Coaching those leading complex human systems

An overview of the Claristrat Method™ for complexity scholars and coaching practitioners

By Fabiana Pereira Hotz, PCC · Claristrat Institute

I wrote this paper to clarify, for interested parties, the core leadership development opportunities the Claristrat Method™ addresses, its foundation in four fields of knowledge (complexity theory, depth psychology, adult development, and the neuroscience of autonomic regulation), and how coaches and senior leaders can and do apply it in their day-to-day as they learn it through one of our programs.

The method is the methodological foundation of the Claristrat Institute, where we develop senior executives as leaders, coaches, and advisors. The Institute does this through two connected practices: certifying senior executives as executive coaches, and supporting them directly through coaching. Both rest on the same understanding of how leaders and organizations develop together.

About this paper.

This paper describes the Claristrat Core Method™, offered through the Claristrat Professional Executive Coaching Certificate program, which focuses on one-to-one systemic neurosomatic coaching.

The Claristrat Advanced Method™, taught in the Advanced Executive Coaching Certificate Program, brings the same approach to group and team coaching and will be described separately.

Program details are on our website, in our brochure, and available upon request.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Executive summary

Senior leaders often know what they need to change in order to achieve their personal and team goals, and still find it very difficult to go ahead and do what they know will be best. The issue is often not lack of conscious will. They report feeling a vague sense that something else, which they are unclear about, is missing, and must come first before the desired change. In my experience as an executive coach using a rigorous new approach, this something else is internal coherence.

The Claristrat Core Method™ is the name of this new approach, and is a highly effective way to achieve this coherence and bridge the gap between what a leader wants to achieve and what they will. It starts by treating the leader and their context as an interconnected human system, reinforcing and countering the patterns and reactions that keep a leader repeating what no longer works.

The method has three working parts. The Claripath™ wheel structures the work as a whole, and every coaching session, in three phases: Intentional Awareness, that builds a shared picture of the person and their situation; Dynamic Meaning, that expand the leader's go-to ways of seeing; and Iterative Transformation, where the leader learns how to open doors by advancing with alignment. The Fibonacci Flow™ ensures conversations are not overstructured and can follow the client's thinking to commitments anchored in their purpose. Four fields of knowledge inform the coach throughout: complexity theory, depth psychology, adult development, and neuroscience.

The method aims to raise the embodied mindset a leader keeps returning to under pressure, which The method calls their basin. When it rises, leaders show:

- More energy for curiosity and strategic thinking, because less goes into self-defense.
- Decisions under pressure made from coherent criteria, still taking in other points of view.
- Willingness to being wrong, so errors are noticed and addressed earlier.
- Steadier presence when challenged: they can feel strong emotion and keep centered.
- A closer fit between what they say they value and what they do, even under stress.
- Relationships that can hold dissent, and a greater ability to develop others.
- The voice to raise ethical misalignments between the group's actions and wider goals.
- Greater agency and well-being.

The method is taught in ICF-accredited programs, in which coaches go through it themselves before guiding others, and it is applied directly with leaders inside organizations.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Why the method exists

The leadership gap: understanding and not changing

When chief executives are asked which skills matter most for future growth, they cite innovative thinking, agility, resilience, and empathy (The Conference Board, C-Suite Outlook 2025). These qualities show in crucial everyday moments: how a leader handles a complex decision, or treats stakeholders under pressure.

Organizations usually rely on competency models, goal-setting, and mentoring to shape these day-to-day behaviors. These tools fail when a leader knows exactly what to do and still cannot do it. Consider a manager who agrees they must delegate, then checks every piece of work they have handed over. The manager has the knowledge. What stops them is a conflict between deeply held beliefs. Left unaddressed, it erodes trust, slows decisions, and leads to burnout.

For senior leaders, these blocks rarely come from a lack of skill or will. They come from developmental shifts in leadership identity and purpose. Ways of leading that used to work, such as believing that constant over-effort is what justifies one's role, stop working. Behavior-focused coaching, which works well for junior talent learning the job, is not designed to reach these beliefs. Nor does this work call for clinical therapy, which diagnoses and treats crises.

What this work needs, and what still happens very rarely, is a type of coaching that develops leaders as human beings. In other words, that expands their mindset. Developmental coaching is so named because it focuses on exactly this: creating the conditions that enable leaders to develop the behaviors required for future growth.

The origins of the Claristrat Method™

The Claristrat Method™ was built for this middle space: developmental coaching that makes leaders more aware, resilient, creative, and open-minded within their organizational (and personal) context. It is a type of coaching, in sum, that leverages effective knowledge and techniques from multiple scientific and human fields to address the root cause of behavioral issues – instead of focusing on the top of the iceberg and dealing with the behavioral symptoms of mindset limitations.

I built the method after over twenty-five years of leading enterprise projects and large consulting transformations at firms such as Accenture and Deloitte. While doing this work, I kept meeting

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

capable leaders who knew what they needed to change in their teams and especially in themselves, but could not do it effectively. Once I understood the issue to be in the human part of the equation, I sought out approaches to mindset development which might help me, and therefore my clients, better prepare leaders and their teams to successfully undertake complex change and transformations. I delved into neuro-linguistic programming, reflective inquiry, systems thinking, complexity theory, cognitive-behavioral psychology, positive psychology, and finally depth psychology. I found that no single approach gave a full account of the human context of leadership, or a practical framework for developing leaders for lasting mindset change.

However, after doing all of that reading and practice, I noticed certain similarities in some of these approaches. I also saw that some of their elements could be effective if organized into a coherent approach based on what neuroscience already knows about how we can change how we think and feel, and complex systems theory already knows about how human groups behave. This is how I started putting this method together, as a strategy for clarity: Claristrat.

The Claristrat Method™ is a live approach that develops with every cohort we teach, and likely with every coaching session it powers. At the time of this writing, it leverages complexity theory and depth psychology to help leaders understand why giving up old habits feels threatening. Adult development shows how leaders can see more and decide better as we adopt more flexible, empathetic, and curious mindsets. The neuroscience of autonomic regulation, applied through somatic techniques, helps us feel able to try new approaches. Together, these disciplines connect in a logical way what a leader understands about themselves with how they actually respond.

The Claristrat Institute is accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), and the method and the coaching that applies it follow the ICF Core Competencies and Code of Ethics. We chose ICF-aligned coaching as a “package” to apply the method because it offers a concise, practical, widely recognized standard for working with senior leaders professionally.

