The background of the cover is a textured, olive-green color. A large, dark silhouette of a person's head with spiky hair is centered. Inside the silhouette, a pair of green eyes is visible, looking forward. The title text is overlaid on the face.

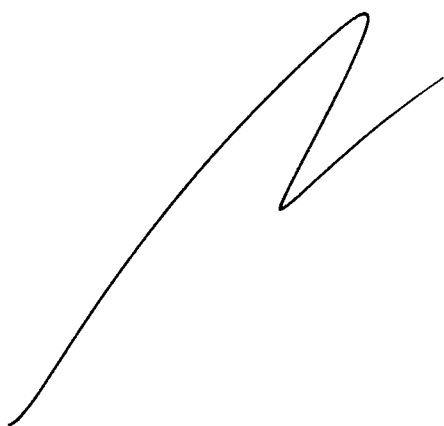
**MINDFUL
LEADERSHIP
COACHING
JOURNEYS INTO
THE INTERIOR**

MANFRED F. R. KETS DE VRIES

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World-renowned leadership expert Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries draws on his extensive experience in group leadership coaching to provide an in-depth look at the coaching process through the lens of psychodynamic mindfulness, considering the diversity of individual and organizational learning.

Kets de Vries advises on how the best leadership coaches help their executive clients create the tipping points that lead to significant personal and professional change and explains the innovative tools to support this intervention technique. Including case studies and questionnaires that facilitate a deep understanding of the psychodynamics of personal and organizational change, this book will help coaches and executives to transform their teams' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and create a "best place" to work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long, sweeping curve that ends in a sharp hook, followed by a smaller, more complex loop.

Mindful Leadership Coaching

TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

Mindful Leadership Coaching

Journeys into the interior

Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries

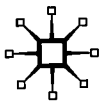
*Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and
Organizational Change, INSEAD, France, Singapore & Abu Dhabi*



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Preface

One day an old Chinese sage lost his pearls. Distraught, he sent his eyes to search for his pearls, but his eyes did not find them. Next he sent his ears to search for the pearls, but his ears did not find them either. Then he sent his hands to search for the pearls, but they likewise had no success. And so he sent all of his senses together to search for his pearls, but none found them. Finally he sent his not-search to look for his pearls. And his not-search found them!

— *Chinese fable*

Introduction

A coaching session with Freud

During the summer of 1910, when Freud was vacationing with his family beside the North Sea in Holland, Gustav Mahler visited him for a consultation. Mahler had contacted Freud because of feelings of depression, and serious relationship problems with his wife Alma (associated with sexual dysfunction). As his wife would write in her autobiography, Mahler was not at all well. He dwelled constantly on the past: his troubled childhood, his perception of being an outsider in Vienna, his concerns about not being understood as a composer, and his morbid fascination with death.¹ He was also troubled by responsibilities as the world's leading conductor. These preoccupations, which he transformed into major themes in his music, were having a destructive effect on his marriage. His depression was deepened by the probability that Alma – fed up with his neurotic behavior – was about to leave him for a younger man, the budding architect, Walter Gropius. Mahler decided to consult Sigmund Freud about his troubled state of mind.

Although (according to Freud's biographer Ernest Jones) Freud was always very reluctant to interrupt his holidays, it was difficult for him to refuse seeing a man of Gustav Mahler's stature.² The composer's "maddening doubt" had led him, however, to put off the meeting on three previous occasions, making it necessary for Freud to give Mahler a kind of ultimatum. Freud made clear that the end of August would be the last chance to have a consultation, as he was leaving then for Sicily.

