

# CONVERSATIONS...

## IN SEARCH OF THE INNER SELF

**ICF** Bengaluru  
Charter Chapter

EDITION 6 | JAN 2023

Add value to your craft  
to enhance your practice



## From the Editorial Desk

# Add value to your craft to enhance your practice

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Time does fly. We are here with another issue of our magazine. It has been an eventful four months. We also had the privilege of meeting each other face to face after a long time. This gave the chapter members an opportunity to explore their expectations. Our coaches undoubtedly love coaching and many would like this to be their primary business. The formula is simple enough. Be authentic, professional and invest in yourself. The slightly tricky part of this is in running a business and grappling with contracting, billing, collecting and similar aspects. Of course one issue is a drop in the ocean. With your future involvement in the various aspects of the magazine and contributions in the form of your wisdom in words, we hope to keep publishing valuable enriching content which serves you as coaches and the coaching profession as well.

Like in the last 2 editions, we culled out a theme from the contributions. On one side, there are the explorations which can help us become more self-aware and hence better coaches for our clients.

On the other side of the coaching equation, coaches often hesitate to be business like in their approach. Hence some articles in this issue dwell on valuing our services and looking at the value we provide to our clients. Highlighting the value we provide so that we can acquire more business is another aspect which has been visited in this issue.

We owe our gratitude to the Management committee of our chapter and contributors who extend beyond our local chapter ambit. Vidhi Vala, our publishing partner, who helps us in bringing aesthetics into our content has been an invaluable support. We value all your drops of wisdom and need them to make our magazine better. Articles are of course welcome, but if that takes too long, please drop in a comment on our LinkedIn page. Those who are not yet part of that are requested to join. You can use the link <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8437646/>.

With the season's best wishes!



### **Gayatri Krishnamurthy (ICF-PCC)**

*Gayatri is a leadership coach and consultant who believes that what you come in with is important but what you do with it is the defining difference. She has over 30 years experience and is an alumna of XLRI Jamshedpur and a Senior Practitioner (EMCC) and a PCC (ICF).*

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### **Amita Bharath**

*Amita is passionate about coaching as a vehicle for strength-based learning and development. She has an MA in Special Education Needs and Inclusion. Additionally she is trained in ADHD coaching. She wants to make coaching available for neurodivergent students, adults and their parents, to support neurodiverse persons to lean into their strengths through coaching. She sees herself as an ally and an advocate for neurodiversity.*

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## From The President's Desk

It is with great pleasure that we applaud the response to our clarion call for contributions to the final issue of our Chapter Magazine for 2022. Seven brilliant coaches have responded with thoughtfully written contributions. Sridhar Laxman addresses the "Courage to Coach" and Rekha R. Upadhyay has written on freeing oneself from "Emotional weight". Vinit Kumar Singh reviews the book *Triggers sparking positive change & making it last*. Amita Bharath has written about coaches engaging with neurodiversity. Magazine coeditors Gayatri and Amita present a conversation with ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter past president Priya Sharma Shaikh as an interview in which she speaks about the recently concluded conclave, and her coaching journey. Sreenivas Nagappa (ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter) provides insights on the value of our coaching services in his contribution, while Lara Matthai provides a roadmap for creating a brand as a coach. It is my belief that these articles will be of great value to you all. I appeal to all members to participate vigorously by reading, sharing, discussing the magazine and contributing their learnings to the chapter magazine. It is wonderful to see members of other Chapters participating and contributing to the magazine.

In other developments, we are very happy to have the dynamic Lara Matthai join our chapter board as Director, Member Experiences. She is hard at work and we look forward to more gatherings. Member responses and offers of support encourage me to look forward to formal and informal hub meets starting early in 2023. I am also pleased to inform you all of the successful Pro-bono Coaching with 2 organisations by our Social Contact Team led by Dr Varundeeep Sachi.



