

CONVERSATIONS...

IN SEARCH OF THE INNER SELF

ICF Bengaluru
Charter Chapter

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Reflect, Use Tools and Go Deep



From the Editorial Desk

Reflect, Use Tools and Go Deep

As has now become a norm for us, we invited our coaches to write articles for us on any topic under the sun as long as it is related to coaching. Then we unearthed the underlying theme. *Reflect, Use Tools, and Go Deep.*

When one reflects, one gets insights. It is a bit like going deep into a somewhat unknown forest with unknown perils, in the hope of unearthing a treasure in its heart. If one has a map or a guide, this search becomes less perilous. I often do the opposite of reflect which is deflect, particularly with feedback and insights about my not- so productive habits and action. Deflection is one such possible action of course.

We next come to the question: do we need tools? I guess one can live without them like mankind did, for several centuries. On the other hand, progress is difficult without them. Multisource feedback is something which helps clients look at themselves more objectively. Profiling tools and self-assessment inventories often provide one such feedback, which is seen as being well researched and unbiased. If the implementation occurs in a confidential manner, it provides the psychological safety that allows the client to engage with the most important aspect of being coached. This is going deep and discovering.

Going into the deep end is scary. In swimming classes, children are thrown into the deep end, and they learn very fast. Adults are more difficult to throw, and their inhibitions and fears make them reluctant to jump in of their own volition. Hence, we need different techniques here.

In our curated articles, we get a peek into all the three aspects. These authors are a mix of new and past contributors. They are affiliated with different chapters, and in this edition, we have an international author lending her thoughts in what is a first for our magazine. I would like to thank them all for their generosity in sparing time and penning these insightful articles. We thank Vidhi Vala, for helping us visualize the magazine better and in putting it together.

With best wishes,

Gayatri Krishnamurthy
Editor, *Conversations...In search of the Self*

Amita Bharath
Co-editor.



Gayatri Krishnamurthy (ICF-PCC)

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She writes regularly on HR issues for SMEs in Moneycontrol.com and general interest articles for TimesOnline. She heads the Research and Publications Division for the ICF Bangalore Charter Chapter, and co-edits the Chapter's digital magazine, Conversations...In search of the Inner Self.

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From The President's Desk

Dear Friends,

We are living in a fractured world; That said, it's amazing that Coaching can boost confidence, improve work performance and build effective communication skills. The purpose of coaching is to unlock people's potential to maximise their own performance..Coaching is unique because coaches collaborate with clients who are honest enough to trust their coaches fully.This enables clients to reveal and discover themselves.

Welcome to our new dynamic members who have joined the Bengaluru Charter Chapter in the recent months. I am pleased to also inform you that the ICF Global Foundation has approved two of our social impact projects under the prestigious ICF IGNITE Programme.

Congratulations once again to our wonderful Gayatri and her Team in producing our eighth edition with nine interesting articles, which includes one by an international author. Entitled Courage in Coaching, it has been written by ICF Global Board Member Tonya Echols of the USA.

The other offerings are as below:

The Tao & Coaching by Venkat. S;

What Holds us Back by Sreenivas Nagappa;

Take Control of your thoughts to unleash the power of Active Thinking

by Pankaj Dixit;

The Physics of Group Coaching Chemistry by Raka Krishnan;

Coach using Local language for greater Client Ease and Presence by Sunil

Sathyendra;

Can AI replace Human Coaches? by Vinit Kumar Singh;

Practicing Post Session Reflection to Polish your Coaching Practice by Sunil

Kumar Vaya.

Please read and share these interesting articles. We look forward to your feedback as we are all on a journey of Lifelong Learning! With co-operation on a global scale, we have landed on the south pole of the Moon successfully and captivated the global imagination with a successful G20 as well! Working as one, we can do yeoman work in the space of coaching.

With warm regards,



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Practicing post session reflection to polish your coaching practice

By Sunil Kumar Vaya

Every coaching conversation is different from the previous one – the reason is that every experience brings a diversity of topics, and the client as a human being.

However, if you start reflecting and journaling your experience from each conversation, you can create a learner's guidebook for yourself.

I learned this from several senior coaches during our Chai pe Charcha weekly huddle. I feel a deep gratitude to all accomplished coaches who threw light on this habit that I was able to add to my practice. I have adopted this practice of journaling reflections from my coaching conversations.

Practicing reflection after each coaching session is a powerful tool that allows me as

Sunil Kumar Vaya urges coaches to develop post-session reflection as a tool to create a handbook of insights to improve skills.

coach to learn and grow from my experiences. It's like shining a light on the hidden gems of wisdom that lie within each session. By taking the time to reflect, you can gain valuable insights, identify areas for improvement, and enhance your coaching skills.

Reflection provides an opportunity to review and evaluate the coaching session in a thoughtful and introspective manner. It allows me to examine my coaching techniques, communication style, and the impact I had on my clients. By asking myself some discerning questions, such as "What went well in this

session?" or "What could I have done differently?", I uncover valuable insights and refine my approach over a period. This has helped me to polish my approach and create a signature presence, session by session, after each conversation.

I pen down my experience after each coaching conversation on various parameters. For me these parameters are in two categories.

First, how did I do the qualitative part during my coaching conversation? For this, I reflect on my a) Presence during the session b) Being non-judgemental c) Listening abilities d) Creating trust and, e) Exploration with client.

Second, I reflect on my experience of ICF coaching competencies (CC) during the conversation, especially with respect to CC3 (4 subparts) and CC8 (9 subparts). I mark my performance on all 13 competencies I went through in my conversation with the client.

One of the benefits of reflection is that it helps you identify patterns and trends in your coaching practice. You start to notice recurring themes, challenges, or areas where you excel. This self-awareness enables you to leverage your strengths and proactively address areas that may need improvement. It's a continuous cycle of growth and development.

