

Selecting Appropriate Coaching Tools and Methods According to a Learning Style in the Context of Professional Development

Celina Jeray

The International University of Logistics and Transport in Wrocław

Abstract

The paper explores coaching tools through the lens of the VARK model, dividing them into three groups: mental (reading/writing and auditory), visual, and kinaesthetic. It outlines selected tools within each category and examines their application in professional environments. The analysis emphasises that while tools can be combined, their effectiveness may depend on individual learning styles, which can serve as a useful guideline for selecting appropriate methods.

Keywords: coaching tools; employee development; psychology in management; leadership development; professional training, vark learning styles.

1. INTRODUCTION – WHY LEARNING STYLES MATTER IN COACHING

Arguably, every society thrives on goal-oriented, actively engaged, and self-efficacious individuals who direct their own development while relying on self-awareness and pragmatic selectiveness. This principle shapes approaches in education and professional development and is similarly reflected in coaching methods and the VARK learning styles theory.

Such emphasis on self-directed, aware development is central to coaching, where the focus is on helping individuals navigate their own goals and implement change. Joseph O'Connor and Andrea Lages define coaching as helping a person change in the way they wish and move in the direction they want (O'Connor & Lages, 2004). Coaching fosters the client's self-confidence and sense of safety, thus enabling them to take risks and implement meaningful developmental changes. Unlike psychotherapy, however, coaching is less formalised, which allows for a broader, interdisciplinary perspective on issues such as finances, career, business relations, or time management – areas which would typically fall outside the scope of psychotherapy.

Among the various disciplines which inform coaching, didactics plays an important role; and within it, the theory of VARK learning styles offers a practical framework for understanding individual learning preferences. By recognising learners as individuals with different needs, desired outcomes and cognitive preferences, the VARK theory helps in selecting coaching methods which match the coachee. It therefore seems justified that a coach should consider the coachee's learning style – whether visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or reading/writing, often appearing in combination – and apply coaching tools and methods accordingly. Many of these methods involve simple and repeatable exercises which can be completed independently, allowing the coachee to explore, experiment and take responsibility for their own progress. In this way, the structured yet flexible activities foster both individuality and self-directed development, which, in turn, creates a natural alignment between the principles of coaching and the VARK approach. Just as memorisation benefits from strategies suited to one's preferred learning style, so too does professional development benefit when exercises and practices match the coachee's cognitive preferences.

Despite criticisms of the VARK theory – with some researchers referring to learning styles as a neuromyth – many coaching practitioners still recognise its practical value. For example, Cathy Liska includes VAK (the predecessor of VARK) in her *Coaching Skills for Professionals* programme (Center for (...), 2026.), and the team at Coaching 360 highlights VAK's practical usefulness in adapting to individual learning preferences (Coaching 360, 2026). However, a key concern raised in the literature is the limited empirical support for the assumption that matching methods to learning styles improves outcomes. Nonetheless, in coaching, VARK may not function as a strict diagnostic framework, but rather as a flexible point of reference. In fact, it can support reflection, help to structure the coaching process, and encourage a more varied use of tools adjusted to the coachee's preferences. In this sense, its usefulness lies less in scientific precision and more in its accessibility and applicability in practice.

The coaching tools discussed in this paper assume, therefore, that auditory learners benefit from sounds and conversation-based activities; visual learners from boards, collages, graphics, tables, or mind maps; tactile and kinaesthetic learners from manipulating objects or performing bodily movements; and reading/writing learners from text-based resources. For convenience, this paper groups auditory and reading/writing learners under “cognitive activities with varying degrees of verbalisation” (see Section 2.1.), since they all potentially require receiving oral or written instructions and producing oral or written outcomes.

2. OVERVIEW AND CLASSIFICATION OF SELECTED COACHING TOOLS

The limited scope of this paper allows to discuss but a handful of coaching tools and methods. It focuses on 15 popular approaches which provide a practical basis for supporting employees during workshops, training, and independent self-development – whether for gaining new qualifications, improving soft skills, or addressing workplace challenges. The brief analyses emphasise the applicability of said approaches in terms of intrapersonal development, interpersonal relations, and overall professional effectiveness. Therefore, presenting these tools in terms of practical application is particularly worthwhile.

2.1 Coaching Tools Based on Cognitive Activities with Varying Degrees of Verbalisation.

The tools presented in this subsection differ in the extent to which they remain primarily in the mental domain. Their direct effects – insights, reflections, responses, or further stimulating questions – can be verbalised, written down, conducted as a dialogue, processed through a thought sequence guided by verbal instructions, or assume the form of an internal monologue. They are particularly well suited for working with individuals who have an auditory as well as reading/writing-based learning style.

2.1.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming, one of the most common workplace coaching tools, was developed by Alex Osborn in the early 1950s, inspired by Graham Wallas's theories on creative thinking and idea incubation (Besant, 2016). A key advantage of this tool is its applicability in a group, particularly when the goal is to enhance both the creativity of group members and their willingness to cooperate while also maintaining group cohesion (Marmerchant, 2025). Brainstorming can target problem-solving, idea generation, or developing solutions. Problem-solving may be additionally supported by discussions or role-playing, while idea generation can begin with mind mapping (popularised by Tony Buzan in 1996), followed by evaluating and refining ideas until they become applicable

A crucial feature of brainstorming, particularly in its initial phase, is the absence of criticism: ideas are generated in a friendly, non-judgmental environment. Even seemingly “less successful” ideas can inspire others; and it is always better to have

multiple ideas for reference. Later stages of brainstorming can be supported by tools such as Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* (mid-1980s) (Besant, 2016).

