

# SHAPING TOMORROW

A Playbook for Coaching Leaders in  
Sustainable Decision-Making and Policy





## **Shaping Tomorrow: A Playbook for Coaching Leaders in Sustainable Decision-Making and Policy**

Written by Ruby Campbell and Diana Collett

With significant contributions from: Jackie Arnold, Denise Baden, David Bennett, Wassim Dbouk, Jenny Wardle, Katarzyna Schubert-Panecka, Natalie Nickells, Volker Molthan, Lina Lo and Michael Cavanagh

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The **Climate Coaching Alliance** (CCA) is a global, voluntary organisation of coaches dedicated to transforming the coaching profession and its impact on creating a sustainable future.

Our mission is to promote a change in human awareness of our disconnection from ourselves, from others and from nature, leading to systemic changes for a regenerative future, where humanity remembers its deep connection with self-others-world. We aim to influence the global professional coaching community by integrating the critical issues of climate and ecological emergencies into coaching conversations. We are deeply grateful to the many CCA volunteers who worked on this project, in particular the Playbook Team and regular members of the Political Pod.

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# INTRODUCTION

Over recent decades, the realities of climate change, habitat loss, species extinction and extreme inequality have become increasingly dire. Some hopes that seemed achievable even ten years ago now seem difficult to sustain. Abandoning certain hopes can be a positive step when it helps us acknowledge the new conditions we face. Conversely, focusing on what is possible from where we are can nourish the conviction that our actions can make a difference.

The first approach involves recognising our current situation, recalibrating our hopes and letting go of what is no longer feasible. The second approach encourages us to consider future possibilities and what we can still commit to achieving. This backdrop inspired the development of this Playbook, a manifestation of a commitment to empower coaches and other change agents to harness their expertise in significantly enhancing the effectiveness of climate action efforts.

In early 2023, the Climate Coaching Alliance (**CCA Political Pod**) identified a critical need for a set of steps that would help change agents navigate the challenges of climate coaching in politics. In response, a multidisciplinary team of volunteer experts in climate coaching, coaching psychology, business mediation, environmental policy, sustainability, education, psychotherapy and science came together from across the globe. Their mission: to bridge the knowledge and practice gap in climate coaching within the political and civic spheres to build a sustainable future. This journey, powered by a profound love for our planet, is shown from the viewpoint of how living systems function and interact.

Living systems thrive through collaboration, systemic processes and diversity. Nature serves as our inspiration. In nature, tensions are not problems – they are catalysts for adaptation and evolution, leading to flourishing ecosystems. Many organisational researchers and climate coaches see this as the future of work. This approach surpasses agile methodology by making space for human emotions and connections.

We invite you to join us. Work with your stakeholders to identify tensions in your systems. Use a living systems approach to create effective solutions within an interconnected ecosystem. This ecosystem includes all stakeholders: national, state and local politicians, businesses, educational institutions, community and religious groups, indigenous people and everyone committed to a sustainable future.

By applying the latest tools from the social sciences captured in this playbook and building on the pioneering work of ecological coaches in the CCA community, we can drive meaningful change through our work with politicians and policymakers. Together, we can adapt, evolve and amplify our efforts across organisations and governance institutions working towards a thriving, sustainable world for generations to come. We can build effective bridges between politics and sustainability.



# HISTORY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The urgent need for action on climate change has been **highlighted by scientists** for several decades. However, it gained significant attention in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as accumulating scientific evidence pointed to the potential catastrophic impacts on ecosystems, economies and human life. A notable milestone was the formation of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC) by the United Nations in 1988. The IPCC, the foremost international authority on climate science, was established to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts, and potential adaptation and mitigation strategies. Its first assessment report in 1990 brought global attention to the issue.

A pivotal moment in recognising climate change as a global risk was the publication of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report in 2001. This emphasised human influence on the climate system and highlighted the potential severe impacts on ecosystems, economies and human societies.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) also started including climate change in its **Global Risks Report** in the mid-2000s, first identifying it as a top global risk in 2006.

In 2015, the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (Climate Action is #13) and the landmark Paris Agreement were adopted by nearly every country in the world, highlighting the need for urgent action to limit global warming and mitigate its impacts.

As of this writing, the latest IPCC reports on climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability were **released in 2022**. These assess the impacts of climate change on ecosystems, biodiversity and human communities at global and regional levels. They also review vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change. A report for policymakers was released by the **IPCC in 2023**.

Understanding the history and ongoing developments in climate change is crucial. The need for urgent action is not new, but it is more urgent than ever. By learning this history, we can better appreciate the need for immediate, collaborative efforts to address climate change.

# HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

This Playbook is a flexible guide for coaches, coaching supervisors and consultants who want to work with political and civic leaders to develop sustainable mindsets. It offers leaders a framework and tools to encourage collaborative climate change policymaking, aiming for a better future for all.

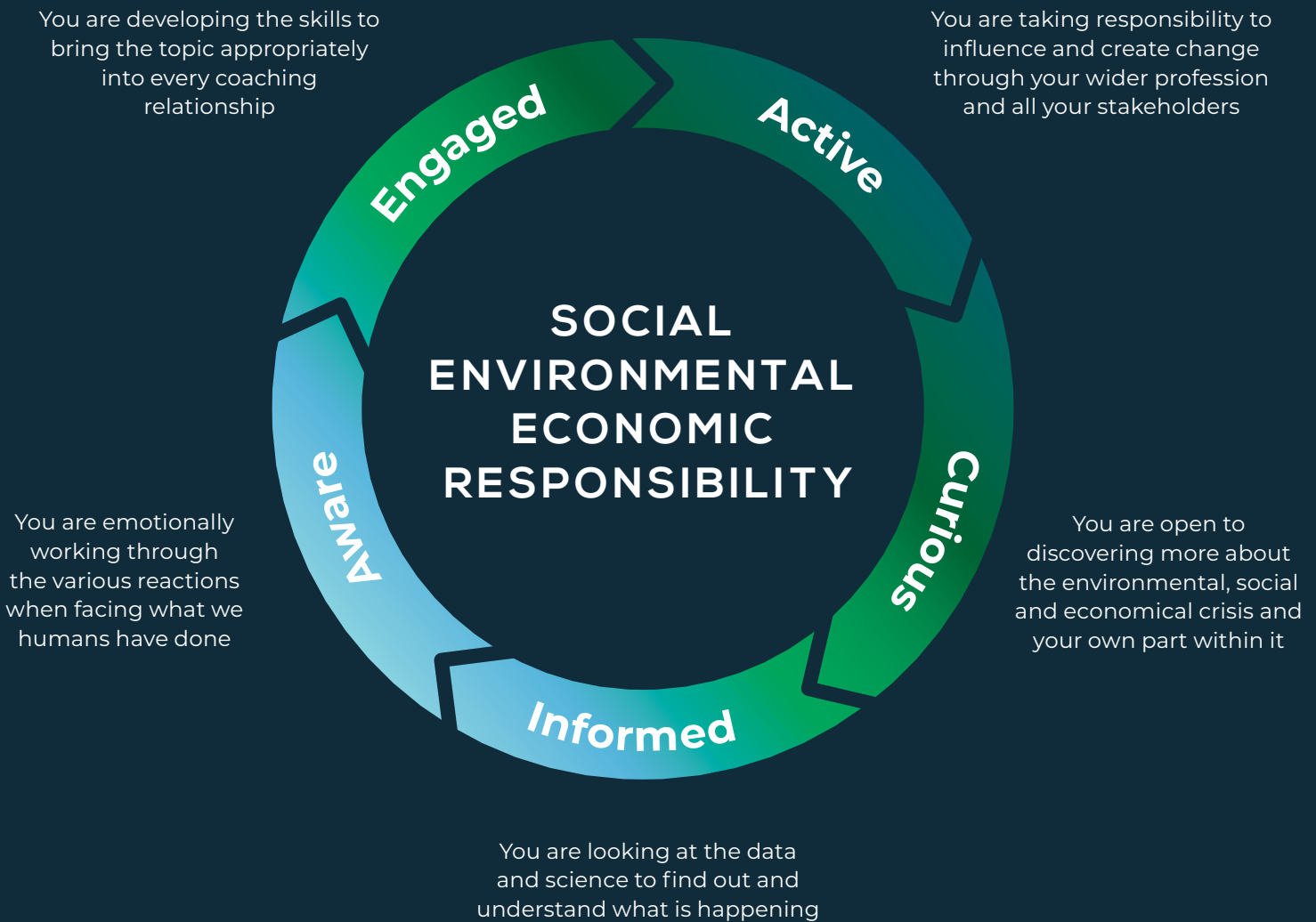
Targeting internal and external coaches and change leaders within organisations, this Playbook is relevant at any level and anywhere within the civic and political space. Coaching supervisors, mentors and educators may also find it valuable.

Published by the CCA in collaboration with the University of Southampton (UK), the Playbook is an open-access document. It is freely available and may be promoted by coaching bodies within the [Joint Global Statement on Climate Change](#), creating a unified voice and joint action on the climate and ecological crisis.

We strongly recommend readers first explore the CCA book *Ecological and Climate-Conscious Coaching* (Eds Hawkins, McLean, Turner & Whybrow, 2023). This book presents the Eco-Phase Cycle and offers practical insights into the impact of the climate emergency on coaching practices, while providing strategies for effective response. Joining book circles for guided learning can deepen your understanding and help you to decide if expanding your coaching or consulting to the political sphere is right for you.

The Eco Phase Cycle Model (see Diagram 1), developed by Professor Peter Hawkins and the CCA, is a recommended tool for change agents to prepare and customise their delivery according to the stage their audience has reached on their journey towards social, environmental and economic responsibility.





**Diagram 1.** Eco-Phase Cycle Model

Source: [Climate Coaching Alliance website](#), adapted from Hawkins et al (2022)

# SIX STEPS

The Playbook is divided into six iterative steps, summarised in Diagram 2. Each step is divided into sections covering the why, what and how, to enable your learning experience. Even though it is presented in order, your learning journey might not follow this path.

Throughout the Playbook you will also find several hyperlinks connected to specific topics, in the hope that they will enable deeper learning. It is advisable to study all steps before embarking on coaching politicians and policymakers.

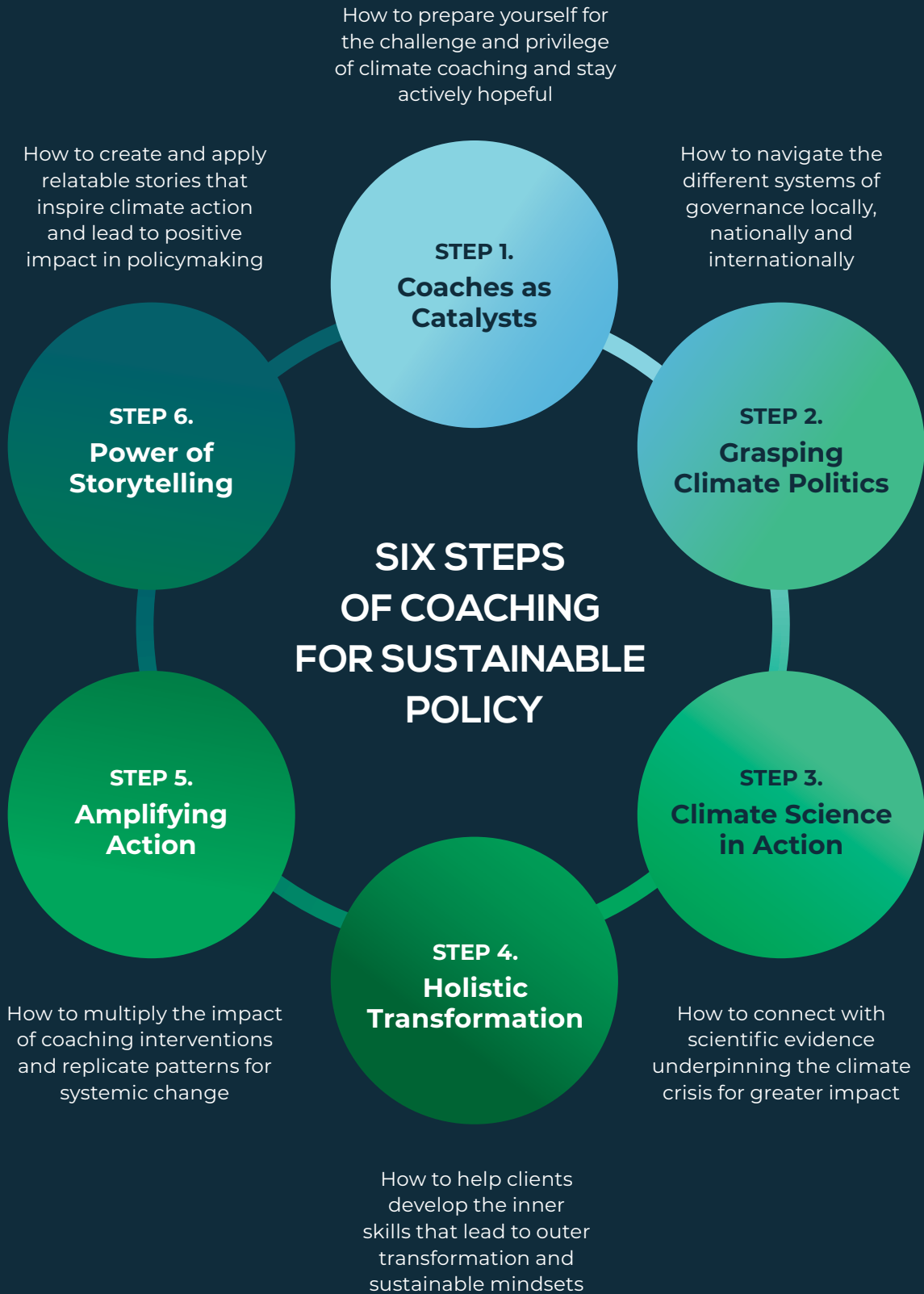
Please note that while every effort has been made to apply current evidence-informed approaches, the Playbook is intended as a guide to inspire further enquiry and deeper learning.