Reflection also helps you deepen your understanding of your clients and their unique needs. By revisiting each coaching session, you can assess the progress made, the challenges faced, and the goals achieved. This information informs your future sessions, allowing you to tailor your coaching approach to better support your clients' growth and development.

In addition, reflection enhances your ability to connect with your clients on a deeper level. By being present in the coaching session and fully engaged with your clients, you can identify moments of insight, breakthroughs, or areas of resistance. These observations become invaluable feedback that guides your coaching interventions and facilitates meaningful change.

As a coach, it's important to create a reflective practice that works for you. This could involve journaling, engaging in conversations with peers or mentors, or simply taking quiet moments to ponder and internalize the coaching experience. Whatever method you choose, the key is to create a space for introspection and exploration.

Coaching is a dynamic and evolving process. Each coaching session offers an opportunity for growth, both for your clients and for yourself as a coach. By practicing reflection, you can extract the lessons, refine your skills, and continuously improve your coaching effectiveness.

Reflective practice post each session, and penning down the musings has helped me in creating self-awareness. When I know there are certain topics I am struggling with, then I know whom to reach out to, and how to get mentoring to address those challenges.

Being a coach is a journey forever and you are never so accomplished where you can't learn and polish further. So if you haven't started yet, you may want to make coaching reflection a ritual for you to refine your practice.

All the best, coaches.



Sunil Kumar Vaya.(ICF-PCC)

Sunil is a CXO coach, a behaviour and Growth architect : Building leadership consciousness, and facilitating personal & Professional Growth. He helps clients rediscover themselves at their core and gain clarity, confidence and focus on what's most important to them. He partners with them to find their purpose, passion, and growth trajectory.

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In his professional life, he has combined deeply informed coaching with a humble corporate journey of 15 million minutes spent on a growth path. He has experienced Success, Joy, struggle & Challenges in Leadership with MNCs.

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The Tao And Coaching

By Venkat S.

Little is known about the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, a guiding figure in Taoism. He is said to have been a record keeper in the court of the central Chinese Zhou Dynasty in the 6th century B.C., and an older contemporary of Confucius. Taoism is a spiritual practice.

One of the stories states that Lao Tzu was distressed with the moral decay of life in Chengzhou and noted the kingdom's decline. So, at the age of 80, he left and rode a water buffalo to the western border of the Chinese empire to live as a hermit in the unsettled frontier. Although he was dressed as a farmer, he was recognized by a sentry at the western gate of the city. The sentry asked the old master to record his wisdom for the good of the country before he was permitted to pass. The text Lao Tzu wrote is what we know today as the *Tao-Te-Ching (The Book of the Way)*.

Venkat S reveals the parallels between the verses of the *Tao-Te-Ching* by ancient Chinese thinker Lao Tzu and understanding the essence of being a good coach.

In some versions of the story, the sentry was so touched by the work that he became a disciple and left with Lao Tzu, never to be seen again.

The *Tao-Te-Ching* contains just 81 verses. You can read the book in one sitting, but you can study it for a lifetime.

The central concept of the *Tao-Te-Ching* is *Wu wei*, literally "non-action" or "not acting". *Wu wei* can also mean "not doing anything," "not forcing," "not acting," "creating nothingness," "acting spontaneously," and "flowing with the moment".

Coaching, in the form we know now, came in later. Thomas Leonard, an American financial planner, is generally acknowledged as the first person to develop coaching as a profession in the 1980s and the concept and history of life coaching today really starts with him. At the time he called it “life-planning”.

If we pause and reflect on the ICF’s Coaching Competencies, and our coach training, we can clearly see how the concept of *Wu-wei* relates so closely with the ‘being’ of a coach.

Here are some verses from the *Tao-Te-Ching* and my interpretation of how it relates to coaching. The use of the masculine or feminine genders for the Coach and Client are intended to include all genders.

From Verse 5

*The Tao doesn't take sides;
It gives birth to both good and evil.
The Master doesn't take sides;
She welcomes both saints and sinners.*

This verse resonates with a good coach’s trait of being non-judgemental about the client, the client’s situation or stature, which is important for cultivating trust and safety.

Once a coach starts forming an opinion, it interferes with his presence. When presence is compromised, the coach is no longer listening.

As Marcia Reynolds says in her book, *Coach the Person, Not the Problem*, ‘Mastery in coaching is about deepening your presence, not perfecting your skills.’

From Verse 9

*Fill your bowl to the brim
and it will spill.
Keep sharpening your knife
and it will blunt.
Chase after money and security
and your heart will never unclench.
Care about people’s approval*

and you will be their prisoner.

*Do your work, then step back.
The only path to serenity.*

Some coaches are anxious to get an outcome for their clients and view coaching as a performance or a way of taking the client to action. ‘Performance’ as a coach gets in the way of our presence.

As my mentor advised me, “Don’t ‘do’ coaching. Be a Coach.” Let go of the need to create value. Simply trust that value is inherent in the process.

Show up and respond to what shows up.

From Verse 10

*Can you coax your mind from its wandering
and keep to the original oneness?*

*Can you cleanse your inner vision
until you see nothing but the light?*

*Can you deal with the most vital matters
by letting events take their course?*

This again can be related to a coach’s presence where she listens intently to what the client is saying. The coach’s own thoughts, her views take a back seat, when she is listening to the client. The client’s insights provide the light.

She makes no effort to lead the conversation and lets the client decide its course. The coach is comfortable working in a space of not knowing.

From Verse 11

*We shape clay into a pot,
but it is the emptiness inside
that holds whatever we want.*

So also, in coaching, it is the space that the coach holds for the clients that creates insights for them. I have noticed that when I allow

periods of silence, the client begins to feel safe, trusts me, feels listened to, and becomes vulnerable. This is where the client best expresses himself.