In practice, brainstorming involves roles: the facilitator, who leads the session, and the participants, who contribute ideas (Marmerchant, 2025). The facilitator should have topic experience and ask questions which stimulate further generation of ideas. Importantly, the environment should be welcoming – it should allow participants to express ideas freely and interact in a respectful manner (Marmerchant, 2025). It is also advisable to designate a person who will take notes and track time (typically 15-45 minutes, as attention tends to drop after 30) (Pitkälä, 2024).

2.1.2 *The Law of Mirroring/Reflection*

The next tool, which primarily engages mental and verbal self-reflection, is based on metaphor or the “mirror principle.”¹ It is particularly useful when the coachee seeks to deepen self-awareness by observing their environment. The mirror principle holds that interactions with others – especially those triggering strong or difficult emotions – offer insight into ourselves (Nelson, 2024). Advocates of the concept, including Yoshinori Noguchi, suggest that, resembling the law of attraction, the mirror principle explains why our interactions with others unfold in a certain way: life reflects ourselves rather than simply happening to us (Flórez, 2022). Consequently, any situation or interaction which goes differently than expected can be seen as feedback. As American coach Iyanla Vanzant notes: “We love in others what we love in ourselves. We despise in others what we cannot see in ourselves” (Vanzant cited in Nelson, 2024). Experiences which seem painful, uncomfortable, or irritating reveal aspects of ourselves that require attention. By uncovering these previously repressed or subconscious areas, we build greater self-awareness.

How can this principle be practically applied? First, we analyse the types of people with whom we often experience conflict or tend to avoid confrontation. The aim is to identify recurring patterns and reduce emotional tension. We then look for shared traits, bearing in mind that we may also form part of the common denominator. In other words, the people we consider toxic or irritating might display characteristics which, to some extent, resonate with our own attitudes or reactions.

¹ Not to be confused with *mirroring* understood as a communication tool (generally innate or learnt through socialization, but also potentially consciously mastered) which consists in building rapport in interactions through the imitation of another person's behaviour, so as to create a sense of similarity, empathy and understanding. An example thereof can be found at: Kinsey Goman, C. “The Art (...)” 2011.

Selecting Appropriate Coaching Tools and Methods According to a Learning...

Therefore, in workplace situations, armed with honesty, self-awareness and sincerity, we can reflect on our own thoughts, feelings and beliefs when interacting with others. For example, if we repeatedly feel annoyed by a particular trait in others, it may indicate an aspect of our behaviour or expectations which is worth exploring. At the same time, it is important to consider both internal and external sources of conflict, rather than assuming that responsibility is solely one-sided. Indeed, this approach fosters a greater sense of responsibility and helps us to recognise how our perceptions influence our experiences. Reflecting on difficult reactions can be a starting point for exploring underlying fears, insecurities or unresolved emotions. The goal is to enhance our self-awareness and learn how to respond to challenging situations in a more conscious and constructive manner (*The Mirror Law* (...) 2026).

In coaching, one can also try a more playful exercise: imagine being an animal, a person of the opposite gender, a celebrity, etc., and explain the reason for choosing this animal or character, focusing on their traits. The coach can then interpret these descriptions to reveal the gap between reality and our own aspirations, weaknesses and dreams.

2.1.3 Visualisation

Despite its name, visualisation relies primarily on the mind. It involves forming mental images of events or situational aspects such as sounds, smells, colours, etc. Similarly to other tools, visualisation can be supported with text or images (e.g., mind maps, collages) (Oseland 2024). It can complement other coaching methods and tools, but also function as a standalone exercise, guided by written or spoken instructions from the coach.

The main benefits of visualisation are increased motivation, improved focus and reduced anxiety, since it helps the coachee clarify the goals and mentally prepare for potential obstacles (Alberts, 2026).

A typical visualisation exercise may involve: (1) finding a calm, comfortable place; (2) selecting a specific goal (e.g., public speaking, important conversation, team challenge, etc.); (3) mentally placing oneself in the scenario – either first person or as an observer; (4) considering micro-situations, dialogues, and environmental details such as sounds, colours, textures (Kwieciński, 2014). It is important, however, to focus on what goes well rather than on potential setbacks. For instance, instead of imagining a dry mouth, one should picture having water on hand.

Persistence is key, even if situations occur at first, and regular practice (10 minutes daily) is more effective than occasional long sessions (Nelson, 2024). Visualisation can also include perspective adjustments such as the domino effect (how achieving one goal affects other areas of life, and vice versa) or changing the temporal distance (as in the common “Where do I see myself in five years?” question). This helps the coachee envision feelings, positioning and progress towards the goal.

Micro-steps can turn obstacles into elements of strategy. With a clearly-defined goal and actionable planning, visualisation becomes an essential tool for coachee development.

2.1.4 Association and dissociation

Association and dissociation together form a powerful coaching tool which can function independently or complement other methods. Before discussing the two concepts, it is worth noting that dissociation is most commonly used in psychiatry, where it refers to a disorder.² However, as a coaching tool – particularly within the NLP approach – dissociation is understood as a controlled process of perceiving a situation from a distance in order to understand it better (Wilczyńska et al., (2013), p. 45).