The core premise: ecological relationships

The method rests on a core premise: the leader and the organization shape each other and therefore cannot be developed separately. A leader influences culture and ways of working through decisions, relationships, and the behavior they model. The organization influences the leader through its expectations, incentives, history, and constraints, and so shapes what the leader prioritizes and does.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

The method coaching examines both directions interactively. A leader may be trying to change a pattern that the organization keeps unwittingly rewarding; they need to see those conditions as clearly as their own reactions. When the leader acts differently, the organization responds, and that response becomes new information that will also change the leader back.

What the method develops

The method treats working in this changing situation as a capacity closer to judgment: noticing what is happening, including in oneself, and seeing the aligned options opened by the situation. Using naturalized complexity theory (a new field of academic research), we help executives create affordances: new actions available as one navigates seemingly unworkable constraints. A small action can then be used as a test. Its result shows options that were not visible before. The guiding question is: what becomes possible now, from here?

This asks a lot of the coaching practitioner. The method's principle for training coaches is learning by becoming: we develop these capacities by going through the work ourselves, on our own real questions. Claristrat coaches examine our own emotional triggers to develop gravitas: the steadiness to stay with a leader's uncertainty without rushing to reassure them. We also learn to adjust our depth of field: how widely we and the leader set our attention during the coaching session, from a single task, to the relationships around it, to the assumptions underneath it. Widening the lens lets us see both the leader's personal assumptions and the organizational conditions driving a reaction.

Whether training executives as coaches or supporting leadership teams directly, the goal is the same: to help leaders who feel drained, blocked, or operating below their potential see their own part in complex dynamics, and act with clearer, more grounded agency.

This is how we serve Claristrat's broader mission: to develop ecological human leadership that drives humanity toward a sustainable, self-realized future.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

How the method works

Developing coaching competence

The 2025 ICF Core Competencies describe what a skilled coach does. A training method also has to say how a coach becomes able to do it.

Knowing that a coach should maintain presence does not make it possible to stay attentive when a client is distressed, or when neither person knows what comes next. Trust and ethical judgment also require practice, reflection, and the ability to recognize one's own biases and reactions.

The method trains each ICF competency through a specific part of the method, so that running the Claripath™ through a session implies practicing the competencies. The table shows where each one is trained and what the coach practices. You will learn more about the Claripath wheel and the Fibonacci Flow, which help guide engagement and session alike, shortly after.

ICF competency	How the method trains it
Demonstrates Ethical Practice	Learned through the boundaries on the Claripath wheel and the Ethics dimension in the Fibonacci Flow. The coach practices recognizing and dealing with conflicts of interest, out of scope topics, or unsafe client states that call for a therapist.
Embodies a Coaching Mindset	Developed through *learning by becoming*. The coach goes through the method on their own real questions first, and practices noticing and correcting the course when their curiosity stops because they have assumed what a client's situation means, or what solution it takes.
Establishes and Maintains Agreements	Learned through Trust Foundation and the re-contracting when clients drift off-topic. The coach practices agreeing on purpose, roles, and permission to interrupt, and validating or reopening the agreement when the work changes direction.
Cultivates Trust and Safety	Developed through Trust Foundation and ongoing autonomic regulation. The coach practices keeping every commitment and watching breath, voice, posture, and coherence of speech for signs that the client can no longer reflect, then slowing down.
Maintains Presence	Trained through the coach's own development and Semantic Reframing. The coach practices staying steady when the client is

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

ICF competency	How the method trains it
	distressed or when neither of them knows what comes next, and holding back the urge to reassure.
Listens Actively	Developed through knowledge of and attentiveness to anchors of meaning in the client speech and demeanor . The coach practices tracking tone, posture, and energy alongside the elements of the client's story, including recurring patterns.
Evokes Awareness	Learned through Systemic Reflection and Semantic Reframing for Dynamic Meaning development. The coach practices bringing the client's working assumptions into view and letting the client examine those before any other reading is offered.
Facilitates Client Growth	Trained through Iterative Transformation. The coach practices helping the client design actions they own, test them between sessions, and learn from how the situation responds.

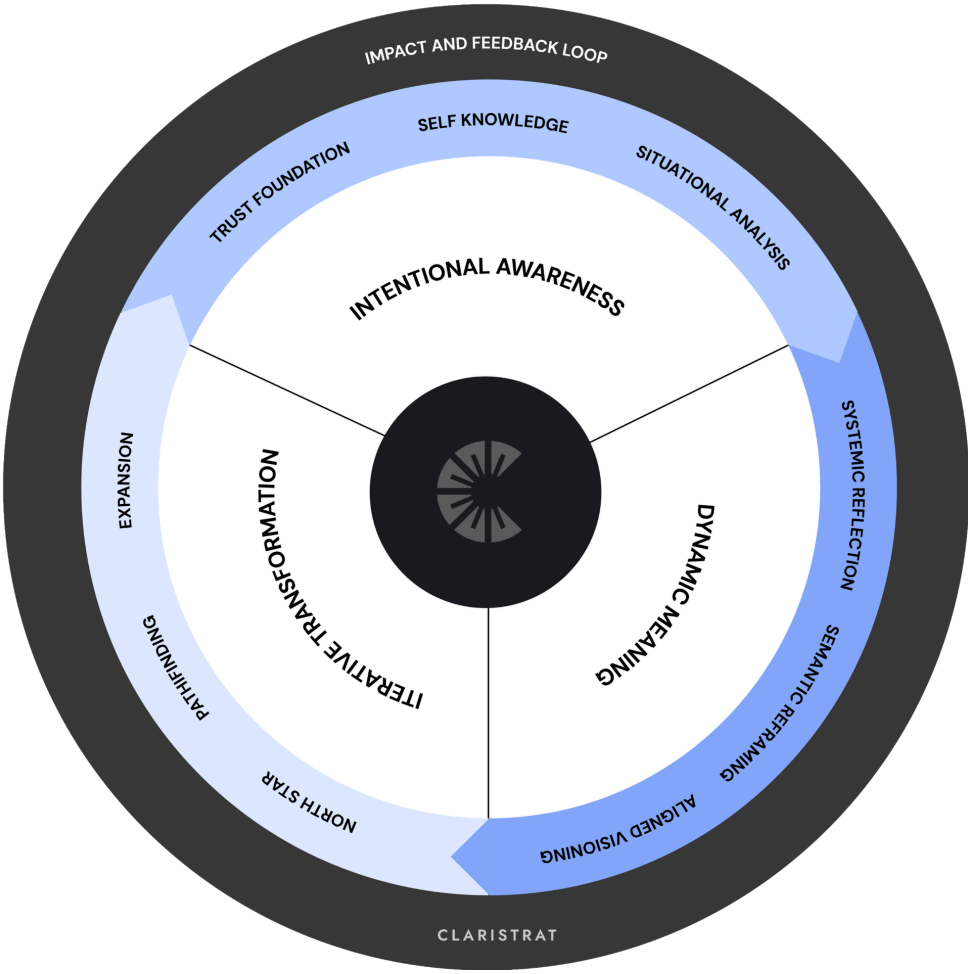
Each sub-phases of the wheel relies on a specific set of competencies, so a coach practices all of them in every session – first with peers during the program's live sessions, subsequently with clients. The training is ICF-accredited and prepares practitioners well beyond certification requirements, so coaches can work with senior leaders with effectiveness and professionalism from the start.

