care so much about what other people think. In addition, if we had not continued after the process with a reflective dialogue these realisations would most likely not have emerged either.

Appendix V – excerpt 3 from session no.3 with Alyssa

This excerpt is approx. 11 pages.

J1:	Just making yourself comfortable on the seat. Just adjusting your body, making yourself comfortable. Perhaps your feet are on the ground, or they're on the seat. Just noticing the soles of your feet. Just drawing your attention to the soles of your feet. Pausing there. Just notice what it's actually like to draw your attention to your feet. Noticing your calves and your knees and your thighs. The tops of your thighs. Notice the shape of your body on the chair. Feeling the support of the chair for your body. Noticing your back and your shoulders and your arms. The position of your hands. Noticing your neck and your head and your scalp and your breath. Noticing the breath going in, deep into your lungs. Really pausing there and taking the time to notice the breath. And in your own time, I'm wondering if you could share any thoughts that you may have that are popping up for you? Just listing those thoughts as they come.	I guide Alyssa through some process steps to help her settle, become aware of her breath and sense into her body. I start first by asking her a question about her thoughts as an easier way to enter into inward attention.
A1:	I'm thinking my head feels very heavy and my neck feels tight. I'm thinking what my son is doing at day care.	Alyssa is naming how she feels physically and what she is thinking about.
J2:	Your head feels heavy and your neck feels tight.	I repeat what she says back to her so she can check this is right and to start closely attuning myself to her process.
A2:	Yeah.	

J3:	You're thinking of your son at day care.	
A3:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J4:	I'm just wondering, is it OK to just put those aside for the moment?	This is an invitation to put those thoughts and feelings aside for the moment to sense what else is there. This is a key element of *clearing a space*. As mentioned, this level of guiding is not usual in focusing but was used to help Alyssa enter more deeply into her process as described above.
A4:	Yeah.	
J5:	Do you notice any other thoughts that might arise?	
A5:	[pause] Hmmm…no.	There is a silent pause here as Alyssa senses inwardly to see what else is there.
J6:	OK, and so just drawing your attention to the breaths and really noticing that space in between your chest and your stomach, really following the breaths and noticing that space. I'm wondering if there are any feelings or emotions that come for you?	I sense Alyssa is still thinking (i.e. in a cognitive sense) rather than felt sensing (i.e. in a bodily sense) so I draw Alyssa's attention to the space between her chest and stomach as a way to start engaging more deeply with the felt sense. I then ask her to identify any feelings or emotions she may have, which can be used as gateways into or steps towards the felt sense.
A6:	[pause] I feel tiredness obviously.	
J7:	Tiredness.	
A7:	[pause] Hmmm…I'm not sure what the emotion is, but I'm feeling like I've got lots of things to do, but I'm not getting them done, so maybe…	There is another silent pause as Alyssa senses directly that she's not sure what the emotion is, but she feels like she's "got lots of things to do" and more precisely that she's "not getting them done".
J8:	There's a feeling that there's a lot of things you need to do, but you're not getting them done.	
A8:	Mm-hmm [affirms]. Or I'm not getting them done fast enough and I	Alyssa checks again and is even more precise in that she feels she's "not

	guess I'm feeling a little bit **inadequate**.	getting them done fast enough" and as a result feels a "bit inadequate".
J9:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so you're not getting them done fast enough, and so you're feeling inadequate.	I could have reflected her words more accurately here. Instead of feeling inadequate she is feeling a "little bit inadequate".
A9:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J10:	Just really slowing down there and noticing what it's like to feel inadequate. Noticing that feeling of being inadequate. Perhaps, maybe describe a little bit of what *that* is like if possible…it may be a feeling or an image, or something about that.	Here I'm inviting Alyssa to notice or observe the feeling as a way to get to know it better and also to put some distance between her and the feeling (i.e. noticing that she is not the feeling). I also provide some options of engaging with the felt sense in the form of an image. Imagery or visualisation may be an easier way for her to engage with the felt sense.
A10:	I look at, there may just be a list, a list of things that I'm ticking off or not ticking off…	Alyssa is visualising herself with a list of things that she may or may not be ticking off, which indicates that she is sensing the felt sense more directly now.
J11:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so there's a list of things that need ticking off or you're not ticking off.	
A11:	A sense of **pressure**…?	Some other quality emerges as she checks in with the list…it's a sense of pressure.
J12:	Pressure, so there's a sense of pressure.	
A12:	And then kinda like a sigh, like when I'm feeling like I'm not getting something done, like frustration.	Again, this phrasing "kinda like a sigh" indicates Alyssa is sensing directly, and then another quality of frustration emerges.
J13:	So there's, so I didn't quite catch that, so there's that pressure when you feel as though you're not getting things done.	
A13:	Yeah, and I sigh, so I'll like [sighs]…so I actually make that sighing noise with my breath.	Alyssa physically sighs as she really feels it in her body.
J14:	Yeah, [sigh] so you make that sighing with your breath, and just	I sigh in response, mirroring Alyssa. This helps me connect with her as I continue to follow her process closely.

	really taking your time to feel that in your body…that sigh. And so what is it, or what is it around that, that you feel when you make that sigh?	I invite her to feel the sigh as a way to help anchor the felt sense. I then ask her to sense further around it to see if there is something more.
A14:	I think that's me telling myself that I'm not doing enough.	This is a big step to identify a message it has for her that she's "not doing enough" but she continues to clarify there's a sense of time or urgency involved.
J15:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
A15:	Not doing enough or doing enough fast enough or still lots to do and not keeping up.	
J16:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so you're noticing that it's me telling myself that I'm not good enough or doing enough.	This time I reflect back "I'm not good enough or doing enough". This is not completely accurate and isn't intentional. However, it reflects my sense of what she is saying.
A16:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J17:	Is it OK just to be curious about that, noticing who is saying you're not good enough or you're not doing enough?	I sense this could be a more sensitive area and ask her a somewhat awkwardly phrased question that invites her to be curious about her sense of not being good enough.
A17:	Hmmm…me?	Alyssa needs to clarify my question.
J18:	So you're noticing that it's me telling yourself you're not good enough. [long pause for approx.1 min 30 secs] I'm just wondering if you could share what's there for you right now?	There is a long pause as I'm leaving space for Alyssa to be with her felt sense. However, I'm concerned she might be drifting off and so I ask her a question to check she isn't.
A18:	It's like a sense of **paranoia** almost, that I'm thinking, what are other people thinking? Are they thinking I'm not doing enough or is it me?	Note that this pause marks the coming of another step where she has identified that this sense of not being good enough is more like a kind of "paranoia" that comes from her feeling of what others are thinking of her.

J19:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so there's a sense of paranoia around what other people are thinking.	
	And I'm just wondering, is it OK just to be curious about that? Perhaps sense into what else is there or underneath that.	This is a focusing question…notice how I ask her if it's OK to be curious, which is more like a gentle invitation.
A19:	I think it's my own…um...I think its self-esteem…self-esteem, **self-worth** or something along those lines that I need other people to see that I'm doing enough, or see that I'm productive, or to see that or to acknowledge that. It's almost like I'm seeking their, seeking **approval**, seeking **acknowledgment**.	Another step where she realises *it* (this sense of not doing enough) is related to her self-esteem/worth, and her seeking of acknowledgement that she is doing enough.
J20:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so really pausing there, slowing down, so there's a part of you that is seeking approval from others, from people around. I'm just wondering if it's OK just to be curious about that part of you? [pause] And it's OK to say no if it's not OK.	I sense this is an important step and want Alyssa to strengthen her felt sense of this new understanding. So I ask her to pause and slow down to anchor it in her body. I then ask if it's OK to be curious about it but I'm careful to give her the option to say no in case she doesn't feel OK to be curious about it [another focusing instruction].
A20:	[pause] I think it's almost like some people's approval is worth more than others, so those closest to me like my husband or my mum. Like I would absolutely be seeking their approval and acknowledgement. I guess I value that highly, more highly than other people's approval.	
J21:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so there's a difference in the kinds of approval, so more your mother's and your husband's approval that's higher than perhaps other people's approval.	Alyssa has differentiated the kinds of approval and acknowledgement she is seeking and I want to help her strengthen that clarification. Notice I'm not asking about the content or "back story" regarding her relationship with her husband or mum. This would

A21:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	disrupt the process and move Alyssa into "thinking" rather than felt sensing.
J22:	And I'm just wondering, is it OK to turn towards that part of you that is seeking approval and just perhaps describe, or if you have a sense of that part of you that is seeking approval.	Here I ask a question to support another way or perspective of being with the felt sense, and to again develop the felt understanding of the distance between "her" and "it".
A22:	Hmmm…I think it's **ego**.	Another step and Alyssa thinks it's her ego. There is no way of knowing what she is referring to here and instead of asking her what she means by ego, which again would move her away from her felt sense, I ask her if she could describe what it's like. I intentionally ask for a quality or something in order to keep it vague and provide her with as many options as possible to describe it.
J23:	Mm-hmm [affirms], ego. Is there a quality or something about that ego?	
A23:	I think it's very powerful.	I could have helped Alyssa to make more space for the ego and/or to ask what other qualities it might have. However, I sensed that this "powerful ego" might have something to say and that at this point in the process it might help her find some kind of resolution. Also, our agreed time for the session is coming to an end.
J24:	Mm-hmm [affirms], it's very powerful. And do you have a feel or a sense that it has something to say for you?	
A24:	I just think it, it takes over so it…so it kind of wants to be in control.	
J25:	It wants to be in control.	
A25:	Yeah, it wants to exert its power and be…	
J26:	OK, so it wants to exert its power and be in control.	
	I'm just wondering if there are any other qualities around that? Or perhaps can you notice how you feel towards that part of you?	Again, I ask a question that helps to create space between her and it so she can start to develop a relationship with it.