It involves two complementary stages (Wilson, 2026). The first stage – association – helps to reconnect with situations which led to a present negative state. It involves: (1) placing oneself at the center of the event; (2) tracing the situation as if analysing a film frame by frame, with particular attention to the climax; (3) focusing on objects, people, emotions, and other remembered aspects of the situation; (4) experiencing the situation more vividly; (5) identifying nuances and drawing conclusions about how the event unfolded and what led to the problem. The second stage – dissociation – begins by imagining oneself in the situation as a third-person observer (without implying dysfunctional detachment such as maladaptive daydreaming). The following steps include: (2) observing the event from the side; (3) imagining conversations with other participants and with oneself; and finally (4)

² The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines *dissociation* (dissociative disorders) as a disturbance of memory, emotions, perception, behavior, and sense of identity and self, which in practice negatively affects everyday functioning (Spiegel, 2024). Moreover, within the domain of coaching (particularly sports coaching), *association* and *dissociation* are used together as terms referring to cognitive strategies (directions of thinking) that either facilitate (association) or hinder (dissociation) the achievement of optimal performance (Morgan & Pollock, 382–403). However, this paper applies both terms in reference to a different phenomenon: a consciously employed tool in which these two processes form an integrated whole with a beneficial effect.

analysing one's behavior, emotions and attitudes towards the situation. Finally, the conclusions can be noted, thereby allowing one to observe changes in perception; for example, whether other participants are now evaluated differently, whether the source of the problem can be located elsewhere, or how similar situations might be avoided in the future.

Indeed, at a certain stage, “consciously choosing between the state of association and dissociation is an extremely effective tool,” which can form the basis for many coaching methods, including neurolinguistic programming (Wilczyńska et al., (2013), p. 45).

In short, association helps to intensify emotions and develop emotional memory. Dissociation, in turn, allows for emotional intensity to be reduced in a safe and controlled way, thus promoting greater objectivity and healthy distance. In professional contexts, it proves particularly useful for emotional regulation, breaking negative habits, handling stressful situations and responding to criticism (Tolmachev, 2024).

2.2 Coaching Tools Based on Visual Media (Traditional and Digital)

This subsection presents tools which primarily rely on visual media and are therefore particularly suitable for individuals with a visual learning style. Such media may be electronic (interactive boards, applications, editable multimedia materials) or traditional (sheets of coloured paper, cut-outs & collages, boards, graphs, pictograms). They support processes of visualisation, categorisation, and the concretisation of ideas formed in the coachee's mind, as well as the recording and reinforcement of progress in the coaching process.

2.2.1 The Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life is a highly versatile tool which helps to systematise an area requiring improvement and to determine a long-term direction of action (Sutton, 2020). The concept is attributed to entrepreneur Paul J. Meyer, who developed it in the 1960s for his *Success Motivation Institute* (Elsey, 2024). Today, two visual forms are used: the spider-web wheel and the pie-style wheel (Fig. 1). Regardless of aesthetic differences, the main principle remains the same: the coachee selects a complex area requiring change (e.g., personal life, professional life, fitness, etc.) and divides it into aspects.

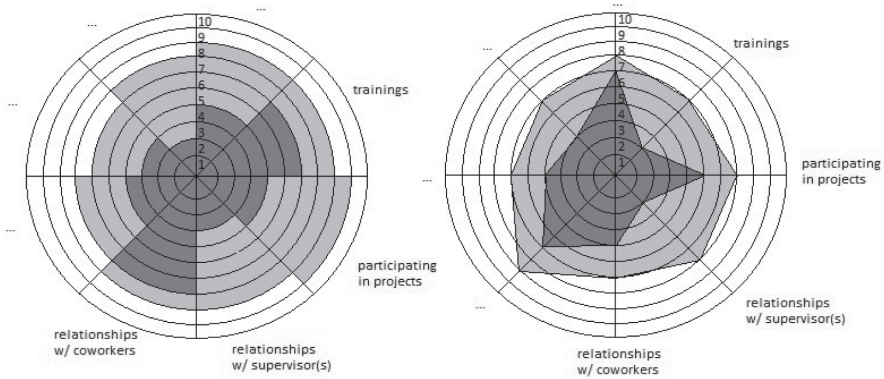


Fig. 1. Two types of the Wheel of Life: pie-style and spider-web wheel
(Source: Author's own work)

For example, professional life may be analysed in terms of training opportunities, participation in projects, relations with a supervisor, or good relations with colleagues. The wheel is typically divided into eight equal sections, although this number may vary depending on the situation. On a scale from 1 to 10 (from the centre to the edge of the wheel), the coachee evaluates their current level of satisfaction in each aspect (marked with a darker shade). Next, the coachee indicates the desired level of satisfaction using another colour (represented by a lighter shade).

This analysis helps to identify the importance of particular aspects and the order in which related goals should be pursued. For instance, if improving relations with an employer depends on timely project completion, then increasing efficiency in this area becomes a priority. Conversely, if delays result from poor relations among employees, rebuilding these relations may be more important. This reflects the leverage effect. Therefore, the Wheel of Life helps to identify not only the factors influencing a situation, but also the relationships between them, thus making it easier to choose an effective plan of action.

2.2.2 Time Management Matrix (Eisenhower Matrix)

Originally developed by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s, the Time Management Matrix became widely known in the early 1990s through Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Roman, 2024). The matrix consists of four quadrants on a chart where the horizontal axis separates important tasks from less important ones, while the vertical axis distinguishes urgent tasks from non-urgent ones (Fig. 2).

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	Crisis situations Pressing problems Time-bound projects	Prevention Effectiveness-enhancing activities Relationship building Identifying opportunities Planning, recreation
Not important	Interruptions, unexpected calls, requests Reports, some emails Some meetings Short-term matters Frequent, repetitive tasks	Some emails Trivial matters Some phone calls Time-wasters Leisure activities

Fig. 2. Time Management Matrix
 (Source: Adapted from S. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*).