Claripath™ and the developmental process

We saw the Claripath represents the often circular path to leadership clarity. It conveys how some of the same topics tend to come back to coaching conversations to be dealt with at deeper levels of understanding, while options related to repeating patterns start opening up as assumptions loosen their grip.

The Claripath wheel has three phases, nine sub-phases, and 27 elements forming a continuing loop of impact and feedback. At the center is adaptive leadership, the synthesized human capacity the method aims to develop. That is, the ability to observe more and assume less in order to successfully respond to complex dynamics as they evolve. Around the edge of the wheel are the boundaries of the work: what is out of scope, what is unethical, and what is unsafe.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.



The three phases are Intentional Awareness, Dynamic Meaning, and Iterative Transformation: understanding the situation, reconsidering what it means, and acting on the new understanding.

The phases are cumulative. Intentional Awareness comes first and keeps running once it starts. Dynamic Meaning joins it, as awareness of the new meanings available and adopted become key. Iterative Transformation represents the field of action outside the coaching session. A client acting on new directions is still noticing new patterns and still testing what they mean while the actions unfold. Because all three phases keep running, a later conversation during the engagement can examine an assumption that an earlier one made visible.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Intentional Awareness

A leader may arrive with a firm account of what has gone wrong and who is responsible, or may feel hurt, constrained, or disconnected from their work. Built on safety first, Intentional Awareness gives the work its ground: a shared picture of the person and of the setting they act in, starting with the person, then looking at their interpretation of the setting. The awareness arc deepens during the whole coaching engagement, given the picture is updated each time something new shows up. These are the three sub-phases of this arc:

Trust Foundation

Why: A client examines their account only when it is safe to do so.

What: Enabled by the coach through clear agreements, confidentiality, professionalism, and respect, resting on a core non-pathologizing and non-judgemental belief the coach must hold: that the leader is a whole, capable person and the author of their own development.

How: The coach contracts explicitly at the start of the engagement and of each session, keeps every commitment, and asks questions that bring out capacities the client already has, such as "When have you handled something like this before?" When an organization sponsors the coaching, contracting is three-way: the coach, the leader, and the sponsoring manager or HR partner agree the goals, what will be shared with the sponsor, and what stays confidential. Trust Foundation holds all of these agreements, so the leader can be candid and the sponsor can see progress.

Self-Knowledge

Why: Patterns a leader cannot see go on running their choices.

What: The leader's recurring patterns and sense of identity: what they believe they must be, what they are trying to protect or change, their values and purpose, hidden commitments, and traits they find hard to acknowledge.

How: Mainly through reflection in conversation, with psychometrics and 360 feedback where useful. The coach builds a working picture of how the client makes sense of their world and themselves.

Situational Analysis

Why: What a leader struggles to see in themselves often shows more clearly in their relationships and reactions at work.

What: The setting in which the patterns appear: stakeholders (personal and professional), governance, power, and organizational history, together with the leader's feelings, energy, and goals.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

How: The coach starts from the trigger that brought urgency to coaching and treats inner and outer as one map. When a reaction flares at work, the coach asks what the situation is showing through it. Constraints the leader feels they cannot change are mapped too, because a seemingly fixed constraint can still hold pivoting potential.

Dynamic Meaning

Dynamic Meaning works on how the leader makes sense of what falls into view. It works with what adult-development theory calls a subject-object shift: an assumption that initially shaped the leader's experience of a situation without being noticed as such becomes something they can look at and make decisions about. Running alongside awareness, it lets each new observation be treated as a reading of the situation, which the leader can test and change. The work moves from the pattern, to the reading that sustains it, to a direction the leader chooses.

Systemic Reflection

Why: What a leader experiences as personal is often part of a pattern in the system. Seeing the pattern turns self-blame into observation, and observation as the leverage for change.

What: Patterns in the interaction between the leader and the organization: stakeholder goals, roles and recurring human patterns, and what the culture rewards, tolerates, or ignores. The method calls a pattern, or a schema, the state which the client's system keeps returning to, such as their mindset, specific points of view, somatic states, and resulting behaviors.

How: The coach asks what keeps happening and how a stakeholder's response sets off the next, placing what the client has been carrying as personal into its systemic context.

Semantic Reframing

Why: As an old account loses its certainty, the leader may not yet have a new one they can trust. The method calls this interval a semantic drift. This is a zone of productive discomfort, because the new mindset will come only when the old one stops serving. Clients may try to "avoid the pain" by asking for a quick plan or by avoiding a decision while the new account is being formed and integrated. In the session, this moment precedes the "aha" which ties the dots between insights forming a cohesive whole and generates unexpected clarity from what was previously contradictory.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

What: Making room for a different interpretation, in a fixed order: recognizing the framework through which the situation is seen (Paradigm), exploring other positions (Point of View), and finding a response the old view had overlooked (Transcendence).

How: The coach contracts for drift in advance (the purpose of the work, permission to interrupt, how feedback will be given) and then practices restraint, setting up the conditions in which the client can see differently and leaving the new view for the client to find. An answer offered too early cuts short what the uncertainty could generate. Drift often shows in the body before it is spoken: a hesitation, a shift in posture, a sudden flatness, or a leader saying they no longer know who they are in their role. The coach helps them stay with that question long enough to understand what is changing.

Aligned Visioning

Why: Action needs a basis the leader has understood and chosen.

What: A new direction drawn from the exploration and tested against the leader's values. The options weighed here are possibilities: what plans and data predict.

How: The client names possible ways forward first. The coach may then show routes the client has not considered. The client tests each against their values and willingness to act, assembles them into one direction, and says when it is complete.