A26:	I feel like it wants to ... although it's powerful and controlling, there's also an element of **protection**, it wants to protect me.	This is a significant if not the most important step in her process. Alyssa can now see that although it is controlling it also wants to protect her. This is the start of her developing a different kind of relationship with this controlling aspect of herself that says she's not doing enough. This insight is highly unlikely to have been achieved through rational discourse.
J27:	It wants to protect you. Even though it's powerful and wants control, it also wants to protect you. Just really taking your time there, getting a really good sense of that feeling that it also wants to protect you. [pause] Is there anything else that you notice around the edges there?	I understand the significance of this shift and am keen to help her strengthen her felt sense of protection. So I ask her to pause. I also want her to further develop this relationship and ask her if there is anything else.
A27:	It doesn't want me to feel hurt.	
J28:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so it doesn't want you to feel hurt.	
A28:	It doesn't want me to feel pain or suffering or hurt, so it tries to protect me.	Alyssa is directly sensing it and clarifies *why* it wants to protect her.
J29:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so it doesn't want you to feel pain or hurt, so it tries to protect you.	
A29:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J30:	Just really taking your time with that. I'm just letting you know, we've got a couple more minutes to go. I'm just wondering if there's anything else there that requires your attention or would be useful for you to know?	Again, I'm supporting Alyssa to anchor this feeling in her body. We've come a long way and I sense this is a good time to bring the process to a close. However, I want to give her the opportunity to notice anything else that requires her attention.
A30:	Yeah, I guess I don't understand this **inner critic** and the ego, their	Another step and a new aspect of the felt sense has emerged – the inner critic.

	relationship with each other. I don't get a sense of that at the moment.	Alyssa can sense there is a relationship between her ego and the inner critic, but she doesn't know what that is.
J31:	OK, there's a question, or you don't quite understand the relationship between the ego and the inner critic. Just really taking your time, there, there's no rush, are there any qualities or when you put them side by side, is there something that you notice about them?	Again, I sense the significance of the inner critic emerging and am keen to let her know we have time.
A31:	[*pause*] I think the critic is trying to protect as well…like…that's the only similarity I guess between them.	Alyssa can sense that the inner critic also wants to protect her.
J1:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so the inner critic is trying to protect as well, so both the ego and the inner critic are trying to protect you.	
A32:	The critic doesn't allow approval, it doesn't allow self-approval. The critic doesn't allow that whereas the ego might like that.	Here a key clarification emerges between these two aspects of Alyssa where the ego allows approval, but the critic doesn't.
J32:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so the inner critic doesn't allow approval, but the ego might allow that.	There is a long pause which indicates Alyssa is directly sensing these two aspects.
	[long pause for about 1 min 50 secs]	Again, this is a significant insight and ask if there is anything these aspects would like her to know.
	And so I'm just wondering is there anything else there that the inner critic or the ego share, or would like you to know?	
A33:	The ego is really attached to accomplishments and it wants me to constantly feel **accomplished**.	Here there is another shift in relation to the feeling of "not doing enough", where the ego is needing to feel accomplished.
J33:	It wants you to constantly feel accomplished.	
A34:	Mmm…whereas the critic's saying, "you're not accomplished", they kinda work against each other.	Interestingly she can now see that the ego and the inner critic work against each other.

J34:	Oh OK, so they're working together in a way that the ego is saying, or constantly wants to feel accomplished, but the inner critic is saying, "you're not accomplished".	This is a subtle yet important distinction and so I help clarify the two positions by reflecting it back for her.
A35:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J35:	I'm just wondering if it's OK to observe the inner critic and the ego in a way that feels more comfortable for you?	I'm keen to help Alyssa see if she can find an approach to the inner critic and the ego similar to her sense of "protection" she had earlier. One that is perhaps kinder and more gentle.
A36:	[long pause] Yeah, I'm not sure how to do that.	The long silence indicates she is trying to develop something that is more comfortable but is not sure how, indicating this feeling is not quite ready.
J36:	Mmm OK, so you're not too sure how to be comfortable with the inner critic and the ego.	
A37:	Mm-hmm [affirms].	
J37:	Is it OK just to put them aside and be curious about the inner critic and the ego? And it's OK to say no if you don't feel OK with that.	I sense this is a sensitive area for Alyssa and that being "more comfortable" is not available to her at the moment. So I ask if she can be curious towards it, which she has shown she can earlier in the session. Again, I give her the option to say no if she can't.
A38:	I feel that they both **serve an important purpose**, but if they, if they come in too much, or they have too much of a hold or too much power, then they can **overwhelm**, whereas…cause the inner critic might actually push you to do better, it might say, "you can do that better", OK, and then you go and do something better, so it can be a good thing, but if it's constantly saying negative things then it's not…so it's like, they both serve a purpose, they kind of…they want to help, but	Another step. Alyssa can now see how the ego and the inner critic "serve an important purpose" and can both be helpful and unhelpful.

they're not always helping if they've got too much control, yeah.

J38: Mm-hmm [affirms], OK, so they actually serve an important purpose, so the inner critic sometimes can help you to do better, but it's when they have too much control that it feels overwhelming and ... So I'm just wondering, **is it OK just to be with all of that**, just noticing that difference between when they're useful perhaps and when they're not being so useful.

Again, we have come a long way and I sense that is enough for the session. So I ask her if it's OK to be with *all* (or the whole) of that as a stopping point in the process.

[pause for about 40 secs]

J39: Just letting you know we've got a couple of minutes to go. I'm just wondering, is it OK to put all of that aside for the moment, knowing that you can come back to it at any time?

Once I sense Alyssa has had enough time to have a whole sense of that I invite her to put it aside knowing she can come back to it at any time. A focusing process step that gently brings the session to a close.

Is there a way that you could perhaps...see all of that in a way that is a bit more curious and gentle to all of that?

I ask her one more time if she can be curious and gentle to all of that.

A39: [pause] Just maybe wanting… wanting better or wanting them to be better…that's a good thing to strive for…

I sense that Alyssa is looking for an ending point or a kind of resolution to the process that feels comfortable for her.

J40: Mm-hmm [affirms], so there's something about wanting to be better, or to strive to be better, and that's something that feels comfortable for you? Or…

A40: Yeah, yeah.

J41: So that was a message from the inner critic and the ego, or is that how you'd like to feel about all these, all of that, with that sense of…

I'm keen to clarify what she means by "yeah, yeah" so I'm certain we can bring the session to a close.

A41:	I think it's a message from them, that they're saying, “we’re doing this to help you be a better person”. Even if it's not helpful, the **intention is trying to be helpful**.	Alyssa is anchoring this feeling of the ego and inner critic’s intention of being helpful even though it may not feel like that at times.
J42:	Mm-hmm [affirms], so the intention is trying to be helpful. Really just taking your time to feel that intention. [pause] And so I'm just wondering if you could find a finishing place for all of that. Perhaps you might want to put it aside for the moment, knowing that you can come back to it at any moment. Bringing with you that sense or that intention that the inner critic and the ego are there to be helpful. And just in your own time, finding a finishing place for all of that. [pause] And I'll just draw your attention to your breath ... And noticing your body in the room. Drawing your attention to your body on the chair, and the chair supporting your body. Noticing the soles of your feet and your legs. Drawing your attention to the sounds in the room and the sounds outside. In your own time, bringing yourself back into the room.	Now that Alyssa has found a clear message or intention from the felt sense, I feel comfortable in bringing the session to a close. Alyssa has gone deeply in this session and for a relatively long time and so I gently bring her back by drawing attention to her physical body and her environment.
A42:	[long pause] I'm back.	

Appendix W – excerpts from Phyllis's journey

Excerpt 4 from session no.9 – Coming home to self, letting go of the fight and overcoming burnout

This excerpt is approx. 6 pages.