Agastya International  
26<sup>th</sup> November, 2022



The Association of the Physically Disabled  
Association of India - 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

We hope to meet, interact and engage with each other with renewed vigour in 2023. I look forward to another year of growth and learning for all of us.

with warm regards and best wishes for the new year,



**Dr Winston Jacob, President**

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*All our dreams*  
**CAN COME TRUE**  
≈≈≈ IF WE HAVE ≈≈≈  
**THE COURAGE**  
—❁—  
*to pursue them*

## **The Courage to be a Coach**

*By Sridhar Laxman*

**International Coach Federation defines coaching thus:** "Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential."

~

Having gone through the rigour of coach education and training, you are familiar with the process of coaching people to maximise their potential.

1. What does maximising personal and professional potential mean?
2. How do you, as coach, support and enable that?

### **What makes me want to talk to you about Courage in Coaching?**

One common observation from conversations with several Coaches is how many of us seem to be plagued by fears.

When Coaches face their fears and show up with clarity and authenticity, they maximise their ability to serve clients. Sridhar Laxman reminds coaches to show up with courage.

Below are some statements expressed by Coaches; maybe you are ruminating on one or more of them.

- I feel hesitant to tell others what I do
- I am uncomfortable announcing and promoting my profession
- I wonder why someone will seek me out for Coaching
- I feel awkward telling prospects about my Coaching fees
- I don't like to hear a no
- I don't want to handle rejection
- I am confused about where to start and

- feel like I am losing time
- There are too many Coaches; I am thinking of giving up
- I don't know if I am delivering value to the Client
- I feel uncomfortable challenging my Client
- I am anxious to understand how the Client feels after each session
- I am worried the Client will see through me
- I am afraid I will disappoint the Client

The list goes on.

Statement after statement indicating a lack of clarity and self-doubt

The word 'fear' comes up when I further probe these statements.

I presume that you may be experiencing one or more of these fears. If you aren't, maybe you could use this information to mentor other coaches who need support to overcome their fears.

### **How do you maximise your own personal and professional potential?**

There are three reasons to reflect and work on that question.

#### **1. Authenticity**

When there is coherence between who you are and what you do, it becomes easier to develop your coaching presence, plan and positioning.

#### **2. Belief**

Develop an unshakeable belief in your craft and the possibilities thereof. By doing so, you will want to learn more, understand better, continue to hone your coaching skills and grow.

#### **3. Conviction**

Conviction is a space where you don't just think but know deep down that the Coaching process is robust, effective and

transformational because you have experienced it and benefited from Coaching.

You shift from trying to sell your services to inspiring others to experience Coaching, maybe even with another coach. You become an ambassador for the profession, not for yourself.

### **Some factors that lead to self-doubt and fears are:**

#### **1. You may not be clear why you have chosen Coaching as a profession**

Think beyond "Coaching is trending, there's much buzz around it, it's easy to be a Coach, I know many people who are Coaches, I like to help others, a natural progression from my earlier career..."

Lack of clarity leaves room for fear to reside. Reflect on attending to it.

#### **2. You may not have done sufficient inner work before getting started**

Each of us has a story filled with difficulties and disappointments, unfair experiences and failures, and they have the power to shape us.

Becoming aware, processing, making meaning and learning to use the experiences to grow more resilient will serve you and your clients.

#### **3. You may not have done sufficient training and practice work**

Credentials alone do not make us great coaches; just like any other profession, commitment, discipline, willingness to learn, and consistent practice to improve are essential to master the work.

#### **4. You may not be aware of how you are showing up.**

Let me share a couple of examples to illustrate this critical point.

### Example 1

Some coaches reach out, ask for 30 minutes for a conversation and spend 20-plus minutes talking about themselves, their plans and where they feel stuck, leaving little time for any advice or guidance.

Maybe it's a habit, or they are unaware and unprepared for the call. But, irrespective of the reason, they are missing out on the opportunity of learning from another coach's experiences. While these conversations are pro bono, it's worth reflecting on the following:

- What value are they likely to get out of that call?
- What would happen if they were to instead send their profile in advance with specific questions they want clarity around?
- What is the impression they are making by showing up this way?