The 4D description of the matrix stands for the following quadrants: I Do, II Decide, III Delegate, IV Delete. Quadrant I (Do) contains urgent and important tasks which cannot be postponed without consequences. However, overloading this quadrant may cause stress and frustration, eventually leading to burnout (“The Eisenhower Matrix,” 2026).

Quadrant II (Decide) includes tasks which are important but non-urgent. Focusing on them is central to effective time management (Covey, 2004). Quadrant III (Delegate) covers tasks which must be completed but can be assigned to others, thereby allowing leaders to reallocate work efficiently. Quadrant IV (Delete) contains non-essential or leisure activities; while they contribute to happiness, their excess may lead to procrastination and wasted resources, including time (Covey, 2004).

In practice, at the start of coaching, the coachee may map the activities in the matrix according to personal perception, then gradually move or remove tasks as they develop. Eventually, the coachee should be able to prioritise intuitively, using Quadrant I as a simple to-do list while managing time effectively and choosing when to act.

2.2.3 Dream Map

The Dream Map (also called a goals and dreams map) is a tool created by the Polish coach Karina Şep, based on visualisation maps used in professional practice (Şep, 2026). It is structured as nine fields arranged in three triads (3×3), marked with colours representing different areas of life (Fig. 3). The Dream Map can also be

viewed as a structured variation of the widely used vision board technique, which visualises goals through images, symbols and written cues.

<p>FINANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -assets -expenses -income -building financial independence 	<p>PERSONAL BRAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -professional and social position -fame and recognition -social life -(self-)acceptance -influence on the environment 	<p>LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -love -partnership -intimacy -sexuality -closeness
<p>HEALTH AND FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mental and physical health -medical care and a healthy lifestyle -family and loved ones -traditions and customs -authorities 	<p>'ME' AND IDENTITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -most important needs and values -self-esteem -purposefulness and the will to live -comfort 	<p>CREATIVITY AND CREATIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -passions, hobbies, inspirations -creativity -new ideas and beginnings -children and relationships with them
<p>KNOWLEDGE, LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -personal development and skills -wisdom and intuition -(self-)awareness -planning and time management -spirituality 	<p>WORK, CAREER, MISSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -professional development -sense of calling -career path planning -sense of mission -vision and life path 	<p>FRIENDS AND TRAVEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -friendships and acquaintances -establishing new relationships -networking -building communities -travel and trips -vacations

Fig. 3. Dream Map

(Source: Based on the temple available at: Szablon [in:] <https://mapamarzen.info/mapa-marzen/> (accessed 02.02.2026).

The author assumes that dreams should be transformed into plans which lead towards concrete actions (Şep, 2026). The structure of the map helps to analyse, organise and select the life areas which are most relevant to the coachee. In practice, it involves creating a micro-visualisation using text, images, cut-outs, slogans or pictograms, either in traditional or digital form. The map may be then scanned and reused; for example, as a phone or computer wallpaper or as visual reminders in frequently visited locations (Şep, 2026).

In professional coaching, the map helps to distinguish the professional sphere from other areas of life and observe relationships between them. Alternatively, the

professional section can be temporarily or permanently extracted and placed in a visible location to reinforce one's values and priorities.

2.2.4 Tool Based on the 'Begin with the End in Mind' Method

The tool known as 'Begin with the End in Mind' was developed by Stephen Covey, previously mentioned as the populariser of the Eisenhower Matrix. Covey introduces the concept by asking the reader-coachee to imagine their own funeral, particularly the speeches of family, friends, colleagues and members of the community (Covey, 2004). The exercise encourages the coachee to view their ambitions, plans and career from a broader perspective. Such reflection promotes responsibility and the ability to align one's behaviour and attitudes with personal values and guiding principles (Covey, 2004).

In practice, this approach means beginning each day with these values firmly established in mind, which allows individuals to act independently of circumstances and avoid purely emotional reactions, thereby cultivating a proactive and determined mindset (Covey, 2004). To achieve this, Covey recommends formulating a *personal mission statement*. This, in turn, helps to clarify who we want to be, what we want to achieve, and, finally, how these goals are grounded in personal principles, functioning as a kind of personal "constitution" (Covey, 2004).

As a coaching tool, the method involves defining specific goals based on fundamental values and dividing them into smaller steps with realistic deadlines. The process can be easily visualised by drawing a line between the present state and the desired goal, divided into stages (e.g., $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, 5%, etc.), eventually down to individual days. Using the perfect tense to strengthen motivation, the coachee records the intended outcomes at each stage; for example: May 1 – I will have scheduled a meeting with the contractor; May 2 – I will have met with the consultant; May 3 – I will have begun recruiting an additional designer. This tool can be applied both to individual planning and team leadership contexts.

2.2.5 The SPACE Coaching Model

The SPACE Model was developed by Nick Edgerton and Stephen Palmer in 2002 (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, pp. 25-31) to visualise the interactions in psychological processes more clearly than various other acronym-based models (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 27). Building upon Albert Ellis' ABCDE model, the authors highlight

how these interactions work: (C)ognitive processes determine (E)motional states, which in turn influence (B)ehaviours and (A)ctions (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 27).

Practically, the cognitive processes involve mental images; for instance, thoughts such as “This isn’t right!” or “It has to be stopped!” which trigger emotional responses (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 27). Such persistent negative emotions can reinforce similar thought patterns, thereby creating a cycle in which (C)ognition drives both (E)motion and (A)ctive behaviour (the so-called ACE model) (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 27-28).

