

Tim Gallwey and Sir John Whitmore, along with Laura Whitworth and Thomas Leonard, are

often credited with launching modern coaching in the 1970s. They are also among the main proponents of the Inner Game approach first developed by Gallwey.

Despite its links with modern research into mindfulness and neuroscience, Inner Game thinking (see box, page 36: *What is the Inner Game?*) is still not as widely appreciated by the coaching community as it could be.

So Gallwey and Whitmore have come together once more to roll out open and corporate coaching programmes through Performance Consultants International. They believe the Inner Game, which Gallwey has evolved (see box, page 35: *Evolution of the Inner Game*), still has plenty to offer.

More than 30 years after they first launched modern coaching and Inner Game thinking, **Tim Gallwey** and **John Whitmore** believe the approach has more to offer now than ever before

INSIDE OUT

All rights reserved. This article appeared in *Coaching at Work*, vol 5, issue 3, 2010 and has been reproduced in full by kind permission of the publisher. Not to be distributed electronically or made available to public websites – for personal and internal organisational use only. For more information, go to www.coaching-at-work.com

How it came about

Gallwey, a professional educator and Californian tennis star, developed the approach as an alternative to the remedial, prescriptive coaching, originating from sport, that prevailed in the 1970s. It led to his ground-breaking book *The Inner Game of Tennis*¹.

That the focus should be on the learner, not the teacher, had already been recognised by psychologist Carl Rogers, Montessori educators and even Socrates. Whitworth and Leonard had taken the therapy route and life coaching was also born in California.

Whitmore, a restless, recently retired professional racing driver, travelled to California in 1970 to study psychotherapy – and himself – at the Esalen Institute, a “sort of psychological health farm”.

His enthusiasm was such that in 1971 he made a documentary featuring, among others, Bob

Evolution of the Inner Game

One giant step in the evolution of the Inner Game since *The Inner Game of Work* was published is its application to leadership in work teams. There is even more self-interference in so-called teamwork than there is with individual performance. You have as many “Self 1”s at play as there are team members – and they play with and against each other in all settings. There is also the combined strength of all the “Self 2” potential when a team can work effectively with minimum interference.

We try to hold as clean a mirror as possible in front of teams engaged in simple tasks for which there is no positional authority, thus requiring mutual respect and equal responsibility. Leadership is in the hands of everyone.

The idea is to let clarity lead. Failure and success is shared equally between each team member and success comes

from each participant taking ownership of the integrity of the team as well as results.

In my latest book³ the Inner Game is asked to grapple with the issue of personal health. The majority of health problems have stress as a causative root. The stress system we’ve inherited from mammalian and reptilian brains has limitations when threats are not physical and short-lived.

There is an alternative system, the Wisdom System, that is part of what the Inner Game calls “Self 2 potential”. By slowing down the momentum of the stress system you are still enough to access your own wisdom in dealing with outside stressors. “Self 1” has an uncanny ability to magnify threat and trigger stress.

The methods and tools in the book aim to provide a choice to access wisdom to minimise the negative consequences of stress on health and performance.

Tim Gallwey

“Eliminating internal obstacles liberates natural learning and minimises the need for teaching”

Kriegel, who years later wrote *Inner Skiing* with Gallwey.

Meanwhile *The Inner Game of Tennis* became a bestseller, in part because it applied to life and work as well as sport. Gallwey trained Whitmore, who worked with him to found the Inner Game brand in Europe, starting with a tennis school in the UK and a ski school in the Alps.

At the same time Gallwey was working with businesses in the US, while Whitworth and Leonard were building a base for life coaching in California and New York. The similarities in all their methods were far greater than the differences and gradually the coaching profession was born,

refined and became respected. Other methods such as NLP were added later, but the fundamental humanistic or Rogerian principles remain sacrosanct to this day.

From the outset Gallwey identified a critically important and distinguishing feature of coaching that Whitmore’s bestselling book *Coaching for Performance*² picks up:

“The primary goal of coaching is to help the client eliminate his or her internal (mental and emotional) obstacles to learning performance and enjoyment, so natural learning is liberated and the need for teaching minimised.

“The coach enables the coachee to access hitherto untapped levels of awareness and responsibility

that form the basis of learning, performance and enjoyment in work, sport and life. Awareness itself is effortlessly curative.”

