

Three conceptions of the self for applied purposes

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A map of the theory and practical approach

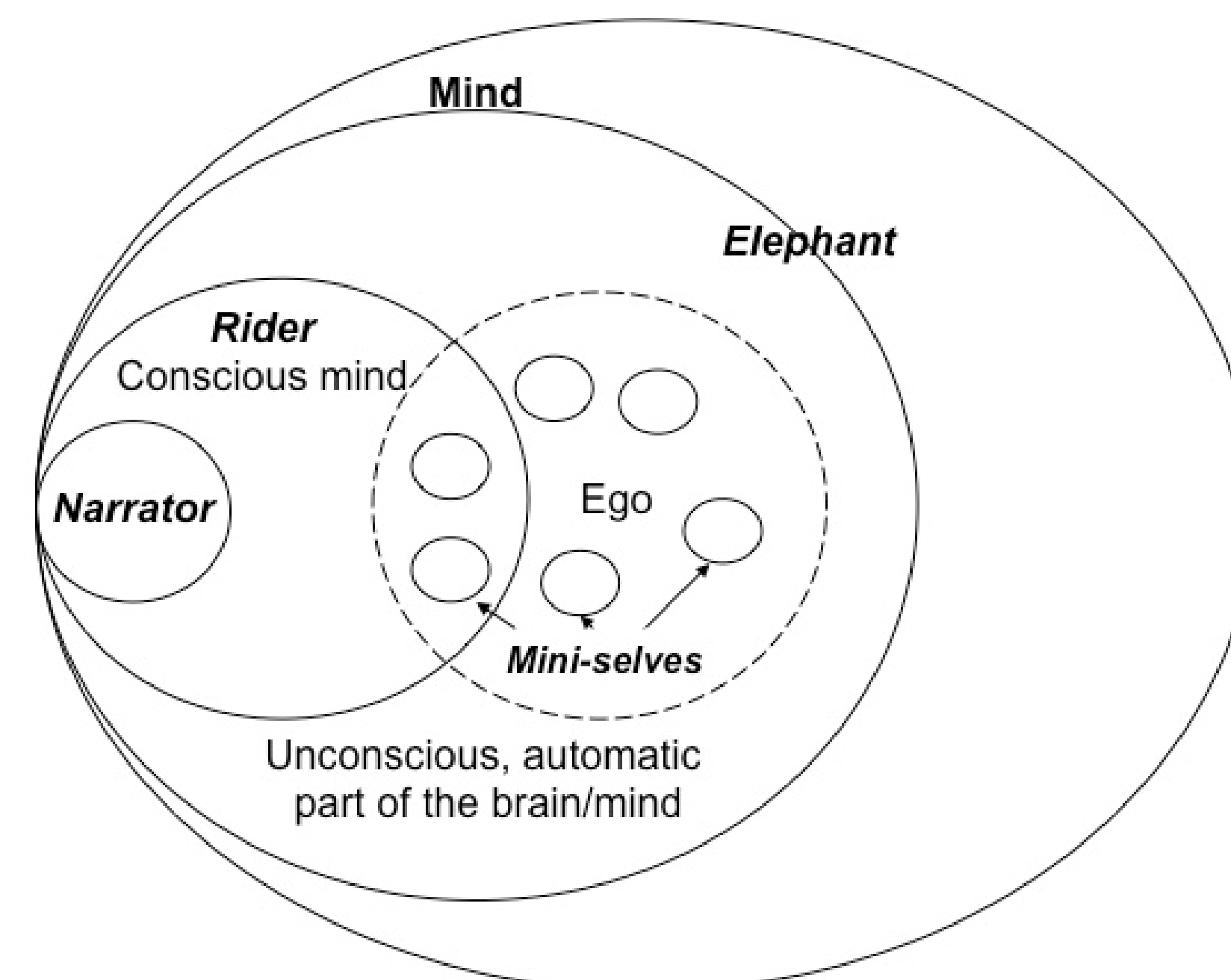
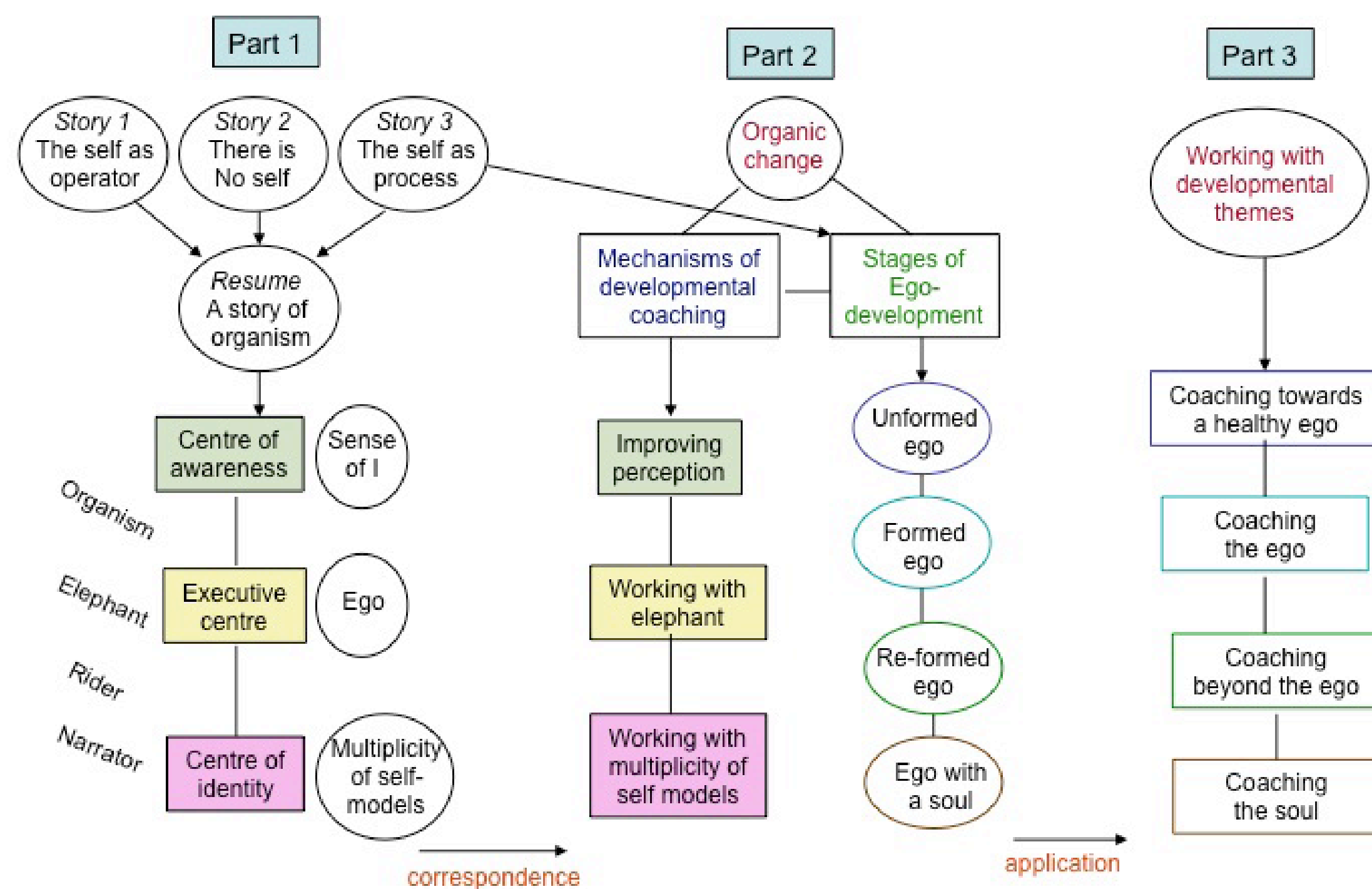