From Verse 15

*Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?*

When the mind is free of any thought or judgement, it is still and acts like a mirror. Only then can we know things as they are. The question is- how do we make our mind free of thought? The answer is – ‘Let it.’

‘Letting it happen’ is not the same as ‘making it happen.’ It is not ‘trying hard.’

I like the analogy that I learnt from Michael Neill (Transformative coach and Author) : If I gave you a pot of muddy water and asked you to make the water clear, how would you do it?

You simply ‘let’ the mud settle down because the nature of water is to be clear. Our minds are something like a pot of muddy water. Thoughts come in and go out continuously. If only we let the thoughts settle down, our innate intelligence comes forth and we get insights. Because the nature of the mind, like water, is being clear.

Coaches can visualise using the metaphor of the pot with muddy water before a session or in between sessions, to let go.

From Verse 17

*When the Master governs, the people
are hardly aware that he exists*

*The Master doesn't talk, he acts.
When his work is done,
The people say, "Amazing:
We did it, all by ourselves!"*

In a coaching conversation, the coach is almost invisible. It is all about the client.

She doesn't talk other than to prod the client into thinking by asking questions. Conventional questions elicit information. Curious questions evoke exploration and when exploration happens, insights come.

When clients get their insights, they own it, because it is their insight. They did it, all by themselves.

From Verse 24

*He who stands on tiptoe
doesn't stand firm
He who rushes ahead
doesn't go far
He who tries to shine
Dims his own light*

A Coach must be centred and this means having his feet firmly on the ground to take in reality.

In the coaching conversation, he needs to slow down and listen to the client and not rush to check off the markers just to gloat over having covered all of them. If he persists in this, he will surely not get far with the client.

Coaching is all about the client and a Coach who tries to assert his own brilliance is sure to fail. Above all, a coach needs to be authentic and vulnerable. He is human, after all.

From Verse 27

*A good traveller has no fixed plans
and is not intent upon arriving
A good artist lets his intuition
Lead him wherever he wants
A good scientist has freed himself of
concepts
And keeps his mind open to what is*

The coach doesn't have an agenda of her own. It is always the client's agenda. Her aim is not to take the client to an outcome. A good coach is open to exploration and to possibilities. As the

American poet T.S. Eliot wrote,

**“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”**

To me, this best exemplifies what coaching is, both from the client and the coach's standpoint.

Though the coach is aware of the coaching competencies, she is not fixated on them. She keeps an open mind to respond to what shows up.

Acknowledgement

The verses of the *Tao-Te-Ching* are from the English translation by Stephen Mitchell, '*Tao Te Ching - A new English Version.*'



Venkateswaran Subramanian (ICF-PCC)

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Apart from being a credentialed coach from the ICF, he is also a certified practitioner of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and trained in New Code NLP.

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Take Control of your thoughts to unleash the power of Active Thinking

By Pankaj Dixit

Have you ever found yourself lost in a stream of thoughts, just passively observing as your mind drifts from one idea to another? It's a common experience for many of us. Most of the time, we find ourselves in passive or autopilot mode when it comes to our thinking. Our thoughts seem to be dictated by external stimuli, the situations we encounter, or simply the memories that resurface. But what if we could break free from this cycle and actively shape our thinking?

The truth is active thinking is a skill that can be developed with practice. By actively engaging with our thoughts and consciously choosing

what is truly important to us, we can reduce the time spent in passive thinking mode. It's a powerful shift that has the potential to transform our lives.

Imagine a scenario where you encounter a challenging situation. In the passive thinking mode, your mind might automatically generate negative thoughts, focusing on the obstacles and limitations. However, if you actively intervene and ask yourself, "What and how would I like to think about this given a choice?" you open the door to a world of possibilities. By consciously choosing your thoughts, you can reframe the situation, consider alternative perspectives, and find solutions that you might have otherwise overlooked.

Our thinking has the power to change everything in our lives. It influences our emotions, behaviours, and ultimately, our

Create an extraordinary life by harnessing the skill of active thinking writes Pankaj Dixit

outcomes. When we passively allow our thoughts to wander, we relinquish control over our mental landscape. On the other hand, active thinking empowers us to take charge and steer our thoughts in a direction that serves us best.

Developing the skill of active thinking does not have to be a daunting task. It requires discipline and a willingness to be present in the moment. You can start with small steps by incorporating certain practices into your daily life.

Mindfulness: Cultivate awareness of your thoughts and the present moment. Mindfulness helps you recognise when you slip into passive thinking mode and enables you to consciously shift to active thinking.

Self-reflection: Take regular moments of introspection to examine your thoughts and their impact on your life. Ask yourself if your thinking aligns with your values, goals, and aspirations.

Thought redirection: Whenever you catch yourself in passive thinking, pause and redirect your thoughts towards more productive and positive avenues. Challenge negative beliefs and replace them with constructive alternatives.

Thought journaling: Maintain a journal to capture your thoughts and explore them further. Write down your reflections, questions, and insights to deepen your understanding and create a space for active thinking.

Intention setting: Before entering any situation or engaging in a conversation, set an intention for how you want to think and respond. This conscious act enables you to approach situations with purpose and clarity.

By implementing these practices you gradually hone and develop the skill of active thinking. Over time, it becomes a natural part of your

cognitive process, and you'll find yourself more adept at actively shaping your thoughts.

It's important to remember that active thinking does not mean suppressing or negating certain thoughts and emotions. Instead, it's about acknowledging and embracing them while consciously choosing how we respond to them. It's a balance between acceptance and intentional action.

As you embark on this journey of active thinking, you'll begin to notice a profound transformation in your life. You'll become more resilient, adaptable, and creative in solving problems. You'll experience a greater sense of control, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

So, why not seize the opportunity to take control of your thinking? Start today by incorporating active thinking practices into your life. Embrace the power to shape your thoughts, and watch as your life unfolds in extraordinary ways.