J1:	So I'd just like to invite you to close your eyes if that is what feels comfortable. Just drawing your attention to your feet. Noticing what that's like. Noticing what it's like to actually notice or pay attention to your feet. Drawing your attention to the shape of your body on the seat. The position of your arms. Your neck, scalp, just noticing the breath. Just following the breath with your attention. Just noticing what that's like. Noticing that space in between your chest and your stomach.	I provide some focusing instructions to support her inward attention.
	Then thinking of this idea of coming home to self, which feels safe, and grounded, something worthy of your trust. Trusting in me. Just allowing that there to be and in your own time, perhaps just describing what's there for you.	I guide her to engage her sense of "coming home to self", using words she has previously used to describe it.
P1:	[pause][sigh] As I'm…a bit like as you're describing it, and as my recent experience, again, there's multiple things coming up [tears forming]…I want to try and name them all. Another thing…like coming home to myself feels like more an **abdominal experience**, but another one I've been doing lately, getting lots of acupuncture at the moment, but also with this smoking thing is coming home to the breath.	Phyllis pauses in silence, sighs, and starts to describe her feel of coming home to self as an "abdominal experience". However, she falls back into describing events (i.e. acupuncture, smoking). Even though she is engaged with her feelings (tears form), the describing indicates she is not yet directly engaging the felt sense. This can be described as medium level experiencing.
J2:	So coming home to the breath is an abdominal experience?	I again support Phyllis in staying with/entering into the felt sense by reflecting her bodily descriptions of the

		felt sense. However, I didn't quite catch what she said meant.
P2:	No, no, sorry. The one we have been talking about, coming home to the self, feels more abdominal, but I was just in my lower, in my stomach and gut, I guess, is more abdominal. Then there's another experience that I've been experiencing and appreciating recently, which is simultaneously and concurrently is **coming home to the breath** in my lungs, in my chest, in my…that cavity, and deeply breathing, and has been a simultaneous process. Both of which have enabled me **deep senses of relief,** that they're both available as well. Like the re-finding them, or I'd forgotten they were there, whatever.	Even though I didn't get it exactly right she is able to correct me and starts to differentiate between the abdominal feel and "coming home to the breath", which resides in her chest cavity. Both have provided her with "deep senses of relief".
J3:	Okay, so the coming home to self feels it's in your abdomen as an abdominal experience. It's also at the same time, there's this coming home to your breath, which is in your lungs. Both of them have this deep sense of relief.	I am deliberately reflecting back what Phyllis has just said in a slow, gentle way to encourage her to slow down, check with her felt sense if what I'm reflecting back is correct and, in the process, deepen her connection with the felt sense.
P3:	Mm-hmm [affirms]. [pause][sigh] But I'd like to also, something that came into my awareness…through the start of this exercise, is also through a description of…oh…in context and contrast to, is like what I've just been describing about disillusionment and **broken-heartedness with and in the world**. It's like there's also a part of me that feels…um…I think this process is really informative for me about where I'm placing my awareness, because I feel like, and I used the word overcompensating before, of coming back to the self. I feel like…it's…about finding, grounding myself in	She confirms she has received what I've said and her pause and sigh indicates she is trying to slow down and sense inwards. Phyllis is still at medium level experiencing. She doesn't seem to be ready to engage deeply with the felt sense yet as she still has aspects of her narrative as being a "broken-hearted idealist/activist" she needs to describe. This is a kind of *Clearing of space* process, which I could have helped her to do more intentionally.

Sydney...and community development being such a strong thread in my vocational **narrative**, as an undergrad degree, and as my **activist** stuff has been community development.

I feel in this strong coming back to self stuff, I feel like I...hmmm…it is to come back and re-form, and start from ground zero…OK…to come back in here…

And part of the experience of coming back to myself is also my total pessimism and despair about...and lack of faith in creative ...and wins in projects…I often feel like I fall short, I'm cynical, and I'm not the unbridled optimist, and I feel a bit of **shame** about how **cynical** I can be ... How lacking **faith** and **hope** I can be, back out in the world. That's possibly because I'm busy just fricking **anchoring here first**.

Phyllis describes how she feels shame about how cynical and lacking in faith and hope she can be. This would be an interesting conversation to have in relation to burnout, however, as this is a focusing session and not a reflective dialogue, I closely follow her process.

J4: So you're busy anchoring in here first. So there's some shame or guilt about not being out there.

I reflect back my sense of what is important as it was difficult to follow everything she has just said.

P4: No, well yes that's true in a bit, but I also was trying to talk more to the…I was more trying to talk to the point about my…The issue about **faith** and **trust**, and that I have not been having a lot of that in the world, in the disillusionment and despair, and **not trusting the world**…

I still feel like my faith is quite low, and my faith and trust and optimism, I'm f***in cynical and I would like to be more optimistic...

This is part of self-esteem shit I'm trying to bust through about **imposter syndromes** and frames and memes that I hold in my **felt** and **cerebral sense**, in association with the

Here she reflects on the words shame or guilt (a word she didn't use), which unintentionally brings her back to reflecting on her sense of lacking faith and trust in the world. She doesn't want to feel cynical but more optimistic. However, the struggle to be more optimistic is tied to issues of self-esteem, feeling like an imposter and her inability to rewrite her narratives.

	world…including in…ability to make stuff up, and **rewrite my own narratives,** and believe different stuff.	
	Like stop…like the effect on my self-esteem of doing a boring as f*** part-time retail job is actually a reality for a lot of people in the economy. And I don't…	Phyllis is telling herself to stop feeling this way, as what she is experiencing in her work is something a lot of people also have to endure. However, I sense this could be a critical voice emerging (a familiar pattern and story) and am keen for her to develop this felt sense of being more optimistic.
J5:	So I'm just wondering if it's okay to pause there and ask yourself the question, or just feel what it's like to be more optimistic. Or what would it be like to actually have more faith and trust?	So I interrupt the storytelling and invite Phyllis to feel what it's like to be more optimistic, and to have faith and trust in the world.
	Perhaps that might be a visual thing, or it might have a smell, or a taste. When you feel what it's like to be more optimistic and have more faith and trust, what is it that you feel about that, or see?	I'm keen for her to engage with the felt sense more directly and so provide explicit ways for her to engage somatically (i.e. through visual, smell, taste etc.).
P5:	When you use the word optimistic first, I definitely had some…a sense of grief and tears, tears and grief, yeah, sadness. But not enough that it's…like it was just a wave.	Phyllis has come back to the felt sense as indicated by her closing her eyes, testing of her felt sense of the word optimistic and describing the tears and grief that came with that as a wave.
J6:	Okay, so it's a wave of tears and grief.	A step here where there's an aspect of giving herself permission to let go of the cynicism.
P6:	Of like again, this feels like an exercise in **giving permission** and allowing and **letting go** of **holding so tight** on the **cynicism**, and the fact that sometimes shit doesn't work, and sometimes shit doesn't work for a long time.	
J7:	So there's something about letting go of the cynicism and that holding tight.	
P7:	Mm-hmm [affirms]. [long pause and sigh]	The long pause and sighing indicates she is entering into a deeper level of felt

But…la la la la…also [pause] in this experience of coming home to myself, and the experience of the possibility of feeling more optimism and faith and trust…is a sense…hmmm…is the want to be able to anchor and ground in the **deepest sense of knowing**, and **deep time**. That is not…it's like…that western frames and practice of living in the suburbs and feeling f***in…or being perpetually f***in busy doesn't accomplish.

I really understand that through, like **indigenous ways of knowing**, who have always f***in known that, and it's deep in their core. It's actually deep in mine, but I spend so little time there that I forget, and it conflicts with a deep sense, a shallower sense than that, that I have of impulsive **impatience** all the time. It's like [sigh]…

sensing or a higher level of experiencing.

She is sensing this deeper sense of knowing, like indigenous ways of knowing that are also deep in her core, and her impatience that conflicts with it.

J8: So there's something about this deep indigenous knowing, that knowing that busyness doesn't work, being busy doesn't work. Then there's also this conflict, or this tension with impatience, this feeling of impatience.

P8: Mm-hmm [affirms]. Well the **deep time** experience, the deep time experience is like the most ultimate, **grounded**, and **earthed** beingness, which **transcends a lifetime**…like over epochs, and I get caught up in the dizziness of…what I'm trying to balance. When I can live in that space, I'm a lot more earthed and grounded, and there is no rush and impulsive anxiety, which is…

Here I am trying to describe…two different states of being, because the one I'm not describing, which is patently apparent in my life…is the one about **adrenal fatigue**, which is

Phyllis is sensing the difference in the energic frequencies between the deep time, earthed and grounded way of being and the highly anxious, adrenal fatigue/burnout way of being.

about fast and **highly anxious**, and a higher frequency than this really deep, deep core energetic frequency of the earth.

J9: So we've only got a couple of minutes to go, and I'm just wondering if it's okay to find an endpoint with that.

So this idea of the deep time experience, the ultimate grounded and earthed being-ness, which transcends a lifetime, or lifetimes and epochs. Then this other part which is the high-frequency, impulsive anxiety which is related to the adrenal fatigue. So just having those two there for you, how can you find an endpoint with all of that? Where would you like to ... Or how would you like to resolve those tensions, in a way?

The session has been going a lot longer than the agreed time. Although I'm keen to continue I'm also keen to support Phyllis in finding some kind of resolution to the process (if possible) and respect our agreed timeframes. So I indicate the session is coming to an end and invite her to find an endpoint in her process.