Edgerton and Palmer add a physiological aspect, labelled as (P)hysiological arousal, because emotions and mental images also generate bodily responses such as increased adrenaline and cortisol, flushing, faster breathing and elevated heart rate (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 28). They also include the (S)ocial context, thus reflecting beliefs about norms, rules, or roles relevant to the situation. Together, these components form the SPACE model (Fig. 4).

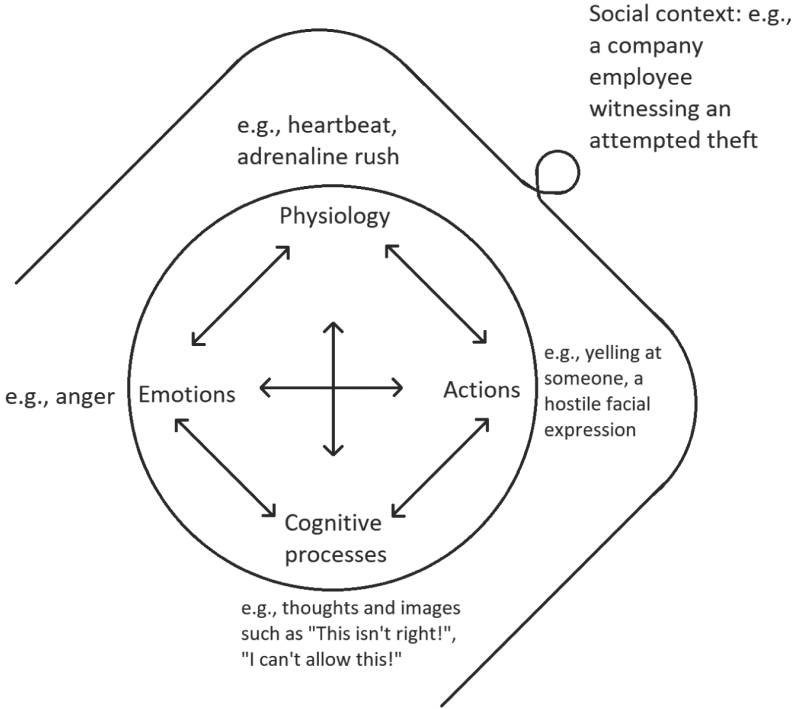


Fig. 4. The SPACE Model according to Edgerton & Palmer
(Source: Adapted from Edgerton & Palmer, 29)

In practice, the SPACE model allows coaches to guide coachees in reframing reactions to stressful events, such as a work presentation. In this case, for instance, one should replace catastrophising visualisations with positive ones (aspect of ‘Cognition’); reduce procrastination and support learning to present effectively (‘Actions’); use relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety (‘Physiology’); build awareness of social context – e.g. supervisors expect a good, not perfect presentation (‘Social context’) (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 30). During the coaching session, all these aspects can be examined and restructured using the above diagram, employing colours or even creating a new diagram (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 30). As such, the SPACE model serves as a practical tool for coaching, and potentially even consulting, training or psychotherapy, alongside other models such as GROW (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005, p. 30).

2.2.6 The SWOT Analysis

Another widely used coaching tool which relies on visual methods is the SWOT Analysis. Originally popular in business, it is now recognised as useful for individual coachees (Renault, 2025). SWOT helps to explore opportunities, solve current or anticipated problems, guide personal or professional development, identify chances relative to threats, clarify priorities, and refine plans during implementation (Renault, 2025). It can also help to present initiatives and organise existing information.

Types of SWOT Analysis
a) classic
b) including strategy planning

a)

Internal		External	
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.

b)

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	<i>strategies of strengths and opportunities (using strengths to take advantage of opportunities)</i> 1. 2.	<i>Strategies of opportunities and weaknesses (overcoming weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities)</i> 1. 2.
Threats	<i>Strategies of threats and strengths (using strengths to avoid threats)</i> 1. 2.	<i>Strategies of threats and weaknesses (minimising weaknesses and avoiding threats)</i> 1. 2.

Fig. 5. Two types of the SWOT Analysis
 (Source: Adapted from Renault, 2025)

The acronym SWOT examines internal factors – strengths and weaknesses; and external factors – opportunities and threats, which can be represented in a table (Fig. 5). Internally, a coachee may assess human resources (networking or support opportunities), physical resources (location, equipment), financial resources (grants, loans, other sources), activities and processes (available programmes and development systems), and experience (their own or others’) (Renault, 2025). Externally, the coachee might consider future trends (e.g., in their profession), economic conditions (e.g., job market), demographic factors (e.g., age, gender of potential clients or collaborators), physical environment (e.g., whether a location is in a developing area), legal factors (constraints or opportunities), and events (e.g., fairs, conferences enabling business expansion) (Renault, 2025).

Variations of SWOT include TOWS, which emphasises external factors and threats (which helps with objective assessment); and matrices which include strategies (Fig. 5b). Moreover, SWOT can also be complemented with tools such as brainstorming or surveys.

2.2.7 Dilts’ Pyramid of Logical Levels

Working within the NLP approach, Robert Dilts developed the Logical Levels model, presented in the Pyramid of Logical Levels (Dilts, 1990, p. xii). Based on research – such as studies on students divided into two groups, each of them informed about an apparently different intelligence levels, which eventually affected their actual performance – Dilts assumed that just as our beliefs about ourselves can limit the fulfillment of our “natural resources and unconscious competencies,” so too, by asking the right questions and reframing our views, we can achieve constructive change (Dilts, 1990, p. xi).

