



**CO-ACTIVE**<sup>®</sup>  
TRAINING INSTITUTE

# **The Science of Transformational Coaching**

**BY ANN BETZ**

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As brain science has evolved independently from the profession of coaching, remarkable connections between the disciplines suggest a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Coaching is no longer considered experimental or unconventional. Three decades into the practice and certification of coaching, it is growing more prominent in the development of leaders. And on a parallel path, technological developments are enabling us to understand and take advantage of the complexity and flexibility of the human brain.

Advances in technology such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) mean we no longer need to go on instinct, or even trial and error, to understand why people change and grow. We can see certain brain activity right before our eyes — something that is inspiring to those seeking to spark a new path or purpose with innovative thinking.

“We’ve known intuitively, and from watching results for 30 years, that the Co-Active model is an effective approach to coaching,” says Karen Kimsey-House, co-founder of the Co-Active Training Institute (formally known as the Coaches Training Institute), whose world-renowned Co-Active coaching model is considered the gold standard of coaching methodology. “Now we can truly begin to link the theory and evidence.”

***Clients often come to coaching concerned, unsure, or thrown off their game in some area of their life, seeking help to get back on top of things. When the coach is present, flexible, and open, they bring a more “coherent” energetic field, which affects the client in positive ways that are not in conscious awareness, bringing them a greater sense of calm and efficacy. It is not uncommon for a client to say to a Co-Active coach, “I always feel so much better just talking to you.”***

*“CTI offers a gold standard of coach training, and the Co-Active model behind it is remarkably congruent with a vast body of research in positive psychology and coaching. As business, health and personal coaches begin to master and articulate these messages, we believe it will create inroads for more individuals and organizations to see the value and validity of coaching.”*

*“It’s exciting to see how the entire field can be uplifted by connecting science and theory with the spirit and practice of coaching. In the future, results will continue to show how science can be mapped to CTI’s Co-Active model and their four cornerstones of coaching.”*

**—Dr. Carol Kauffman, founder and director of the Institute of Coaching and faculty of Harvard Medical School for over 25 years**

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## **A Science-Backed Process for Optimal Human Growth and Change**

Evidence from the field of neuroscience confirms that the philosophy and tools of coaching and leadership are in powerful alignment with what is known about effective brain development.

Using neuroscience foundations, coaches are positioned to engage the client's brain in ways that create openness, creativity, and the optimal environment for neuroplasticity, leading to lasting, transformative change.

Anyone looking to evoke new patterns in their thinking and in their life can be confident knowing that scientific proof continues to support the successes of coaches and leaders who have essentially rewired their brains.

Co-Active principles offer a variety of ways to help individuals move out of a reactive state and create new possibilities for moving forward, with tools and skills that can be linked to neuroscientifically proven stress-reduction techniques, right-left hemisphere integration, and neuroplasticity.

## **Reducing Stress Creates Room to be Proactive**

Science has revealed that when the brain is influenced by the chemicals associated with stress, it is less creative and less able to think of long-term solutions. Because there is no judgment or evaluation in Co-Active coaching and leadership development, the client remains open to input and is much more able to access their own unique creativity.

There is evidence that reflecting on personal values provides biological and psychological protection from the adverse effects of stress. In a 2005 study by scientists at UCLA, individuals were subjected to a stress challenge in a laboratory setting. Those who were given the task of identifying their values and reflecting on them before the test showed significantly lower cortisol levels after the test than the control group subjected to the same stress test but not asked to identify or reflect on their values.

Co-Active coaches use values and life purpose to help their clients find meaning in their life and create a compelling vision for the future, which research shows contributes to an overall increased sense of well-being and reduction of stress.

## Integration: The Competitive Advantage of Brain Complexity

Research also shows that the process of having “collaborative, contingent conversations” that are emotionally attuned and non-directive builds positive neural connections in the brain.

In other words, connected conversation with a present and open coach cannot help but have a positive impact on the brain, which in turn leads to improved relationships and greater capacity to show up more powerfully in the world.