### Example 2

In gatherings and on social media, I have observed some Coaches state and demonstrate their biases, judgements, discrimination and hate on specific topics, be it about religion, politics or someone else's behaviours.

While everyone is entitled to their opinion, the above becomes problematic for a few reasons:

1. If we cannot rise above our prejudices and hate, how can we be objective and non-judgemental with our Clients?
2. What is likely to happen to the Coach's reputation when prospective Clients read these posts and comments?
3. What are the chances of being referred for potential engagements?

This example hopefully reminds you of the

first point about Authenticity.

5. You may not have an understanding of how to market yourself.

Coach training teaches you how to coach, not market yourself as a coach; ignoring the second part of this equation will keep you invisible and miss out on serving potential clients.

6. Your focus may be on you, not your Client.

Coaching is about the Client, not the coach; read this aloud daily to keep your ego out of the way.

Spend time understanding whom you wish to serve, their needs, and how they will benefit from Coaching. These reflections will help you develop a healthy perspective and engage you in things that make a difference.

7. You may be assuming on behalf of the Client

If the Client finds value, they will tell you

If the Client does not find the value, they will tell you.

In either case, you learn and have an opportunity to improve.

Refrain from wasting your precious time and energy on assumptions, presumptions and second-guessing your clients.

8. You may not be mindful and in the present moment

As a Coach, you are aware of the mind's tendency to worry about the past or be anxious about the future. Neither is helpful.

Learn to be present and use that awareness to manage your fears.



In closing, it requires courage to look at oneself and acknowledge that there is room for improvement and that potential needs to be maximised.

Wanting to make changes and being open to change are different things; focus on the latter, for therein awaits the emerging, courageous self.

Clarity and fear don't coexist, and our power lies in managing our fears.

Being an adult means we must learn to take ownership and responsibility for our choices and act on them.  
It's okay to feel what you feel.

It's okay to change directions and do something else.

It's okay to want to persist and continue as a Coach.

Make the choice that will serve you best and move in that direction.

Living with fear robs you and the world of enormous creative potential  
Coaching is a noble profession, and the world needs even more coaches.

So practice being courageous, Show Up, Shine, and Serve.



### **Sridhar Laxman (ICF-PCC)**

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# ***Emotional Weight: Work it off, drop unnecessary baggage, liberate yourself***

*By Rekha R. Upadhyay*

People have started to realize the importance of talking about how they feel, expressing themselves, and the need to have a sacred space to express themselves where they won't be judged or questioned - just heard. And hence the need to have coaches, therapists or a confidant is becoming increasingly important.

We human beings carry a lot of emotional weight which accumulates over years in a person's life. . When someone says, " I still remember this incident in my life- ," doesn't this sound familiar in terms of expression? Why do we remember incidents, experiences, and certain people in our lives and retain their memories forever? Why are those things so important to remember? We forget subject knowledge which we have learned in school but remember instances

from childhood that are etched in our memories.

I want to challenge my readers here: When you narrate these incidents and memories, have you ever given thought to what life lesson that particular incident teaches? We always focus on the person or situation or how people made you feel; we keep talking about only that. And somewhere, sometimes we experience a sense of déjà vu or being in a similar situation or even the same situation seems to repeat its patterns.

**Rekha R. Upadhyay invites readers to reflect upon how to shed emotional baggage, feel lighter and break the cyclical pattern of painful experiences.**

On a surface level, the experience seems very different or may be similar. When we recall our memory of the same situation and narrate it, every time without realizing, we add weight to our emotions. It becomes a subconscious loop and when we hear someone who has had a similar experience, we give ourselves an assurance --Ah so others have also experienced the same. However, an important aspect which we forget is that every person's experience of a seemingly similar situation will be different.

I do get to hear from people, especially from clients who I coach: – how do I let go of whatever I am holding on to? I don't know! My question to them is what is it that you are holding on to? What is it that you are not willing to learn due to which you are unable to let it go? What would it mean to set yourself free? And they do tell me- I never thought in this way.