The two men met at a restaurant in Leiden and after the meal continued their discussion walking along the canals. They talked for over four hours,

the longest therapeutic session Freud ever conducted. Writing much later to Theodor Reik, in 1934, Freud noted, “I analyzed Mahler for an afternoon in the year 1910 in Leiden. If I may believe the reports I achieved much with him at that time. The visit appeared necessary for him, because his wife at that time rebelled against the fact that he withdrew his libido from her. In highly interesting expeditions with him through his life history, we discovered his personal conditions for love, especially in his Holy Mary complex (mother fixation). I had plenty of opportunity to admire the capability of the psychological understanding of this man of genius. No light fell at this time on the symptomatic façade of his obsessional neurosis. It was as if you would dig a single shaft through a mysterious building.”³ Mahler, on his part, sent a telegram to Alma the day after the meeting: “I’m filled with joy. Interesting conversation...” Although Mahler had no knowledge of psychoanalysis, Freud noted that he had never before met anyone who understood so quickly what psychoanalysis was all about. Whatever happened during their session, apparently it changed Mahler’s life.

Perhaps Mahler told Freud the story of his troubled childhood, how he was first initiated to music, and the pleasure he derived from it. Perhaps he described how his ability to compose music gave him a sense of victory over his tyrannical father.⁴ Perhaps he talked about the terrible, painful relationship between his father and his mother: his father’s violence toward his mother and his mother crying, and running out of the house. Perhaps he spoke about his helplessness – all tragic themes that he would iterate in his music.

As to Freud’s response, perhaps he made some observations about Mahler’s relationships with women, explored the infantile patterns behind them, discussed his striving for perfection, his “Holy Mary” complex, and its possible link with Mahler’s sexual dysfunction. Perhaps he speculated that in his striving for perfection, Mahler had sacrificed his relationships with other people, in particular his wife. Mahler wrote, “Others wear the theater out and take care of themselves; I take care of the theater and wear myself out.”⁵

While individual four-hour consultations are highly unusual, psychoanalytical interventions (unlike coaching) normally extend over a considerable

period of time, often many years. Traditional psychoanalysis has always advocated longer treatments but from the beginning, both longer and shorter forms of treatment have been available within psychoanalysis. Freud's treatment of Mahler has been taken as a prime example of one of Freud's shorter interventions. It seems that although it was only four hours in total – albeit in a single session – Mahler's meeting with Freud had some effect. Mahler's impotency disappeared, and the marital relationship apparently improved. Unfortunately, Mahler died the following year.

In her autobiography, Alma Mahler also recounts the meeting between Freud and her husband, mentioning that Mahler contacted Freud out of fear of losing her.⁶ It seems that Freud had told her husband that he recognized his mother, an abused woman, in every woman he met. But Mahler's relationships with women had always been complicated. Later in her book, Alma writes that when she met him Mahler was still a virgin at the age of 40, despite attempts at seduction by several experienced women. Moreover, before their marriage Mahler had written to Alma stipulating that she must give up her own musical ambitions, including composing. The only music to be talked about in his house was his own. (Much later, he partly changed his mind about this requirement.) In that letter, he also wrote that her main task would be to make him happy. Alma should be there only for him – it was almost as if she should behave as an extension of himself.

We can infer from a number of these comments that the couple seemed to be caught in a kind of sado-masochistic relationship, a way of dealing with each other that both needed in order to retain their identity. It seems to have been a very engulfing relationship – all or nothing, life or death, either merging and disappearing inside one another or losing each other. Perhaps the only satisfying, fruitful, and constructive relationship Mahler ever had was the one with his music.

Considering it was so successful when it did take place, why did Mahler cancel his appointment with Freud three times? Perhaps, at an unconscious level, he had a modicum of understanding about what made him so creative. Was he afraid that his talk with Freud would challenge him to face his inner demons? And as these conflicts were so much part of him,

would dealing with them impact his ability to compose? Would analyzing his problems cause his fountain of creativity to run dry? Perhaps Mahler's initial reluctance to see Freud had something to do with his own realization that his personal conflicts had been channeled successfully into his compositions.