P9: Like associating with the deeply earth-grounded, longer wave frequency…what was I going to say? Is like much more calm, and unrattled, like it's so much more **resilient** and maybe this is like that's an extreme end of **coming home to myself** has been down that trajectory…compared to the high-frequency, highly anxious f***ing rushing, rushing-ness which has been…yeah, where I've been from. Where I've come from.

This is a big step where Phyllis has made the connection between this sense of "coming home to self", the deep earth-groundedness and being more resilient.

J10: Okay. So there's a sort of longer wave frequency which feels **calm**, **unrattled**, and more **resilient**, which is more of this coming home to self. This different component which is the rushing, frenetic energy, and that's where you've been. So there's something about coming from that, to this longer wave frequency, which feels more grounded and earthed.

P10: Yeah, and the longer wave one is the association I would call with…well I use deep time as well as trust. Like that's the **ultimate trust**.	Another step, the deep time earth-groundedness is also the ultimate trust in the world.
J11: Beautiful.	
P11: Where the other one has been where I haven't been trusting, and it's been **exhausting**.	Another step, realising that her highly anxious, frenetic way of being is not only not trusting in the world but is exhausting.
J12: Yeah, okay. So there's the deep trust, and the other one has been exhausting.	
P12: Mm-hmm [affirms].	

Excerpt from session no.10 – Moving from storytelling to felt sensing

This was the 10th coaching session with Phyllis and by this stage she was familiar with the focusing process. Generally, we would reflect on the previous session, what had occurred in the meantime and I would invite her to pause and sense more deeply where I felt it would be useful. A large portion of the conversation still involved Phyllis describing events or "storytelling" and she appreciated the moments where I invited her to pause on something I sensed was significant in order to develop a felt sense of it. This "dipping in and out" of the felt sense through reflective dialogue became our modus operandi and this next excerpt (approx. 8 pages) represents this process, leading to a felt shift.

The excerpt starts after a brief discussion about the inner work Phyllis had been undertaking and how she could address the pressure, impatience and frustration she had regarding her progress.

P1: And when you're naming to let go of the frustration, the first thing that comes up is this constant want for validation around my doing this in the world, and also this whole process is so f***ing nuanced that it's unquantifiable, it's always quality-based. It's like, "How do I measure? I	The frustration Phyllis refers to is connected to a want for validation in what she is doing in the world in relation to her social change/activist work, and the shifts she's been having as a result of the inner work to be reflected in the world (e.g. finding a job that aligns with her skills, passions etc.,

	want validation in what I'm doing" or the shifts being reflected in the world ...	improved working relationships and so on)
J1:	Sorry, just ... Yeah, that's a really, really core, core thing there. So reflection in the world. So what is it that you sense is the reflection in the world? This frustration.	Here I'm not quite sure what she means by the relationship between her frustration and this reflection in the world.
P2:	Sorry, the want for validation.…it's this frustration of this sense of ... Or in what you just fed back to me of taking the frustration out...	Referring to what we were discussing before this part of the conversation.
J2:	So…not necessarily taking the frustration out but looking at what the frustration is about.	I clarify what I mean about looking at this sense of frustration.
P3:	Okay, good…so the frustration, that whole thing, I can go and share a story. The frustration is about uncertainty and a feeling of swimming through mud and not being able to see clearly. The sense of feeling lost and disillusioned in this process of ... this year of being 40, I think like no time before, possibly.	Phyllis enjoys storytelling. This frustration about uncertainty and the feeling of "swimming through mud" arose during previous sessions.
J3:	So is it okay just to maybe pause on that felt sense of swimming through mud?	This felt sense of swimming through mud emerged in a previous session and I'm keen to help her pause and engage with the felt sense.
P4:	Thank you.	
J4:	Would you be okay with just pausing on that?	I sense she's not quite ready and ask the question again.
P5:	That could be really cool, I just want to offer a quick side story.	She is not ready to engage with the felt sense before she can share this story on her mind.
J5:	Sure.	
P6:	At Schumacher College I did a unit of study on...and it was titled, 'Taking a lead in the midst of complexity', and we were asked to do lots of work in	Here Phyllis is letting me know how far she has come. When she first started engaging with her feelings of uncertainty etc. she was petrified. The

	this nuanced space. And our teacher was a Gestalt therapist, and she thought I had it in for her, but it was the most acute...I just couldn't f***ing hack it, and wouldn't go...mid-session morning tea, and bawl my f***ing eyes out. It was so... And maybe this was my first window into feeling uncertainty, was ... I was petrified. Anyway, happy to go into a sense of swimming in mud.	key here being the inward attention to her feelings is what was terrifying for her (i.e. this was not the first time she had felt uncertainty as it reads). She is now ready to engage the felt sense after telling her story.
J6:	So you were petrified? And so, just pausing on all of that, just sensing in, taking your time. Perhaps just connecting with your breath, and reflecting on this sense of uncertainty and the frustration around the want for validation. This feeling of swimming through mud.	I reflect the essence of our discussion so far and guide her to this swimming through mud image, which is a familiar handle for engaging the felt sense.
P7:	[long pause] Immediately going into the feeling, well it's a visual actually, is like ... But I don't know how to ... There's like brown water, but water that could be actually brown clouds or sideways poo [laughing]…just this roll of ... or clouds tied with cotton binding...[sigh]	The long pause indicates Phyllis is slowing down and sensing inwards. She very quickly engages with the felt sense indicated by her use of imagery and trying to find the words to describe it, which demonstrates she is sensing directly these "clouds tied with cotton binding".
J7:	So clouds tied with cotton binding, this rolling brown…clouds, cotton binding.	I reflect her words back slowly and softly to support her in the process of slowing down.
P8:	Actually, going back to a deja vu, I can hear cutting the cotton binding, but I…deja vu, cutting away the cotton binding to open up. And a deja vu of a deep process I went through similar, when I was doing the process with the coaching Masters student in the UK was fine. And this was about a relationship with my youngest brother, actually at the time was about finding a mother of pearl. Oh wait, because it was similar shape. [laughing] There's a	She is connecting past experiences of similar processes with the Gestalt therapist and to memories of her brother, and a sense of cutting the binding to open up and finds this "mother of pearl" beneath the clouds/poo. This is a step, an opening towards noticing something new about the clouds/poo.

mother of pearl sitting under the f***ing thing, you know…it's like…	
J8: Mm-hmm [affirms].	
P9: Yep.	
J9: So there's a mother of pearl sitting under the thing?	I sense this is an important step and also Phyllis might move quickly passed it so I reflect this back to her to support her in staying with this new aspect of the felt sense.
P10: Well I'm…but I haven't necessarily…I'm just making a memory, like an association to ... what came up last time, I haven't actually been into this one, right…presently… [sigh] [long pause] But I've also just shifted and moved into very bodily sense of stabbing heart pain right now. [laughing]…which took me out of the visual imagery I described earlier [laughing]…ah it's possibly associated…	Phyllis is trying hard to stay with the felt sense and then there is another step as it changes from the image into bodily felt "stabbing heart pain", which she finds amusing.
J10: So there's a stabbing heart pain?	This was possibly a missed opportunity here. Instead of reflecting back the stabbing heart pain I could have brought her attention back to her felt sense of the mother of pearl. This would most likely have had different qualities that may have helped to resolve the feeling of swimming through mud. However, we will see later on at P18 that this mud/poo cloud transforms into something else anyway.
P11: Physically…like heartburn actually. [sigh] I think. Well, actually…[pause] And then the word associations that come after that is just, "Let it go, let it go. Just let it go."	Another step as words, "let it go…", come with this felt sense.
J11: So let it go.	

P12: Keep moving through the process, don't get blocked in it.	She senses the meaning as to keep on moving and not get blocked in the process.
J12: So keep moving through the process, don't get blocked in it.	
P13: It makes sense. Who was the sage that said that when you're going through shit, just keep going? Whatever it's like…"As agonizing as this process is for me, holding it up [laughing] is not gonna make it in easier, right?" Like I wanna get through like...[pause]	Here Phyllis is thinking about this quote and I'm a little concerned she will come out of sensing and back into thinking.
It's like holding the questions about the brown mud, and walking through mud, and the shit that's not clear. It's like, I'd actually like some clarity, but it's also holding...[pause]	A small step, what she would like from all of this questioning is some clarity.
So there's a sense of wanting to come out the other end of something, this process and journey of feeling through mud, but it's also inherently holding this as a f***ing lifelong paradox of, "This is the state of play, so just f***ing be able to be Buddhist, you know, non-attached about it. And sit with it, because this is the state. Don't be held by it but be with it. Embrace it."	Another step, where Phyllis's pace and energy has picked up as she has a felt sense of this realisation of "wanting to come out the other end of…this process". She is speaking in a way that she is telling herself what she has realised, that it is a "lifelong process" and to "sit with it, because this is the state… embrace it".
J13: So just pausing there for a minute, and just asking yourself the question, "How can I be with it?"	I'm feeling Phyllis has gone back into thinking here and so I ask a Focusing question to bring her back to sensing freshly.
P14: [Long pause]	Phyllis starts to tell a story about how she shared her vision for a sustainable future at the CSL retreat where she shares her ideas about the "creation of space", which has been significant for her healing.
It's actually the same. It's the same answer that I shared at the retreat, in my vision for a sustainable future was… [pause] Okay, I'm feeling this now a contracted heart, which is interesting to be sitting with, but I…shared with the class a meditation of lots of the healing and release and	

purge that I'd been through the last couple of months. I took them through a meditation and sitting with the notion of the creation of space, because that has so…has been a big f***ing shift…

And I totally felt ... I totally overshared with that group in my vulnerability, to say, "This is what's going on for the first time in my life." Anyway, I did, but I went through it like ... It's enabled space, and I feel like with the walking through mud/poo, when you ask, "How can I sit with this," one of ... the silver lining…

She then moves back into sensing directly the mud/poo cloud, which indicates she now has the ability to go from storytelling to felt sensing without guidance.