Spirituality

Gallwey and Whitmore lead spiritual lives that inevitably influence their values, and their vision of people, human potential and life purpose. Gallwey, however, prefers not to mix the spiritual with workplace goals, and respects a division between workplace coaching and life coaching or personal development.

Whitmore, on the other hand, believes coaches can benefit their clients more if they are familiar with the principles, models and tools drawn from transpersonal psychology, “a whole-system psychology that includes the spiritual as an integral, even unavoidable, part of being human”. ■

What is the Inner Game?

The Inner Game is more a methodology than a philosophy. What philosophy there is rests on two foundations:

- 1 We all have more potential within ourselves than we recognise.
- 2 We all interfere with the discovery and expression of that potential more than we like to admit (as expressed in the simple formula): P (performance) = p (potential) – I (self-interference).

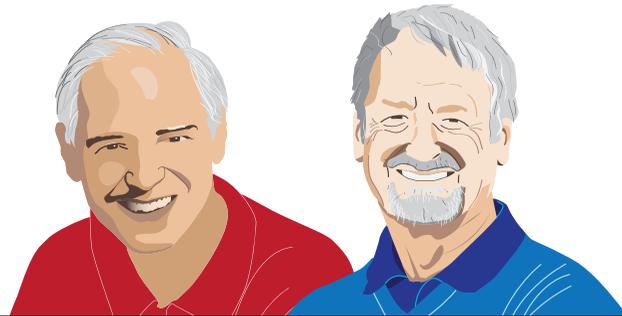
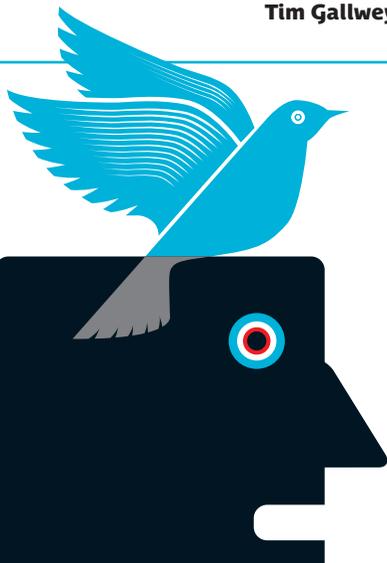
The methodology for evoking one's potential and reducing self-interference is based on three principles:

- 1 Increased awareness of current reality is itself curative.
- 2 Choice – which is essential to achievement.
- 3 Trust in one's own potential – which can overcome the roots of self-interference.

The Inner Game approach suggests that humans can not only achieve the outcomes they commit themselves to but can do so in a way that is fulfilling to them, and learn in the process. I call this capacity **Mobility**.

The coach's role is to facilitate the mobility of the client, whether individual or in a team, by increasing awareness, choice and trust. In short, this enables the client to be more conscious in thought and action while being hampered less by unconscious habits that interfere.

Tim Gallwey



John Whitmore and Tim Gallwey in conversation

The following interview by David Drake is an abridged edited version of an interview for the *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, reproduced here with kind permission

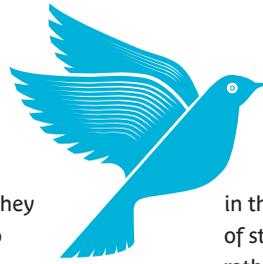
TIM GALLWEY First, there is very much more to every human being than we realise. It is not a limited quest only as an individual, but as a social human being. Second, we get in the way of our own selves a lot more than we like to admit. Put those two things together and you have the drama of living life today – that we've got a tremendous, incredible opportunity for a while to be a human being. In my understanding there is nothing like it, and yet we are faced with a lot of interference that gets born outside of us, and some from inside of us, that keeps us from even wanting to know. We think we already do know, and thinking that shuts down the learning process. Trust in what a human being really is, and can be, served by the commitment, choice, or responsibility to find out, amid other social responsibilities, is the fundamental theme for me.

JOHN WHITMORE Ultimately there is only one coaching question: "Who are you?" I think that is what we try to help people discover. There are many different ways to define coaching, but one could say it is helping people to find who they are underneath the conditioning, the social obligations, the imposed religious imperatives and their own anxieties and defence mechanisms. One could describe that as a spiritual quest or as a personal development quest. I think the process is the same whatever words we use to describe it.