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**Engaging with this Playbook as part of your continuous development as a climate change coach will equip you with the knowledge and tools necessary to drive meaningful change in our world.**

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**Diagram 2.** Six Steps of Coaching for Sustainable Policy

# FOREWORD

This book invites a thoughtful and intentional approach. Written in an engagingly straightforward style, it may at first seem like a simple guide for encouraging coaches and change agents to engage with climate-related work. However, its clarity and simplicity reflect a deeper, more sophisticated foundation of thought and practice. The insights and strategies within offer valuable resources for those committed to nurturing leaders who shape decisions around climate change. This Playbook is designed to be a meaningful tool for anyone serious about supporting impactful leadership in this critical area.”

If you are like me, it often feels comforting to read a book aimed at providing straightforward answers to clearly defined problems - answers that can be immediately put into action with predictable logical outcomes. Climate change is not one of those straightforward problems. We know this because we have spent decades trying to solve it with a raft of obvious logical answers – all the while witnessing accelerating rates of greenhouse gas emissions and ecological degradation. Climate change presents us with a set of complex problems that seem to defy our best attempts at solutions.

This Playbook takes that complexity seriously. It is underpinned by a deep understanding of complex systems theory, along with findings from the natural, social and psychological sciences. It does not seek to provide coaches

with simplistic universal answers to the wicked problem that is climate change. Instead, it seeks to develop the capacity of coaches and leaders to take more complex perspectives to the policies and changes needed to protect our planet. The development of more complex perspectives is at the heart of leadership in an increasingly challenged world.

Perspective taking capacity has been defined as a person’s or group’s capacity to understand, critically consider and integrate multiple competing perspectives to form a common coherent and larger perspective that enables effective action (Cavanagh, 2013; Cavanagh & Turner, 2023).

Too many of the solutions put forward for climate change are akin to focusing a torch narrowly on strategies that hold plausible (reductionistic) answers to the problem. Increasing our perspective taking is like learning to hold the torch higher. It enables the viewer to see more of the system and relationships that bind the parts together and make it the system it is. It seeks to explore all the practical tensions, forces and paradoxes that are part and parcel of any complex human system. It is from this exploration that a myriad potential responses to the problems facing us will emerge. Like evolution, complexity theory tells us that many of these responses will fail. But some will be found that provide practical and effective solutions.

A critical feature of complex systems is Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety (Ashby, 2017). Put simply, Ashby's law states that if a person, or group, want to survive in a sustained way, they must be able to meet the full variety of challenges their world presents with an equal or greater variety of effective responses.

This playbook offers a thoughtful collection of questions and considerations, designed to help the reader hold their torch higher and elevate their perspective and leadership. It serves as an invaluable resource for coaches and leaders, fostering the diverse range of responses needed to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. With its clear and accessible approach, this playbook makes a significant and meaningful contribution to both coaching and political decision-making, guiding readers toward impactful and lasting change.

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**This playbook offers a thoughtful collection of questions and considerations, designed to help the reader hold their torch higher and elevate their perspective and leadership.**

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**STEP 1**

# **COACHES AS CATALYSTS**

## STEP 1

# COACHES AS CATALYSTS

Step 1 helps coaches, supervisors and other change agents improve their awareness and psychological insights when coaching politicians and policymakers on climate change. It explores strategies for managing personal biases and emotions related to this highly charged topic.

As catalysts for coaches with a focus on climate awareness, the aim is to foster and maintain supportive environments for clients to navigate the complexities of climate issues. This involves building trusting relationships with all stakeholders.

It is crucial for coaches to refrain from judgement, moralising, campaigning or imposing their own ecological beliefs onto clients. Instead, the emphasis needs to be on open exploration of the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in addressing climate change.

Step 1 encourages self-reflection and personal growth by providing tools to assess how your coaching can increase personal development and change in your clients. As catalysts, coaches can inspire transformative actions and foster a culture of resilience and proactive engagement in the face of climate challenges.

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**“We need to ensure that we are neither in denial, disavowal, or into just blaming others for the ecological crisis; that we have moved beyond grief and frozen powerlessness...”**

Eds Hawkins, McLean,  
Turner & Whybrow, 2023, p.105

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## A. MANAGE YOUR INNER DRIVERS



### WHY?

Politicians and policymakers are often at the forefront of harsh criticism from their rivals, the public and the media. They are often viewed as intrinsically untrustworthy. This perception, which can become an unconscious bias, will obstruct your ability to have a non-judgemental relationship with them. A safe coaching space is one where curiosity flourishes without preconceived notions of the client's deeper intentions.



### WHAT?

Unconscious bias refers to the prejudice or stereotype that individuals may unknowingly hold about a particular group of people. These notions are often influenced by media representations and societal opinions.

As coaches and facilitators of change, it is our ethical responsibility to provide clients with a safe, non-judgemental space for exploration. Not acknowledging unconscious biases can inadvertently create an unproductive environment for clients, as subtle cues in our language or demeanour may convey unsupportive attitudes.

The challenge for coaches lies in becoming aware of subconscious biases. Personal experiences, especially in political engagement, can teach valuable lessons in overcoming unconscious biases and building credibility with clients. Equally, learning from individuals who have first-hand experience in relevant areas can offer deeper insights into the complexity of human behaviour and challenge stereotypes.

Generally, it is helpful to assume that as human beings, your clients' intentions are positive, and that they strive to be collaborative, creative and open to changing their perspectives and behaviours. In reality though, this may be a difficult assumption to hold, especially if you do not live in a democratic country. Even those who reside in countries that benefit from the rule of law may have jaded views of governments and politicians.

Reflecting on unconscious biases is essential for broadening our perspectives so we can work empathetically and effectively with our clients.

This activity is designed to help coaches develop greater self-awareness through meaningful reflection on their unconscious biases.



## HOW?

Identify and interrogate your own opinions and assumptions about people in public office. You can do this by exploring how these beliefs were formed and consider whether they are fair and reasonable assumptions.

Ask yourself the following:

- ▶ What are your values and character strengths?
- ▶ What are your overall impressions of politicians and/or policymakers?
- ▶ Think about what has influenced this belief/impression? Is it linked to personal experience, or the collective impressions you have been exposed to through media or other people?
- ▶ What role do you think confirmation bias plays in your impressions of politicians?
- ▶ How do you manage other cognitive biases you might have?
- ▶ How might these impressions impact your ability to coach these clients from a neutral viewpoint?
- ▶ How can you develop alternative perspectives about the political space?

**NB. Hold on to your reflections as we work on these challenges throughout the rest of the Playbook.**



## B. KNOW YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE



### WHY?

In discussions about climate change, it is common to encounter a mentality of “us versus them.” We all have busy modern lives, which often involve less-than-ideal practices like reliance on fossil fuels. A person’s perspective on how to address these issues is influenced by their unique circumstances, needs and resources. We are all wrestling internally with what changes to make and how to make them.

Many theories and models explain how our thinking, personal growth and relationship with the media intersect. Developing a Personal Theory of Change helps us understand our role in the broader social transition we aim to promote.



### WHAT?

A theory of change is a comprehensive and structured framework that outlines the underlying assumptions, pathways and strategies for achieving a desired social or environmental outcome. It provides a plan for understanding how and why change happens, identifying the steps needed to bring about that change.

A theory of change helps stakeholders to articulate their assumptions about how change happens. It enables them to identify the most effective strategies for achieving their goals and evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. It serves as a powerful tool for planning, implementation and evaluation in the fields of social change, international development, public policy and environmental conservation. Key components of a theory of change typically include:

**Desired Outcome:** The exact social or environmental change the project aims to achieve.

**Inputs:** The resources, activities and efforts used to achieve the desired change.

**Activities:** The actions taken to carry out the initiative.

**Outputs:** The immediate results or outputs from the activities.

**Outcomes:** The short-term, intermediate and long-term changes or results expected from the initiative.

**Impact:** The broader and more systemic changes or benefits that occur at a societal or environmental level.



## HOW?

By following these steps, you can develop a theory of change that guides your efforts towards achieving meaningful social or environmental impact.

- ▶ In relation to climate coaching, what is your purpose and what are you drawn to do? What is your desired future? This is your personal desired outcome.
- ▶ Which political context are you aiming to be working within e.g., local, state, national, regional or global? Identify key stakeholders, power dynamics, systemic barriers and opportunities.
- ▶ What resources, activities and outputs are needed to bring about the desired change?
- ▶ Identify underlying assumptions and risks.
- ▶ Create a diagram of your theory of change that shows how inputs, activities, outcomes and the desired impact are connected.
- ▶ Evaluate your theory of change through consultation, project pilots or research studies and gather data for iterative refinement.
- ▶ Communicate your theory of change with stakeholders, funders and partners. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to track and adjust for progress.



## C. UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT MODES OF SUPPORT



### WHY?

Coaching helps people grow by providing a safe space for personal insights and changes. However, it is important to understand the differences between coaching and other types of support like counselling or therapy. Mixing these up can confuse clients and disrupt the coaching process.

Coaches might also take on other roles, such as mentors, activists or therapists. It is crucial to understand the differences between these roles to be able to perform each one effectively.



### WHAT?

When coaching roles and methods are unclear, it can affect how well clients benefit. Here is a simple glossary of different types of support to help you clarify your role and improve client support:

**Activism** consists of efforts to promote, impede, direct or intervene in social, political, economic or environmental reform, with the desire to make changes in society toward a perceived greater good. It can be either individual or in a group.

**Advocacy** is actively speaking up for the ideas, views, beliefs and rights of another person, group or species. It is often associated with promoting access and equity, social reforms, biodiversity and environmental regeneration, and can be a form of activism.

**Climate coaching** is a collaborative process that empowers individuals and organisations to address the challenges and opportunities of climate change. Climate coaches use coaching techniques to help clients explore their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to climate change, and to identify personal and collective goals for sustainability.

**Coaching** is defined by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential.

**Coaching psychology** defines coaching as a collaborative and goal-directed process that draws on evidence-based psychological principles and techniques to enhance individual and organisational performance, wellbeing and personal development.

**Counselling** is the professional guidance of an individual,

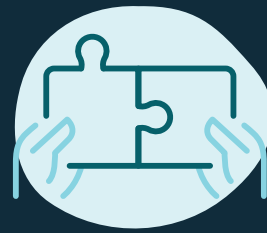
couple or family to relieve distress, improve coping ability, raise awareness and understanding of oneself and others.

**Mediation** is a confidential and structured process designed to foster understanding and resolution between individuals or groups in conflict. As environmental conflicts become more pronounced, there's a growing need for a transformative approach to mediation, as reflected in the European Union co-funded **Environmental Mediation Initiative**.

**Mentoring** is a special relationship where confidential discussions help the mentee to develop professionally. Typically, the mentor, who has more experience, shares discipline-specific knowledge and expertise.

**Psychotherapy** aims to improve an individual's wellbeing and mental health, to resolve or mitigate troublesome behaviours, beliefs, compulsions, thoughts or emotions, and to improve relationships and social skills.

**Training** is a structured process of learning and skill development designed to improve knowledge, abilities and performance in a specific area or task.



## HOW?

We recommend you review your practices and craft a concise script to clearly communicate your services to clients. Use these statements to establish transparent expectations in your work.

- ▶ Consider the different support methods you employ, both within coaching and other roles.
- ▶ Reflect on your coaching approach and any tendencies to switch methods during sessions.
- ▶ Based on your review, draft a brief statement outlining the services you offer and when they are appropriate.
- ▶ Provide a clear description of the coaching process and its benefits in five bullet points.

**NB. Be sure to define your role, theirs, your theory of change and other relevant details when setting up a Coaching Agreement/Contract.**

## D. BUILD YOUR INNER RESOURCES



### WHY?

In climate coaching, it is important to understand our connection to natural systems and our vulnerability. This awareness drives profound shifts in attitudes, actions and perspectives.

Developing inner resources helps climate-aware coaches grow while supporting clients in their transformations.

Dealing with clients' complex issues is part of the journey towards sustainability. Managing current challenges requires reflection, careful positioning and proactive measures. Through this process, we discover our inner strengths and the resources needed to drive change alongside clients.



### WHAT?

Investing in inner resources empowers change agents to maintain their dedication, tackle complexity and effectively promote positive change amidst the climate crisis. Some essential inner capabilities needed when working with climate change include:

- 1. Self-awareness:** Change agents need to understand their own strengths, values, motivations, biases and limitations to be effective in their work. Developing self-awareness helps them recognise when they need support or guidance, and how to continuously learn and grow. Self-awareness, like continuous learning, depends on developing humility in our relationships through intellect, culture and spiritual understanding.
- 2. Emotional regulation:** Climate change can evoke strong emotions such as fear, anger, grief and frustration. Research on climate emotions is expanding. We recommend that coaches familiarise themselves with the variety of emotions related to climate change by consulting the **Climate Emotions Wheel**. Emotional regulation allows change agents to manage these feelings effectively while maintaining clarity of thought and making rational decisions, even in stressful situations.
- 3. Emotional intelligence:** The above skills are two of several linked to **emotional intelligence**. To communicate effectively with individuals, change agents need to encourage individuals to honestly express their deepest feelings and needs while empathetically listening. Focusing on self-awareness and compassionate understanding promotes genuine connections and constructive conflict resolution.
- 4. Non-Violent (or Compassionate) Communication skills (NVC):** At the heart of NVC lies the identification of universal human needs. Rather than fixating on specific strategies or solutions, NVC seeks to understand what fundamental needs drive our behaviours. By recognising these shared needs, individuals can find common ground and work toward solutions that meet everyone's

wellbeing. **NVC is extensively** used by coaches, psychologists and other helping professionals.