Iterative Transformation

Iterative Transformation carries the new understanding into decisions, relationships, and practice. Each action is a test, and its result feeds back into awareness and meaning, which are still running. Awareness without meaning stays description, and meaning without action stays ungrounded; with all three running, the work has three dimensions at once: what is seen, what it means, and what is done. Pathfinding without North Star has nothing to steer by, and Expansion without Pathfinding inflates the leader's sense of what has changed. The measure is that the leader visibly needs the coach less and less, until a new development cycle is ready to restart, sometimes years after the first engagement.

North Star

Why: Every consequential action needs a reference point to steer by.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

What: A purpose that can guide the leader's choices. The method calls its effect a coherence field: decisions, commitments, and relationships start to line up with that purpose, and as the leader acts differently, people around them respond.

How: The coach helps the leader consider inner drives and outside forces together, attends to coincidences that feel meaningful, and connects vocation and values with a direction the leader can steer by. The method makes room for synchronicity: a coincidence between something a person is inwardly preoccupied with and seemingly random and yet meaningful outside events, with no perceived causal link between them. For example, someone weighing whether to engage in a type of project is approached in the same week by two unrelated people about the work they have been imagining. The North Star usually reflects, in the lived world, what the leader's attention is already organizing around: shared timing and shared fields.

Pathfinding

Why: Direction becomes real only in action, and the situation's response is the information the next step needs.

What: Conversations, decisions, resources, and timing: where to act, where to wait, where repeated effort has little effect, and which arrangements need to end or can be improved. The method associates charisma with a leader whose conviction and attention help others engage with a shared purpose, therefore more easily recruiting associates that catalyze their mutual pathfinding.

How: The leader treats actions as probes: small moves that are safe to fail and show how the situation responds. Between sessions the leader acts and brings back what happened; the coach helps them decode the response, amplify what works, adjust their pace, and repair misalignment. Probes are also how leaders generate what comes next, creating the path's several ways with each step.

Expansion

Why: A change counts when it holds without the coach.

What: The leader observes the change's effects, integrates what they learn, and applies it in more of their life and work. More energy is freed once they recognize and welcome aspects of themselves which their previous mindset required them to ignore or reject. This self acceptance correlates with better self-awareness and relationships with others. Their leadership style becomes more adaptive.

How: The coach looks for evidence outside the session, such as decisions that no longer wait for in-session deliberation. Inflation is also an event at this point, where the leader overestimates what has changed. The engagement is designed to extend briefly or to end.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

The twenty-seven elements

Each sub-phase of the arcs also contains three elements that direct the coach's attention within it.

Sub-phase and participation	Elements
Trust Foundation (the coach establishes)	**Respect:** honor time, agency, and confidentiality. **Clarity:** agree on principles, process, and roles. **Collaboration:** develop the work together.
Self-Knowledge (both listen)	**Patterns:** notice relational, emotional, and cognitive tendencies. **Resilience:** examine how fixed ideas and roles respond under stress. **Identity:** explore self-image, values, and disowned traits.
Situational Analysis (both listen)	**Triggers:** identify what brought urgency to coaching. **Outer Context:** examine stakeholders, markets, and organizational dynamics. **Inner Landscape:** explore feelings, energy, and personal goals.
Systemic Reflection (both interpret)	**Intentionality:** understand stakeholder goals and underlying expectations. **Roles and Archetypes:** examine how roles and recurring human patterns shape behavior and conflict. **Culture:** identify what the organization rewards, tolerates, or ignores.
Semantic Reframing (both reconsider meaning)	**Paradigm:** recognize the framework through which the situation is being understood. **Point of View:** explore other positions and what they reveal. **Transcendence:** reconsider a fixed view of oneself or the situation and find a response it had ruled out.
Aligned Visioning (both explore)	**Optionality:** consider what is possible from the wider view. **Alignment:** test it against values and willingness to act. **Assembling:** choose how the options fit together into a direction the leader can pursue.
North Star (both recognize)	**Constellation:** consider inner drives and outside forces together. **Synchronicity:** explore coincidences between inner experience and outside events that feel meaningful. **Purpose:** connect vocation and values with direction.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

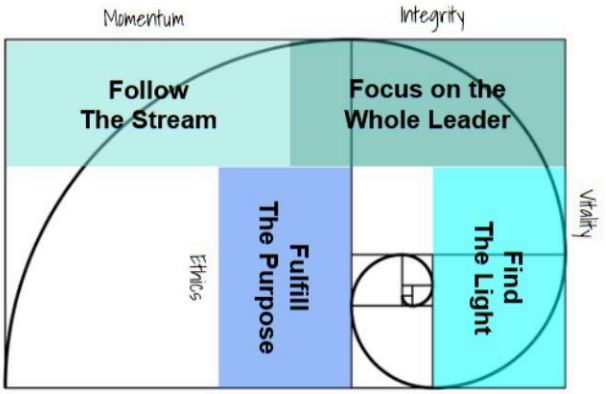
Sub-phase and participation	Elements
Pathfinding (the client acts between sessions)	**Devising:** arrange resources and conditions for action. **Momentum:** find a workable pace and timing. **Restoration:** reset direction and repair misalignment.
Expansion (the client broadens application scope)	**Observation:** notice resistance without being driven by it. **Integration:** reconcile aspects of self and purpose. **Presence:** notice one's reactions while staying attentive to the people and situation at hand.

The Fibonacci Flow within a session

While Claripath describes the developmental process across an engagement and provides the session's structure, the Fibonacci Flow guides the conversation within the core listening and meaning-making moments within the session.

Step-by-step models such as GROW, CLEAR, and FUEL prescribe a fixed sequence of conversational stages. The Fibonacci Flow instead tells the coach what is meaningful to the conversation so it achieves its goals, whatever order the client's thinking takes.

Senior leaders rarely think in a straight line. They return to earlier points, test ideas aloud, and connect concepts that seemed separate. This is how understanding builds best, within the meaning-making dynamics native to the client and their current mindset. As the Fibonacci name suggests, each turn builds on the one before.



Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Four movements guide the coach. Each is paired with a quality the coach keeps watching:

Follow the Stream (Momentum)
Whatever the client brings is initially assumed to belong. The coach follows where the client's thinking goes even if the logic initially seems unclear.

Focus on the Whole Leader (Integrity).
When unsure, the coach returns to the client's identity, values, and role in the wider system. This keeps coaching from turning into advice.

Find the Light (Vitality).
The coach looks for the insight that gives the client energy and direction, and stays with it until it can be acted on.

Fulfill the Purpose (Ethics).
Commitments are always anchored in the client's North Star, coming increasingly into sharper view.

Ethics runs through the whole flow, and the coach maintains safety from the first minute to the last.