Figure 1. Relationship between ego, narrator and mini-selves

Bachkirova, T. (2011) *Developmental Coaching: Working with the self*, Maidenhead: Open University Press

Centre of awareness – sense of “I”

I – as an experiential dimension or a basic pre-reflective sense of self without which the person would not be able to function (animals also have that). It provide a sense of experiences being ‘mine’.

I – a pole of identity; the first-person perspective in the perception of life; a vantage point with respect to the external world. Claxton (1994: 81) said that I “can be seen as a kind of address, a reference point in space, which the brain-mind has to take account of in computing the strength and direction of a pounce or swerve”.

Executive centre: “ego” a net-work of mini-selves

A neurological network that could be called an executive centre or ego, responsible for the coherent behaviour and normal functioning of the individual in the world.

This network is modular, with each module or mini-self responsible for a function/ action of the individual in the world.

This centre responds to the needs of the organism mainly unconsciously but the individual may become conscious when the usual functioning is delayed because of the ambiguity, complexity of a task or with a provision of greater leisure.

Centre of identity – narrator about “me”

Narrator – a centre of narrative gravity (Dennett, 1991); a linguistic function that by making use of memory and reason creates a theory of self as a coherent (uniting the various experiences in one), separate, continuous unit which has various attributes.

Just as I can spin a hypothetical story to account for your funny little ways, so am I able to theorize about myself (Claxton, 1994)

Mechanisms of change

Enhancing the quality of perception

- **Conditioning** (external influences, shaping; internal attachments and identifications)



- **Self-deception**

Steven Pinker recently said the one great thing that psychology has achieved is “documenting the human propensity for self-deception, self-serving biases, cognitive dissonance, and defence mechanisms of the ego - the source of much of the complexity, and tragedy, of human life” (2008, p. 184).

Working with the elephant

Soft thinking

Soft focus on many things at the same time
Slowing down
Gentle questioning



Communication with the emotional body

- From: emotions
- From: non-verbal language
- From: felt sense (Gendlin, 2003)
- To: metaphors and imagery
- To: relationship
- To: attitude of curiosity
- To: advise and feedback

Dealing with the multiplicity of self-models

- **Accepting the fact of multiplicity**
- **Matching a self-story with a real mini-self**
- **Working on the synthesis of self-models**



Working with developmental themes

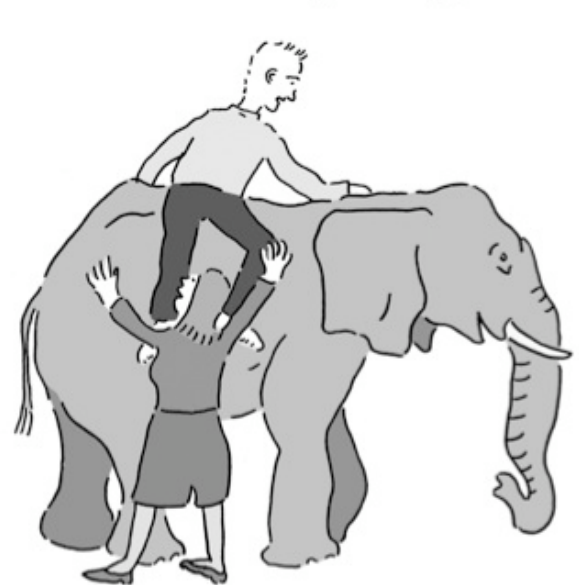
Stage	Core assumption*	Transitional dilemmas*	Corresponding challenge	Type of coaching
Unformed ego	The universe is fair, so I can ensure my security by being good	Life is not fair	Learning to stand on ones own feet	Coaching towards a healthy ego
Formed ego	I can be the master of my fate through my own initiative	Some forces cannot be controlled	Learning to see things from many perspectives	Coaching the ego
Reformed ego	I need to be all that I can be to fulfil my purpose in life	I can only realize my potential by giving up myself	Learning to live with paradoxes and see through constraints of language	Coaching beyond the ego
Ego with a soul	I seek to be one with the Ground of All Being	Seeking or not seeking the Ground keeps me from it	Learning a new way of being	Coaching the soul