5. **Resilience:** Climate change is a complex and challenging issue that often involves setbacks, resistance and slow progress. Resilience will help change agents bounce back from difficulties and persist in their goals, despite obstacles. More recent research suggests we develop **mental strength**.
6. **Adaptability:** Climate change is dynamic and unpredictable, so you will need to adapt your strategies and approaches continuously. Building inner resources for adaptability will help you stay flexible, curious and respond appropriately to evolving circumstances, opportunities and challenges. A helpful model is “capacity to adapt”, discussed in Step 3.
7. **Mental health first aid skills:** Working in the climate change space often triggers a stress response. However, if the stress exceeds a person’s capacity to process it, the mind-body system can become stuck in a heightened threat state. This can lead to a dysregulated nervous system, resulting in excessive busyness or dissociative shutdowns, ranging from chronic stress to complex PTSD. Therefore, it is advisable that change agents receive **mental health first aid training** to recognise, communicate with and support clients facing mental health challenges until they can access professional services.



## HOW?

Give yourself around 30 minutes of uninterrupted time in a comfortable space to try out this reflective exercise for building resilience. It is called “The Five Rs”, by Arnold & Patterson (2020):

**RETREAT:** Think of a situation where you felt challenged or puzzled by someone’s views. Write down what they said and their perspective in detail.

**REFLECT:** Consider why their statement was confronting or confusing for you. Ask yourself if you have encountered this perspective before, how it differs from your own, and what values and strengths you hold regarding the issue. Think about resources that can help you understand their viewpoint and identify aspects you can or cannot embrace.

**REFRAME:** Incorporate insights from both perspectives and your environmental awareness to see the bigger picture. Strive to find constructive ways to include both viewpoints without judgement.

**RETURN:** Plan how you will integrate this new perspective into your next conversation with the person. Consider how to introduce the topic, support them by re-framing their views positively, and gently encourage them to consider other perspectives.

**RESILIENCE:** Reflect on the strengths and the inner resources you used to reframe the issue and address it with the person.

**NB. We encourage you to keep reading the Playbook and discover potentially new inner resources.**

## E. UNDERSTANDING IDENTITIES



### WHY?

Understanding why individuals, including politicians, may resist or struggle with behaviour change, even when faced with compelling evidence or urgent issues like climate change, is essential. Clients could be confused as they negotiate personal values that may be in contradiction with their social/professional goals and identity. This insight helps coaches adapt their approach to overcome resistance and achieve real change.



### WHAT?

Climate change presents a complex, systemic challenge that demands co-ordinated action across various levels, especially from political leaders. Coaches can help politicians understand their resistance to change and develop strategies to overcome it, promoting systemic sustainability.

Research shows that government leaders who focus on environmental sustainability face psychological factors that influence their actions. These factors often conflict with their pro-environment values. Even if the person prioritises being environmentally friendly, workplace cultures favouring traditional methods and economic growth can push them to make decisions that contradict their values because of fears of backlash or failure.

In such cases, government leaders may feel disconnected from their true selves when trying to adopt pro-environment roles. Helping them align their actions with their environmental values can make them better advocates for sustainability.

The concept of **“immunity to change”** aids coaches in identifying entrenched beliefs, assumptions and fears that hinder politicians from adopting a new, environmentally aligned social identity. By addressing these barriers, coaches can help them make genuine progress towards climate action by embracing and integrating pro-environment values into their leadership roles.



## HOW?

This tool can help clients examine their self-identity, including their values, beliefs, abilities and goals. This helps coaches guide clients towards actions that match their principles.

### 1. Exploring environmental identity

- ▶ Begin by discussing your own connection with the environment. What helps you feel connected to nature? How do you sustain this connection? What actions do you take to support sustainability and regeneration?
- ▶ Share a brief, relevant story about your environmental journey. Then, write three sentences describing your environmental identity.
- ▶ Develop questions to ask clients about their environmental identity. For example, how do they feel connected to nature, and how important are environmental issues to them?

### 2. Exploring social identity

- ▶ Explain that workplace contexts influence decision-making, even in environmentally supportive organisations.
- ▶ Create questions to help clients explore social factors at work that both support and hinder climate action. For instance, what obstacles prevent them from acting on their personal beliefs at work?

### 3. Contradictory values

- ▶ Introduce the concept of ethical blindness and explore it with clients. Pose powerful questions to address contradictions between personal beliefs and organisational actions. Additionally, discuss the impact of conflicting values on clients' wellbeing and work choices.

### 4. Forge new actions

- ▶ After gaining insights into psychological influences, help clients turn these insights into actions.
- ▶ Develop questions to support clients in creating new actions in the workplace. For example, how can they introduce changes that align with their values and organisational context?

Read More: [\*\*A tool to develop your Theory of Change\*\*](#)

Watch: [\*\*Seeing people as individuals reduces political hostility\*\*](#)

Listen: [\*\*The Communicating Climate Change podcast\*\*](#)



STEP 2

# GRASPING CLIMATE POLITICS

## STEP 2

# GRASPING CLIMATE POLITICS

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POLITICS?

Politics refers to the governance of a country or area, and the activities that influence its actions and policies. Politics is also used to talk about the ways that power is shared in a system and the ways it is affected by personal relationships between people. The word itself conjures up notions of debate, conflict and perhaps more recently, polarisation. No matter how we choose to look at it, understanding politics is important because it affects every area of our lives, especially decisions relating to climate change.

The need for urgent action on climate change has been raised by scientists, environmentalists and policymakers for several decades. What is holding back the concerted work being done in science, industry and even their voters' individual efforts? On the other hand, how well do we understand a politician's job and perceptions? As change agents, do we have the tools to help them address the climate crisis?

Step 2 highlights some of the most common factors that hold back political progress around climate action. You can use it as a starting point before you search for further resources with greater detail.

## A. CLIMATE ACTION IS COMPLEX



### WHY?

Politicians often hesitate to act on climate change because it is complex and lacks clear governance frameworks. Understanding complexity and what are known as “complex adaptive systems” (CAS) will give climate coaches the tools and insights needed to help politicians navigate this landscape. By embracing rather than avoiding complexity, coaches can foster resilience, adaptation and transformation, ultimately empowering politicians to tackle the challenges they face.



### WHAT?

Climate change is not a linear problem with straightforward solutions. It involves dynamic systems where actions in one area can have ripple effects across multiple domains.

Climate change is a multifaceted issue with interconnected social, economic, political and environmental dimensions. Coaches who understand complexity can appreciate the interplay of these factors and the diverse interests involved in climate action.

They can offer resilience-building strategies that increase the ability of political systems to withstand and recover from climate-related shocks and disruptions. This includes flexible policy frameworks, robust governance structures and inclusive decision-making.

Ideally, international cooperation should be widespread and unanimous, facilitated by mechanisms such as the Conference of the Parties (COP) established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The first COP meeting took place in 1995 in Berlin, Germany. Since then, COP meetings have been held annually, bringing together representatives from countries around the world to discuss and negotiate climate change agreements and initiatives.

However, several barriers hinder action.

Implementing COP agreements involves lengthy negotiations and compromises, often undermined by competition between states and vested interests. Additionally, governmental changes can lead countries to renege on agreements they have signed, as when the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2017.

Coaches who master systems thinking can help politicians navigate these interconnected systems and anticipate unintended consequences of their decisions.

Complex adaptive systems, such as the global climate system or socio-economic networks, come into play when changes prompt new behaviours and nonlinear responses. Coaches need to help politicians build the capacity to adapt and respond effectively to unpredictable events and the evolving challenges that come from climate change.

Tackling climate change requires transformative change at multiple levels, from individual behaviours to institutional practices and global agreements. Coaches can assist clients to take climate action by helping them define their role and identity in the climate change transition. By understanding the complexities and barriers, coaches can empower clients to navigate challenges and contribute effectively to climate solutions.



## HOW?

Coaches can encourage their clients to be enthusiastic about climate action by framing the call to action in constructive ways. Think about big picture metaphors and analogies that resonate with your client then broaden their perspective beyond simplistic, short-term, linear thinking solutions:

### 1. Understand complex adaptive systems (CAS)

Begin with examples of complexity then read more about the features and dynamics of CAS so you can understand complex causality.

### 2. Visualise complex adaptive systems

Comparing a CAS to a living organism or a network of interconnected nodes can help clients grasp the dynamic nature and interdependencies within a system.

## B. POLITICAL CYCLES



### WHY?

Understanding political cycles is essential for climate coaches because it can explain timing and potential constraints of policy implementation. It means coaches can tailor their support and guidance to align with opportune moments for climate action. An empathetic approach and acknowledgment of the pressures help coaches create supportive coaching environments for politicians to navigate tough decisions.



### WHAT?

Short electoral cycles, typically three to five years in many democracies, create pressure for immediate results. Even within the civil service, where roles may be more stable, there's a tendency for short-term focus due to departmental rotations. This mindset, exacerbated by the need to solve immediate crises, often sidelines long-standing issues like climate change.

The clash between short-term political culture and the long-term challenge of climate change means many countries lack comprehensive mitigation strategies.

Climate policies requiring years or even decades to show impact struggle to gain traction in environments where short-term wins are prioritised for political expediency.

There's a need to shift towards valuing and supporting long-term perspectives in policymaking. Climate-aware advisors can help politicians and policymakers navigate potentially risky but beneficial long-term actions, risky because of the initial discomfort and inconvenient lifestyle changes they may cause citizens and governments alike.

In addition, as more women, LGBTQ+, people of colour and other previously marginalised groups enter the political sphere, there is a focus on the negative impacts that traditional political cycles can have on their mental health and overall wellbeing. It is crucial for coaches and other change agents to be mindful and compassionate, recognising the unique challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds in making their voices heard in political environments. We will say more on this later.



## HOW?

Identify and interrogate your own opinions and assumptions about people in public office. You can do this by exploring how these beliefs were formed and consider whether they are fair and reasonable assumptions. Ask yourself the following:

### 1. How can coaches promote the political will to galvanise new responses?

Leveraging political will is about finding ways to motivate thinking and action that move beyond “business as usual”. A useful formula is:

**Known facts + New scenario + Coaching question(s) = Insights into new way of working.**

- ▶ Start with known and accepted facts.
- ▶ Introduce a different scenario.
- ▶ Ask questions that help clients explore possible choices that fit the new scenario.

### 2. Supporting long-term policymaking

Coaches may play a crucial role in helping policymakers and politicians reshape the narrative around long-term thinking. These coaching questions can be useful:

- ▶ What could the potential consequences of inaction be, both in the short and long term?
- ▶ How can we highlight future benefits to create compelling messages for constituents?
- ▶ What strategies can shift public perception from immediate gratification to long-term sustainability?



## C. VESTED ECONOMIC INTERESTS



### WHY?

It is important to understand the reality of vested economic interests and possible undercurrents of systemic political corruption, also known as “state capture”. This will help us better understand the motives, inducements and predicaments that politicians and policymakers face. It can make coaching conversations more nuanced and, ideally, more effective.



### WHAT?

State capture happens when powerful industries lobby politicians to prioritise their own interests over effective climate change solutions. This lobbying, driven by vested economic and political interests, often leads to policies that prevent action against climate change. The fossil-fuel industry and other lobby groups exert significant influence over politicians and the media to protect their profits from activities such as coal, oil and gas extraction. They have discredited climate scientists and activists who raise concerns about the environmental impact of fossil fuels. Indeed, lobbying has become an industry, with lobbyists often outnumbering politicians and activists in key cities.

Politicians often cultivate relationships with industry lobbyists in return for party donations, campaign financing or promises of lucrative jobs after leaving office. Those who resist industry pressure risk public condemnation. Industries also threaten economic consequences for countries considering legislation against their interests, leading politicians to prioritise economic stability over environmental concerns. This dynamic of lobbying for industry benefits has roots in colonial practices and continues to disadvantage ordinary citizens.

Coaches face challenges in addressing state capture because it has a pervasive influence on public officials. There is an answer, however. They can help clients broaden their perspectives beyond industry influence and make sustainability part of decision-making. We will explore this again later, but here are some initial ideas:



## HOW?

To coach public officials effectively, it is crucial to understand the local dynamics of vested interests and lobbyists targeting your clients. To improve your coaching approach:

### 1. **Stay curious:**

Develop a keen awareness of the **economic and political interests** in your region that your clients may encounter. Ask questions and stay informed about local stakeholders.

### 2. **Build credibility:**

Learn about the specific political context of your area and use relevant terminology. This demonstrates your understanding and credibility to your clients.

### 3. **Expand perspectives:**

Use tools to help your clients see beyond the influence of lobbyists and party politics. Encourage them to consider broader goals, which we will discuss later.



## D. POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES



### WHY?

To understand their clients, coaches need to be aware of a country's prevailing political ideology. Political ideology often shapes individuals' beliefs, values and perspectives. Understanding the nuances gives coaches invaluable insight into clients' backgrounds, motivations and potential biases.

In addition, different political ideologies may influence how individuals perceive and respond to coaching interventions. By adapting their approaches and language to resonate with clients' ideological leanings, coaches can achieve better rapport and engagement. Political ideology can impact the socio-economic environment, policy landscape and institutional structures within a country. Coaches need to grasp this context to help clients navigate challenges and identify opportunities for growth.



### WHAT?

Political ideology can vary significantly depending on the region, country and historical context. Ideologies including authoritarianism, socialism, conservatism and others exist and influence governance structures worldwide, although liberal democracy has gained significant traction in many parts of the globe.

**What is liberal democracy?** Liberal democracy refers to a political system characterised by representative government, individual rights, rule of law, and free and fair elections. It emphasises principles such as civil liberties, political pluralism and human rights.

**What is neoliberalism?** Neoliberalism emerged as a dominant economic ideology in the late 20th century, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. It arose as a response to perceived inefficiencies of state-controlled economies and promoted free-market principles, deregulation, privatisation and reduced government intervention in the economy.

It is important to note that liberal democracy underpins the political system, while neoliberalism underpins economic ideology. While they can coexist and influence each other, they are distinct concepts with different focuses.

The impact of neoliberalism on the global economy has been profound, leading to widespread deregulation and liberalisation of markets, fostering globalisation and more interconnected economies.

While proponents argue that neoliberal policies have spurred economic growth, increased efficiency and lifted millions out of poverty, leading economists also highlight serious detriments such as growing income inequality, financial instability and social disparities.

