

Integrative coaching approach by Alexander Rehm

As a former top manager of several large corporations for more than 20 years, I have been always thriving to lead with purpose and having **impact**. In 2008, after intensive coaching training, I left the operative business in the direction of personnel and personality development by taking over the management of the Leadership Academy at Swarovski. During these years evolved - also supported by using external coaches during our programs - my understanding of the real need to support people in learning, reflecting, and implementing what they have learned, if the use of resources is to have any effect at all.

As an executive coach, I focus on leadership issues for top managers and support them in gaining access to their own resources and skills, which expand their options for action, enable them to develop answers to their questions and translate them into appropriate actions. But what motivates the clients to act, what drives them? Why do human beings think, feel, and behave the way they think, feel, and behave? Only when we build up a trustworthy relationship within the framework of a "therapeutic alliance" and approach potential answers to these questions I can have an **impact** with my appropriate interventions.

But how does coaching work? What is the right approach? In my search for a scientifically based **impact model**, I came across the **Integrative Coaching Approach** by Prof. Dr. Gerhard Roth and Dr. Alica Ryba (2019), which I have been certified to use since April 2020 and which I would like to present in brief below.

Our personality and our psyche are determined by genetic and epigenetic, i.e. gene regulatory mechanisms, by prenatal experiences of the expectant mother, by early postnatal influences of the environment, especially regarding the quality of early bonding experiences and environmental influences as well as experiences in later childhood.

These factors result in the **four-level model** by Roth and Cierpka (2014), the **three limbic levels** and one **cognitive level**.

In addition to the "life support program", the **lower limbic level** contains the temperament as the basis of the individual personality. All genetic, epigenetic, and prenatal influences are also included here. The **middle limbic level** contains the experiences that a child made in the first three years of life, particularly in the interaction with their primary contact persons. These then form the framework for the further development of the personality.

At the **upper limbic level**, we learn in childhood and adolescence to adapt our infantile egoism to social requirements, i.e. to endure reward deferral, to compromise, to do good to others so that they do good to us, etc., to achieve goals such as a certain professional position.

The **cognitive-linguistic level** is the level of logical arguments and appeals to insight, but also that of consciously controlled self-disclosure and communication. It has no direct influence on a person's emotion, behavior, and physicality, but only works in conjunction with the limbic levels.

Personality and psyche develop on those three limbic levels. This takes place within the framework of the functions of the **six "psycho-neural" basic systems**, such as the *stress processing-, self-calming-, bonding-, impulse control-, motivation-, reality- and risk perception systems*. These six systems serve to fulfill the **basic needs** of every human being, namely **bonding, control/orientation, gaining pleasure** and **avoiding displeasure**, and **maintaining/increasing self-esteem**.

If one or more of these needs are not sufficiently satisfied in the long term, the person feels a certain **inconsistency** (Grawe, 2004), which then leads to stress and the associated internal and external conflicts.

In my experience, top managers only accept support when the inconsistencies in their way how they deal with themselves, or their environment have reached a level that no longer allows them to continue and therefore requires urgent change.

Through guided self-reflection, my clients understand that there are three different forms of conflict, although they can all occur together:

1. **person and position** - this is where good diagnostic tools can help to gain clarity on a cognitive level.
2. inconsistency between **motives and goals** - this requires a sound understanding of the 3 different limbic levels and what influence they have on our behavior and our decisions.
3. **contradiction** between the 6 psycho-neural systems

Whether therapist or coach, both try to accompany their clients from an inconsistent state to a consistent one. However, if the inconsistency in a client - described above - manifests itself in clinically significant psychological disorders in the areas of perception, regulation of emotions and behavior, I refer them to psychotherapeutic treatment.

The well-being of my clients is my absolute concern. As a coach, I can only help to reduce the perceived severity of the problem and gain access to personal resources that lead to behavioral changes that have a lasting effect if there is a tangible orientation on solutions (not problems) and a willingness to look closely at where the conflicts are coming from.

What does this integrative coaching approach mean for my clients?

There is no one right method that fits all clients equally. Since people not only have different personality traits, but also **three types of memory**, namely the **explicit** or state memory, the **implicit** or behavioral memory and the **somatic** or body memory, I intervene in coaching on precisely these three levels in an individual-centered way:

1. at the level of the subjective state of **mind**, i.e. how a person feels at the moment, what s/he thinks, what ideas s/he has, what s/he says, i.e. what the person can express verbally. Many approaches end up believing that simply talking and appealing to insight, i.e. addressing the cognitive-communicative level, will change ingrained behaviors and feelings.
2. Therefore, I reflect the perceived **behavior**, i.e. how a person behaves towards another person. I address the conscious and preconscious intuitive level and pay attention to paraverbal communication, i.e. how a person says something (voice control, intonation, speed, rhythm)
3. the **physical** states, i.e. how a person reacts spontaneously, is controlled by the unconscious limbic levels. Here I pay attention to non-verbal communication, i.e. what is not said, posture, facial expressions, skin circulation and gestures.

The individual personality structure gives me reference points to the possible reasons for the stress that led them to ask for a coaching. I integrate my wide range of methods and many years of management experience into the impact model described above with the declared aim of not only helping managers to deal with their issues superficially, but also to create a consistent psychological state in the long term. To achieve this, I expect my clients to make sufficient time and financial resources available, combined with the desire to work on themselves and to look to the future with an open mind.

Successful coaching requires pressure of suffering, the prospect of reward and patience. So that potential clients can get together with me an idea of my coaching approach and its impact, it is essential that we get to know each other before starting the process.

I look forward to receiving your filled in contact form at alexander.rehm@rld-group.com or just give me a call on +41 79 55 237 99.