**Watch “The Neuroscience of Integration” with Ann Betz and Karen Kimsey-House.**

For example, a 2010 fMRI study at Case Western Reserve University found that when subjects spent 30 minutes talking about their desired personal vision, the parts of their brain “associated with cognitive, perceptual, and emotional openness and better functioning” were activated.

View their demo of how coaching with compassion can “light up” human thoughts for more about how neuroscience teaches us that we are amazingly complex and multilayered beings — and the more we can integrate and be agile with this complexity, the better.

By helping clients expand their focus beyond the presenting issue or problem, Co-Active coaching facilitates the engagement of the whole brain. Rather than looking just for the most logical answer, a Co-Active coach will often encourage the client to explore both thoughts and feelings and to give voice to intuitive gut reactions. This kind of attention helps integrate the right and left hemispheres of the brain, which not only opens up new solutions and creativity but also builds lasting connections that can be used for future problem-solving.

## Neuroplasticity: The Art of Changing the Brain <sup>EV</sup>

Co-Active coaching helps people identify the pathways that are not working and focus on creating new ones that lead to more resonant, effective, fulfilling lives. Over time, through commitment, support, practice, and reflection, those “ahas” become dominant neural pathways, and what was once a reach and challenge becomes commonplace.

As neuroplasticity expert Norman Doidge points out, there is substantial evidence we can “rewire our brains with our thoughts.” But because the default in our brain is to go with the pathways that are already developed, it is difficult to change without focused, supported, intentional effort.

Co-Active coaching brings this sort of focus and support, making it possible to literally help a client’s brain rewire itself for greater effectiveness. By asking curious, powerful, open-ended questions designed to make the client think, Co-Active coaches stimulate reflection, which helps to anchor in learning and produce lasting growth.

There is a saying among neuroscientists: “If it fires, it wires,” meaning that much of what we do creates the potential for a new neural pathway. Through a process called “myelination,” the more a pathway is used, the stronger it becomes. This is because every time we repeat an action, a fatty covering called myelin coats the neural pathway, making connections stronger and more secure.

Coaches are taught to keep the focus on a dance between having the client forward the action — doing things that move their lives forward — and deepen the learning — reflecting and making meaning of what they have attempted and accomplished. The result is to create a positive upward cycle of learning for the client.

## Conclusion

Everyone longs to be successful in their lives, whether it is at work, at home, or as a parent, friend or partner. We don't want just to change one particular circumstance — we want the fundamental ability to live, work, react, and create in the most effective way.

As the growing body of neuroscience research reveals, the tools of Co-Active coaching and leadership development profoundly help clients develop positive new neural networks, respond more calmly to stress, make choices more easily, and access much more of their creativity.

This inevitably leads to more effective, successful, and fulfilling lives, and there is substantial evidence from neuroscience that this philosophy is particularly effective in engaging, motivating, and helping clients experience lasting change and transformation.

# ABOUT CTI

Through Co-Active leadership training, CTI is creating a transformative change in the way people relate to and work with each other.

Based on the premise that everyone is a leader, Co-Active teaches you how to take responsibility for self-authoring your own life and empowers you with the skill set and mindset for positive growth.

Our founders, among the initial pioneers of the coaching profession, wrote Co-Active Coaching, the most popular book on coaching (often used by other coach training programs too), now in its 4th edition. With over 110,000 copies sold, it's been published in more than 10 languages worldwide. Stephen Covey, author of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, called it "the bible of coaching."

Headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, CTI is the largest and oldest in-person leadership training school in the world and the only program to teach its groundbreaking Co-Active model. CTI was the very first organization accredited by the International Coach Federation (ICF), and over the last 25 years, CTI has trained more than 62,000 Co-Active coaches worldwide. Today, CTI trains more new coaches each year than any other training program.

## CTI's in-person leadership development programs

- **Co-Active® Coaching Fundamentals** (2.5-Day Course)
- **Co-Active® Coach Training and Certification** (12-Month Program)
- **Co-Active® Leadership Experience** (3-Day Course)
- **Co-Active® Leadership Program** (10-Month Program)

For a complete list of CTI's courses and programs, visit [www.coactive.com](http://www.coactive.com)

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