Here are some books, articles, and TED Talks that support and explore the idea of active thinking.

Books

Thinking, Fast and Slow (2012) by Daniel Kahneman: Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman delves into the two systems that drive the way we think: the fast, intuitive, and emotional system, and the slower, more deliberate and logical system. Understanding these systems can help us become more aware of our thought processes and make better decisions.

The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment (2001) by Eckhart Tolle: This book explores the concept of living in the present moment and freeing ourselves from the dominance of past memories and future anxieties. By being fully present, we can actively shape our thoughts and find inner peace.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (2017) by Carol S. Dweck: This book introduces the concept of fixed and growth mindsets. It explains how our beliefs about our abilities can profoundly impact our achievements and shows how adopting a growth mindset can lead to a more proactive and fulfilling life.

Articles

<https://jamesclear.com/positive-thinking> by James Clear: This article discusses the power of positive thinking, how it can lead to better performance, and how to cultivate a positive mindset.

<https://talkshop.ph/blog/the-art-of-thinking-slow/> Learn about thinking slow

TED Talks/Videos

The Art of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli: In this talk, Rolf Dobelli shares cognitive biases that affect our thinking and decision-making, and how being aware of these biases can help us think more clearly and actively.

The Power of Vulnerability by Brené Brown: This talk emphasizes the importance of embracing vulnerability and being authentic to shape our thinking and live more fulfilling lives.

How to make stress your friend by Kelly McGonigal :She urges us to see stress as a positive, and introduces us to an unsung mechanism for stress reduction: reaching out to others.



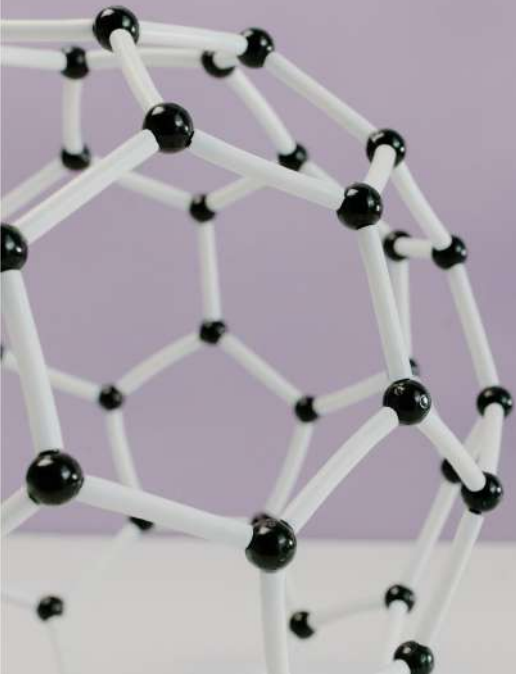
Pankaj Dixit (ICF-PCC)

Pankaj has been coaching leaders and managers through career advancement and career transition for over 10 years. He has worked for over 25 years as a leader and business unit head in Fortune 50 companies in the banking and IT industry. He is widely traveled and exposed to multi-national, multi-cultural environments.

Pankaj helps his clients to discover the mental attitudes which are stopping them from achieving their goals. He helps them to leverage their strengths to come out of their comfort zones and overcome these obstacles.

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The Physics of Group Coaching Chemistry

By Raka Krishnan

In my journey as a coach, I have mostly coached individuals one-on-one. Then there came an opportunity to coach a group of senior executives of a large global organization. It was too tempting an opportunity to let go. Being an absolute novice to group coaching, I accepted this assignment with a lot of trepidation. Coaching a group was like charting unknown waters.

The members of the group were from the same organization but from diverse functions and locations. The groups had been curated by the organization and that was a big relief. I decided to extend my one-on-one coaching experience into group coaching.

We started with a typical 'Chemistry Session'. I would like to call it a 'Bonding Session'. Six individuals, who are strangers to each other, get on a Zoom call with the hope to achieve their individual goals. As their coach, I needed to create the space for them to be open, to respect

A first group coaching opportunity offered Raka Krishnan rich learning. Read her account of it.

each other, trust each other, share experiences, speak-up and be vulnerable. I felt a huge responsibility on my shoulders. And then I heard myself seeking permission from the group to do a grounding exercise before we started the introductions. Those 2 minutes felt like the 'opening ceremony' of our group.

All apprehensions put aside, we introduced ourselves. The group members were eager to know each other and during the conversation, I felt that I was a part of the group and not just their coach. This mindset helped me be a true partner in their thinking process all through the engagement.

None in the group except one had experienced coaching earlier. As I explained coaching to them – what they could expect from a coaching session, how I expected them to participate, and what we could create together as a group – I felt a sense of pride being an exponent of this coaching 'phenomenon'. I felt a sudden rush of energy within me and was amused to see how it had become contagious. It started with one member of the group picking up the energy and soon enough the others were catching on.

Each member was excited to contribute to their

own journey and to the other's' as well. They were very comfortable not being 'coached' as in 'mentored' but co-creating and learning from the group wisdom. I was expecting some challenge here, but I must commend the maturity with which the group as a whole was willing to imbibe the process.

We together defined the norms that we wanted to set for the coaching sessions. As a coach, I laid the foundation, and the group was quick to add on their bits. As each member was getting involved in the process, they were committing to the success of coaching. This was later reflected in their participation: sharing openly, trusting each other, and above all, being vulnerable. I had not expected senior executives from an organization, who did not know each other, to be so vulnerable and share very personal matters, which aroused a lot of empathy and support from within the group.

I would like to specially mention a norm we set – to champion the group. Each session would

start with a quick round of celebrating the success, each one had achieved since the last session. The success could be anything, even unrelated to the coaching topic. As the coaching sessions were scheduled towards the end of the day when the general energy levels were low, this helped the group start on a high and that boost in energy was visible throughout the session.