Neoliberal capitalism has contributed to ecological destruction and exacerbated climate change in several ways:

**Resource exploitation** by incentivising the relentless extraction of natural resources, such as fossil fuels, minerals and forests, to fuel economic growth and corporate profits. This leads to habitat destruction, deforestation, biodiversity loss and depletion of finite resources.

**Externalisation of costs** by allowing corporations to make high profits at the cost of environmental degradation, impacting society today and for future generations. When they prioritise short-term profits, companies may disregard the long-term environmental consequences, shifting the burden of pollution, waste disposal and environmental cleanup onto communities and ecosystems.

**Lack of regulation** by advocating policies for minimal government intervention, including environmental regulation. This deregulatory approach can weaken environmental protections, undermine conservation efforts, and embolden industries to exploit natural resources where there are no adequate safeguards or accountability.

**Commodification of nature** by treating nature as a commodity to be bought, sold and exploited for profit. This mindset promotes the privatisation of natural resources and ecosystems, leading to the enclosure of common lands, water privatisation and the monetisation of ecosystem services. The result is worse ecological degradation.

**Growth imperative** by prioritising continuous economic growth as a measure of success, often at the expense of ecological sustainability. The pursuit of endless growth exacerbates resource consumption, waste generation and greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the escalating climate crisis and ecological devastation.

There are collaborative initiatives among governments intent on advancing holistic measures of progress that go beyond traditional economic indicators like GDP. The aim is to work together to develop and implement innovative approaches to policymaking, informed by principles of wellbeing economics, to improve the quality of life for their citizens while safeguarding the planet's resources for future generations.

**Coaches can play a vital role in helping politicians embrace alternative economic models.**



## HOW?

### 1. Understand Wellbeing Economies

- ▶ Explore the principles and practices of Wellbeing Economies to broaden your knowledge.
- ▶ Learn about new conceptual frameworks from alternative economic models that you can use with clients, such as Circular Economics.

### 2. Understand regional contexts

Explore political ideologies and belief systems in the region where you work. For instance:

- ▶ Asia
- ▶ EU
- ▶ Latin America and Caribbean
- ▶ Africa
- ▶ USA
- ▶ Australia

### 3. Reframe climate strategies to appeal to neoliberals

- ▶ Recognise that policymakers often prioritise economic growth over sustainability goals, making it challenging to promote degrowth-based climate policies.
- ▶ Assist clients in reframing climate initiatives within this neoliberal context by highlighting opportunities for economic growth, job creation and global competitiveness, such as transitioning to renewable energy.

### 4. “Right scaling” for sustainability

- ▶ Public sector focus is often on scaling up or scaling out interventions for impact.
- ▶ Instead, support choosing the right scale for sustainability efforts, rather than solely prioritising broad or large-scale expansion.



## E. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT



### WHY?

Climate change is complex. It requires collaboration and coordination among different levels of government, as well as with multiple stakeholders. Climate coaches need to understand the roles and responsibilities of each level of government if they are to be effective.



### WHAT?

**Hierarchy:** different levels of government may have different jurisdictions around climate action. For example, local governments may be tasked with addressing flood prevention or preservation of marine life. National governments are better suited to large-scale issues in the national interest such as energy and transport infrastructure or mitigation against species loss.

**Engagement levels:** commitment to action on climate issues can vary across these differing levels of government. Local authorities, where community consultation is more immediate, may be better placed to carry out tangible, targeted, sustainable actions, such as widening rivers for flood mitigation.

National level policymaking has a broader spectrum. Actions are usually generalised to cater to the needs of stakeholders and citizens across the country. Vested interests can wield more influence in opposing ecologically sound decisions.

**Gaining and using power:** political cultures tend to be strongly focused on the drive to obtain and hold power, both with voters and within the 'corridors of power'. Politicians and policymakers are keenly aware of how the power dynamics operate within their political party and level of government. They shape their actions and decisions accordingly. From a coaching perspective, everyone has personal strengths that increase their influence in these power plays, as well as blind spots or underdeveloped qualities that hinder their progress.

Coaches will gain credibility and relevance if they build a sound and compassionate understanding of how their local and regional hierarchical structures intersect with climate governance, and the power dynamics their clients face.

Many factors influence personal and collective commitment to action in the public sector. You can prepare for this with the next activity.



## HOW?

### Which level of government are you coaching in?

- ▶ What are the levels of government in your region, e.g. US, Australia
- ▶ What is the cultural appetite for climate initiatives at each level?
- ▶ Meet politicians in different venues and at different levels to consider the dilemmas they face.

### Decide the level of government you wish to work in, then:

- ▶ Learn about the local political system. Is there an organisation to help you get up to speed?
- ▶ Explore with your client the power dynamics they see around them and help them develop strategies to mitigate challenges based on their strengths.



## F. DISCOURSE OF DELAY



### WHY?

Understanding the discourse of delay is vital because discussions about climate change can provoke a variety of emotions and defences. These are the result of the complexity of the topic allied to the inevitability of change. By recognising common conversation patterns, coaches and change agents can overcome barriers preventing deeper discussions and attitude change.

Let's delve into five common arguments that arise when individuals are reluctant to engage with climate change. Coaches can use the tools below to move beyond these defensive lines.



### WHAT?

A common tactic is to introduce arguments that contradict established facts in climate science. This strategy is pervasive, from community gatherings, workplaces and online platforms to media talk shows. Many public and media figures use this tactic, known as the discourse of delay, to distort information about the climate crisis. They may present their efforts as clarification, when in fact they are spreading misinformation.

The five common internal defence mechanisms are known as the "5 Ds": Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial and iDentity.

These barriers are evident across the internet, media and in personal interactions, including political discourse. They prevent deeper discussions about climate change and impede meaningful responses and actions.

As coaches, understanding these barriers is essential for fostering compassionate and curious climate conversations. The "5 Ds" can be summarised as:

1. **Distance:** some individuals feel disconnected from climate change, seeing it as distant and less important than immediate concerns.
2. **Doom:** others avoid thinking about climate change because it makes them feel hopeless and afraid, particularly in the absence of practical solutions.
3. **Dissonance:** some struggle with aligning their lifestyle choices with their ideals of an eco-minded lifestyle, leading to discomfort and avoidance.
4. **Denial:** some deny outright the reality of climate change as a form of self-defence against fear and guilt, seeking alternative views that fit their comfort zone.
5. **iDentity:** information that contradicts personal, professional or cultural identities may be seen or dismissed as irrelevant, because it challenges existing beliefs and self-perception.

Collectively the "5 Ds" create a formidable barrier that rational arguments alone cannot penetrate. Activists and scientists have often failed to persuade climate deniers because they did not address these underlying psychological barriers.

Coaches and change agents can skilfully guide clients around these obstacles, fostering constructive dialogue and action.



## HOW?

These coaching tips can help you gently move clients to the other side of their defences to explore new ways of thinking and acting about climate issues.

### 1. Moving beyond defences

- ▶ Trying to break through these defences with more information can be frustrating. Focus on helping clients see the benefits of a climate-friendly society and understand it as a positive choice, rather than a fear-based obligation.
- ▶ Client-centred coaching explores areas where conversations can flow more freely around these barriers. Create space to build understanding of a society that resonates with your client's values and aspirations.
- ▶ Go with the client's natural flow, identifying points that connect with their vision for the future. Consider their desires for themselves, their family and their community.

### 2. Impact awareness

You can support politicians and policymakers in moving away from discourses of delay towards promoting constructive, tangible actions that inspire hope within their community. You can do this by:

- ▶ developing strategies to help clients move away from fear-based thinking.
- ▶ assisting clients in recognising the long-term impacts on public action of delayed discourse.
- ▶ encouraging them to adopt alternative messaging to foster hope and bolster constructive action.

## G. CLIMATE JUSTICE



### WHY?

Climate justice recognises that the impacts of climate change are not evenly distributed and disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups, including low-income communities, indigenous peoples and people in less wealthy and less industrialised countries, often referred to as the Global South.

Acknowledging this will help coaches have more nuanced conversations and help clients expand their views so they consider inclusive climate policies.



### WHAT?

Climate justice is about the fair and equitable treatment of all people and communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable and marginalised, to better tackle climate change.

The concept acknowledges that countries in the Global North, which include economically wealthy nations in North America, Europe, East Asia and the Pacific, have contributed the most to climate change through emissions. In fact, they account for 92 percent of cumulative climate and ecological destruction.

Conversely, regions in the Global South, the less wealthy countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, have suffered the earliest and harshest impacts of climate change – but often lack the resources to adequately mitigate these losses. Clearly, denoting parts of the world by their hemispheric location is not an accurate measure of wealth. Hence,

Climate justice argues that those most affected by climate change, such as the less wealthy nations in the Global South, are not primarily responsible for causing it. Wealthy countries in the Global North are experiencing severe floods, fires and droughts. However, they have more resources to restore affected communities. This is not the case with less wealthy nations where natural and built habitats are destroyed, dramatically damaging livelihoods and prospects.

Achieving climate justice requires accountability from the large emitters of the Global North, requiring changes in behaviour and more responsible actions. This means adopting regenerative practices as well as compensating the Global South for loss, damage and mitigation of extreme weather events.

Coaching can become a crucial instrument for climate justice. Indeed, equity is a core principle of major international coaching bodies, and coaches can facilitate the development of this ethical viewpoint and become enablers of planetary health.



## HOW?

### 1. Learning more about the world by income and region

- ▶ Before engaging with your clients, consider the origins and implications of categorising countries and people. Diplomatically assess your client's preferred terminology.
- ▶ The World Bank classifies economies for analytical purposes into four income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high income.

### 2. Finding your story of climate justice

This activity is designed to increase your understanding and connection with the **plight of the Global South and climate justice**.

- ▶ Which region and weather event in the Global South do you most relate to?
- ▶ Write a story about your feelings and insights. Create a two-paragraph statement linking your felt experience with the need for the Global North to reduce emissions.
- ▶ When and where might you use this statement in your work?

### 3. Develop your coaching methods to support climate justice

You can develop your own approach through discussion with supervisors or in peer supervision conversations. A useful reference is the “Thinking and Working Politically”, see below.

Read More: **Thinking and Working Politically**

Watch: **What is Climate Justice?**

Listen: **Climate Diplomacy Podcast**



### STEP 3

# CLIMATE SCIENCE IN ACTION

## STEP 3

# CLIMATE SCIENCE IN ACTION

Discussions about climate change are often hampered by misunderstandings about climate science, how different elements on earth are interconnected and the impact on life. This can lead politicians, along with many others, to avoid fully addressing the issue or acting with urgency.

Moreover, information overload from uninformed media and other sources can make an unfamiliar topic feel more frightening. This is a typical reaction in humans confronted with something new and potentially threatening, triggering the fight-or-flight response, and sometimes leading to paralysis.

The impact of this depends on the individual's capacity to adapt to the unknown and the way information is conveyed. Change agents may inadvertently amplify anxiety, perpetuating a cycle of negative emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Genuine understanding needs a supportive environment.

Step 3 provides a brief primer on the basics of climate science, encouraging readers to use these fundamental concepts to support deeper and more meaningful conversations with clients. This will also mitigate the risks of misinformation. It is crucial to understand power dynamics in the public arena, and educators have a vital role to play.

## A. CONNECTING WITH CLIMATE SCIENCE



### WHY?

As voters become more aware and media coverage intensifies (in part because of serious natural disasters), climate action is becoming a shared responsibility. Coaches and change agents need to understand basic climate science to assist with informed decision-making, mitigation efforts, adaptation strategies, environmental stewardship, economic implications and ultimately, to hold leaders accountable.

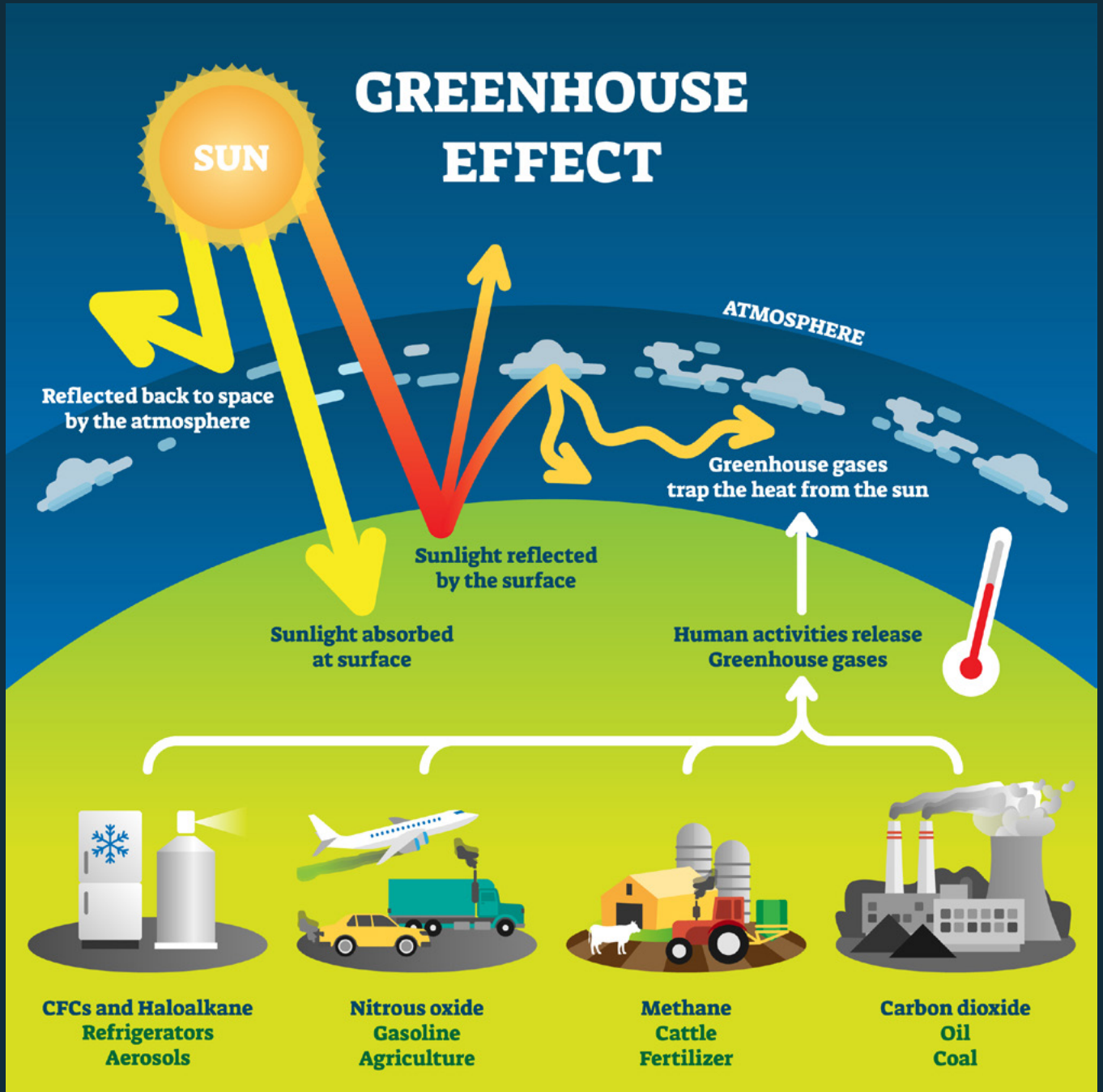


### WHAT?

Climate science helps us understand why the weather behaves as it does over long periods of time and how human activities are influencing these patterns. It examines factors such as temperature, precipitation, wind patterns and sea levels to explain the causes and impacts of climate change, as well as potential strategies for adaptation and mitigation.