The direction of the work changes at Find the Light. Someone says they are exhausted. The questions narrow: from the exhaustion, to the requests they always accept, to what they expect if they refuse, to the belief underneath: "if I say no, I'll be left out." Find the Light is where they name that belief as theirs. Then the work widens: one refusal, the conversations it requires, what happens over the following weeks, and finally how they arrange their time.

The four movements also describe four dimensions of purpose. When one is missing, the coach can see it:

Dimension of purpose	Movement	When it is missing
Service and Duty: purpose as the root	Fulfill the Purpose	The leader is self-focused, and achievement feels empty. They describe their goals in detail and go quiet when asked who else benefits.
Becoming and Expression: purpose as formation	Focus on the Whole Leader	The leader performs a role. Their language is correct but flat; their energy returns only when they talk about something outside the work.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Dimension of purpose	Movement	When it is missing
Transcendence and Presence: purpose as integration	Find the Light	The leader is reactive: decisions are driven by bodily alarm before they have reflected. Their body stays activated even at rest.
Balance and Flow: purpose as carrying forward	Follow the Stream	The leader is rigid and mistakes holding a position for integrity. They describe their direction in the same words they used months ago.

A leader whose purpose is present in only one or two of these dimensions has a partial purpose.

The four fields of knowledge

The method brings together complexity theory, depth psychology, adult development, and neuroscience (autonomic regulation, neurosemantics, and neuroplasticity). Each answers a different question: what the situation allows, what emotional patterns shape how the leader reads it, how that reading can change, and how the body affects their ability to respond.

The method assumes that what a person can read in a situation (what stands out to them), enables what they can reach (the actions open to them). Each core discipline sheds a light on this process, and contributes with possibilities to widen reading and reaching:

- **Naturalized complexity theory:** shows what is reachable from where the person stands.
- **Depth psychology:** describes how neurosemantic centers of historically and epigenetically embodied meaning (complexes) condition what stands out.
- **Adult development:** schematize how mindset porosity widens what is reachable, because the leader can read signals contradicting their own (then more lightly held) assumptions.
- **Neuroscience:** threat narrows what is readable, and regulation reopens it, allowing for neuroplasticity and broader meaning-making, which gets embedded as neurosemantics.

Timing connects the readability and reachability loop in practice. When an established interpretation begins to loosen, a leader may become able to consider something that felt impossible

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

before. Complexity theory calls the point where a system's stable patterns themselves change a bifurcation. The coach needs to recognize that moment without forcing it. The method uses *kairos*, the right moment, alongside *chronos*, clock time, for this attention to readiness. Kairos is shared timing: a move made in phase with the rhythms around it reaches further. The leader must still be able to take part safely; distress that prevents this requires the coach to pause and consider appropriate support, within the boundaries Trust Foundation sets.

Naturalized Complexity theory: the leader's possibilities

The method reads a leader's situation through complexity theory: the leader and the organization are parts of one system, in which each part's behavior changes the conditions for the others. The method understands any triggering human exchange as a complex situation, in which interactions change what is possible, and the effects of an action may only make sense afterward.

When constraints have broken down and a situation is chaotic, stabilization comes first. Acute personal distress is a separate matter: the coach recognizes distress that requires clinical care on its own terms, and refers accordingly.

Bonnitta Roy's body of work shifts the question from what can be done now to what is possible from here. A situation holds potentials: what is available in it but not yet formed. Potentials differ from possibilities, which are what plans and data predict. They become reachable as relationships and constraints change, and a constraint that cannot be changed can still hold potential, the way gravity holds everything down and is also what flight works with.

Roy describes four ways in which things move together. Through direct connection, a change in one passes to the other along the link. Through shared timing, they synchronize, lock into phase, or move in counterpoint, and they can share a rhythm with no connection at all. Through a shared field, they respond together to the same surrounding conditions without affecting each other. Through shared norms, rules, rituals, symbols, and values coordinate what each does. Most analysis treats every link as a direct connection. A pattern can be held by any of the four, and an intervention that works on one leaves the others in place, which is why a redesigned process can leave an old dynamic intact.

Roy also shows how adaptations spread. One person's defensive checking becomes part of another person's environment, so adaptations reinforce each other across a team or an organization.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Depth of field follows from this. Systems are ecologically interrelated, so any local analysis is a matter of focus: coach and leader choose where to look, and what they look at keeps its relations to everything around it. The same holds when they zoom in, to a single reaction or belief. An issue that looks simple at the level of a recurring task may show a complex pattern once they widen the focus to the relationships and assumptions involved.

Three concepts are central:

- Attracting schema: a pattern a system keeps returning to. A leadership team redesigns a process and finds the old dynamic back, because the interactions sustaining it are still in place. The range of conditions from which a system drifts back to an attractor is its basin. The method uses basin for the attractor a person keeps returning to, together with the range of states that pull them back to it, described under adult development below.
- Emergence: a new pattern arising from interactions within a system. The leader can influence conditions and take part in the interactions without being able to specify the outcome in advance. Minding the conditions for emergence is key.
- Systemic affordance: the actions a situation offers a particular person, given their position, relationships, and capacities. As constraints and relationships change, different actions become possible.

These concepts explain why a pattern persists and where there may be room to change it. They also explain the method's attention to timing: a response that had little effect under one set of conditions may work when those conditions shift.

Depth psychology: recurring patterns

The method teaches Jungian depth psychology largely through Edward Edinger's and Murray Stein's syntheses. Five ideas carry the practical work: the complex, the persona, the shadow, archetypes, and the relationship between the ego and the Self.

A complex is a cluster of personal associations around an archetypal core: individual experiences, assumptions, and bodily states (schemas) connected to a recurring human theme. It carries meaning and emotional charge. When activated, it shapes what a person notices, feels, and does before they have had time to reflect, and often after.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

The method reads a complex as an attracting scheme in the leader's inner life, and calls it a psychosomatic attractor because it involves an interpretation, an emotion, and a bodily response together. For example: the thought "they'll think I'm incompetent," a sense of dread, a tight chest, and hours spent over-preparing.

A trigger is a reaction that keeps firing without ever being satisfied. Over-preparing never relieves the dread, so it repeats. Roy describes these as loops that never reach satisfaction, and they are the mechanism of a psychosomatic attractor and of the derailers described below. The body registers the reaction first, and the explanation follows. The coach's question is: what would actually settle this?

The persona is the professional face a person presents. The method watches how aware the leader is that it is crafted, which is one sign of porosity, described under adult development below.