[pause]…including feeling or visualizing that poo/mud cloud in my body is actually ...the amount of padding and space I've been giving it…

[pause] I feel like including in real-time…I haven't been...I've almost been in a [sigh][pause]...

This is so weird and challenging to name as well, like…acknowledge for myself right now, as well…um…

She also points to the mud/poo cloud as being "in my body", which she describes as feeling "so weird and challenging to name as well" as she struggles with it in "real time".

Because all the things, all the ... there's visions of blue sky and a f***ing beach in the eastern suburbs that I can go and use this time and use this space to soak, if I can get my bodily, physical self there to just go and sit in the space of being in this space. And I haven't necessarily taken…prioritized that opportunity, and I feel like I have been giving space to this process and to myself in the last couple of months. Including through the window open, like this core word is this sense of space that I've created through a lot of this felt sense and process work. That's

Phyllis starts talking about a beach she can go to "sit in this space" but her tone and the speed with which she describes her "sense of space", the process work, and her struggles with daily activities (such as physical exercise, searching for jobs etc.) – the "hamster wheel of validation", indicates she has gone back into thinking and storytelling.

	been the big win in sensory experience, and so I haven't been filling that space, necessarily. But then I'm like ... I'm naming my frustrations of not doing physical exercise and feeling, but also I can spend all day at the computer looking for job ads, which I inevitably do. It's like that dopamine f***in hit, doing all these inane job-selection criteria, wanting to shift out of ...	
	And again, going into this hamster wheel of validation, which I [sigh] let go of at a point of surrender…which was part of the massive shift in the process of coming into this work with you, Jeremy, of finding the space and giving myself the space in the first place.	The "giving myself the space" she refers to here is participating in the coaching sessions and Focusing process.
J14:	Mm-hmm [affirms]. So the shift has been in giving yourself the space, and there's a sense of letting go of all of that.	I'm keen to bring Phyllis back to the felt sense and so interrupt her in order to pause and reflect back what has emerged.
P15:	I don't know what *that* is because *that* ...	Phyllis is coming back to the felt sense.
J15:	Yeah?	
P16:	All of these things are constantly all in tension all at the same time, as well. Right?	She is referring to her whole sense of *that* or her sense of "all of that", which she is finding challenging to name.
J16:	Yeah. So what is your sense of the space and this idea of letting go?	
P17:	Nice one. [pause] I have this...So I've got a visual and a spatial right now, and the space is in my upper body cavity, which is around ... Oh, God. I don't ... So around this cotton-bound, tied poo-thing, mud, which seems associated…sitting is possibly my heart, also as I hold a lot of the energy and frustrations in the world [*tears*	Phyllis describes exactly where she is sensing directly in her "upper body cavity" and as she describes this mud/poo thing she finds an association with her heart and "frustrations in the world" (referring to her concerns about the world), which brings tears.

coming] of what's f***ing going on right now, in a pretty dark space.

And I feel like there's a gestation of letting that thing brew, the mud, cotton-bound visual thing, but actually I don't know if I do it today, in this session, or I do it in the next week, or tonight, or by myself sometime, or it's not ready yet...

A small step forms as she realises there's something about needing to let the mud/poo thing brew. Something about it is not "ready yet"…for what we are still unsure. However, what comes next clarifies this uncertainty.

J17: Mm-hmm [affirms].

P18: …is the interesting thing, right…of transforming that thing, the cotton-bound mud cloud, poo...[*laughing and crying out loud almost hysterically*]

Oh, God. It's a f***ing cocoon is what it is, and I've just like ...when that opens, like I've just ...there's space to let it, it is gestating, and it's f***ing doing its thing, and I want the new-emergence in this heart-space of the cocoon into the next f***ing forward. And the pain is like the pain of coming out, right?

And emerging from that, so that's what I've just, at least I've nailed this much just then, thank f*** [laughing], and I ... You've named it previously, in terms of that ...

Phyllis is laughing and crying out loud as she experiences a felt shift of transforming the mud/poo thing and realises it's actually a cocoon in her heart space waiting to emerge, "it's doing its thing" and the pain she feels is actually "the pain of coming out". This is a big and important step for her.

She mentions how I've named it previously, but it hasn't been until she's had a felt sense (i.e. in the form of an image in her heart space) of that that the shift (this transformative step) has occurred.

J18: Mm-hmm.

P19: …about how I'm such an inherently an impatient person.

J19: Mm-hmm [affirms].

P20: And so we've done this, named this before, right? And so I have this duality of being so f***ing impatient, yet I'm the last…like here, [laughing] sitting in this space with you, being able to see the cocoon...like I can finally *see* the cocoon, but it's still embodied.

Phyllis's pace has changed as she has come out of engaging directly with the felt sense. She is now reflecting on it and refers to the cocoon as still being embodied or not yet transformed.

J21: Yeah. So is it okay to just be with that cocoon for a little bit longer? So there

I'm keen to support her in staying with the felt sense and invite her to do so.

was a big shift there for you, from this sense of the tied up poo-cloud that actually it's a *cocoon*.	
P21: I know. [laughing]	
J22: There's a question about its readiness, so that's actually the question. Is it ready, or it's not ready yet, or something about that.	The unresolved aspect of it is this question about its readiness.
P22: Yeah, so a big shift is to actually have the clarity to see the f***ing cocoon like not as a wall of mud or dirty water...there's been no form to it for f***ing months, so at least I can see it for what it is now.	Phyllis is reflecting on her insight about the cocoon and is happy with that.
J23: So you can see it for what it is?	She clarifies that she can both see (i.e. the insight) and feel (i.e. the felt sense) this sense of it not being ready.
P23: And also, see...because I can feel that it's not ready yet.	

Discussion of excerpt no.10 – how focusing can support the coaching process

Moving from storytelling to felt sensing

As this excerpt demonstrates, Phyllis engaged with the felt sense in multiple ways such as whole senses (e.g. swimming through mud, sitting with the calm/space), bodily senses (e.g. the heartburn, stabbing heart pain, felt sense emerging from her heart space), imagery (i.e. the mud/poo cloud bound with string transforming into a cocoon) and so on. She moved in-between spaces (i.e. head, heart, upper body cavity) and in ways of engaging with the felt sense quickly and unpredictably. In particular, there was a continuous "to-ing and fro-ing" between thinking, feeling and sensing as she moved from storytelling to felt sensing. This required me, as facilitator, to carefully follow her process and help her to pause and slow down in order to guide her from storytelling back to the felt sense. According to Welwood (2002: 139-140), "stories about the way we are or the way reality is", which help form our identity, are an "elaborate web of rationalisations…[that can act as] obstacles to healing because they keep us separate from our experience". Further, even if this sense of

identity is not accurate, it "provides some illusion of stability and permanence amid the uncertainty and flux of existence" (Welwood 2002: 140). This may in part explain Phyllis's desire to tell stories and describe past events as they help create a sense of stability amongst an uncertain and unpredictable world.

Operating from a place of not knowing in order to be authentically present

As previously mentioned, I did not attempt to analysis or interpret what she was saying (e.g. the cutting of the binding around the mud/poo cloud or the mother of pearl sitting underneath). This required me to operate from "not knowing" so I could be more authentically present and attentive to her process. This was not needed for Phyllis to arrive at her own insights and realisations. Indeed, if I had stopped and asked her to explain what she meant by something, this would most likely have brought her back into thinking and the felt shifts would not have occurred. Further, the process of trying to interpret what she was saying would have prevented me from being authentically present in the moment.

Discussion of excerpt from session no.10 – continued

Gaining a felt understanding of self-care

The most significant shift for Phyllis was the ability to see the "mud/poo cloud", which she has been "swimming through" for years, as a "cocoon", and gain a sense of forward movement and potential for change implicit in this new felt sense. Even though the cocoon was not ready yet to transform and she might not have had the clarity she was looking for, this was enough for her to bring a sense of relief.