Coaches and change agents do not need to have formally studied science to work with politicians on effective climate action. However, making time to understand the topic will help create meaningful dialogue as a trusted learning guide.

- ▶ **The Earth system** includes the atmosphere (the air we breathe), the hydrosphere (all the water on Earth), the biosphere (all living things i.e. living systems) and the geosphere (the Earth's solid parts like rocks and soil). These parts interact in complex ways, influencing weather, climate and the environment. Essentially, it is the whole package that makes Earth the planet we call home.
- ▶ **Living systems** are a subset of the Earth system and refer to ecological communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their physical surroundings. The biosphere includes both living and non-living components, but living systems focus solely on the web of life. They depend on the Earth system for resources and are influenced by Earth system processes such as climate and weather.
- ▶ **Greenhouse gas emissions:** understanding the role of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), in trapping heat in the Earth's atmosphere is fundamental. Coaches can explain the sources of these emissions, including fossil-fuel combustion, deforestation, agriculture and industrial processes, and how they lead to the greenhouse effect and global warming (see Diagram 3).



**Diagram 3.** Sources of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) and Their Role in the Greenhouse Effect

- ▶ **Temperature rise and extreme weather events:** once the link between increasing emissions and rising temperatures is understood, the detrimental impact on life becomes clearer. You can highlight how this contributes to more frequent and extreme weather events such as heatwaves, hurricanes, floods and droughts.
- ▶ **Climate feedback mechanisms** involve interactions between different parts of the Earth's systems such as the atmosphere, oceans, land and ice. For example, the albedo effect happens when melting ice or deforestation change how much sunlight the Earth absorbs. Less ice means less reflection and more heat absorbed, which melts more ice, making warming worse.
- ▶ **Sea-level rise and ocean acidification:** sea-level rise caused by thermal expansion and melting ice caps poses significant threats to coastal communities and in some cases whole islands. You can also help explain how rising temperatures lead to ocean acidification that endangers marine ecosystems, for example by bleaching coral reefs.
- ▶ **Planetary boundaries:** in 2023 a team of internationally renowned scientists used Earth system science to quantify nine processes critical for maintaining the stability and resilience of the Earth system as a whole and therefore living systems supporting life on the planet. This planetary boundaries framework has generated enormous interest within science, policy and practice.





## HOW?

Enhance your client's understanding of how science and evidence-informed policy decisions impact their constituents' welfare:

- ▶ Encourage your client to select a climate-related issue they find hard to address.
- ▶ Work together to identify all stakeholders involved, including voters, their political party, government departments and lobby groups. Emphasise how the Earth is a primary stakeholder.
- ▶ Visualise stakeholders sitting in a circle, each voicing their concerns about the issue.
- ▶ Guide your client to put themselves in each stakeholder's shoes then justify their stance using climate science.
- ▶ Record all stakeholder positions so your client can grasp the diverse viewpoints and draw conclusions.
- ▶ Help create a statement that shows your client understands all these perspectives. Encourage them to articulate their new position and proposed actions.
- ▶ Deepen the impact by prompting your client to consider:
  - ▶ Where and when they can use the statement.
  - ▶ How they can leverage this technique to develop their public voice on other climate issues.

### **Beware of misinformation:**

It is important for change agents to do their due diligence when researching climate science and climate change. Misinformation, fake news and dangerous conspiracy theories confuse the public and derail efforts towards sustainable wellbeing, ignoring essential aspects of climate-change action.

We urge you to use scientific data from reputable sources. If in doubt, we recommend turning to [\*\*The Debunking Handbook 2020\*\*](#), written by 22 prominent scholars dedicated to debunking misinformation for engaged citizens, policymakers, journalists and other practitioners. The Read More section below has more suggestions.

## B. UNDERSTAND CLIENT'S CAPACITY TO ADAPT



### WHY?

As civic and media pressure increases, policymakers and politicians may feel overwhelmed, distressed and unable to adapt to this new reality. Instead of being motivated, they can be immobilised by fear, hopelessness, powerlessness and despair. Guilt or shame can make matters worse, leading to inflexible thinking, inability to grasp complex issues and lack of will to make changes. Coaches can play a major role in helping clients build their capacity to adapt.



### WHAT?

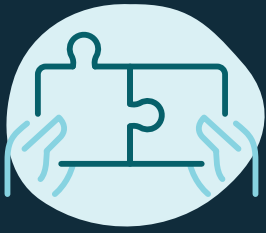
**“Capacity to adapt”** means people can manage their thoughts and emotions while considering diverse perspectives, ideas and information. This can be achieved through psychological flexibility and mental complexity.

**Psychological flexibility** involves adjusting our response to internal experiences and external circumstances to align with our values and goals. It emphasises openness, awareness and choosing effective responses, drawing from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Rather than changing thoughts or feelings directly, ACT focuses on aligning behaviours with values to manage distress. It is valuable for addressing concerns around climate change with meaningful activities.

**Mental complexity** refers to processing and integrating multiple, sometimes conflicting, pieces of information and perspectives. It is influenced by factors such as cognitive development and life experiences and is crucial for understanding how clients perceive and interact with the world. Being in a senior role or being older than others does not guarantee high mental complexity, therefore coaches might instead look for clues about critical thinking and complex problem-solving skills.

In politics, the capacity to adapt becomes more nuanced. Politicians and policymakers may hold differing private and public positions influenced by economic interests and ideology, and this can affect how they make decisions. By embracing the science of compassion and practicing mindfulness, coaches can help clients improve their capacity to adapt. This is discussed in greater detail further on.

To learn more about the theory and practice of these ideas from academic sources, see the References section. For accessible material, see Read More at the end of this step.



## HOW?

This combines aspects of **psychological flexibility** and **mental complexity** to show how you can build your clients' capacity to adapt.

- ▶ How will you create a safe space for divergent opinions, beliefs and experiences?
- ▶ What questions could you ask your client to better understand their level of responsibility and reach for a particular issue?
- ▶ How will you prepare yourself, so your clients feel safe answering with “I don't know” and “I'm scared”?
- ▶ During coaching sessions, what verbal and non-verbal signs may offer clues about your client's ability to grasp, synthesise and make appropriate decisions about complex issues?
- ▶ What signs will help you understand your client's ability to manage conflicting information and the emotional reactions it may trigger?
- ▶ Ask for their insights on a contentious climate issue and observe how easily they respond. Offer an opposite perspective and ask for their thoughts. How do they manage this other view?
- ▶ What questions could you ask to clarify these non-verbal signs and signals?



## C. UNDERSTANDING POWER IN THE PUBLIC ARENA



### WHY?

Understanding the nuances of power will help you give clients more targeted support and guidance. This includes helping them leverage their authority and influence in an ethical way, navigate political landscapes and develop positive relationships with stakeholders, including the media.



### WHAT?

Recognising the role of power is essential for understanding social dynamics, resolving conflicts and promoting effective communication and collaboration. It is important to consider power imbalances, encourage equitable relationships and behave ethically. In many interactions there is an implicit or explicit exchange of power, where individuals may seek to assert their authority, influence others or negotiate their interests. Power dynamics can manifest in various ways, such as through verbal communication, body language, social status, or access to resources.

Power comes from authority and influence. Authority stems from socially approved positions that allow individuals to make decisions and take action. In contrast, influence refers to the personal attributes and capacities that foster respect and leadership. Politicians and government officials are scrutinised on how they wield authority and influence.

Coaches can help clients understand the power they have, leverage their strengths and address areas for potential development. Our levels of authority and influence vary from the workplace to home, community to social media, and these levels differ in the public arena too.

Politicians often stress their power to influence, honing skills in persuasion and debate. Policymakers, on the other hand, wield authority to make decisions affecting millions of people, requiring strategic information-gathering and decision-making skills. Leadership coaching helps leaders use their authority and influence effectively.

Harnessing personal power is crucial for driving change around climate and sustainability. Coaches can guide clients in developing sophisticated communication skills and inclusive practices to influence their stakeholders.

**NB. Coaches working across different countries, cultures and languages need to acquire appropriate intercultural skills when working across collectivists and individualistic cultures.**



## HOW?

You can help your clients become more comfortable with their personal power by:

- ▶ Asking what they understand about the differences between authority and influence and discussing examples from their life.
- ▶ Highlighting their strengths and potential areas for development. For example, they may be a very good orator but not pay much attention to listening, collaborating or building negotiation skills.
- ▶ Exploring how they can use their power and influence effectively, such as fostering inclusion and empowering those at all levels of the hierarchy.
- ▶ Encouraging them to use their authority and influence for the good of all, maintaining their true values and integrity on ecological issues and sustainability.



## D. BECOMING LEARNING GUIDES FOR POLITICIANS



### WHY?

Many politicians struggle to bridge the gap between climate science and policy, as we have seen. In such cases, coaches can take a different approach and become a learning guide. Learning guides aim to lay down a solid foundation of knowledge that empowers individuals and entire communities to tackle challenges. It is about increasing understanding and making sure people have the tools to make informed decisions and act accordingly.



### WHAT?

Learning guides, advocates, coaches, mediators, psychologists and other change agents each play a crucial role in supporting climate action and sustainability, and the boundaries of their roles have expanded and overlapped in recent years.

This is how you can be an effective learning guide, whatever your role:

#### **Education and awareness:**

- ▶ Educating individuals about climate science, sustainability principles and environmental issues to highlight the urgency of climate action.
- ▶ Creating a welcoming environment for positive exploration and learning.

#### **Informed decision-making:**

- ▶ Helping policymakers understand the scientific evidence of climate change and its social impact so they can make well-informed decisions.
- ▶ Empowering individuals to make sustainable choices across their lives and work.

#### **Neutral perspective:**

- ▶ Maintaining a non-partisan stance, offering objective information and encouraging critical thinking.
- ▶ Engaging with diverse political ideologies to promote consensus-building and dialogue.

#### **Collaborative engagement:**

- ▶ Facilitating dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to find solutions to common challenges.
- ▶ Playing a pivotal role in achieving consensus around shared goals.

#### **Adapting to diverse contexts:**

- ▶ Tailoring education to suit different audiences including policymakers, community groups and businesses.
- ▶ Equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools to meet their specific environmental challenges.

#### **Your long-term impact can be:**

- ▶ Contributing to a knowledge base that drives systemic change and prioritises sustainable practices.
- ▶ Helping to develop sustainable solutions targeting the root causes of climate change and improving resilience.



## HOW?

Develop your skills as a learning guide in climate science by breaking down complex issues into easy-to-understand steps:

### Exploring climate science:

- ▶ Dive into climate science data and broad trends to get the big picture.
- ▶ Stay updated on developments and look out for discrepancies between findings.

### Preparing for client meetings:

- ▶ Create mind maps outlining root causes and effects.
- ▶ Use simple, direct communication to deliver information clearly and succinctly.

### Building your knowledge base:

- ▶ Start by reviewing the materials suggested below.
- ▶ Consult sources offered by your client and ask local climate scientists for more.

### Enhancing your skills:

- ▶ Quickly expand your knowledge by attending multi-stakeholder conferences where experts from research, industry and policy collaborate on common challenges.
- ▶ Join relevant expert networks by signing up to their newsletter to stay informed.

### Guiding your client:

- ▶ Simplify scientific evidence to make it accessible and avoid overwhelm.
- ▶ Support your client in delivering their message and action plans, especially in the face of scientific uncertainty.

Read More: [\*\*Communicating on Climate Change\*\*](#) (United Nations)

Watch: [\*\*Climate Forward 2024-Climate on the Ballot\*\*](#)

Listen: [\*\*Risky Talk Podcast with David Spiegelhalter, University of Cambridge\*\*](#)



**STEP 4**

# **HOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION**

## STEP 4

# HOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION

Climate change affects all areas of society, demanding urgent political leadership globally. It cuts across all disciplines including science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine (i.e. STEMM), the social sciences and economics. Recently, catalysed by the pandemic, evidence-informed policymaking has gained more attention, emphasising the need to bridge the gap between evidence-based climate solutions and policymaking realities.

A global study published in *Nature* in January 2024, covering 125 countries, showed that 86% of respondents endorse pro-climate social norms and 89% demand intensified political action. Unfortunately, the risk of electing governments that do not represent the majority's concerns about climate change is ever present. There is a disconnect between the mindsets of citizens and political leaders.