Conclusion

My key takeaways from this experience were:

The chemistry or discovery session sets the tone for the rest of the sessions; in a group coaching scenario, it is not just about the chemistry between the coach and the coachee but also the chemistry between the different coachees; the coach holds the key to unlocking the 'bonding' space where the group creates an open collaborative and creative environment.



Raka Krishnan (ICF-PCC)

Raka Krishnan is a Leadership and Executive Coach, Mentor and Founder of The Korneroom. She is passionate about helping professionals achieve their goals through an empathetic understanding and a holistic approach. She has nearly 3 decades of corporate experience, her last role being Vice-President Global Delivery in an analytics start-up. She enjoys travelling and reading.

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Coach using Local Language for greater Client Ease and Presence

By Sunil Sathyendra, Nimma Coach

When I was little over ten years old, I read this book called *My Experiments with Truth*; the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi. The book was too big for me to complete but the phrase “Experiment with Truth” has stayed with me.

Since my foray into coaching a year ago, that phrase has stayed its course in this space too. I have been experimenting with Coaching. There have been some amazing adventures, melding creativity into coaching and also utilizing the

umbrella of coaching in the local language.

I have often heard that “Words make our Worlds” and wondered about the effect of language on our worlds. As a Bengalurian, I have been exposed to many languages: Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and in each language, its own vocabulary, interpretations and slang. I have been able to connect with people who speak these languages for their trade, living and expression.

Sunil Sathyendra records his experiments with coaching in his native tongue Kannada. The client is more relaxed and present and the session richer, he reports. Incorporating local language in coaching can open up an abundance of clientele, says Sunil.

But my romance with Language has been predominantly with English. It is the language I write in. Kannada is the language that I grew up learning as my mother tongue. Hindi is the language acquired due to studies, movies and the metro city living. Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam have been brothers and sisters with Kannada. In the corporate sector– at least with the MNCs

– the language of choice is mostly English. And all of the coaching tools, techniques, ideas, interpretation have been through English. I am a good coach, I say that in all humility. But these questions came to me just as I had finished my 100 hours of coaching for the ACC credentialing .

*What if my client does not know English?
What is the market for this in India ?*

If I change the language from English to Kannada or Hindi- What changes for me as a coach?

So over the next 400 hours of Coaching, I did this experiment: I did almost 40 hours of coaching in Kannada and Hindi. Here is what I have learnt from this experience.

I took up this experiment like a true scientist.

The Natural Connection:

Coaching Presence, Chemistry and Trust

Talking with the client in their language of choice enables the most natural connection established in a short span of time.

What I observed – right from the chemistry call – the session had a different vibe. Most importantly the client felt at ease. The boundaries were not so rigid. They were not connecting to me as a coach, in the role of the coach, but to me, Sunil aka Pungidasa, the person. The connection was very quick, their guard was down, they were smiling, laughing and very comfortable with the space, the process and me. The questions didn't seem to come from a "higher up" position but as Equals! Most of them shared that thanks to switching to Kannada or Hindi, their flow of thoughts were just smooth. They didn't have to bother about processing in their mother tongue – converting to English, sharing it, having the coach paraphrase and the same processing happening in reverse. Imagine, just for a second, that process for every question and answer.

The mental load is off. It was always smooth. And the metaphors and analogies that came were just so beautiful, clear to understand for themselves and for me as the coach. I too could go with the metaphors that came to me intuitively. They, the client, would get it instantly and share their views. My Presence as a coach was with a lot more ease and less pressure. .

What's on your mind became Yen samachara?
Coffee ayta...

A good 5 minutes in each session was marked for talking about them, before getting into the actuals of the coaching call. There was an ease that had developed between us. The client was able to share their emotions with ease. The nuances of language, dialect, and culture flowed effortlessly.

The reflections were deeper, the silence richer and the experience for the client was quite wonderful.

The Struggle:

My questions too, seemed to go with the flow. But in all honesty it was difficult for me too. Now suddenly when I had to ask, What makes this important for you? I did struggle to make it sound non-judgmental. The direct literal translations don't work.

Wait, I'll give you an exercise. Try and translate, transliterate this into your local language.

1. What would you like to hold on and what would you let go?
2. What makes this important for you to explore In this session?
3. How would you like to acknowledge yourself for the session ?
4. What are your beliefs and value systems that are at play here?
5. What would you like to feel instead?

My personal reflection was that I knew very little about my own mother tongue. For me to

understand it was easy, but to ask a question in the moment, or share an observation, to do the counter analysis from English to Kannada or Hindi was troublesome. Just imagining the plight of the client, not so well-versed in English made me empathise with them a little more. I was living in the same uncomfortable space as them.

My Hindi is passable, my linguistic Kannada is good but suddenly you are asking questions, What are your feelings – Aapke Bhavanao mein kya chal raha hai? Nimma Manassu yen heltha ide?

It sounds superficial, very text bookish and somewhat irritating for me in the flow of the conversation. That was a challenge at first but then I switched to Kanglish and Hinglish (Kannada+English and Hindi +English respectively) and the flow was saved.

Moving on...

India is a multilingual country. There are many that don't find the need to speak in English on a daily basis, are uncomfortable with the language or more comfortable with their native tongue. So the Indian advantage is with language.

Just imagine that you are in another country and then you suddenly hear someone speak your mother tongue; you may not know them at all but you will go and talk to them, ask them where they are from and there is a very real

possibility of a life-long friendship that blossoms. This was exactly the feeling that the client had when they heard me speak in their tongue. They were not speaking my tongue, I was speaking theirs.

So to coaches out there, try incorporating the native language of the client into your sessions. There is a vast network of untapped potential out there. Coaching in the local language may now unlock an entire abundance of clientele. The impact of coaching can be reached to them as well.