We continued to reflect on what her body was telling her she needed in the form of self-care – while she was in this waiting period (i.e. for the cocoon to transform). She recognised this struggle between wanting to slow things down and take care of herself (in particular, by doing physical exercise), and her tendencies to resist and sabotage the self-care process by over-thinking, as she stated:

> And then there's this sense of ridicule, ridicule of why do I have to go into a whole f***ing process about it. And this is the whole thing, just do it, get out of

> your head and do it, do it, do it, do it. Stop thinking about it, stop having an **existential crisis**, that's what is breaking the pattern to go do it, is stop being in a pre-contemplation mode.

And as we continue to reflect another shift spontaneously occurs:

> And then also, this whole...here comes the deep emotion again, the whole...and another **deep shift** here...shifting the validation mechanisms or seeking the external f***ing validation, compared to coming within, the **internal validation of looking after myself**.

This shift emerged from her initial frustration around her need for external "validation in the world" she mentioned at the start of the session (P1). Now she had a felt sense of what it is like to provide her own internal validation, which she could see as being part of her self-care process. She reminisced how terrified she was when she was first exposed to Gestalt therapy and required to explore her feelings around uncertainty. However, she noted that she hadn't felt ready or safe enough to explore these feelings more deeply until she had experienced focusing. Importantly, it was the felt sensing, and not more rational thinking that enabled her to achieve these shifts. Specifically, the inward attention provided the space she desperately needed for her felt sense (i.e. the feeling of swimming through mud, the mud/poo cloud) to transform into a cocoon with its implicit feeling of potential for change (i.e. its gestation and waiting to transform).

Excerpt from session no.10 – *Becoming OK with uncertainty*

After a few minutes of further discussion, Phyllis then sensed that her "felt sense [is] coming forward" and needed her attention. This excerpt is approx. 2 pages.

P24: Something wants to come in this space, I feel like ...well, not maybe…as you say the felt sense is the new, is the new felt sense coming forward. [sigh] [long pause]	Phyllis enters into her own process without any guidance from me as indicated by her sighing, slowing down and the long silent pause.

	Well, I may be ... f*** [laughing], this is endless, anyway, maybe this is...the word associated with calm, compared to the one, the sensory experience of, associated with space, and maybe I could put the two of them together…[laughing]	She realises that part of her resistance to doing exercise is her wanting to just sit in the stillness of this newly found "calm space" and "experience it in its wholeness".
	…and feel like, calm space, but the space has felt really f***ing calm and...like, I can't even...and well, it has been this whole exploration of this new sense of space has been deeply f***ing satiating, and that's what's been so addictive about it, that I've just wanted to hang in it and not...	
	Just experience it in its wholeness as it is and not be exercising...you know, doing...move, I've just been in this sort of "wow" exploration of sitting in the stillness of this space. And that's a different one if, too...	
	…if this one is emerging, oh here I am naming it, so this is what's happening Phyllis, it's like, if this is calm, then it feels like a different energy and movement, and it's channelling up like a funnel from my heart space, upwards, probably through, up and out of my body, rather than...	She starts to find words to describe the this "different energy and movement" from her heart space she is sensing. She is then able to describe this felt sense/image of space in detail.
	And it's a sort of grey, or not, like an opaque colouring rather than the sense of space, which is much more transparent, and sort of clear…and if...the space feels like it has, and looks, like it has a membrane of my outer skin and outer body, it's fairly thick…and...	
J24:	So there's a...the space seems clear, and there's a membrane, and then there's this other energy which is coming like a funnel from your heart space, up and outwards. And so there seems to be something different about that.	I'm keen for Phyllis to explore what is different about this new energy and sense of space and draw her attention to it.
P25:	Yeah. Well, this one I'm calling and describing as "calm," but I'd like also, I've also been having the sensory experiences today, through this process… including...[sigh]…describing this calm of some physical pain, and I've just	She indicates that the insights from the felt sense "keep coming".

been describing to you stabbing pains around my heart and heartburn, and actually, when I go to this calm, in a similar ...[laughing] I can't, just oh Christ almighty, I can't do this, it keeps coming, keeps coming...

…what the calm, what the calm, what the feeling, where otherwise the cocoon was, is also a f***ing gnarled, like the genesis of the calm, which I've described as a heart space earlier, also looks like a totally munted kidney shaped baby potato, which is looking a bit gnarly. And then, this is so f***ing …like… [laughing]

…my step mom, in my exhaustion I think I shared with you about the suggestion about a business professional coach, I said, "I'm doing all this work…, I just can't f***ing deal with it, it doesn't stop," and her comeback was, and I'm a bit like this with the gnarled potato, it's like...her response was,

"Yeah, that's right, it keeps going and going and going and going, and then there's some more, and then it keeps going and going, and then you die, and then it stops and there's no more of that." [laughing]

And it's just, grrrh! Sometimes just stop the world and stop this internal process I'm describing in this session with you today. [laughing]

Phyllis has come a long way. She's had many steps to arrive at some significant felt shifts. She indicates that her body has had enough and she needs a rest.

J25: Yeah.

P26: Anyway...enough.

We stopped here, reflected on the process and she acknowledged that shifts would continue to occur over the next couple of days. We then discussed how she could consolidate some of the learnings and insights from the session through various activities she has found useful (such as journaling).

Discussion of excerpt from session no.10 – continued

Learning acceptance, patience and becoming OK with uncertainty

Phyllis ended the session by recognising that the image/felt sense of the cocoon "is a form of knowing and certainty" that had given her some clarity and a way forward where "previously [she'd been] swimming though mud". Even though we didn't arrive at this new "something" from the cocoon, this is a kind of resolution of her initial frustrations about the uncertainty she mentioned earlier in the session (P3).

Arguably, Phyllis's felt sense of wanting to sit in the "stillness of this [sense of] space" and "experience it in its wholeness" was potentially more significant. This could be seen as an evolution of her desire and capacity to hold all the questions about the "mud/poo cloud" in a way that is more "Buddhist…non-attached" (P13). According to Welwood (2002: 141), this can be viewed as "being present with our experience as it is", an "unconditional presence" where we can be with "our experience in a fresh, *open-minded* way" [italics added]. And I would add here, in an *open-hearted* way.

Reflective dialogue and focusing excerpt from session no.11

This was the 11th session with Phyllis and approximately one month since her previous session. During this time she had secured a new job in an organisation working to support housing co-operatives (i.e. aligned with her interests and skills), had joined the gym and given up smoking. She felt as though the "holding pattern" in terms of her journey was over and she was now in the "post chrysalis/cocoon" phase, as she explained:

> I feel like the transition point now is to rather than **fighting** and **battling** with all this stuff [referring to uncomfortable feelings and challenging situations that arise], [I am now having] an energetic experience of more **outward facing** and interflow with having **arrived** after all those lessons.

Learning acceptance, patience and how to be with uncertainty

I asked her to further explain this idea of fighting and battling and how her new approach is different, and she replied:

> …fighting and battling is a form of **resistance**, because a shift is…coming to more **acceptance**…including with **uncertainty**, and or the tensions of **waiting**, and **patience**, and understanding **timeliness**.

Phyllis could now see how her resistance had been both an internal and external process, where she had questioned and battled "labour market participation" for example, and struggled with feeling disempowered (a "victim of circumstance") as a result of her active resistance. This new approach involved learning how to be with uncertainty in a different way (discussed above) including patience and how to accept and "go with movement" – enabled by the micro-process of following the forward movement or "carrying forward" of the felt sense. As Phyllis described, she moved from a "default disempowered blaming and throwing rocks" state (i.e. not feeling able to change her situation) to "a re-emergence in the world", involving an "energetic shift…that feels very different internally". Further, this inner work enabled her to "unplug this deep…hyper anxiety default" she had experienced for decades. She could now see the connection between her inner process and her being in the world, as she stated:

> …the shift [to]…stopping throwing rocks…and being more…**aligned**… not feeling so disempowered or despondent, means that I might be **more engaging**, and engageable with friends and community.

This change supported her to be "more responsive, proactive and engaged" (i.e. more effective when engaging with others), in particular in relation to her work. This required a kind of letting go, of learning to stop fighting and resisting at both the micro-processing level and broader, macro systems level (i.e. to stop "throwing rocks" in a metaphorical sense at people). In other words, learning how to let what her body wanted her to know arise and trusting in that process, and learning how to live in a complex and uncertain world where she is limited in her human ability to create the change that is needed.

A new experience and sense of self as wholebody transformation

Phyllis's sense of "internal spaciousness" that was provided through focusing enabled this internal energetic shift. I asked Phyllis what her sense of what the spaciousness provides and she replied:

> …it's like my cells…at the **cellular level**, like I just feel really…**whole**, and warm like…not a cerebral, like a **bodily self-affirmation**. Like all my cells are satisfied.

And foundational to this has been a "new experience of self", as she explained:

> … this whole **transformation** has been internally…and these shifts, and that relief and that spaciousness is…very much about…I was going to say re-anchoring but new anchoring in, and **newly discovered** and or revealed **experience of self**, and **sense of self**.