Considering these points and the insights from previous steps, the central question emerges: how can mindsets be transformed? The world is failing to implement meaningful solutions at the rate and scale needed, due to a disconnection with ourselves, with others and with nature, as identified by social scientists and sustainability experts. In this step we draw from evidence-informed social sciences and the experience of numerous climate change agents to offer a blueprint for transforming political will for a sustainable planet.

## A. MINDSETS AND CONNECTIONS



### WHY?

A mindset refers to a person's set of attitudes and opinions, their way of thinking and how they typically approach things. Climate coaching offers a safe and confidential space for individuals to explore their thoughts and feelings about climate change. By understanding the other person's mindset, change agents can tailor their conversations, interventions and messaging for effective and sustainable change.

The term "mindset" may imply that our minds are set, and that our behaviours are attributed to what goes on in the brain, a view aligned with a mechanistic way of seeing the world. Alternatively, we may view the human mind as a complex adaptive system nested within the vastness of living systems and the earth system. A different narrative therefore emerges where we speak of **connection (or attunement)** with our bodies, with others, and with nature as we learn to embody sustainability principles and increase resilience. We will refer to all terms to reflect emerging knowledge.



### WHAT?

Efforts to engage the public on climate change must acknowledge that people vary in their psychological, cultural and political motivations for either taking action or refraining from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for example. Working closely with communication researchers can help change agents craft appropriate messaging and interactions with clients.

The Yale Program on Climate Communication and its project "The Global Warming's Six Americas" has been researching and tracking for over a decade the public's climate change belief, attitudes, risk perceptions, motivations, values, policy preferences, behaviours and underlying barriers to action. It found the US population to be divided into six groups classified as "alarmed, concerned, cautious, disengaged, doubtful or dismissive". Only 11% are steadily dismissive of climate change, with a growing number of concerned and alarmed people across the nation.

In 2022 the project turned its attention to the rest of the world, becoming **Global Warming's Six Audiences**. The study looked at public views on climate change in 200 countries across Asia and the Pacific, Europe, North America, South America, Southwest Asia and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. This framework is used by climate educators and communicators, including local, state and national governments, academic institutions, environmental organisations, businesses, faith groups, doctors and scientists.

Communication experts advise against using aggressive approaches. Instead, consider using non-violent communication (NVC), mentioned in Step 1. Well-meaning climate change coaches may apply reductive labels (e.g. calling people deniers or greedy), which gives rise to "othering". Social scientists suggest this leads to discrimination and polarises discourse.

The Eco-Phase Cycle Model, developed by Professor Peter Hawkins and the CCA (see Diagram 1), is a recommended tool to customise your delivery depending where your audience is on their journey towards social, environmental and economic responsibility.



## HOW?

These suggestions will help you with the initial steps towards a long-term professional relationship with your client:

- ▶ Carefully review previous steps for a better foundation on cultural and socioeconomic context and investigate tailored communication strategies according to your region of interest.
- ▶ Use available evidence to assess which stage of the eco-phase model your client is in i.e. curious, informed, aware, engaged or active. This will guide the tone, complexity of information shared, and cadence of interaction with your client.
- ▶ Co-create and maintain a compassionate, collaborative and empowering space (we will offer further suggestions on methods and tools in later steps).
- ▶ Support clients in letting go of old attitudes and embracing new mindsets. The [Bridges Transition Model](#) has more details.
- ▶ Explore and address ethical dilemmas.
- ▶ Hold space to support tolerance for ambiguity.
- ▶ As a learning guide, consider what information might help your client in areas such as climate, [ecology](#), [sustainable cities and communities](#), and wellbeing economies.
- ▶ Introduce holistic leadership models such as [Regenerative Leadership](#), which encourages seven fundamental competencies: 1) Awareness and knowledge, 2) Design and planning, 3) Inner transformation, 4) Relationships, 5) Eco-system vision, 6) Collaboration and 7) Drive.



## B. CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION



### WHY?

Research carried out during and after the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COP) 25 and 26 investigated decision-makers' views on the inner qualities and mindsets that facilitate climate action. This led to the first systematic review in 2021 of academic literature examining the connections between inner and outer transformations that support climate action. The review proposed an integrated model of inner-outer transformation (see below), showing how clusters of transformative inner qualities relate to worldviews, beliefs and values that shape our relationships with ourselves, others and the world. These relationships, in turn, influence our ability to drive change at individual, collective and systemic levels.

The review highlighted the potential role of mindfulness and compassion – provided they include ecological and social awareness – as powerful catalysts for inner and outer reconnection, fostering resilience, engagement and more decisive responses to global sustainability crises.

### WHAT?

Mindfulness encompasses a range of practices, such as centring ourselves in the present moment, noticing our internal state and surroundings, and refocusing our attention. It involves observing and accepting our sensations, thoughts and feelings as they arise, without judgement. All of this can improve self-regulation.

Neuroscientists suggest that mindfulness benefits us by reducing the body's stress response, with positive effects on the immune system and health. Mindfulness is also about **how we pay attention**, which can be understood through three key processes:

- ▶ **Intention:** using our heart as our compass, guided by our deepest hopes and values.
- ▶ **Attention:** training our mind to stay grounded in the present moment.
- ▶ **Attitude:** cultivating compassion and curiosity.

Mindfulness can help break the cycle of negative thinking, allowing us to move beyond negative self-talk and reactive impulses. While we cannot stop triggering unhappy memories or judgemental thoughts, we can choose how to respond. Interventions such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) provide a **“choice point.”** offering a pause and a new perspective by shifting from 'doing' to 'being.' Mindfulness also fosters positive emotions like wonder, awe and gratitude which can create an upward spiral of positivity, hope and connection within ourselves, with others and the world.

Scientific research has identified compassion as a motivational system influencing thoughts, physiological responses, intentions and behaviour. It consists of two key processes: recognising suffering and feeling motivated to alleviate it. Like mindfulness, our capacity for compassion can be developed through teaching and practice.



## HOW?

There are multiple exercises and online courses to cultivate mindfulness and compassion but to help clients achieve mind–body–environment connection and embody sustainable principles, we must place **ecological and social awareness** at the centre.

**NB. Be sure to keep cross-cultural considerations top of mind and obtain approvals in advance.**

These examples may be useful for climate change agents:

- ▶ [Mindful breathing](#)
- ▶ [Compassion Training](#)
- ▶ [Savouring walk](#)
- ▶ [Awe outing](#)
- ▶ [Nature activities for adults](#)
- ▶ [Connecting with nature from home](#)
- ▶ [Deep Time Walk](#)
- ▶ Meaning-making (aka spiritual) practices: painting, music, poetry, fiction
- ▶ Indigenous and First Nations People rituals e.g. [Columbia's Solstice Festival](#)
- ▶ [Resources from the Climate Coaching Alliance](#)



## C. INNER DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### WHY?

Progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed globally in 2015 as the most comprehensive plan for a sustainable world, has been ineffective. With a desired deadline of 2030, we need to urgently increase our collective abilities and activities to deal with these complex challenges that extend beyond climate change. Add the pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine, and scholars now refer to the "causal entanglement of crises in multiple global systems in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects" as a **global polycrisis**.

This is why the Inner Development Goals have been co-created as non-profit, open-source initiative to foster the inner development that can lead to the outer transformation the world needs for a sustainable future.

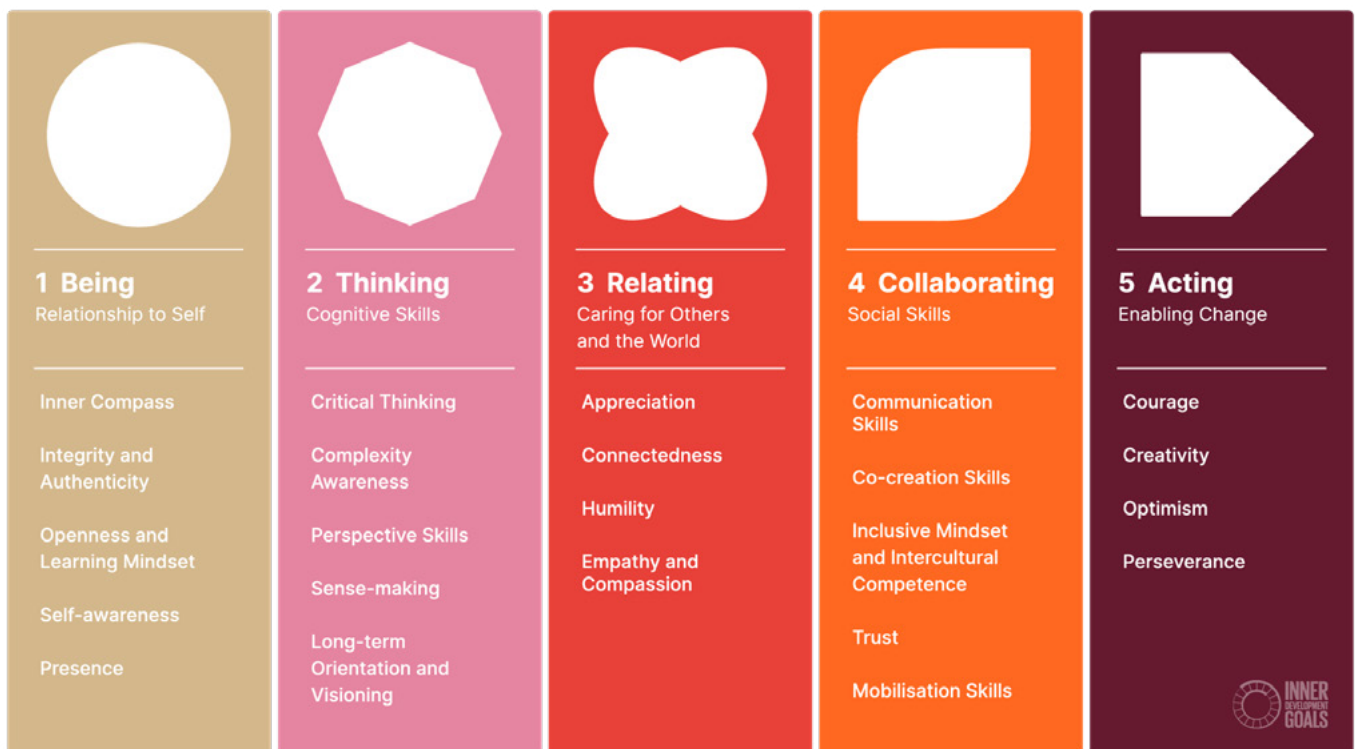


### WHAT?

**The Inner Development Goals (IDG)** community researches, collects and communicates science-based skills and qualities that help us live purposeful, sustainable and productive lives. It aims to co-create an integrated model of inner-outer transformation because these transformative inner qualities help us drive change (see explanation above).

Grounded in interdisciplinary research, the IDG Framework consists of five dimensions and 23 qualities, abilities or skills essential for human inner growth and development, as shown in Diagram 4. The framework is available in many languages and is continually developed with input from experts, scientists, practitioners and organisations worldwide.

Experienced coaches and other change agents are likely to apply most, if not all, of these when working with clients. The significant value-add here is that these elements are organised in one place, providing context for clients considering transformative work. In other words, the framework simplifies the complex field of human development, helping us better identify, integrate, understand, communicate and develop the inner skills needed for sustainable development.



**Diagram 4.** Inner Development Goals (IDGs) Framework

Source: Inner Development Goals website <https://innerdevelopmentgoals.org/framework>



## HOW?

To learn how the IDG Framework can help your work with political leaders and policymakers:

- ▶ Explore the [IDG website](#) and watch the video for inspiration
- ▶ Look for the [IDG Framework](#) in your preferred language
- ▶ Collaborate in the [global research](#) and answer the One Big Question
- ▶ Learn about the [Ecosystem for Inner Development & Human Flourishing](#)
- ▶ Use the [IDG Toolkit](#) as part of ongoing research and provide feedback
- ▶ [Join the IDG Community](#)

## D. COACHING WITH COMPASSION



### WHY?

Climate change is a difficult issue, and how we talk about it can sometimes make things worse instead of better, as previously discussed. It is crucial to have conversations that build connections rather than create divisions, and this is where compassionate coaching comes in. By fostering understanding, we can help our clients move towards their desired future, co-creating solutions within a supportive coaching relationship. Discovering a person's hopes and dreams is essential; it unlocks positive emotions and intrinsic motivation, driving genuine and lasting change.



### WHAT?

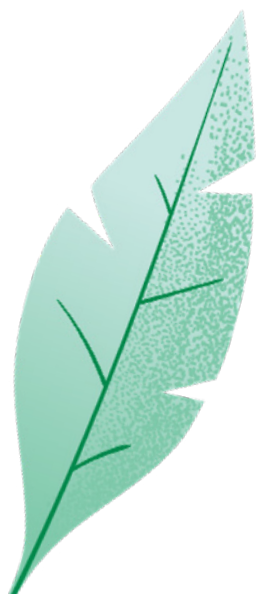
Coaching with compassion involves meeting clients where they are with a genuine sense of care and concern, focusing on the other person, providing support and encouragement. By helping politicians and policymakers identify and pursue their dreams, which often begins by exploring their values, compassionate coaches can build and maintain resonant relationships (see below).

Coaching with compassion for lasting inner change comprises the following actions. You can adapt them to your context:

**Develop resonant relationships:** inspiring, meaningful coaching moments and high-quality, trusting coaching relationships take intention, preparation and practice. Resonant relationships have an overall positive emotional tone and a genuine connection with the person being coached. They will embody support, security, hope and infuse us with the energy and motivation to reflect authentically, take initiative and keep trying.

**Discover the vision of an ideal self within an ideal future:** behavioural change usually happens in bursts, rather than in a smooth, linear progression. Coaches can assist clients in envisioning an ideal future in all areas of their lives, drawing from their own sense of self-efficacy and tapping into feelings of hope and optimism about what is possible. Clients will also be encouraged to reflect on their core values, core identity and their sense of purpose or calling in life. Ultimately, they will be able to articulate a personal vision for their future, as well as a shared vision that includes their family, community and society at large.