Dilts identified six levels for coachees to work with: (1) the basic level – our environment – constitutes our external constraints. (2) We operate in this environment through our behaviour. (3) Our behaviour is guided by our mental maps and strategies, which define our capabilities. (4) Our capabilities are organised according to beliefs, and, in turn, beliefs are organised by identity (Dilts, 1990, p. 1). At the top of the pyramid is spirituality. The main principle of this concept is that operating only at lower levels leads to blocked or merely temporary change.

In professional development, for example, learning a language to deliver a future presentation may fail if the motivation is only situational. Approaching the goal from higher levels enables lasting and meaningful change. Seeing oneself as an educated

Selecting Appropriate Coaching Tools and Methods According to a Learning...

and competent person (identity level) allows the creation of a concrete, long-term, balanced learning plan which enables systematic, enjoyable and productive study. Conversely, focusing only on environment or behaviour (“I can’t afford a course” or “I don’t have 20 minutes for study each evening”) quickly limits progress. Conversely, operating within the scope of identity or spirituality (“I have a talent for learning new things” or “who knows, maybe I’ll be able to help someone else with this language skill, even outside work”) ensures that change occurs even under unfavorable circumstances, which may only delay or temporarily interrupt the process. Specific questions for reflection with a coach can be seen on the example pyramid (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Dilt’s Pyramid of Logical Levels
(Source: Adapted from Cahill, 2016)

2.3 Coaching Tools Based on Physical Movement

The final group of coaching tools discussed in this paper includes methods based on physical activity, particularly movement between locations within a defined space (e.g., corners of a room or different pieces of furniture). Such movement is typically used to help the coachee gain a new perspective, although specific physical actions may also be associated with beneficial psychological states. Essentially, these methods link bodily movement with corresponding mental processes. They are especially useful for individuals who remember information better and maintain focus more effectively when physical movement is involved.

2.3.1 The Disney Creative Strategy

Another tool is the idea attributed to Walt Disney, though it was popularised in the 1990s by Robert Dilts, who defined it as a method used by Disney and his collaborators to transform dreams into reality (Elmansy, 2015). The tool involves assigning three physical locations such as corners of a room or different seats to three roles: the dreamer, the realist, and the critic. Optionally, visual boards may be added to each location to strengthen the association between the place and its corresponding mental state.

The coaching process follows three steps. First, the coachee (or a small group) moves to the dreamer position, where brainstorming or visualisation is used to generate ideas, plans and visions. Importantly, none of the ideas produced at this stage should be criticised. Second comes the realist position, where the ideas are considered practically. The questions to be asked at this stage should include: What actions will make these ideas possible? What costs and efforts are involved? What foundations already exist? Can the approach be tested? (“Walt Disney Method (...)” 2026). The final position is the critic, where the idea is evaluated from a critical – but constructive – perspective (Elmansy, 2015). Here, the focus is on identifying potential risks and weaknesses of the plan.

The aim of this method is to refine ideas and develop a concrete plan of action while giving balanced attention to each stage. Anchoring each perspective to a different physical location (or, if space is limited, to a symbolic body position) helps to reinforce the process.

2.3.2 Resource Anchoring

Similarly to the previous tool, anchoring is based on NLP, specifically on the concept of neuro-association – linking a stimulus with an emotional state in a way similar to a conditioned reflex (Mukherjee, 2012). It can be particularly useful in professional settings such as important meetings, events, or presentations, where stress may be replaced with calmness, energy, or enthusiasm.

In practice, the coachee first identifies an emotional state they lack in certain situations such as confidence. Next, the coachee selects a simple stimulus which can be easily recalled; for example, a place on the body, a gesture, or an image. The brain then gradually forms a neuro-association between the stimulus and the chosen emotion, thereby creating a new neural pathway. To anchor the state effectively,

the action should be repeated several times with focus and attention. When the desired state becomes strong (in terms of imagery and emotion), it should be interrupted by performing a completely different activity, such as counting tiles or recalling a random number.

An interesting variation of this technique is the slider anchor (“NLP Anchoring,” 2024). Here, the coachee selects a place on the body, such as the forearm, and draws a line on it with a pen – while describing the desired state aloud and gradually building the mental image as the line appears on the skin. The line can also represent a scale. After several repetitions, the associated state can later be triggered simply by sliding a finger along this place.

2.3.3 Perspective Shift

The penultimate coaching tool presented involves a Perspective Shift.³ There are several variations of this method, such as Future Pacing or Spatial Anchoring. Each of these variations is based on viewing a given plan as already completed; that is from a future standpoint. For example, one may apply the 10-10-10 rule developed by Suzy Welch (Camarote, 2022). This involves imagining how we would perceive a given decision (or achieved goal) 10 minutes, 10 months, and 10 years after making it.

Other variations, such as Future Pacing or Spatial Anchoring, which can be combined with the 10-10-10 rule, may also rely on a kinaesthetic approach. All these activities require movement; otherwise, they may be supported by physical objects: for example, the coachee can draw a line, or place an object, such as a sheet of paper (useful if the coachee finds note-taking helpful) or any other small object, in front of them representing the goal. They then analyse their thoughts by asking what they feel when thinking about the goal, naming the accompanying emotions and sensory details, while also considering possibilities and anticipating potential obstacles (Hoobyar, 2026; Schneider, 2022; Razjer & Wąsowska-Chęć, 2012).