Let me provide a small example. An employee felt like a victim when she didn't receive the promotion she was looking forward to and felt very hurt that all the hard work she had put in over months to reach there did not fructify. This situation initially led to anger and fighting within herself--had she put in the right effort or not, where did she go wrong, why did her leader not promote her despite doing everything right, and somewhere, there was unsaid blame being projected on her leaders as well. A few weeks were very difficult for her. After a lot of the emotions settled down, it took her considerable time to restart her growth journey. After some time had elapsed and she had to work towards a promotion again, she felt triggered-- what would be the outcome even if she put in her best effort. And this underlying feeling of not being successful kept coming back to her; she found it difficult to let go of the emotions she had dealt with in her past situation.

Somewhere the baggage was still weighing upon her and she was not able to move forward freely.

She started working with a coach for her development. As she started exploring what was making her feel stuck, she found it was the emotional baggage which she was still holding on to, even after many months. She felt like a victim for herself, and every time she remembered the suffering she had gone through, the victim in her surfaced again. The meaning of letting go for her was to let go of this emotion, of feeling victimized, which she was holding on to. Once she started accepting that part of her that felt like a victim and realized her learning from that situation, it gave her closure and the strength to move on.

Sometimes we have to accept the role we play for ourselves in a situation, unconsciously or subconsciously, even though we may not realize consciously what we were actually doing in a particular situation.

How do we really let go of this weight-- of unexpressed feelings or residue of expressed emotions that one has experienced or is holding on to, even after many days, months, or years?

1. Every time you find yourself in a similar pattern of emotional entanglement, reflect on what this emotion is all about that you are not willing to let go.
2. What is that part within you that you are not willing to face?
3. How is holding on to this particular emotion serving you?
4. Are you willing to set yourself free from this loop?
5. Sometimes we learn through experience

that it is better to forgive and forget. Now the question arises: how can I forgive and forget when I am unable to do it? And why should I?

This aspect of forgive and forget is to create an acceptance of the role that we played in such situations. And accepting our role in the situation helps one to invite a deeper level of acceptance. At the same time, perhaps, we are not one to forgive others, but one can definitely forgive oneself leading to acceptance at various levels within.

We have heard the expression: Forgive and Forget. What is the true meaning of this phrase? In the journey of my life so far, I am going to share what I have realized is the true meaning, for me, of Forgive and Forget.

When we forgive, one is not forgiving someone who has been in the situation with you, but we are forgiving ourselves and releasing that part of us that was still trapped

in the vicious loop and freeing the emotion that is stuck. When we completely release that emotion, we also let go of that part within us that was still trapped or stuck within us. In this way, the incident starts to fade from the memory; what remains is the learning we had from the incident.

Hence to Forgive is to let go and free oneself fully; Forget is to let go of the emotional association, and what one needs to remember only, is the learning for oneself.

When we express our emotion fully and let go of the weight associated with the emotion, we feel lighter, emotionally and physically. We no longer carry the unnecessary weight of unresolved painful experiences.

Are we not carrying our physical body weight? Isn't that enough for a human being to carry? So how often do you work out on your emotional weight? Think about it.....



### **Rekha R. Upadhyay**

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## ***Ease into change by managing your Triggers.***

***A book review by Vinit Kumar Singh***

In his book *Triggers* (2016) Marshall Goldsmith, one of the world's most influential business coaches, looks at why people don't change behaviors they know need changing. He looks at why doing something different is difficult and points out the factors (he calls them "Triggers") that derail those efforts.

### **Triggers Prevent Change**

A trigger is any stimulus that changes our thoughts and behavior.

Let me give you an example to understand it better. Some days back, I was on vacation with my family at Rock Beach in Pondicherry. We were roaming around the beach on a pleasant Sunday morning, and suddenly the smell of Waffles and ice cream filled the air. Since I was avoiding sugary food, I tried ignoring it, but my daughter

**Do you sometimes tend to behave in ways you don't intend to? How do you change your personal behavior? Vinit Kumar Singh brings you his understanding of Marshall Goldsmith's book, rich with insights on making positive changes stick.**

Annie couldn't move an inch ahead from there and wanted to try a bite of crispy butterscotch chocolate waffles.