**Develop a learning agenda towards an ideal self and future:** viewing individual change as a learning process rather than a single event makes the journey to an ideal future less daunting and more appealing. Let this perspective guide your coaching questions, especially as clients move through the stages of the Eco-Phase Cycle Model. Encourage them to set their own learning agenda for conversations and practise deep listening. While it may be tempting to immediately educate clients, especially if you see yourself as a learning guide, it is important to approach the process gently. Compassionate support and gradual guidance will help create a sustainable learning environment where dreams can become achievable.



## HOW?

Here are some basic steps for coaching politicians and policymakers in the climate space. They will be further developed in subsequent sections:

- ▶ Review Steps 1 and 2 for tips on developing resonant relationships with your client.
- ▶ To help discover your client's real self, review Steps 2 and 3 to develop more nuanced questions.
- ▶ Avoid describing who or what they "ought" to be. Be mindful not to fall into judgemental or shaming narratives.
- ▶ Encourage your client to reflect and record in their own time questions such as:
  - ▶ Who do I really want to be?
  - ▶ What do I really want to do with my life?
  - ▶ How can I enact my values and strengths?
- ▶ Ask your client to imagine their ideal self as a regenerative leader:
  - ▶ What does that look like?
  - ▶ What will my legacy be?
  - ▶ What resources do I need to achieve my ideal self and future?

## E. ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



### WHY?

Traditionally, coaching has focused on helping clients use personal vision to motivate change within their own limited view of the world, especially in individualistic cultures. However, this approach often overlooks challenges to the planet and does not serve our living systems well. To create a world where everyone can enjoy wellbeing now and in the future, we need to expand our coaching methods to include a holistic understanding of sustainability. This is especially important when working with politicians, who have the power to create and implement necessary policies.



### WHAT?

Sustainability is often misunderstood as focusing solely on environmental issues, conservation or energy saving. Yet creating a just, inclusive and equitable society is equally crucial for addressing the social, environmental and economic challenges outlined in the **United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

These complex, interconnected problems are deeply embedded in our cultural narratives, influencing how we see ourselves, our relationships with others and our connection to the natural world. To address this, we need a paradigm shift in our lifestyles and thinking. It starts with reflecting on the following “stories we live by”:

- ▶ **Economic models:** these often emphasise rapid growth, prioritise profits above all else and encourage increasing consumption.
- ▶ **Social systems:** these frequently contain inherent disadvantages and inequalities of opportunity, and lack inclusivity, diversity and fair representation.
- ▶ **Cultural narratives:** these sometimes portray humanity as separate from, superior to, or inherently selfish in its relationship with the natural world.

Understanding and addressing sustainability challenges (SDGs) must be integrated into all subject areas and disciplines. Equally important is nurturing the competencies and mindset necessary for transformative change. The **UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development** open access courses provide learner-centred, action-oriented and transformative education for all global citizens.

Many courses focus on the technical aspects of sustainability, often neglecting the emotional factors that inspire collaboration and action. Instead, the seminal work of Isabel Rimanoczy in **The 12 Sustainability Mindset Principles** defines a sustainability mindset as:

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**“A way of thinking and being that results from a broad understanding of the ecosystem’s manifestations, social sensitivity and an introspective focus on personal values and higher self, expressed through actions for the greater good.”**

Sustainability Mindset as defined by Isabel Rimanoczy.

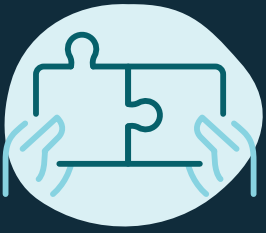
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It groups the 12 principles into four domains:

- ▶ Ecological worldview
- ▶ Systems thinking
- ▶ Emotional intelligence
- ▶ Spiritual (or Meaning making) Intelligence

Transforming the hearts and minds of individuals to such an enormous extent is perhaps the greatest challenge we will ever undertake. Developmental psychologists and coaches have highlighted how different ways of “making meaning” or understanding the world depend on the stage of human development.





## HOW?

This vision activity can be integrated into work you are already doing with politicians in different capacities, e.g. HR, leadership coaching, wellness coaching, life coaching and training. It can help you and your clients envision compelling futures. You will need paper and pen for recording insights and should allocate at least 30 minutes. To maintain focus, consider recording the instructions on your phone then listening to them as you visualise. (Adapted from a CCA presentation by Eddie Farwell from work by Donella Meadows.)

### 1. Prepare

- ▶ Find a quiet place.
- ▶ Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and imagine a sustainable world.
- ▶ Have your paper and pen ready.

### 2. Visualise

- ▶ Relax and let your mind explore without force. Use all your senses to imagine this world. Reflect on questions like:
- ▶ What is your home like?
- ▶ What is the community like?
- ▶ How is energy, water and food managed?
- ▶ Who lives there and how do you interact?
- ▶ What kind of work do you do?
- ▶ How does transport work?
- ▶ How do communities sustain themselves and resolve conflicts?
- ▶ How is nature treated?



### 3. Expand your vision

- ▶ Envision surrounding communities and nations.
- ▶ Consider their physical systems, decision-making processes and interactions.
- ▶ Reflect on diversity, progress and daily life.
- ▶ Record and reflect: write down your vision and thoughts on making it a reality.

### 4. Visioning in the public arena: imagine what regenerative governance looks like:

- ▶ Politicians working for the benefit of people and the planet.
- ▶ Collective global actions for sustainability.
- ▶ Laws enabling sustainable change.
- ▶ Regulations promoting climate action and economic balance.
- ▶ Empowerment of businesses and individuals for a regenerative future.
- ▶ Collective action for global good.
- ▶ Respect and protection of biodiversity.

Read More: [\*\*Reconnection: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out. The Mindfulness Initiative\*\*](#)

Watch: [\*\*Regenerating Australia Film Trailer\*\*](#)

Listen: [\*\*Dadirri \(The Deep Inner Spring Inside Us – A Gift to the Nation\)\*\*](#)



STEP 5

# AMPLIFYING ACTION

## STEP 5

# AMPLIFYING ACTION

We may be reaching a tipping point in global awareness about the impact of climate change.

The Covid-19 pandemic accustomed people to living with disruption and uncertainty, causing worldwide upheaval and prompting us to rethink our assumptions as we adapted to a new reality.

The public is increasingly linking climate change to the rise in extreme weather events. There are more media reports on the effects of floods, fires, warming seas and melting glaciers, which could shift our collective approach to addressing human suffering.

On the other hand, whilst most adults in the US are **concerned about climate change**, it is not a national priority and, as of the writing of this playbook, they are reluctant to phase out fossil fuels completely. The fact that younger adults are more open to it, however, suggests bigger generational and cultural shifts.

Renowned environmental scientist and systems thinking educator, **Donnella Meadows**, described tipping points as crucial moments within complex systems where small changes can lead to significant transformations. As catalysts, we can recognise these moments and support small actions which may be amplified to accelerate change.

Climate coaches can play a pivotal role in history by supporting political leaders on their transformation journey. They can help develop collaborative qualities and empower leaders to take courageous action to change laws so these wins can spread locally, nationally and globally.

Step 5 focuses on how coaches can accelerate change through the coaching ripple effect. We also look at the emerging field of social quantum change and how it is used in climate action.

## A. THE COACHING RIPPLE EFFECT



### WHY?

Coaches and change agents can play a crucial role in driving widespread action. Our work is often underestimated, but a single coaching conversation can be a piece of a larger puzzle that, when viewed as a whole, depicts a sustainable planet.

Understanding the ripple effect of our coaching helps us strengthen our individual and collective influence, highlighting the significant role we can play in accelerating action. This impact extends beyond individual political leaders to the wellbeing of entire communities.



### WHAT?

Political leadership involves not only direct influence on subordinates but also indirect influence throughout the system such as on political parties, government agencies and local constituencies. Coaching aims to transform individual leaders and their **interactions** within the system so the system itself changes.

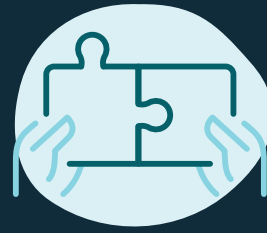
To assess the impact of coaching, it is important to evaluate changes in how members of a system **connect and interact with each other**, particularly in the quality and patterns of their communication. However, obtaining and analysing this relational data can be challenging so you could consider applying **Systems Network Analysis** (SNA) in your coaching programme design. It has been used by multinationals for many years.

The coaching ripple effect can transform individual politicians into powerful agents of change. Their enhanced abilities and actions can lead to significant improvement in policies and public engagement in these ways:

**Empowering leaders:** coaching helps politicians develop the confidence and skills to take courageous, decisive actions. When leaders feel supported and empowered, they are more likely to introduce and advocate for progressive climate policies.

**Enhancing collaboration:** coaching fosters empathy, communication, trust and co-creation skills. Politicians coached to be better collaborators can build stronger alliances, both locally and internationally, leading to more coordinated and effective climate action.

**Strategic thinking:** coaches assist politicians in developing long-term strategic thinking so they can see the broader implications of their actions. This is crucial for creating sustainable and impactful climate policies that address root causes rather than just symptoms.



**Influencing policy:** as politicians implement climate-friendly policies, the positive outcomes can serve as models for other regions. Successful initiatives can inspire and influence other policymakers, creating a cascading effect of environmental benefits.

**Public engagement:** coached politicians are often better at communicating the urgency and importance of climate action to the public. This can increase public support and drive grassroots movements, leading to broader societal change.

**Legislative impact:** coaching can help politicians navigate complex legislative processes to ensure impactful climate laws are passed and enforced. Strong legal frameworks are essential for long-term environmental sustainability.

**Systems thinking:** coaching encourages a holistic view of problems and solutions. Politicians learn to see how environmental, social and economic systems are interconnected, leading to more integrated and effective climate strategies.

**Cultural shift:** as politicians adopt and champion climate action (especially if they are younger, as [recent surveys](#) suggest) they can influence cultural norms, promoting a societal shift towards sustainability. This is vital for achieving widespread and enduring impact.

## HOW?

- ▶ Check whether your organisation has access to [SNA](#) resources. We recommend partnering with internal technical experts to design the most effective coaching programme.
- ▶ Universities and consultancies around the world offer myriad courses promising to teach leadership behaviours for sustainability. It is important to use [evidence-informed criteria](#) to decide which to take up.
- ▶ As outlined in Step 4, consider holistic leadership models such as [Regenerative Leadership](#) and its seven fundamental competencies.
- ▶ Consider applying the [IDG Framework](#) described in Step 4 to develop qualities required in your chosen level of government i.e. local, regional or national.
- ▶ Consider joining the [CCA Political Pod](#) and the [IDG community](#) of practitioners to collaborate on practical applications and expand shared knowledge of the political impact of climate coaching.

## B. QUANTUM SOCIAL CHANGE



### WHY?

Climate change is a global issue that requires collective action to mitigate its impacts. We have looked at the inner human dimensions needed to create deeper and more authentic connections with each other and with nature to achieve transformative change. We have looked at maximising climate coaching impact through the ripple effect.

But can this or any intervention be scaled to the degree we urgently need? To answer this, social scientists looked at quantum physics, borrowed the concept of fractals and coined the term “quantum social change”.

Quantum social change suggests that climate action can happen faster and with greater impact when it is driven by collective action and shared values i.e. it involves creating a sense of shared purpose and mobilising people around a common cause.

This approach has evolved to use digital tools to mobilise citizens to act. Coaches and change agents can play several roles as learning guides and supporters throughout the whole “value chain” by working with stakeholders involved in the creation, consultation, approval and implementation of climate-focused policies.



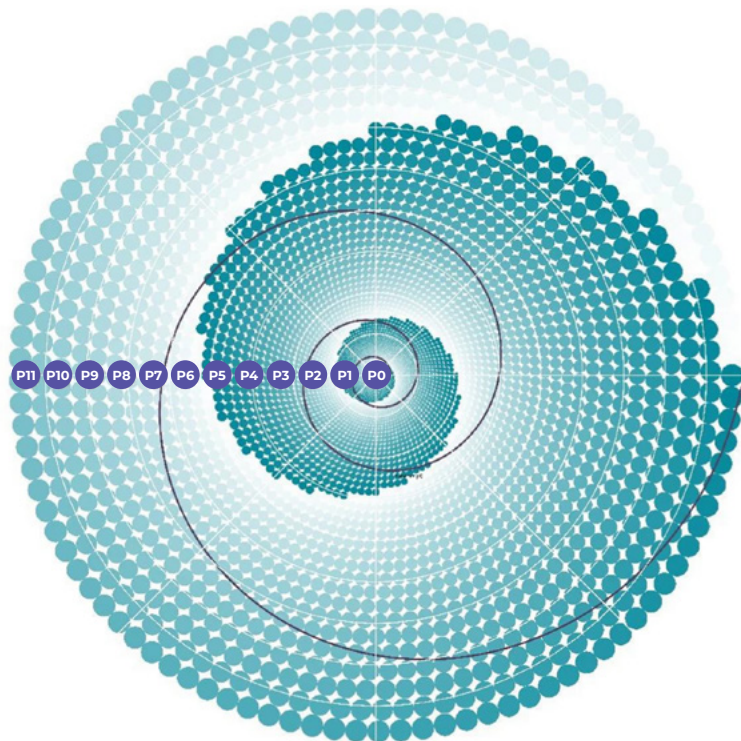


## WHAT?

Quantum science has given us the concept of fractals as a novel and potentially more effective approach for scaling social change. Fractals are self-similar patterns that can repeat themselves. When it comes to societies and social change, these patterns can be replicated through conscious intent across groups and settings of any size.

A fractal approach to scaling has the potential to promote “virtuous cycles” of entangled change at multiple scales (see Diagram 5). The Powers of 10 Fractal Framework shows fractal agency where individuals can influence family, friends, communities, villages, neighbourhoods, metacommunities and so on, up to continental and global scales.