Phyllis noted how this involved "totally shifting my self-talk to a much more positive self-affirming, and self-validating space, rather than minimizing or nullifying, or non-validation". At this point I sensed some focusing would help to anchor this bodily felt sense of self-validation (this excerpt is approx. 3 pages).

J1:	The **validation** is in here. And so I'm just wondering when you sit with that validation, that positive self-affirming feeling, I'm just wondering if you could just feel into that, just with that a little bit more. And perhaps ask yourself the question is there anything else around that?	I invite Phyllis to really let her body feel this new shift or change in how she feels toward herself. I ask a familiar question for her to start engaging her felt sense of validation.
	Just really taking your time, perhaps it could be an image, or a smell, or a taste. Or something different around that feeling of **self-affirmation**, that positive internal validation.	I suggest an image, smell or taste as a way to support her to engage with the felt sense. I have found that Phyllis responds well to these suggestions by providing her with something more explicit to focus inwardly on.
P1:	Yes, an image of like, two hands and two feet. Two feet reaching from the floor,	This image of hands and feet is accompanied by a sensation of

	and just jumping up, and a sensation of…and the word **joy** that comes with it.	jumping with joy indicating she has quickly engaged with the felt sense.
J2:	So there's a sense of joy that comes with it.	
P2:	Like energised…joy.	Her felt sense of joy is specific …it's energised.
J3:	Energised joy. [pause] And so when you have this image of the two hands, and the two feet jumping, and this energised sense of joy, is there anything else? Or are there any other qualities around that?	I pause to allow her time and to see if anything else emerges. After a while I ask a question to keep the process moving forward.
P3:	[long pause] [sigh] Yeah, a big thing…there is a massive thing around the thing. A massive consciousness about **how I occur in the world**, and the fact that I can validate this in the world, and allow it in… allowing the **happiness**, it's **not conditional**, let it soak in, and let it be here…like let it in.	She is referring to her felt sense as the "thing". A big step here where Phyllis has a felt realisation of how she can be in the world in a way that allows joy and happiness in. It has a very specific quality of not being conditional. She is almost willing or giving permission for herself to "let it in".
J4:	So allowing the happiness in.	
P4:	Yeah. But also being…shifting my **identity** in the world by articulating this **different way of being**, rather than…[pause] And my **consciousness** around that, around how I occur in the world, and how I communicate …and/or the previous feelings of despondency, and/or **cynicism**…	Another step where she clarifies how this shift in her identity is both a response to and result of this "different way of being". It is a shift in consciousness towards a new ways of being (unconditional joy, happiness) and also away from old ways of being (cynicism, despondency).
P5:	When people feed back to me, and or other people, about beating one's self up, I often cannot understand, or see it for what it is. And possibly because I…well things are not dynamic, linear…sometimes I spend a lot of	Phyllis is referring to how people provide feedback about her self-deprecating sense of humour or negative self-talk as beating herself up, and up until recently she couldn't see this. However, in this moment she can see it from the outside and is

	time there. But it's right now, I'm talking about it, and I'm going "I'm not doing that right now", and so I can see from **outside** it. But sometimes when you're in it, you can't see it.	making a conscious decision to positively self-affirm rather than engage in negative self-talk.
J6:	Yeah.	
P6:	That one, I always wrestle with that one, particularly when I'm presented with it. And here **I am looking back or down on it**, going, "I'm not doing that right now."	Phyllis is describing her sense of being on the outside, looking back on this non-validating aspect of herself.
J7:	Yeah, yeah. Okay. So there's been a shift in consciousness in how you're perceiving yourself, so there's a different way of being in the world that can see yourself. So there's a noticing that you didn't have before, when you're beating yourself up. And so when you're in it, you can't see it. But now you're noticing actually right now that difference of how you can actually go about perceiving yourself differently, and noticing those aspects.	I'm reflecting back and pointing to this different way of being in the world that she can actually feel in this moment. This will help her to resonate and anchor the meaning in her body.
P7:	Mmm, Mmm [affirms]	Phyllis likes this reflection and affirms strongly.
J8:	And so there's like a positive reaffirming feeling, or approach now, in how you perceive yourself.	
P8:	[long pause] And all energetically…um…the possibility of these, I'm also seeing the image of the **infinity symbol** on its side…yeah, the infinity eight on its side, or actually the two. Yeah, because they touch, of the positively reinforcing, or the negatively reinforcing self-talk. And the positively reinforcing, just so much more **simpler** and **lighter**. Like the negative stuff is heavy,	Another step and a long pause as a new image of an infinity symbol emerges, which has both the positive and negative self-talk. This pausing followed by the image indicates Phyllis is directly sensing the felt sense. This new image is interesting and I could easily ask her to explain what she means by it. But as mentioned, asking about content would move

including that I'm not okay being not okay. And the weightedness of the negative stuff. [sigh]

her into "analytical thinking" rather than felt sensing.

J9: So the positive self-talk feels simpler and lighter.

P9: Mmm [affirms] Liberates more space to engage more.

J10: Yeah. Liberates more space to engage more.

Another step, the positive self-talk also liberates more space to engage more. At this stage I'm not sure what she is referring to. I'm assuming to engage more with the external world, but I cannot be sure.

P10: Which is also part of this **coming out of the cocoon**, and **engaging more in the world**… Like there's transitions happening all at once. And the new self-talk one is coming in actually, and the gym thing. And all this kick-up-the -pants. Like there's been this pre-contemplative exercise, internal dialogue, **thinking too much**, being very heady going on for months. And I've finally just made the switch last three days to **be in my body**. It's been liberated by getting out of this workplace, and over thinking that, and **feeling suppressed in the context of the work I'm doing**. And then this experience of not moving my body…well I just had this experience like two days ago of this whole neurological, like with the shift, I could feel all my neurology. **Like brain activity shifting**, new paths, or **recreating paths** that have been a bit atrophied for a while.

Another step, Phyllis clarifies what she means by to engage more. She connects this new realisation with her felt sense of the cocoon, which emerged from her previous session, and how this positive self-talk enables her to engage more in the world.

And there has been this switch from over-thinking to being in her body, which has in turn helped to create new neurological pathways.

J11: Yeah.

P11: So all these things going on a lot of different levels.

J12: Amazing, thank you.

All these shifts are occurring at all different levels and it is enough for me just to acknowledge "all these things", which points to her whole felt sense of all of that.

Discussion of excerpt from session no.11

Using image as a handle for the felt sense

Phyllis spontaneously referred to her image of the cocoon – a "handle" on the felt sense from her previous sessions. As Gendlin (1996: 48) explains, just as "the handle of a suitcase…brings with it the whole weight of the suitcase, the whole weight of the felt sense is brought forward by that one word or phrase when one repeats it to oneself". She was then able to use this image as an "avenue" (Gendlin, 1996: 171) to pick up where she left off (so to speak) with the felt sense from the previous session. The shift that accompanied the image is not the image itself. It is bodily felt and came from bodily sensing the implicit whole. And the shift "is a new step in how she *is*. It is and includes the past, but in a new and changed way, as a new and different bit of holistic living" (Gendlin, 1996: 82). In other words, the image comes as part of a new bit of bodily being. It is not only emerging but already a new step of change (Gendlin, 1996: 82).

Bodily felt experience of a new way of being

Phyllis described a shift in consciousness or way of being, which felt like shifts at all levels of her body including new neurological pathways (i.e. a cellular level transformation). This was accompanied by an emergence from her image of the "cocoon" to being more engaged in the world, which allows joy and happiness and includes self-affirmation rather than "negatively reinforcing self-talk". Again, this shift towards a new way of being was not an idea or conceptual realisation but a bodily felt experience – a "body self-affirmation".

Excerpt from session no.12 – Anchoring the felt sense of a cellular level of presence

This excerpt is approx. 3 pages.

J1:	I'm just wondering what other micro processes, so what I'm really sort of asking about at a micro level, what do you sense is different in relation to how you could be in this new role, catching	Here I ask Phyllis how she can bring her new ways of being from her inner work to a new way of being in relation to her new role.

the train into work each day? I'm just wondering do you have a sense of what is different for you as a way of being that you can bring from all the various discussions and processes that we've had over the past year?

And take your time with that. That was a big question.

P1: Well, the thing that keeps coming up, I'm trying to see…there's an **image** and…but…it's interesting that's what you just put…how you've just articulated that to me is not what is been presented back right now, which is how do you *feel*…and it's like and you talk about micro processes. I'm just feeling like at a **cellular level,** what, what [starting to cry] like what I feel happened for me, Jeremy, through this process with you, with this total f***ing alignment. Like a **cellular restructure** …pointing myself in one direction and…at the cellular level. Like billions of times of over, you know?

By this stage in her journey, Phyllis is much more aware of her ability to engage the felt sense without the need for a guiding process.

She is trying to engage the felt sense through imagery, which is her preferred way of doing so.