TIM Coaching doesn't keep me as vibrantly alive as learning does. I am happy being on either side of the coaching fence. I love coaching and I love being coached and I love learning when it is from my daily life. Learning is a word that I don't think will quickly go away. Self-development is an even better word. Knowing yourself is an even greater quest. I don't believe that those have to be in any order. You can learn to know yourself at any point when you're still not that psychologically and emotionally developed. Self-knowledge is a never-ending quest for me. I've said that it doesn't have a limit, so I'm not looking for something else to interest me.

I'm not for teaching self-actualisation in the business context, but teaching or coaching on learning so the coach is there to help when the person is ready for a personal step in learning. In a business environment you shouldn't forget the business objectives of the individual and the corporation – or else coaching will become something it wasn't really designed to be and will lose face. That's my personal bias.

JOHN I have difficulty with the relationship between workplace and individual development to the extent that the values of business very often run counter to the values of the individual. I believe profoundly that at the deepest level everyone has



benevolent positive values. It is difficult when there is a conflict between an executive's personal values – which are often compassionate, contributing ones – and business values that tend to be selfish, acquisitive and what I would call counter-evolutionary. The problem is that our social structure, our economic system, is tribal and competitive in nature and encourages us to be competitive between one another, as people and as organisations. I think we have reached a stage in the world when competitiveness is getting more and

Some do not, perhaps because they have not had the opportunity to experience and thrive in that liberated space of being independent.

TIM I would agree with that model and the belief that how interdependent one wants to be is one's individual choice. It is clearly going to make the world work. It is going to be what makes government, education and healthcare work. It is based on real interdependence where people can speak straight to each other and move towards a common good because they are confident enough

in this direction, led by the demands of students and the will of teachers rather than of institutional heads.

We are living in very exciting times. There is so much necessary change going on. Periods in history have been described in certain ways, like the Reformation or the Renaissance. I think we are going through one of those fascinating periods in human history now, and it is very much a waking up of the collective. I think that's the function of coaching. People awakening, becoming more aware and responsible is just a part of this change. It is almost as if coaching as a profession has grown up to meet this need at this time.

TIM What comes out of this conversation is the really good news that there we are not at the end of evolution – we are at the beginning. It is very exciting and within everyone's reach. The answers we are looking for are inside us, and that's a tremendously hopeful and exciting possibility. The more we learn about ourselves as human beings the more we respect the other human beings with whom we share the planet. We're all moving in the same direction – individual evolution and social evolution.

“Coaching has grown up to meet the current need to make people more aware and responsible”

more inappropriate and we've got to focus much more on taking care of the human family.

TIM It is not only in business that there's a conflict between basic human values and what is going on in our culture. The key role of the coach is to help people think and feel for themselves and be independent and work together with others in a co-operative way. So the business environment is as good as any to work out that dilemma between individual and culture. I don't see it as an obstacle, but as necessary learning to win your stripes as an individual. You have to recognise the culture you are in, and know, and then make fundamental choices about where you stand.

JOHN I use a model that starts with dependence – on our parents, our teacher and the rules of the game. So we do as we are told. Then we enter the stage of independence where we become self-assertive, often to the distress of our parents. Some evolve into a third stage – interdependence – having a desire to collaborate with others for the good of the whole.

in their individuality that they don't always have to win every argument or look the smartest.

I want to bring up a word we have not mentioned – it is a special kind of learning called “unlearning” and it may be as important as learning. Learning new things may be only half the job. Unlearning the old things we've taken in unconsciously – or sometimes consciously but we realise they're not really our own – is perhaps even more important.

I hope coaching doesn't lose its foundation in learning. Whether coaching is facilitating the learning for an individual or a team, understanding the process and what gets in its way is fundamental to its success. And the only way you can have that understanding is by continuing to be a learner yourself.

JOHN I see that we coaches are moving from working with individuals into working more with groups and whole organisations as they become coaching cultures. But what I have noticed in the past four or five years is whole institutions changing from within. I believe education will move

References and further information

- 1 W T Gallwey *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Random House, 1974.
- 2 J Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance (4th ed)*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009.
- 3 W T Gallwey, E Hanzelik and J Horton, *The Inner Game of Stress*, Random House, 2009.
- T Gallwey & J Whitmore, “Coaching and the freedom to learn: A conversation with Tim Gallwey and John Whitmore” (D Drake, interviewer), *The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, 7(1), 38-53, 2009.
- See John Whitmore profile: www.coaching-at-work.com/2006/09/01/driving-force
- See Tim Gallwey profile: www.coaching-at-work.com/2007/03/01/strokes-of-genius