While standing in the queue buying those for my wife and daughter, a thought triggered in my mind, Let me indulge for just today. I will avoid sugary food from tomorrow.

The smell in the air and my daughter's insistence acted as a 'trigger' here. It countered my decision to stay away from sugar lace foods. In our lives, triggers can appear in the form of people, circumstances or events. Even the smell of a particular food can trigger our memories.

### **Our Environment is full of Triggers.**

Our Environment is filled with all kinds of triggers which stop us changing our behavior. Marshall puts it beautifully: "If we do not create and control our Environment, our Environment creates and controls us. And the result turns us into someone we do not recognize."

Whether we realize it or not, our Environment is the most crucial factor determining whether we'll succeed or fail to

implement a new behavior, like trying to avoid sugary food every day or booting an old behavior like getting confrontational in work meetings.

### **Identify and Eliminate the Counterproductive Environmental Triggers**

Identifying the Counterproductive triggers is more straightforward if you focus there. However, eliminating those triggers is easier said than done, particularly ones you don't control. For instance, you can't do much about the annoying neighbor or idiot drivers on the road other than just being mentally prepared for it. If you know you will encounter people, situations, or temptations that trigger you to act counterproductively, you need to prepare for those triggers and choose how to respond in advance.

### **Add Productive Environmental Triggers**

Now that you've done your best to eliminate or prepare for counterproductive triggers, it's time to create productive triggers. For instance, you can use sticky notes, digital reminders, and to-dos as triggers to reduce your chances of missing your planned work goals. The best way to load up your Environment with productive triggers is to surround yourself with people who promote the behavior you are striving for. It's like you want to become a better public speaker, but you are surrounded by people who are neither good nor motivated to work on their public speaking skills; the odds of you working on public speaking would be far too less. But if you surround yourself with people working on their public speaking skills, you will gradually start seeing the positive impact on yourself. That's why clubs like Toastmasters and other such communities help people work on the personality trait they intend to change or grow.

### **Making Lasting Change in the Behaviour with Active Questioning**

If you can eliminate or anticipate counterproductive environmental triggers and create productive ones, you're on your way to changing your behavior. But the sad part is that it may not last long. If you want a lasting behavior change, you need a method that consistently pulls you away from the gravitational force of your old habits. The process Marshall suggests is asking Active questions.

Passive questioning leaves plenty of room for shifting the blame onto situations, circumstances, and others, while active questioning puts the responsibility squarely on ourselves. For example, the passive form of the question is "Do you have clear goals?" The active form of the same question is "Did I do my best to set clear goals today?". This sentence makes me responsible for doing anything reasonable to do my best to achieve clear goals.

Asking these six questions helps us understand ourselves better and changes our behavior accordingly.

Asking the six active questions is effective in helping us change our behaviors:

- Did I do my best to set clear goals today?
- Did I do my best to make progress toward my goals today?
- Did I do my best to find meaning today?
- Did I do my best to be happy today?
- Did I do my best to build positive relationships today?

Did I do my best to be fully engaged today?

The daily questions allow us to raise awareness about the triggers and our

behaviors. Over time, after many reminders, we learn and adapt. We understand what works and what doesn't and eventually change successfully.

So how does your Environmental Trigger impact you at the moment? Does it serve or prevent you from becoming the person you want to be?

Reading the book *Triggers* gave me some practical tools to apply to my life immediately, and like any good habit, it's going to take some time to implement and find consistency. But starting with a proven system that has worked for some of the top leaders in the world seems like a great place to start!



### **Vinit Kumar Singh (ICF-PCC)**

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THINK  
ABOUT  
THINGS  
DIFFERENTLY

# Coaching and Neurodiversity: How should coaches engage with neurodiverse clients?

By Amita Bharath

Understanding Neurodiversity is a fundamental step towards greater equity in an inclusive world. Sociologist and author Judy Singer coined the term in 1998. It is the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population. The term was first used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders. Human cognition exists along a spectrum of abilities and challenges. Hence no 2 individuals - neurotypical or neurodivergent - are the same.