She starts to cry indicating she is having a felt shift about how the process has helped her in achieving this "cellular restructure".

And I…the stuff we've talked about, like about the spacial…and this… like I just feel [*sigh*]… um…It's about a feeling space of more **holism of myself** that I'm bringing and because of a restructure and at a deep physiological level, through the focusing work that I've done with you and some of the shifts that happen in, spoken through the **imagery** stuff that I had earlier…

Phyllis is describing the restructure as feeling more her whole self.

And like…an image that is coming now, I can't…it looks like a white a sort of legume bean on its side and I can't make out...

Again, here I'm thinking now, on its side, I'm like is that a sort of a pregnancy or more fertility image as well in the same way that I was looking at one point at… this looks like a very,

She is engaging with the felt sense indicated by her use of imagery and challenge in trying to describe this legume.

like pale, legume on its side. And I don't know and I'm seeing it just on the corner of a particular street, I can't remember… that's the image I'm seeing. I don't know if that bean is me or is part of me being part of…in that…process of this part of my life...

J2: So, there's a white legume laying on its side. And so, when you're just being with that, are there any other sort of qualities about that or a sense of smell or taste or any other ideas or images that are around that legume on its side?

I sense from her description that Phyllis is struggling with the image and so offer her some focusing suggestions to help anchor and deepen her engagement with the felt sense.

P2: Well, I guess like it's a still image, a fixed point. Like it's not f***ing moving like so much of that environment does with the human activity around it.

J3: So, it's still? It has a quality of stillness about it when everything else around it is moving, is that right?

I'm reflecting back what she is sensing, which helps to slow the process down and support her in staying with her felt sense.

P3: Just a quality of stillness about it, no movement about it. There's no more around it. That's the image. There's no movement. That's what comes is a **stillness** and **calm**, which I just I feel like…

J4: Stillness and calm.

P4: They're new…these are **new qualities** at a whole new level of Phyllis in the **cellular integration** that's happened through this process with you…yeah.

These new qualities of stillness and calm that describe this cellular restructure have emerged.

J5: Is okay to stay with that for a little bit, just pause on that and really just feel what it's like for that to be in your body and to really have a bodily felt sense of that feeling of stillness and calm, which is a new quality or new qualities. So even in that space of busyness and moving around, there are these new qualities of stillness and calm. [*pause*]

Again, I'm supporting Phyllis to anchor her bodily feel of these new qualities of stillness and calm.

Really just taking your time to feel what that is like.

P5: [long pause for about 1min] **…wholeness** is another word and I like…actually looking at the white bean on its side is actually a side profile of me and my fat belly and I'm just at like a level of… it's interesting when I go through naming these inherent shifts and changes that have happened in the course of this work and the things I come…I'll put at the top of what is the new, like stillness and calm. It's like when I also say wholeness, it's like a cellular sense of **self-assuredness**, like self-assuredness of like **presence** and I find it fascinating, like my monkey mind is tuned in 24/7 and making judgements about me and the world and how I'm fitting in and blah blah blah blah blah…[laughing] which must also be in a different way has been historically…because these qualities and traits feel more **unshakable** now…including, and I just think it's so fascinating. Like I just...

After a long pause where Phyllis is sensing directly a new quality of wholeness emerges. As she goes through the process of naming these shifts, more qualities emerge. Now we have a more "unshakeable" sense of "self-assuredness of presence", where previously she was consumed by the "monkey mind".

J6: Okay, wow. So, can I just reflect that back. So, at a cellular level and this is related to these new qualities of stillness and calm and wholeness. The wholeness is actually related to a cellular sense of self-assuredness of this presence, which is different. So, you're aware of this, you're aware of the monkey mind and it's different to that and so there's these qualities and traits which feel more unshakable now.

I sense this is a big step for Phyllis and reflect what she has said back in order to help clarify and anchor this new felt realisation.

P6: Yeah…yeah…**cellular level of presence** is what I was trying to say…

J7: Yeah.

P7: And then that, which is the…nature of this feeling…

J8:	Yeah.	
P8:	This is going to go around and...so, like as I try to describe it to you [tears coming]	Phyllis starts to cry out loud as she feels the relief that comes from the felt shift.
J9:	Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Wow. Okay. So, at a cellular level of the presence, of presence, which is also the nature of the feeling.	
P9:	Nice one!	

Discussion of this excerpt is in section 5.2.4.4.

Appendix X – example of reflective dialogue with Theresa

This was from the sixth coaching session with Theresa just after she returned from the retreat. The session began by reflecting on her experience of the retreat and any insights she may have had. This morphed into a conversation (approx. 2 pages) about what she had gained from the coaching process, in particular, the value of spaces for silence in dialogue, the relief this provided and "how much the world needs this" (session #6).

T1: I feel like the last few months have been…I think that the thing that I've taken away from these sessions, like really really clearly, is the bits where it felt like it was exactly what I needed. It was almost being able sit here and say…just, just say it, and to feel the **silence afterwards**. After some time, you'd ask a question, or I might pick up some other line, but the feeling of **relief**…in doing that, I don't think I ever really ever expected to feel that, which is funny because it's really, it's both a really simple and a really sophisticated kind of thing to do.

…to know that I could sit in this space and just have, just play out what was going on, and to **not feel the need to instantly resolve it**, or to…I kinda, I feel like…I guess I came into the coaching inquiry with an appreciation for just **letting people have their experience**, and the need to not critique or judge. That it's okay what people are feeling but…I don't think I'd realised how much *I* needed that.

I almost like, you know what? Yeah. It almost just felt like this was this space where there was like a, not a wall because that sounds exclusive, but it was this **safe space** to…just let things be. And in going to the States and having another different kind of experience with the same thing, I feel so strong in myself about the value of that, and how much I need that, but **how much the world needs** that and how much people need that.

I've had so many conversations in the past few months, about **certainty**, and the desire for certainty, and how much I need it, or I want it, even though I can't have it. But that's one thing I feel totally certain of, is the need and importance of that.

J1: Of being okay with uncertainty, or your awareness of your need for certainty?

T2: The need for spaces like this, where people can say what they need to, into the **silence**. Then it'll be silence afterwards. I don't know what you call that…yeah…

It's hard to...I think, I don't know, maybe I just want more silence in my life, but it's just this sense of...and like I can say something into the silence, and then after a while, I'm like actually, it's wrong. But I guess it's a feeling of **not being rushed** or

not being **pushed**, or not feeling **like it's not enough**….um…yeah, it's just like the feeling of **stopping** or **pausing**.

T3 I've been talking about gentleness, I feel, on and off with friends for years, and people, close friends have commented that **I'm very gentle with other people, but I don't offer it to myself**. I have heard that for years and years, but for some reason, that, sitting in that group, all of a sudden, it was almost like all of a sudden, **I was ready to hear it**, because it came…because I'd been through enough stuff and I was ready.

I ended up talking about it for ages, and I think that's what the **silence** is about in a way. I don't know. You're only dealing with what you're ready to deal with. It's not only about control, but it's like **you're setting your own pace**.

…it was almost just like an **emotional realisation** of something. That I'd **known it intellectually** for ages, and then all of sudden, emotionally, I was like, I just slam myself. I don't talk about it very much because I'm not even really conscious of doing it, but **it doesn't even feel like an inner voice**…it just feels like…it's **deeper than a voice**, but it's like I offer this to pretty much everybody in my life, but I haven't offered it to myself. But I could only hear it because **I was ready to hear it**, and because **it came from me rather than from someone else".**

Gaining a felt understanding of the importance of being gentle to self

I think **I felt it in my body**. [*pause*] …I have a great **trust of my tears** sometimes, that I get. As soon as they hit something, that feels like it's **new** or it's **true** or something. Yeah, that's how my body responds.

I felt on the closing day, we were able to make a closing kind of… comment or something like that, to the group, and I felt compelled to say it in that space that I had this realisation that I always associated, **gentleness**, kind of like with not necessarily weakness, but with something soft or kind of floaty, and it being almost inherently very feminine, like you expect gentleness from mothers or something, and I just had such a strong feeling that **gentleness can actually take a huge amount of strength**. Or for me, it takes a huge amount of strength. All these people came up and said things about that afterwards, and I was quite surprised. Maybe nobody offers themselves gentleness…

Again, that was a realisation that you can't really explore something, or be **creative**, or test new waters if you don't have an element of gentleness. Whether that's in…whatever field you're in, you need to have the capacity to be gentle if the result is not what you want it to be. That **gentleness seems totally vital to be able to experiment**, because otherwise you'll try something once, and if it doesn't work, and then you'll just slay yourself and not try again…

I used that [being gentle with myself] the other day like... I was back for two weeks and I had to do this, the first I've ever pitched something. I think I got sick at the start of the week and then didn't have very much time to prepare. I was feeling sick with nerves about it, and then I thought, like, **what if I was gentle with myself** about this. It totally shifts my feeling about it…and the **response is relief**, it's a feeling of…yeah, I think it's almost like a physical response that feels like **letting go**. Just like I could offer that to myself.