- P0** Individual (YOU!) ( $10^0$ )
- P1** Family/Friends ( $10^1$ )
- P2** Personal Network ( $10^2$ )
- P3** Community ( $10^3$ )
- P4** Village/Neighborhood ( $10^4$ )
- P5** Metacommunity ( $10^5$ )
- P6** Urban ( $10^6$ )
- P7** Nation/State ( $10^7$ )
- P8** Sub-continental/Regional ( $10^8$ )
- P9** Continental ( $10^9$ )
- P10** Global ( $10^{10}$ )
- P11** All homo sapiens who have ever lived ( $10^{11}$ )



**Diagram 5.** The Powers of 10 Fractal Framework

Source: [Fractal approaches to scaling transformations to sustainability \(2023\)](#).



In the political arena, Christiana Figueres describes a clearly repeatable pattern for generating social change as the three Cs – Coalitions, Collaboration and Consensus. An internationally recognised leader on global climate change, she was Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 2010-2016. She explains how the Paris Conference of the Parties (COP) was a breakthrough because, after previous disappointing COPs, she and her team prepared carefully. They built the three Cs with delegates and country representatives before and during the Paris meeting to create a momentum which led to success.

From small beginnings, ripple effects can build the necessary momentum for tangible, active social change. Climate coaches, supervisors and change agents can do this by encouraging clients to generate actions and strategies that are easily replicable at any scale.



## HOW?

Using the ripple effect for social change involves expanding spheres of influence to create new and different connections and alliances.

This activity is based on Christiana Figueres' concept of the 3Cs: Coalitions, Collaboration and Consensus:

- ▶ **Collaboration:** firstly, consider all your techniques to help your client broadly identify potential new collaborations for social change. Encourage them to keep expanding their list.
- ▶ **Coalition:** suggest how they can combine their contacts to identify and create suitable coalitions for each action they want to achieve.
- ▶ **Consensus:** jointly explore which stakeholders are best placed to build consensus and political pressure.

Forging these collaborations and coalitions may sit outside your client's comfort zone, but you can coach them to develop the skills needed through the "relating" and "collaboration" dimensions of the IDG Framework, which supports authentic relationships.

Read More: [\*\*Fractal Approaches to Scaling Transformations to Sustainability\*\*](#)

Watch: [\*\*The Inside Story of the Paris Agreement – Christiana Figueres\*\*](#)

Listen: [\*\*Voicing Relationships Podcast\*\*](#)



STEP 6

# POWER OF STORYTELLING

## STEP 6

# POWER OF STORYTELLING

In the fast-paced world of politicians, policymakers and funders, managing a plethora of information and meeting the expectations of diverse stakeholders is a daily challenge. For climate coaches, a potent approach is to incorporate engaging narratives and personal experiences into the conversation to make the climate crisis more tangible, and clearly demonstrate its impact on humanity.

Some people lose interest at the mere mention of climate change, failing to comprehend the immediate need for action. Narratives pierce that opposition and studies show that embedding convincing messages within a story can overcome cognitive obstacles.

Politicians frequently struggle to communicate intricate issues and policies to a wide audience because these subjects do not conveniently fit into brief statements. Stories offer a connection. They use familiar patterns, helping us deal with complexity. When you encapsulate your message in a story, it comes alive, resonating with policymakers and spurring action.

In Step 6 we explore the power of storytelling to convey climate change messages.

## A. ANATOMY OF A GOOD CLIMATE STORY



### WHY?

While the primary goal of coaching is to guide clients on their journey of understanding, there are instances when you can make an impact by sharing personal insights and information. Narrating a story can provide a valuable perspective, allowing clients to envision an alternative way of operating and a promising result. The stories you use will ideally be relatable, motivational and appropriate to the situation.

The stories we tell shape how we view the world and what we think is possible. Therefore, to change the future, we need to change our narratives.



### WHAT?

Storytelling is an inspirational tool that demonstrates how simple actions can cut through complex situations within the audience's grasp. You can share your personal journey towards pro-environmental behaviour or motivate specific actions through other relevant examples. Both are equally impactful.

There is an abundance of climate-related narratives, from Hollywood blockbusters like *The Day After Tomorrow* to global news coverage. Narratives rooted in fear often lead to avoidance or denial, however, as discussed earlier. Tales of doom and gloom fail to engage the public or policymakers in a greener future.

Conversely, narratives showcasing genuine solutions inspire individuals to adopt eco-friendly practices, as recent research has shown. The key is crafting stories that are solution-focused, positive and feature empathetic protagonists overcoming obstacles for a sustainable future. These characters resonate if they have relatable traits like courage and perseverance, stirring empathy and galvanising engagement.

It is crucial to consult Steps 1-6 before crafting your story, so that it aligns with expert knowledge rather than misinformation.

This is particularly important considering the disconnect between climate science and policymaking evident in recent elections around the world. Policymakers operating within short electoral cycles may prioritise piecemeal measures such as recycling or improving electric vehicle infrastructure. Instead, they need to plan for a sustainable society and devise comprehensive policies that accelerate systemic changes at scale.



## HOW?

This simple template will help you on your storytelling journey:

**Choosing the topic:** select a topic that resonates with your audience's current situation or challenges. Consider what they need to know, how much time they have and the key points you want to convey.

**Story length:** write your story in different lengths – 400 words, 200 words and a 100-word paragraph. This helps you understand your story better and present it confidently in various settings.

**Structure:** use the STARE model (Baden, 2019):

- ▶ Situation: describe the context and your hero's role.
- ▶ Task or obstacle: outline the problem your hero needs to solve.
- ▶ Action: detail the actions your hero takes to solve the problem.
- ▶ Result: explain what your hero achieves.
- ▶ Enjoy: engage your audience with how the hero's actions have promoted environmental awareness and changed behaviours.

**Crafting for impact:** polish your story to make it come alive with these tips:

- ▶ Hero description: make your hero relatable and inspiring. Avoid evoking negative emotions.
- ▶ Actions: ensure the green behaviours in the story are solution-focused, understandable and achievable.
- ▶ Confidence: write in a way that makes the audience feel their actions can also make a difference. Use data to show the solution works.



## B. SHOWCASING IMPACTFUL EXAMPLES

### FICTION

A Green Stories project teamed experienced writers with climate experts to create an anthology of 24 stories: *No More Fairy Tales: Stories to Save Our Planet*. This was shared around **COP28**, making the Top of the COPs newsletter. Each story showcases transformative climate solutions and readers can see how to help make them happen by following links to the **Green Stories website**. Genres varied from romance to whodunnits to family dramas. The stories showcased climate solutions ranging from nature-based carbon drawdown projects to legal approaches and included technical engineering-type stories and stories looking at political systems and culture.

#### The Pitch

This tale derives from the eco-themed romantic comedy novel *Habitat Man*. It kicks off with the protagonist's failed pitch for a nature accounting system, akin to **Elkington's triple bottom line method**. Feeling despondent, he visits a couple proud of their wildlife garden, which sparks an epiphany about the power of personal actions in our own backyards.

**Research** on the novel revealed that 98% of readers adopted at least one green solution mentioned, such as wildlife gardening, composting or even opting for a natural burial in their wills. This underscores fiction's potential to inspire change, showing that stories featuring green solutions can indeed influence behaviour among mainstream audiences.

#### Ocean as a Nation

Three narratives investigate the concept of granting nationhood to the ocean. The first traces the inception of this idea, while the second depicts the challenges encountered by the ocean's inaugural president. The third fast-forwards 60 years to highlight the positive outcomes achieved. This initiative resulted in the Law School at the University of Southampton citing the success of granting legal status to nature. The topic was presented at an Ocean Summit in 2022 and the stories have been published in the novel **Fairhaven – A Novel of Climate Optimism**.

#### The Assassin

Set within a citizens' jury, eight individuals convene to discuss climate solutions. The murder-mystery plotline adds entertainment value and offers a playful context to delve deeply into critical climate solutions. This concept has been transformed into the play *Murder in the Citizen's Jury*, which is open to any organisation to stage royalty free. Citizens' assemblies represent a significant climate solution, as evidence shows they tend to make sustainable decisions and think beyond short electoral cycles and vested interests.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL: FROM COACHING TO POLITICS, BY DAVID BENNETT

The first time I considered entering politics was in 1995. I had lived in Brazil for several years, which was at times a disorienting experience. I led the privileged life of an expatriate but also volunteered on a project working with street children. I saw the impact political corruption and electorate apathy had on Brazilian society. The experience led me to consider entering politics to ensure Aotearoa New Zealand didn't go down the same track. However, I found politicians' behaviour both in and out of parliament repellent, so I shelved my intention.

Over the years, I maintained an interest in politics. In 2016 I again considered joining a political party, once more spurred by what I saw happening in another country. Donald Trump's gargantuan media coverage convinced me he would win the USA presidential election. This time I followed through and joined the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure his type of politics would not gain a foothold in my country. Volunteering in the 2017 general election, I remember attending a campaign planning event and wondering "where are the people like me?" That is, people with a corporate background, interested in social justice and the environment. Because of this feeling of alienation, I became an inactive member.

### Awakening to climate change

In 2017, I read Thomas Friedman's inspiring *Thank You for Being Late*. Friedman explained how globalisation, technology and climate change interact, complicating and speeding up one another. I started challenging the coaches and community of practice I worked with, asking why we weren't talking about climate change, why we didn't have any intentions around addressing the crisis, why we continued to fly around the world with our work. The response was minimal.

In my own practice, I wasn't talking about climate change with my clients. In the summer of 2019, I bought books on climate change, Naomi Klein's *On Fire* and David Wallace-Wells' *The Uninhabitable Earth*, and left them on the coffee table in the beach house we stayed at with a group of friends. Curiously no one read them, not even me.

## **Covid as a catalyst for becoming an active member of a political party**

During the first Covid lockdown in March 2020 I had several discussions about the “new normal”. People were enjoying the slower pace of life and how this enforced change was benefitting individual, community and planetary wellbeing. I questioned whether education or politics was most important to achieving this “new normal”. Education is a slower process while the political cycle in New Zealand is three years, so politicians can affect change relatively quickly. I committed to being actively involved in the Green Party.

I attended a “Building our Candidate Capacity” Zoom meeting that same month. As a leadership coach, I had something to offer candidates for the upcoming general election. We were welcomed with, “Thank you for offering to be a candidate.” “No, no, no!” was my response. I was surprised to learn we didn’t have people selected to stand in several local electorates. After weeks of reflection and discussion, I put my name forward. I had no intention of being an elected politician. My motivation was to represent the party and to learn from the experience, so I could help ensure we were better prepared for the next election by having enough outstanding candidates.

I spoke at candidate events, knocked on doors and called voters. A highlight was supporting the local university Greens group. Election night saw our party vote increase and the long-standing incumbent in our electorate unseated by the major progressive party’s candidate. To continue my learning and contribution, I joined a party committee that met throughout 2021 to review the campaign.

## **Ending and letting go to create space and foster clarity**

I realised I didn’t need to become an expert in climate change. I didn’t need to become the “greenest Green”. I have something specific to contribute: my coaching knowledge, experience and mindset. This decision lifted a weight of expectations I had burdened myself with.

I have discussed “growing green candidates” with fellow members. How do we encourage people to consider being candidates? How do we develop their potential to be courageous and inspiring politicians? How do we support elected representatives? How do we support unsuccessful candidates, so they persevere and stand in future elections?

## Climate-conscious coaching

Having discovered and joined the Climate Coaching Alliance, in 2022 I refocused my coaching practice on individuals, organisations and politicians working on climate change. How I work hasn't changed, but who I work with, and the type of people and organisations, has. When I attended the New Zealand Business and Climate Change conference later that year, the opportunities for coaching to contribute were evident. As I listened to the political and business speakers, I heard unspoken themes of the challenge of leading through complexity, the need for systems thinking, decision-making in uncertainty and collaborating across and between sectors with people with different perspectives. Yet there was no explicit discussion on developing leadership or the value that individual, team and systemic coaching can provide.

I am increasingly clear about applying my knowledge of behaviour change, adult development theory, complex adaptive leadership, polarity management, mindfulness, embodied leadership and motivational theory to my climate-conscious coaching practice. Being a political party member, I am energised and inspired as my need for autonomy, competence and relatedness is met by being involved in both spheres.

Read More: [How Storytelling Boosts Environmental Impact and Engagement](#)

Watch: [Christiana Figueres: The inside story of the Paris climate agreement | TED Talk](#)

Listen: [The Power of Positive Climate Narratives](#)



# FINAL REMARKS

Social scientist and author Karen O'Brien recently highlighted an intriguing article in *New Scientist* that ties together many concepts from the Playbook. Written by anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, the June 2024 article delves into the concept of tribalism and its deep historical roots. Whitehouse explains how “identity fusion” – a powerful sense of oneness within a group – has been vital for our survival. He suggests we can harness this unity to tackle global challenges, recognising our shared ancestry to strengthen our bonds with all of humanity, as well as with our compatriots and extended families. Whitehouse envisions a future where we become a global “teratribe,” united in purpose.

This idea of identity fusion aligns with the principles of quantum social change, where individual and collective identities are intertwined. It highlights how our connections, grounded in language, emotions and shared values, can broaden our perspectives and foster a deeper sense of unity. Expanding our identities, instead of narrowing them, is essential for creating meaningful and lasting relationships. We hope this Playbook inspires readers to work towards this vision, providing practical tools and an open invitation to embrace continuous learning.

As climate coaches and change agents, we play a vital role in nurturing these connections. Caring and resonant relationships are key to moving beyond mere coexistence to truly thriving within a living system. Our work involves co-creating spaces with clients to develop their thinking skills and nurturing their relating skills by helping them care for others and the world.

As learning guides, we also play pivotal roles in enhancing our clients' collaboration skills and providing the scaffolding for acting towards a sustainable world. This approach differs from traditional collectivist views that suppress individualism for the sake of uniformity. Instead, we can champion an expansive, compassionate and holistic transformation, paving the way for a sustainable future for all living beings.

By guiding political leaders and policymakers with these principles, we can help them make informed and compassionate decisions. Our influence can help build a global community where unity and diversity coexist harmoniously, ensuring the wellbeing of our planet and all its inhabitants.



**Together, we can inspire the transformation needed for a thriving and sustainable world.**



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