In addition to my coaching experience, this was echoed in a virtual networking event that I host for Coaches each month, the last Friday of each month. And in one of those meetings, we spoke of the power of coaching in the local language. And the learnings from the meeting were super fun and almost had the same flavour. There were coaches from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and also from Indian states such as Gujarat and Maharashtra. They all had the same experience. The ease for the client was so much more amplified. The trouble for the coach was in switching to the local dialect from English since all the learning has happened in English.

I have had a delightful experience coaching in Kannada, my mother tongue and I hope to do more of it. Feel free to let me know of your thoughts and share your experiences too.



Sunil Sathyendra

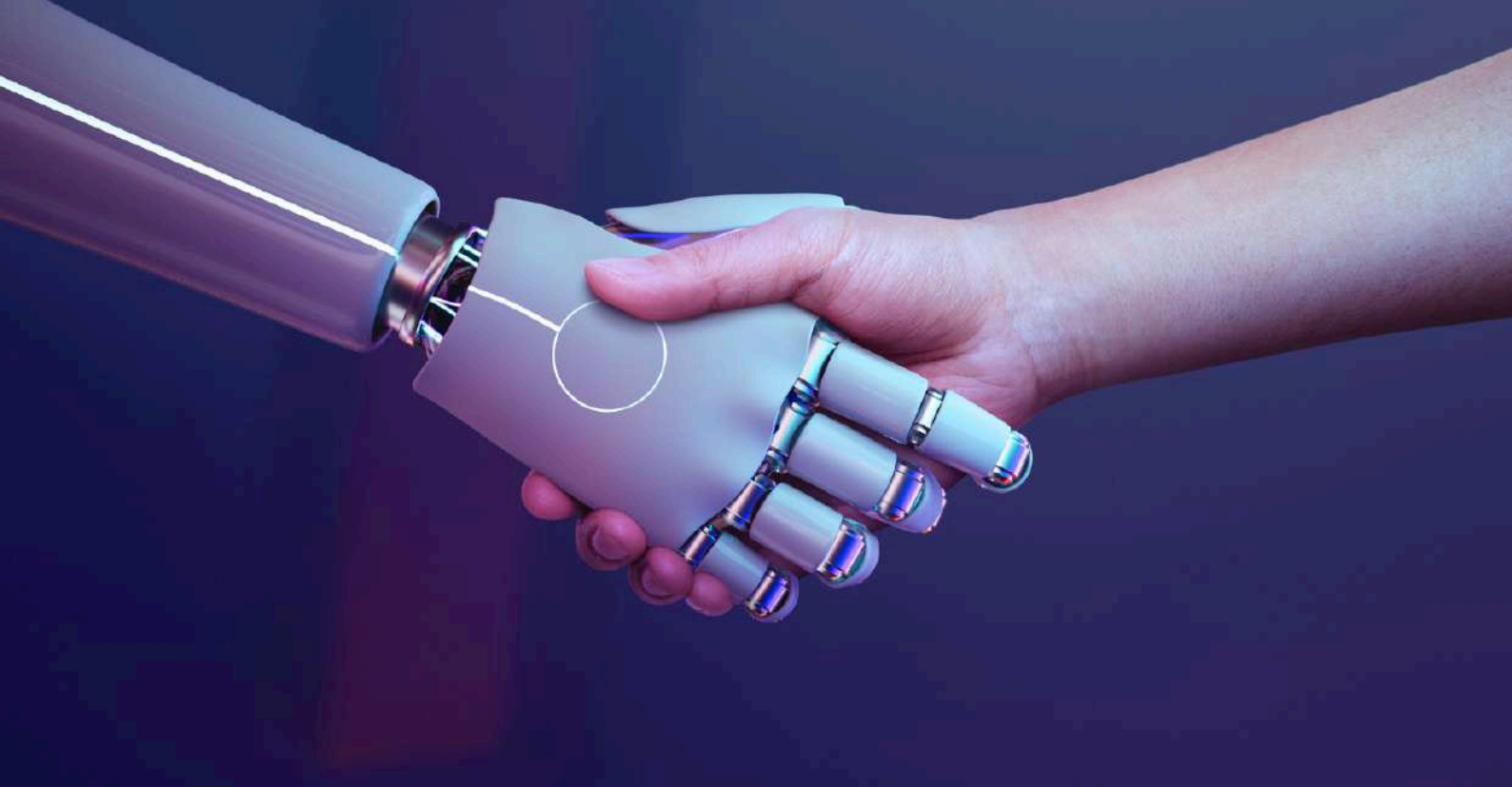
Sunil Sathyendra is famous in writing circles as Pungidasa and in coaching circles as NimmaCoach, (Your Coach) in Kannada.

Sunil's passions include writing, podcasting, philately, photography and more. He has been into writing for more than 12 years and has penned more than 5000 poems and 150 short stories in English.

Connecting with people through words, emotions and stories is one of his favourite pastimes. He is also interested in volunteering, fundraising and currently raises funds for rural scholarships via his annual poetry subscription.

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Can AI Replace the Human Coach?

By Vinit Kumar Singh

The Movie That Ignited Curiosity: Ex Machina

"Ring, ring!"

As I picked up the phone, I sensed both enthusiasm and concern in Binny's voice on the other end of the line. "Hi Vinit, it's Binny! I took your recommendation and watched Ex Machina. It's fascinating, but it also made me even more curious about the potential of AI, especially in our coaching world."

I chuckled, fully aware of the impact thought-provoking movies can have. "I'm glad you watched

Vinit Kumar Singh recounts an engaging conversation last week with a fellow ICF Coach and friend, Binny Brown. The discussion centered on the impact of Artificial intelligence on Coaching by humans. Both are deeply passionate about Coaching, having ventured from diverse career paths into the realm of leadership coaching.

it, Binny! Ex Machina does bring up some intriguing questions. What specifically caught your attention?"