We can speculate that the effectiveness of Freud's intervention may have been the result of his making a number of supportive observations. Freud recounted that he was quite impressed by Mahler's psychological insight. Whatever happened during that walk, on his return to Vienna, Mahler was remarkably positive about his conversation with Freud, as if it had finally given him a solution to his miserable state of mind. After the meeting with Freud, Alma stopped seeing Walter Gropius (or at least kept her liaisons secret) and Mahler encouraged and praised her compositions. Furthermore, the annotations in the manuscript of Mahler's unfinished 10th Symphony resemble an open love letter to Alma. Whatever happened during the meeting with Freud, it must have reminded Gustav why he loved his wife, and what role she played in his life.⁷ In one way or another, Freud helped stabilize their relationship until Mahler's death in 1911.

Everybody has a coach

The Freud-Mahler encounter can be viewed as an example of a remarkably effective coaching session. It demonstrates how much work can be done in a short intervention. Yet many more years would go by before coaching interventions (not necessarily the sort of in-depth interventions like the Freud-Mahler encounter) would be widely practiced. In the early 1980s, leadership coaching started to gain momentum, but the widespread adoption of executive coaching practices began only around a decade later. Of course, as the Freud-Mahler example illustrates, as long as people needed guidance, some form of coaching had been always available, albeit under other names. In the early days, however, having a coach was a kind of a dirty little secret. It was something you didn't want to talk about. If you had a coach, it usually meant you were in some sort of trouble. Being advised to undertake coaching meant you were being given a final chance to do something about whatever it was you were doing wrong. Initially, coaching was stigmatized.

Nowadays, leadership coaching is cast in a far more positive light. In fact, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme and having a coach has become a status symbol. It means you're successful, that you're someone who your organization is investing in for the future. Coaching is no longer a reactive process. Today's fast-track executives proactively seek some form of coaching and nearly every senior executive seems to have a coach.

One of the reasons for the current popularity of coaching is that many executives have realized that leadership coaches offer expertise that is not necessarily found inside the company. Another, which probably accounts more for its attractiveness, is that most find it easier to confide in an objective outsider. External coaches are more likely to offer a confidential relationship within which executives can discuss delicate issues freely, let their defenses down, and explore blind spots, biases, and shortcomings.

The higher executives climb on the organizational ladder, the less they can depend on technical skills and the greater their need for effective interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. This is where leadership coaches can make a major contribution. For example, there are many unspoken rules about appropriate executive styles for top-level positions. These rules are not always easy to decipher. Leadership coaches can help executives decode these rules and understand what is expected of them in terms of behaviors and attitudes. Coaches can help their clients to enhance their style, explore future options, and discuss their ideal and actual organizational impact. They can also facilitate their learning, help them to clarify their goals, and guide them in getting things done.

Coaches can draw their clients' attention to repetitive problems that they may not have recognized. They can help their clients realize that what they once regarded as strengths could easily turn into weaknesses as they climb the organizational ladder. They can also help them to become more effective with colleagues, subordinates, bosses, and other stakeholders and take a serious look at behaviors that may adversely affect these

“The higher executives climb on the organizational ladder, the less they can depend on technical skills and the greater their need for effective interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence”

relationships. They can help come to terms with behaviors that cause difficulties, and find more effective ways of functioning.

For example, the most common reasons why executives go astray are difficulties in anger management: being too domineering; reacting inappropriately when things are not to their liking; not handling failure well (not admitting error, covering up, or listing excuses); the inability to influence their people constructively; being too far removed from their people; or living an unbalanced lifestyle. At its most basic level, the role of a leadership coach is to help the executive acknowledge and deal with realities that might otherwise be avoided, denied, or accepted with resignation. In addition, coaches may help them recognize defensive routines within their organization, and do something about them.

Effective leadership coaches contract with their clients with the objective not only to improve their clients' performance, but also to guide them on a journey toward personal transformation and reinvention. They can help their clients break free from an unsatisfying or conflict-laden role and plan for new roles. Coaches can expand their clients' horizon of possibilities, eliciting powerful new commitments, transforming their view of themselves, and fostering new ways of being and acting.

“Coaches can expand their clients' horizon of possibilities”

The coach also has a role in helping executives to build shared understanding, that is, learn how to think and interact better in a work setting, through courageous conversations, assisting them in giving constructive feedback. Coaches may help executives to create better functioning teams and design organizational cultures that will get the best out of their people.