Four groups of developmental themes

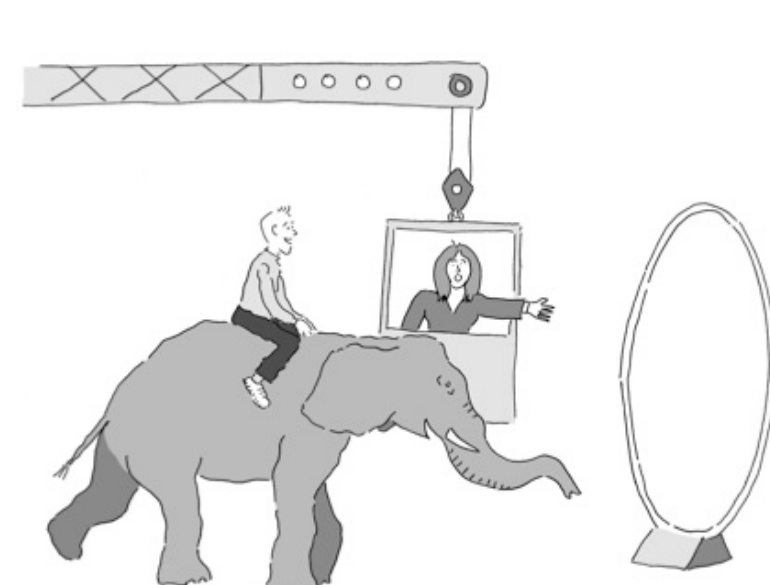
Unformed ego	Formed ego	Reformed ego	Ego with a soul
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making in difficult situations with a number of stake-holders • Taking higher level of responsibility than they feel they can cope with • Work-life balance connected to inability to say ‘no’ • Performance anxiety • Issues of self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with high amount of self-created work • Achievement of recognition, promotion, etc. • Interpersonal conflicts • Drive for success and underlying fear of failure • Problem solving • Learning to delegate • Stress management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfaction with life in spite of achievements • Internal conflict • Not ‘fitting in’ • Search for meaning • Overcoming life crisis • Initiating a significant change • Dealing with personal illusions • Staying true to themselves in a complex situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intention for spiritual development • Lack of progress in a chosen path • Making sense of a mystical experience • Coming to terms with mortality of the organism • Realisation of incompleteness of work for a mission • Overcoming spiritual illusions

Potential core assumptions and challenges with two columns* adapted from the description of selected stages by Wade (1996, p.263)

Coaching towards a healthy ego



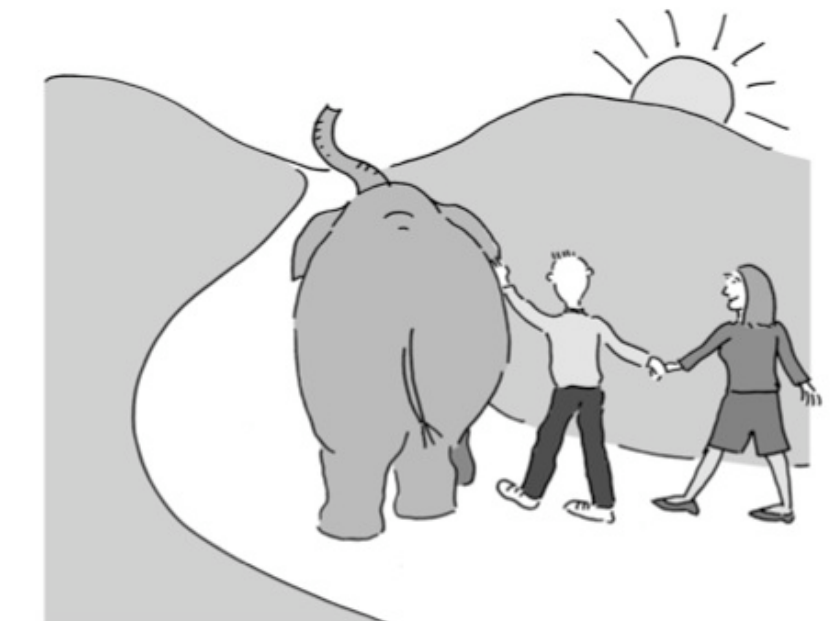
Coaching the ego



Coaching beyond the ego



Coaching the soul



References

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