In the next stage, the coachee moves behind the line, paper or object and mentally assumes the goal has already been achieved, although Nicole Schneider also

³ The tool labelled as *perspective shift* may often be confused with another tool (also from the NLP approach), namely *perceptual positions*. However, the latter operates on different principles. In general terms, *perceptual positions* involve analysing a problem or situation from the viewpoints of various participants (e.g., a colleague, client, employer) as well as from that of an independent observer (see: Andy Smith *Perceptual (...)*, 2020 [in:] <https://nlppod.com/perceptual-positions/>)

suggests recalling a similar event from the past as a reference point (Schneider 2022). While mentally placed in the future (as if having achieved the goal), the coachee can reflect on the original desires by asking: what has changed, how do they feel, which opportunities were used, what obstacles occurred, and which elements of the plan did not materialise? (Razjer & Wąsowska-Chęć, 2012). The final step involves analysing what new insights have emerged and how they can be applied.

2.3.4 Walking Coaching

The final tool supporting the coaching process is simply walking. One of its advocates is Katrin Homer, who, in addition to well-known health benefits (such as stress reduction, increased endorphin and oxygen levels, lower blood pressure, and a break from a sedentary, gadget-filled lifestyle), also points to historical figures known for walking while thinking or conversing, such as Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Steve Jobs (Homer, 2019). Homer also refers to research from Stanford University, which shows that creativity increases in 81–100% of individuals after walking, depending on the study (Homer, 2019). Researchers observed greater talkativeness, as well as an increase in the number, originality and quality of ideas (Homer, 2019).

In her own coaching practice, Homer identifies several benefits of walking sessions. First, walking supports other coaching tools by removing the coachee from their usual environment. It creates a less formal setting, free from office furniture and work-related associations. The coachee feels less pressure, for example from maintaining eye contact, and instead walks side by side with the coach, fostering a more equal, partner-like relationship (Homer, 2019). Second, walking itself has a relaxing effect. As noted by Harvard psychiatrist John Ratey, walking stimulates the release of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, thus producing a natural antidepressant effect (Ratey, 2017). As a result, the coachee experiences greater calmness, relaxation and mental distance, which, in turn, supports creativity, focus and listening ability (Homer, 2019). Third, Homer observes that walking itself activates the coachee's potential, reducing the need for the coach to ask many questions, while moments of silence become less uncomfortable than in a traditional consulting room. In a professional context, this highlights the value of creating green spaces around workplaces or encouraging employees to walk, for example through initiatives such as subsidised fitness programmes.

3. CONCLUSION

While the article does not engage with other evidence-based strategies such as spaced practice, active recall or goal-oriented feedback, it nonetheless strives to offer a practitioner-oriented and accessible introductory outline to coaching tools. This makes it especially useful for coaches, trainers, HR professionals or individuals seeking practical tools for self-development to quickly scan and select approaches suited to various settings – from workshops and project teams to one-on-one consultations.

This paper is only an outline of selected coaching tools which can be effectively applied in professional settings by individuals with different learning styles. It is worth noting, however, that many of these tools can coexist, just as different learning preferences may coexist within individuals. Although the scope of this paper does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between learning styles and the effectiveness of specific tools, such a connection appears intuitive.

This intuition is justified not only by direct engagement with a given tool, but also by the coachee's subsequent independent work with the generated material; for instance, visualisation boards are likely to be more engaging for those who naturally retain visually presented information more easily.

While a coach should be able to work with a variety of tools – despite having personal preferences regarding their usefulness – the coachee must feel that a given tool is well suited to them. Therefore, an individual's learning and memory style appears to be a practical criterion for selecting appropriate coaching tools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Alberts, H. (2026). *Unlock Your Visualization Power: Effective Coaching Worksheets Revealed*. Quenza. <https://quenza.com/blog/coaching-worksheets-for-visualization/>
- [2] Besant, H. (2016). *The journey of brainstorming*. Journal of Transformative Innovation. Regent University. <https://www.regent.edu/journal/journal-of-transformative-innovation/the-history-of-brainstorming-alex-osborn/>
- [3] Cahill, A. (2016). *Neurological levels by Adrian Cahill*. Adrian Cahill. <https://adriancahill.com/nlp-coach-in-shanghai/mission-spirituality-neurological-levels-modified/>