But practicing as an effective leadership coach requires a considerable amount of psychological skill and insight. Coaches need to acknowledge not only what is immediately perceivable but also developments under the surface. We need to listen with the third ear, paying attention to transference and countertransference phenomena. We need to identify the unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another. We need to pay attention to the dynamics within the intrapersonal and interpersonal field.⁸ As leadership coaches, we need to be aware of the dynamics that occur when others open up to us, and when we need to open up to them. As with any kind of close relationship, coaching creates

a new dynamic with associated past behaviors, patterns, and old ways of thinking. In more traditional leadership coaching, these issues would usually remain in the background; in in-depth coaching these dynamics are identifiers, and used as additional information to help the client.

However, many coaches fail to realize that when these dynamics become activated, they have the potential to derail the coach's efforts. If these unconscious relationship needs are strong, they can work in unfortunate ways that undermine the coaching activity. As these dynamics often involve painful and contradictory feelings – touching us and our clients where we feel most vulnerable – they are often difficult to address. But they need to be addressed, verbally or non-verbally, if we want to be effective in our coaching assignments. This necessitates a degree of mindfulness.

Mindful leadership coaching

Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master during the Meiji era (1868–1912), welcomed a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He filled his visitor's cup, then kept pouring.

The professor watched the cup overflowing until he no longer could restrain himself. "Stop! It's full! You can't get any more tea in this cup!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I help you learn unless you first empty your cup?"

Coaching in depth requires the ability to listen carefully to whatever the client is trying to convey with an open mind – like the Japanese professor in the Zen story, the coach has to start with an empty "cup." In this kind of coaching context, mindfulness means drawing the client's attention to the experience of the present moment in an open and non-judgmental manner. This can be viewed as a distinct state of consciousness, distinguished from the normal consciousness of everyday living. Mindfulness leads to wiser judgment about what is and isn't important. Taking a reflective pose, rather than resorting to a flight into action, gives clients room to roam

"Mindfulness leads to wiser judgment about what is and isn't important"

"This monumental book is the synthesis of nearly 35 years of research and practice in psychoanalysis, top executive consulting and training, individual/group coaching... All this is elegantly written in simple words. A 'must-read' for coaches, reflective executives and academics."

—**GEORGES TREPO**, Emeritus Professor, HEC Paris

"I heartily recommend this book to all professional coaches who want to deepen and explore their own coaching relationships."

—**ERIK DE HAAN**, Director of the Ashridge Centre for Coaching, Ashridge Business School, and Professor of Organisation Development and Coaching, VU University, Amsterdam

"Manfred Kets de Vries takes us on a journey into our personal interior to help us to become more reflective practitioners. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in leadership coaching for personal and professional transformation."

—**SOUMITRA DUTTA**, Anne and Elmer Lindseth Dean and Professor of Management, Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University

"Kets de Vries skilfully uses the interplay of conflicting emotional forces to provide an excellent guide to leadership coaching which can be considered as groundbreaking."

—**VASEEHAR HASSAN** PhD, Advisor and Board Member, Guidance Investments, Malaysia

"This book is an absolute 'must-read'... Manfred Kets de Vries has once again given all of us an opportunity to think and talk about what really matters for human beings in modern organizations."

—**PROFESSOR KONSTANTIN KOROTOV**, Director of the Center for Leadership Development Research, ESMT – European School of Management and Technology, Berlin

"Kets de Vries offers powerful insights that could literally save people's careers and more importantly their self-esteem."

—**PROFESSOR RANDEL S. CARLOCK**, Berghmans Lhoist Chaired Professor in Entrepreneurial Leadership, Wendel International Centre for Family Enterprise

"Apart from Manfred Kets de Vries, no one has described so lucidly, emotionally, and profoundly the inner lives of leaders and the paths of their development. This book will become absolutely indispensable for both coaches and executives."

—**ANDREY VLADIMIROVICH ROSSOKHIN**, Head of the Department of Psychoanalysis and Business Consulting, National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE)

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