The shadow is energy a person has banned or repressed, and so does not use. In leaders it shows as derailers: behaviors that appear under stress and contradict how the leader usually presents, such as a collaborative leader turning controlling before a deadline. Psychometrics such as the Hogan Development Survey measure these tendencies. Energy diverted into these contradictions is unavailable for the leader's purpose, and because it is not integrated, what the leader says they value and what they do under pressure drift apart. Coaching brings these patterns into view so the leader can recognize them and use the energy they hold.

Archetypes are recurring human patterns, such as the martyr or the rebel, that roles and situations pull people into. The coach uses them as directions of curiosity, asking which pattern a situation is drawing the leader into. Leaders are never typed by archetype.

A mind has many complexes. How a person's energy, and so their attention, is distributed across them forms a larger pattern they keep returning to. A complex is a local attractor; this larger pattern is the global one, which the adult-development part of this section calls the person's basin.

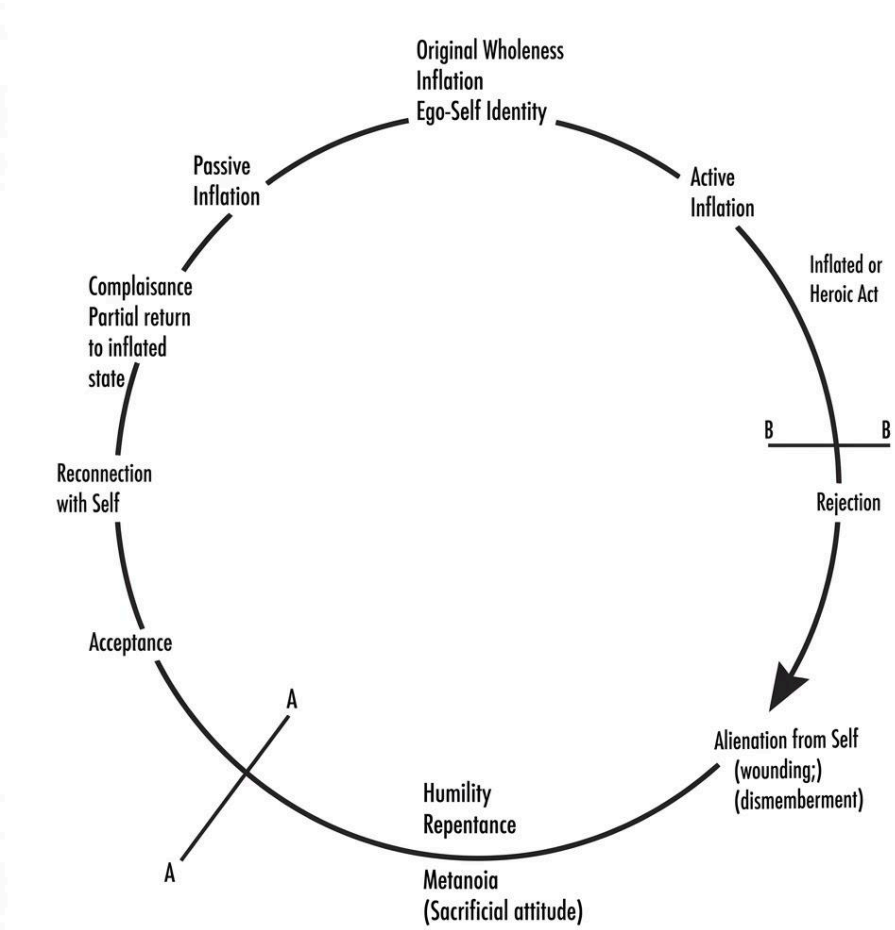
The method treats the mind as enacted in the body, through the nervous system. Change is always accepted or refused there, which is why understanding alone rarely changes a reaction, and why the effective coach works with the body as well as with meaning. When someone's chest tightens as a colleague questions their numbers, the tightness, the fear of being exposed, and the urge to over-explain are one event showing in three places. Insight that does not reach the tightness leaves the pattern in place.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

Energy here means the leader's felt vitality, motivation, and available effort: what draws their attention, what drains them, and what they feel able to act on. Jung's word for it, drawing from Freud but extending it to mean well beyond the sexual aspect, is libido.

Meaning shapes that experience. A leader may understand an alternative intellectually and still feel and react through the old pattern. Coaching examines the interpretation, its emotional weight, and the bodily response together, and asks what changes in the leader's experience and actions as they begin to understand the situation differently.

Edward Edinger's cycle of inflation and alienation gives the method its account of change. A person may treat their own understanding as if it were reality itself. Edinger calls this inflation: the ego, the everyday sense of "I", identifies with the Self, the psyche as a whole, and the person acts as if their judgment were beyond question, as when a founder treats any challenge to the strategy as disloyalty.



Edinger's Visual Representation of the Psychic Lifecycle

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

When experience challenges that understanding, the person feels alienated: unsure of the account they relied on, with no new one to replace it, and at its deepest, cut off from what made their work feel worth the effort. This cycle runs continuously throughout a person's life. At any point in an engagement, the coach needs to know where in it the client is.

The method connects alienation with semantic drift. The familiar pattern has weakened, which opens room for another understanding, and the experience is uncomfortable. Jung's transcendent function describes how a new position can form out of the tension between two conflicting ones, a position neither side contained. This is why the coach gives that tension time and leaves its resolution to the client.

Individuation is the wider aim: the person becomes better able to recognize parts of themselves they had overlooked or rejected, and to see how those parts affect their choices. We connect this with a wider relationship with the world, following Jung's discussion of individuation and relationship.

The method also works with these dynamics in teams and organizations. The Claristrat Advanced Method™ covers that work.

Adult development: meaning-making capacity

Robert Kegan's work contributes the subject-object distinction. In plain terms, development is the movement from being inside a reaction, including one's own identity, to being able to look at it.

The method keeps this distinction and adjusts what it watches, substituting the adult development ladder between levels three (socialized mind) and four (self-authoring mind) to instead attend to two dimensions:

Orientation: where attention goes first. Some people check their own reaction first; others check the world first. Jung called this introversion and extraversion, and described it as the direction in which a person's energy, or libido, flows. It is a lasting disposition, independent of developmental stage, and narrower than sociability.

Porosity: how open a person's identity is to being tested. How attached is the stability of their identity to their current way of seeing, and what they have built based on it so far? A useful question is: *what would count, for you, as this mindset being wrong?* Porosity also shows in a person's relationship to their own persona, or their social identity: the more aware they are that it is crafted,

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

and available for them as a generative variable from which to shape coherence, the more porous they usually are.

