



# The Heart of the Matter: a discussion with Helen Mundy

**Helen Mundy is evolving her coaching practice, reflecting the enormous learning and wisdom she has built through her own development and from working with a wide range of clients over the past 7 years. Her new organisation is called the Heart of the Matter. Andrew Flint, colleague and a former coachee of Helen's, interviews her to uncover her thoughts about what is at the 'Heart of the Matter'.**



**Helen, you are often reticent about offering your opinions; your focus is so often on helping others explore their own beliefs and meanings. What's changed?**

Evolving my business into 'The Heart of the Matter' has been a thought provoking process. It's consolidated my knowledge and experience and given me space to think how I can apply this even more effectively to help people and their organisations achieve sustainable change. This has led me to want to share my beliefs and philosophy from the beginning of 'The Heart of the Matter', so for once I am going to hang up my ears and offer some of my personal reflections and learning. This is also my gift back to the many people who have helped shape these thoughts over the years. I thank them all for the contributions they've made and hope that my thoughts can inform them even further in their own evolving journeys...

**So, Helen why 'The Heart of the Matter'?**

Over these last seven years every transformational piece of coaching I have conducted, observed or received myself has got right to the heart of things. It's involved finding the root cause, seeing the wood for the trees, cutting through the static.....and understanding what

is blocking that person or group from making the changes they really want.

What you find 'at the heart' evolves. As we tackle one layer, another is revealed. If we can have the courage to get to the heart and keep our attention on it as it changes, I just know we are more likely to release our best possible performance. I work best with individuals and teams over time, helping them unravel the layers and creating a sustainable transformation with them.

**And why specifically the heart?**

The heart is about feelings. When people go to the heart of the matter and align their intellect with their feelings you unleash a flow of energy and quality thinking. True creativity, the unblocking of the mind, requires a full connection that intellectual debate alone cannot achieve. Edward De Bono speaks of this intellectual debate as about 10% effective when compared with connecting both sides of the brain. Each time we work at the heart of the matter there is a release of emotion and then an alignment of feelings and intellectual outcomes – it's very powerful.

One of the few differentiating factors available to already hard working, highly intelligent people and teams is to tap into their emotional intelligence to allow their best performance. I find it

frustrating that so few organisations are able to accept or support this in their current cultural and managerial style.

### So, getting to the core and releasing and aligning feelings with intellect are at the heart for you.

Absolutely, you've got it!  
Fundamentally, I believe my business is all about achieving this alignment.

### How do you help people get to the heart of the matter?

For me, coaching starts with listening – and that's one of the world's scarcest resources! Speaking your truth when someone is there paying exquisite attention to you is a liberating experience in its own right.

Most listeners are just waiting for the opportunity to speak. One of the best gifts you could give a colleague or friend would be to give them a really good listening to! We are generally conditioned into wanting to give them a solution to make it better – all done with the best of intentions. And yet we can then rob them of the opportunity to explore and commit more fully to their own solution.

### So listening is the start...what then?

Listening slows things down and helps people connect with and express their deeper thoughts and feelings. The relentless pace and volume in many people's working and whole lives serves to mask what is really going on for them. It's a form of avoidance of the heart of the matter. Taking the pace down, setting the time aside and paying attention to the whole person creates a very different quality of environment in which to think. By letting someone say it out loud, you release their minds from the never-ending internal dialogue and debate. You enable them to get out of their own way. Quality thinking can then ensue.

### And how does that kind of thinking get to the heart?

Enabling quality thinking to get to heart is then a matter of what the individual coach brings. At the core of that for me are great questions that help to uncover the heart and the time to consider the answers in depth. I also incorporate a

wide variety of really useful models, tools and techniques that help expose the patterns of thinking that can cause someone to be blocked. The same or different models can then provide them with a more supportive structure to their thinking to unblock them and facilitate their taking action towards alignment.

### Coaching clients in this way must require a real commitment from them too. What have you seen make a difference in clients who really want to benefit from this kind of approach?

That's a great question! Absolutely, it's clients who bring themselves fully to this process who get the most from it. That's not easy to do and I really admire the individuals and teams that I work with for effectively swimming against the strong tide of today's prevailing organisational culture.



It takes two core things in my mind:

The first is investment in the individual and team. That means investment in time, in their whole wellbeing and a belief that this investment will pay off. It's a judgement call for any organisation what to invest and, more importantly, how to invest to get the best return in the development of their leaders. And investment is needed at an individual level – change is individual... much as we would like to find a 'one size fits all'. That's scary when we don't believe we have enough time anyway.

So, the second thing that is needed is courage. That could be the courage to try something new. We might know that our 'work harder and faster' ethic isn't working for us...but it can become quite comfortable in it's uncomfortableness. We employ great time-management techniques and claim to have done everything we can to make it better for ourselves. It takes courage to say 'that

approach isn't working' and try something which we might not understand and even be scared of.

It is always the courage in yourself that lets the layers unravel, knowing that you will emerge more whole and able to create the outcomes you want and need.

Courage comes from the French 'Coeur' – the heart! Courage is therefore to be 'heart-felt' and that is a quality that I have witnessed in clients who can work at the heart themselves and with their teams.

### So, in the last 7 years what have been the major influences on you in taking this approach?

Well, actually firstly my clients! I have met a wide range of extraordinary people, created amazing experiences with them and great learning for me about how all this works.

Secondly, colleagues with whom I have worked – I continually exchange views and ideas and models with those I have trained and those who've trained me. My coaching community is a rich source of talent, support, sharing and humility!

And I am continually developing my approach by adding new perspectives. Most recently I have been very struck by Nancy Kline's work – laid out in the extraordinary book 'Time to Think' which I increasingly recommend to my clients. She's modelled over more than 25 years how the brain makes breakthroughs in thinking...and the model is elegant and sophisticated yet simple. It encapsulates what getting to the heart of the matter really means for me.

### So what's at the Heart of the Matter for you right now?

I guess I've always lived my rhetoric. I have always wanted to, as best I can, role model what I advocate to others. So right now speaking what I believe to be true is at the heart for me. That's what the launch of the company is all about – speaking what I believe to be true, drawn from the very privileged journey I have taken of working in this way over the years. It's scary, it's real and it comes from the heart!

**Thank you Helen, and the best of luck with the 'Heart of the Matter'.**