Binny took a moment to gather his thoughts before diving in. "Well, seeing the AI character Eva interact, express emotions, and even manipulate its human creators really made me wonder. If AI can portray emotions and understand human behavior to that extent, could it eventually replace the kind of personal connection and emotional intelligence we bring as coaches?"

Navigating the Discussion: Addressing Emotional AI

Understanding the impact of Ava's character in Ex Machina, I was eager to address Binny's concerns while highlighting the irreplaceable aspects of human Coaching.

"Binny, I'm thrilled you found 'Ex Machina' intriguing. Yet, it's worth remembering that movies tend to dramatize AI. While AI can

simulate emotions in the movies, our Coaching is built on genuine empathy and understanding. Our ability to connect on a deeper level, interpret subtle cues, and guide clients through their unique journeys is something that AI can't replicate."

"As you already know, in our Coaching, Binny, we're more than just conveyors of information. We create a safe space for self-discovery and growth for the Coachee. It's about building authentic relationships, fostering meaningful change, and helping individuals tap into their leadership potential. That's where our true strength lies as Leadership Coaches."

Binny's voice resonated with understanding as he absorbed the distinction. "I understand your perspective. Our Coaching is about the genuine human connection we establish and the real-time adaptability to our client's emotions and thoughts."

The Intersection of AI and Human Touch

To address Binny's concerns about AI encroaching on our coaching domain, I proposed a harmonious integration that could amplify our impact.

"Binny, here's a fascinating thought: instead of viewing AI as a competitor, let's consider it as a complementary tool. Imagine leveraging AI to gather data, analyze patterns, and offer quick insights. This could lay the groundwork for our coaching sessions, allowing us to dive even deeper into personalized strategies, emotional support, and meaningful transformations. It's about embracing technology as an ally that enhances our coaching practice."

Binny became curious about the concept and felt compelled to investigate it further. "So, you're suggesting that we could use technology strategically to streamline certain

aspects of coaching while preserving the depth of human connection and expertise?"

"Precisely, Binny! By harnessing AI's capabilities judiciously, we can elevate our Coaching to new heights. We like to blend the power of data with the human touch to give our Coachees the best possible outcomes."

Embracing Possibilities: Coach's Role in the AI Era

As our conversation drew to a close, Binny's initial uncertainty seemed to evolve into a sense of assurance and excitement as he mentioned, "You know, Vinit, this conversation has been truly enlightening. I realize now while AI has its strengths, it can't replicate our intuition, empathy, and the personal touch we provide. I'm genuinely excited to explore this integration and continue making a meaningful impact in the coaching world."

"That's the spirit, Binny! Embracing technology isn't about being replaced; it's about leveraging innovation to expand our horizons. Our expertise, combined with the strategic use of AI, will undoubtedly lead to remarkable advancements in anything we do."

In conclusion, our conversation underscored the irreplaceable role of human Coaching in fostering genuine connections and personal growth. While AI, like ChatGPT, holds promise, the dynamic interplay between technology and humanity will shape the future of Coaching in remarkable ways. By weaving ethics, empathy, and innovation into the fabric of our coaching practice, we're poised to create transformative experiences that empower leaders to thrive.

A Humorous Twist: Future Possibilities

As our conversation neared its end, I couldn't resist injecting a touch of humor and playfulness into our discussion. "You know,

Binny, I attended a session with Professor John Chiramel during my last visit to IIM K, and he talked about the possibilities of Strong AI having super intelligence from current weak AI. I'm just hoping we don't end up with an 'Eva' from 'Ex Machina' in the future – a strong AI

that manipulates human feelings.”

I would love to hear your thoughts on the implication of Coaching with the evolution of AI-based Coaches.



Vinit Kumar Singh (ICF-PCC)

Vinit is a seasoned technologist and coach with a profound global perspective on business and people dynamics. With a career spanning over two decades, he has consistently delivered groundbreaking results by spearheading business shifts through the strategic implementation of digital transformation initiatives across the globe.

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The Beliefs that Hold Us Back

By Sreenivas Nagappa

I was asked the other day to identify what were the main impediments to growth of leaders. And while there are many because each of us is different, on reflection, I zeroed in on two.

1. Inability to align self & others

Essentially this comes down to believing in the purpose of the work we do and influencing others. And this is not always something very esoteric – it could be about some of the trade-offs that every leader needs to make: short term vs. long term is a good example. And when Leaders fail to do this, they not only set themselves back but also leave their teams dispirited.

I used to coach a Leader who said that since his firm planned to go in for an IPO in a couple of years, his board had communicated to him that recruiting Marquee Customers and Explosive Volume Growth were critical. But the Leader felt that both strategies would require him to cut prices and lower profitability. As this was pretty much the opposite of what he had been advocating for the last few years, this was a halfway approach. The results were obviously less than desirable: his reputation suffered; his

Sreenivas Nagappa analyzes the perceptions that hinder the growth of leaders.

team was conflicted and morale and results dropped.

Thus, aligning oneself and the team with what needs to be done is crucial. In this case, the Leader should have made every effort to persuade the Board, but once the decision was made, he needed to, in head and heart, be on the same page. By the way, the story does have a happy ending since the problem was identified in time – the Leader was able to make the shift; importantly he was able to explain the new direction to his organization in a manner that did not seem like a flip flop or lack of coherent strategy. The IPO was successful and secured the financial futures of much of the organization.

The other aspect of alignment is on both the What and the How.