Each person has a usual position on these two dimensions, which they return to. We call it a basin: in naturalized complexity terms, the attracting schema a person keeps returning to, together with the range of states that pull them back to it. It reflects how energy and attention are distributed across the person's complexes. Most people have moments of greater openness, and the moments pass. When pressure eases, people return to their basin; we call this return a fallback.

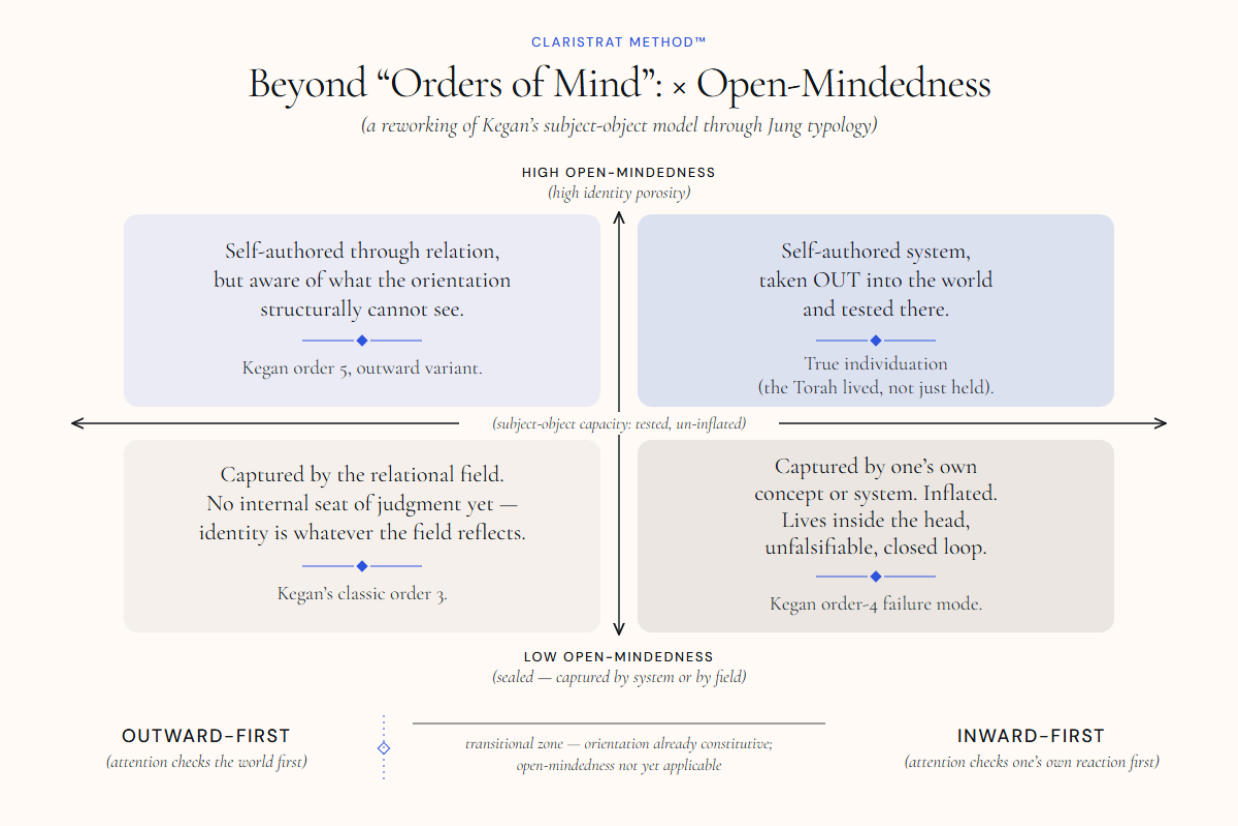


Figure: Orientation and porosity. A person's basin is a position in this space. Development is vertical movement; a shift sideways under threat is adaptation. The descriptions are examples of where a person may sit, and leaders are never typed by quadrant.

Development is a vertical change of basin: a move in which porosity changes. It is upward when porosity rises and downward when it falls. A person who exchanges one set of convictions for another, and is as closed about the new ones as the old, has changed what they believe and stayed in the same basin. Upward development also moves toward goodness, or ecological coherence: a change

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

that widens more than the person's own options. Goodness works as the North Star sub-phase does: it gives choices an intentional direction and is never truly grasped. Goodness can only be applied at a human scale through ethics: whether a change holds up with the people and environment it affects. Ethics here is a civilizational and ecological requirement: a leader's development is generated, not extracted from others.

	Outward-first	Inward-first
Higher porosity	**Relational judgment that knows its own blind spots:** reads the group well and can say where that reading may be wrong.	**A self-built system lived where it can fail:** firm criteria, regularly put to the test.
Lower porosity	**Captured by the group:** identity is whatever the surrounding field reflects back.	**An untested self-built system:** coherent and articulate, and closed to evidence against it.

Pressure changes how a person shows. Under threat, attention turns outward: a leader who usually acts from their own judgment may start checking for the group's approval. The method reads this as adaptation, and adaptation costs energy, taken from curiosity and strategic thinking. The coach tells a lasting disposition from an adaptation over several sessions, comparing what happened with how the person digested it.

The coach assesses porosity over several sessions, from three observations. The first is the answer to the porosity question: whether the leader can name concrete evidence that would show their view to be wrong. The second is the leader's relationship to their persona: whether they speak of it as something they built or as who they are. The third is what happens when the test arrives: whether the leader revises or defends. Psychometrics such as Hogan's add a second view.

Porosity differs from two familiar traits. Openness to experience is an appetite for new ideas and experiences; a person can collect frameworks eagerly and test none of them against their own identity. Intellectual humility is the recognition that one's beliefs may be wrong. Porosity concerns identity: putting who one is, and what one has built on it, at risk. It is felt in the body as well as thought.

The porosity question works alongside Kegan and Lahey's immunity-to-change map. The map moves from an improvement goal, to what the leader does instead, to the hidden commitments behind it,

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

to the big assumption that holds them in place. Asking “what would count, for you, as this assumption being wrong?” turns the big assumption into something the leader can test. If they can name evidence, they can design a safe test of it, which becomes a probe in Pathfinding. If they cannot, the assumption is held as part of who they are, and support comes before any challenge.

Self-authorship is necessary but not a rank. It means having one’s own criteria for weighing what others expect, and it develops in outward-oriented people as fully as in inward-oriented ones. A person who asks “does this fit what I care about?” before agreeing is self-authoring.

Three conditions drawn from Kegan's work guide this part of the method, in this order:

Support (confirmation): feeling understood and accepted in one's present experience.
Challenge (contradiction): meeting the limits of one's current thinking.
Stability (continuity): enough stability to stay oriented while that thinking changes.