- [4] Camarote, R. (2022.07.06). *This perspective-shifting exercise leads to faster, better decisions* | inc.com. Inc. <https://www.inc.com/robin-camarote/this-perspective-shifting-exercise-leads-to-faster-better-decisions.html>
- [5] Center for Coaching Certification. (2026). *Develop Coaching Skills for Your Role as a Professional and Leader*. <https://www.coachcert.com/training/continuing-coach-education/coaching-skills-for-professionals.html>
- [6] Coaching 360. (2026). VAK. <https://coaching-360.co.uk/services/360-academy/vak/>
- [7] Covey, S. (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press.
- [8] Dilts, R. (1990). *Changing Belief Systems With NLP*. Meta Pubns.
- [9] Edgerton, N. & Palmer, S., (2005). *SPACE: A psychological model for use within cognitive behavioural coaching, therapy and stress management*. The Coaching Psychologist Vol. 2 No. 2 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322509343_SPACE_A_psychological_model_for_use_within_cognitive_behavioural_coaching_therapy_and_stress_management
- [10] Elmansy, R. (2015). *Disney's Creative Strategy: The Dreamer, the Realist and the Critic*. Designorate. <https://www.designorate.com/disneys-creative-strategy/>
- [11] Elsey, E. (2024.09.29). *How to Use the Wheel of Life in Your Coaching Practice: A Complete Guide*. The Coaching Tools Company. <https://www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/wheel-of-life-complete-guide-everything-you-need-to-know/>
- [12] Flórez, K. (2022.05.26). *What is the Law of Mirrors?*. Step To Health. <https://steptohealth.com/what-is-the-law-of-mirrors/>
- [13] Homer, K. (2019). *"The more we exercise, the better our brain gets, the more focused we can be, and the smarter we are."* Value Partnership. <https://value-partnership.com/blog/coaching-whilst-walking/>
- [14] Hoobyar, T. (2026). *Future Pacing with Purpose: Use NLP to Stay Motivated When Life Gets Hard*. NLP Comprehensive. <https://nlpc.com/future-pacing-nlp/>
- [15] Kinsey Goman, C. (2011). *The Art and Science of Mirroring*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolkinseygoman/2011/05/31/the-art-and-science-of-mirroring/>
- [16] Kwiecieński, M. (2014). *Wizualizacja Celu w Procesie Działania i Dążenia Do Niego*. Coaching Time. <https://marcinkwiecinski.com.pl/coachingtime/wizualizacja-celu/>
- [17] Marmerchant, B. (2025). *Brainstorming Sessions: Team Coaching Tools and Methods*. World Consulting Group. <https://www.worldconsulting.group/team-coaching-tools-and-methods-brainstorming-sessions>
- [18] Morgan, W.P., & Pollock, M.L. (1977). *Psychologic characterization of the elite distance runner*. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 301, pp. 382-403.
- [19] Mukherjee, S. (2012). *Anchoring – An NLP Master Tool*. SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2191435
- [20] Nelson, J. (2024.01.16). *The Law of Mirroring Explains Why You Keep Attracting the Same People, Places and Problems*. Thought Catalog. <https://thoughtcatalog.com/>

- january-nelson/2018/07/the-law-of-mirroring-explains-why-you-keep-attracting-the-same-people-places-and-problems/
- [21] NLP Anchoring. (2024). NLP Academy. https://www.nlpacademy.co.uk/articles/view/nlp_anchoring/
- [22] O'Connor, J., Lages, A. (2004) Coaching for Human Development. International Coaching Community. <https://internationalcoachingcommunity.com/pt-br/coaching-human-development-joseph-oconnor-andrea-lages/>
- [23] Oseland, L. (2024.10.17). *Managing the Coaching Process with Mind Mapping*. Mind Map. <https://mind-map.com/managing-the-coaching-process-with-mind-mapping/>
- [24] Pitkälä, J. (2024.01.04). *Brainstorming Sessions: Agenda Template + Best Practices*. Wudpecker. <https://www.wudpecker.io/blog/brainstorming-sessions-agenda-template-best-practices>
- [25] Ratey, J. (2017). *Build a Better Mood Through Exercise*. High Performance Institute. <https://www.highperformanceinstitute.com/blog/better-mood>
- [26] Razjer, D., Wąsowska-Chęć, M. (2012) *Zmiana Miejsca*. Coaching4smart. <https://coaching4smart.wordpress.com/tag/zmiana-miejsca/>
- [27] Roman, M. (2024.07.26). *The 4 quadrants of Time Management Matrix [Guide]*. Timeular. <https://timeular.com/blog/time-management-matrix/>
- [28] Renault, V. (2025). Section 14. *SWOT analysis: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats*. Chapter 3. Assessing Community Needs and Resources, Community Tool Box. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/169571561/SWOT-Analysis-Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-And-Threats>, originally from: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/swot-analysis/main>
- [29] Schneider, N. (2022). NLP Goal Setting with Spacial Anchoring Pattern. Global NLP Training. <https://globalnlptraining.com/simply/nlp-goal-setting-with-spatial-anchoring-pattern/>
- [30] Sęp, K. (2026). *Mapa Marzeń – jak Zrobić Mapę Marzeń ?*. Mapa Marzeń. <https://mapamarzen.info/mapa-marzen/>
- [31] Spiegel, D. (Ed.). (2024). *What are dissociative disorders?* Psychiatry.org <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/dissociative-disorders/what-are-dissociative-disorders>
- [32] Sutton, J. (2020.07.29). *The Wheel of Life: How to Apply It in Coaching*. Positive Psychology. <https://positivepsychology.com/wheel-of-life-coaching/>
- [33] The Eisenhower Matrix. (2026). Columbia University. School of Professional Studies. <https://sps.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/2023-08/Eisenhower%20Matrix.pdf>
- [34] The Mirror Law: Reflecting Our Inner Reality (2026) Dulce Encanto. <https://dulceencanto.us.com/blogs/inspo/the-mirror-law-reflecting-our-inner-reality>

- [35] Tolmachev, A. (2024.06.18). *Mastering association and dissociation in NLP for personal and professional growth*. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mastering-association-dissociation-nlp-personal-growth-alex-tolmachev-iexsf>
- [36] “Walt Disney Method – Taking Different Roles: Dreamer, Realist, and Critic.” The Workshop Leader. (2026). <https://theworkshopleader.com/facilipaedia/analysis-creativity/generating-ideas/walt-disney-method/>
- [37] Wilczyńska, M. et al. (2013). *Moc coachingu: Poznaj Narzędzia Rozwijające Umiejętności i Kompetencje Osobiste*. Wydawnictwo Helion.
- [38] Wilson, C. (2026.03.05). *NLP Dissociation Techniques: A Quick Guide*. The Knowledge Academy. <https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/nlp-dissociation-techniques/>

Celina Jeray
International University of Logistics and Transport
in Wrocław, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0003-2389-1419
aubrey.towney@gmail.com