We normally urge people to agree on the What and leave the How to the individual manager to determine, especially if they are senior. But this causes a ton of heartburn in the senior person, and as we know, when the senior has heartburn, this translates down the line into big ulcers. Because it is a reality that rarely are any decisions of the variety of "Debate once and Delegate Forever" executed perfectly down the chain of command. There is always follow up needed (Good or Bad, depending on which side of the table we are) and updates sought and views offered...So aligning also the "And this is how we are going to address it" at some level of detail makes it a far easier workplace.

And if the Leaders we coach are:

- the senior most person, they benefit from contributing their views and having a clear line of sight
- the person who is implementing, they benefit from less nit-picking and having to justify actions every day and of course more autonomy.

2. A false belief that the Best Way to do it is My Way

I have a theory of how our beliefs on this evolve as we approach a good level of capability.

There is only one way to do it & that is My Way

There are many ways to do it but mine is still the best

There are many good ways to do it and I have

one of the possible solutions

Unfortunately, too many Leaders are still stuck in the early stages of this evolution. And the pitfalls are obvious i.e., the team stops thinking, all options are not considered, there is no decision making – just directives and the like. So, why do so many Leaders carry this approach? Because it is part of their Success Mantra. They did something like this in the past and it was a success (at least in their own minds!). In a way it is a reflection of Daniel Kahneman's Dual System Theory and embodies System 1 Thinking - driven by instinct and experience (Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow 2012). And if the building is on fire, this is probably a good way to think and act. However, when the building is not on fire and we do have a little time, this approach makes us pay significant costs.

The simplest solution is also the best solution – Listen before you speak. And of course, tweak it to your own situation: if there is a strong top down culture, invite the junior folk to speak first; if no one usually volunteers, reward participation, don't ridicule any contribution etc.

All of us as Coaches, come across instances of beliefs or attitudes or traits that come in the way of personal growth. I am happy to hear what you have seen and your thoughts on addressing these.

Write in at sn@snagappa.com.



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Sreenivas is a CEO turned Coach. He brings the experience of having worked with large corporations like Unilever & Office Depot as well as with family-owned companies to help Leaders be successful. He is passionate about Thriving in an era of Disruption, Conflict Management and Running.

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COURAGE

Courage in Coaching

By Tonya Echols

The world of coaching is growing exponentially in every way. From methodology to technology, there is always something new for us as coaches, to learn or consider as we evolve the way we engage our clients. I have the honor of supporting many people from all over the world in their journey to become coaches, and one question that always comes up is, “What is the best way for me to develop as a coach?” I understand they are often looking for a specific tool, book, or resource that will unlock a flood of insight, but my answer, sometimes met with chagrin, is simply to continue to coach.

Coaching is an art and a science, two endeavors requiring study and practice. While many find comfort and ease in studying coaching, its practice can sometimes feel overwhelming, even for the most experienced coaches. The reason for this overwhelm comes from the fact that coaching requires so much of

us personally. Although a coaching session is always about the client and their goals, to hold space for their growth, we must continually build and examine our own foundations. We can only coach our clients authentically (and effectively) if we simultaneously do the internal work to understand our desires, motivations, fears, and goals. Without that personal reflection and examination, we can subconsciously impact coachees with our personal biases, judgments, and limitations. The importance of this internal awareness makes it clear that the most critical tool we can leverage as coaches is ourselves. The question then becomes, “How do I continue to develop myself?” While, to a certain degree, the answer will depend on your individual needs, I recommend one key area to consider, developing courage.

The word courage is connected to bravery and fearlessness, but it is derived from the Latin word *cor* which means heart. The actual origins of the word’s usage include the concepts of inner strength and spirit that come from the heart. Suppose we think of courage through its original meanings, in that case, we are challenged to consider who we are at our core. This allows us to draw upon the reservoirs of

Tonya Echols reminds us to look inwards to develop courage as a tool to grow as coaches

strength and energy to engage with the world not with an expectation of fearlessness but with an acknowledgment of the fears we hold and the power within us to face and defeat them. Courage allows us to overcome our personal challenges and embrace our gifts and talents to create and share space for others to do the same for themselves. Courage allows us to be curious about ourselves, the world, and our clients. Courage allows us to ask hard questions and challenge our clients to delve deeper than their comfort level normally permits. Courage enables us to sit silently without discomfort as our clients process their thoughts. Courage provides us with the discernment to recognize when a coaching client or sponsor is not a good fit and walk away from engagements when we know it is best for all parties. Courage can bolster us to seek new learning opportunities as coaches, even if we initially feel out of our depth.

We step into this courage in a number of ways. Self-care is a primary method in any of its forms, including journaling, meditation, and resting

our bodies physically, mentally, and spiritually. Self-care provides us the opportunity to reflect on and examine our experiences, raising awareness that allows us to make more informed choices for the future about all aspects of our lives, including our coaching.

Another way to connect to our courage is through being coached ourselves. Coaches have coaches because we know the benefits of having a trusted partner to support and challenge us in exploring who we are and what we want in life. However you choose to tap into your courage, remember the key is developing greater self-awareness and strengthening your heart to be your true self.

Every day, more tools and resources are available to us as coaches, and there will only be more in the future that will enrich how we support those we coach. However, we must remember that powerful coaching begins not with reaching outward for external answers but with developing ourselves and our courage to look inwards for personal growth.



Tonya Echols (ICF-PCC)

Tonya has over 27 years of experience in corporate management, digital and traditional media, technology, finance, coaching, leadership development, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. With a master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University and as a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Tennessee in Business Administration-Accounting, she is a doctoral candidate in Leadership Psychology with emphasis in Neuroscience and Inclusive Leadership from William James College.

She is a multi-award-winning international Executive Coach, Leadership and Organizational Development Consultant. She is the Managing Principal of Vigere, selected as one of the Top 20 Leadership Development Training and Coaching companies for 2022 and a Global100 honoree for 2023.

Tonya serves as a Director and Officer of the Professional Coaches Board of the International Coaching Federation and serves on the Global Enterprise Board.

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