Support comes first because it frees the energy a challenge needs; a challenge met without it is defended against. The method considers these conditions in the coaching relationship, the learning cohort, and the organization around the leader.

Kegan describes orders of mind (socialized, self-authoring, self-transforming) and estimates how many adults are at each. The method reads an order as the name an instrument gives to a basin. The instrument tests a person within one conversation, so it can score an adaptation as an order: an inward-first person under threat checks outward and scores as socialized. Upward development is measured by porosity. The method describes the self-transforming person as one whose identity stays open to testing and whose curiosity about the world stays open under pressure, so that their adaptations increase their agency and well-being and benefit the people and environment around them.

Neuroscience: embodied experiences

Adult brains change with learning and experience; studies of adults learning new skills have observed changes in brain structure, as in Draganski and colleagues' study of juggling practice. Coaching is one such experience. When a leader repeatedly practices a different response in real situations, the change becomes part of how their brain and body respond as well as how they think.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

The method also draws on Stephen Porges's polyvagal theory and Allan Schore's account of emotional regulation through attuned relationships. Polyvagal theory's physiological and evolutionary premises are debated, but its functional usefulness holds strong; both Porges's account and Grossman's critique bear on it. Schore's work concerns psychotherapy and development; The method applies it to executive coaching.

In practice, regulation means being able to feel emotion and bodily arousal while staying engaged in the conversation. The coach attends to pace, emotional intensity, and the client's ability to reflect, and notices their own reactions. When the leader struggles to stay engaged, the coach slows the conversation and asks what would help them continue safely. When a complex is strongly activated, the coach works somatically until the client's nervous system steadies: slowing the pace, attending to breath and posture. If more is needed, the client is referred to therapy while coaching continues, or coaching pauses until the crisis subsides.

The client's regulation is also where the method draws the line between coaching and therapy. The coach goes into the past when doing so shows the pattern that is active now, and only as far as the client stays regulated. The coach reads regulation in four signals: breath, voice, posture, and coherence of speech.

The method holds that change lasts when a leader repeatedly notices a reaction, considers another response, and practices it with the support of a trusted relationship. Earlier experience shapes what the leader brings to that process. The method connects this with Kegan's subject-object shift and Jungian individuation.

How the method differs from traditional reflective coaching

Coaching at mastery level in the ICF tradition is often practised as reflective inquiry. The coach mirrors the client's thinking back, asks open questions, and helps the client reach clear awareness and a plan they own.

Reflective inquiry stays and works through the client's current level of embodied thinking: what they notice, believe, want, and choose. The method instead works with the whole system the person enacts: thinking, body, energy, relationships, and the patterns that link them. Reflective inquiry

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

changes the choices; the method shifts what produces them. In the method's terms, reflective inquiry supports a sideways move within a basin, and the method aims at a change of basin.

Four practices follow from this:

Who the client is being always shows in what they do. Asked who they are being, a client may describe how they pay attention on a morning walk. The method takes that as the answer, because a person is enacted in how they act and attend, and the coach follows it into the body or into the pattern it belongs to.

The coach asks about the body from inside. The coach observes posture, voice, and energy, then asks what the client notices in their body, and listens for the client's own words. The body often registers a shift before the client can explain it.

The coach looks for the level the solution needs. When a client asks whether a recent decision was right, the coach may first return to the goal of the engagement, so the client can see the pattern the decision belongs to. The client then answers the question at that level.

The coach may offer a view. The coach states it as their own, builds it on what the client has just said, and leaves the client free to disagree. How readily the client corrects the coach is part of what the coach watches.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

How the method is taught and applied

The Institute uses the method in coach training and in leadership development inside organizations, and introduces it to prospective participants in a live briefing.

Learning by becoming

Before participants learn to guide clients through the method, they go through it themselves. They bring real developmental questions into the cohort and experience what it takes to examine their own assumptions and responses.

The three phases organize the program, an individual engagement, and the work within a session. Participants practice connecting awareness, meaning, and action at each scale. Development continues between sessions, where clients test their choices and see the response. With practice, they can increasingly use the process on their own.

The cohort is part of the learning. Faculty model the inquiry, presence, and feedback they teach. They support participants while challenging them to examine what they might prefer to leave unquestioned. Participants also learn from each other.

Admission reflects this design. The Institute trains senior leaders to become executive coaches, and each participant's experience contributes to the group's learning. Executive experience becomes a foundation for coaching practice, together with the ability to recognize when one's own experience is influencing the conversation.

Delivery draws on Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Claristrat is ICF-accredited. The Professional Certificate (ICF ACC Pathway), which teaches the Claristrat Core Method™, is about 110 hours. The Advanced Certificate (ICF PCC Pathway), which teaches the Claristrat Advanced Method™ and whose first 12 weeks are the Professional curriculum, is about 175 hours.

Participants include senior executives moving into coaching as a second career, executives developing coaching capability for their own teams, and operators building a coaching or advisory practice from their executive experience. They learn to use Claripath across an engagement and the Fibonacci Flow within conversations, and to work with organizational context and assessment material in senior leadership coaching.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.

The method in organizations

In organizations, the method is applied in two ways: leaders work with Claristrat coaches, and leaders learn the method themselves. Those who learn it gain what coaching clients gain and use it in their own conversations, so they become better executives and people managers whether or not they go on to coach. Individual development is considered together with the conditions in which the leader works. A change that makes sense in a coaching session must also be tested against organizational relationships, expectations, and constraints. Engagements inside organizations include the sponsor in contracting, as described under Trust Foundation.

Organizations often hire coaches trained in different approaches. That brings variety but makes a shared account of the work harder to establish. Claristrat's coaching bench brings together practitioners with senior executive experience, trained in the same method, who share a framework and ethical commitments across geographies, languages, and leadership levels.

Internal programs develop this capability among an organization's own leaders and mentors, who apply the method within their existing culture, in the development conversations already taking place. As those conversations change, they can also change expectations and relationships across the organization.

Organizations can work with the Institute through one-to-one engagements for senior leaders, an alumni coaching bench with coaches matched and supervised under the method, or internal programs that develop coaching capability among their own people. Supervision under the method means that a senior Claristrat practitioner reviews each bench coach's engagements with them at regular intervals, against the method and the ICF Code of Ethics.

A living method

The Claristrat Method™ is a living project. Coach training and organizational work are its current applications, and the Institute is exploring others, including applied research and the further development of the method's theory.

Fabiana Pereira Hotz and Claristrat Institute @ 2026. All rights reserved.