That said, a majority of the human race are more or less similar, or neurotypical, while

Amita Bharath unpacks Neurodiversity and coaching neurodivergent clients.

those who manifest these differences are referred to as neurodiverse or neurodivergent. The term neurodiverse has been expanded since its inception, to mean variations in cognition due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia, Tourette's Syndrome and several others. This concept has evolved in recent decades into the Neurodiversity movement, to support the neurodivergent minority find acceptance, accommodation, and agency in a neurotypical world.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Neurodiverse hiring

Where is Neurodiversity in the picture of Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) programmes ? In the developed world, greater awareness, access to diagnosis and changing ways of looking at disability have



given Neurodiversity some traction in corporations. Neurodiversity has been perceived as a competitive advantage for the strengths and special abilities of high-functioning (More able) individuals on the spectrum of neurodivergence.

Danish Technology Entrepreneur and parent of an autistic child, Thorkill Sonne set up Specialisterne (The Specialist) to transform the way society perceived Autism. Specialisterne is a software testing company to demonstrate the competitive advantage of persons with Autism when they are accommodated and supported by the company they work in. It provides a work environment where being autistic is normal. The focus is on the special abilities, rather than disabilities, of the neurodiverse employees.

Thorkill also set up a partner organisation, Specialisterne People's Foundation, a Not-for-profit, to expand globally the principle of neurodiversity at work in over 50 countries. In India, Specialisterne has partnered with Enable India to create programmes to train and employ


neurodivergent adults  
(<https://specialisterneenableindia.com/services>)

Some global companies have restructured their human resources practices in order to tap this largely ignored talent pool of neurodivergent individuals. SAP, Microsoft, Dell, Hewlett Packard Enterprises, EY, and Goldman Sachs are a few that are reforming their HR processes to make their organisations more neurodiverse. In 2017, IBM partnered with Specialisterne to create the Ignite ASD program, a pilot programme for neurodiverse talent.

Standardized and scalable human resource management practices date to a time when persons with developmental disorders such as ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia were seldom in consideration for hiring. Over the past few years, this picture has changed. Sonne's initiative at Specialisterne and work to create neurodiverse programmes in corporations provides valuable insights about the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals. (See Table below)

## Neurodivergent strengths

Autism S. Disorder	ADHD	Dyslexia, other learning disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Rote memory</li> <li>❖ Attention to detail</li> <li>❖ Unerring focus</li> <li>❖ Often high IQ</li> <li>❖ Honest</li> <li>❖ Direct</li> <li>❖ Computer proficient</li> <li>❖ High productivity in routine tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Entrepreneurial</li> <li>❖ Out of the box thinkers</li> <li>❖ Great in crisis</li> <li>❖ High energy</li> <li>❖ Sensitive</li> <li>❖ Creative</li> <li>❖ Ability to <u>hyperfocus</u> on tasks they like</li> <li>❖ Risk takers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Great social skills</li> <li>❖ Intuitive, insightful</li> <li>❖ Sensitive</li> <li>❖ Good visual spatial skills, think in pictures and perceive multidimensionally: using all senses</li> <li>❖ Highly aware of environment</li> <li>❖ Very curious</li> </ul>



## How should Coaches in India engage with neurodivergence?

The global prevalence of neurodivergence is pegged at 15 -20 percent. In India, data is scanty, but it is believed that the statistics of global prevalence are valid for India as well. Disorders of neurodivergence are making frequent appearances in the content in social media and the traditional media. However, awareness about the different conditions, access to diagnosis and assessment for degree of disability is scarce. The stigma and lack of acceptance adds to masking as a coping strategy –not a good one— used by neurodivergent individuals to “hide” their difference.

There are two ways that coaches in India can engage with the idea of neurodiversity.

### 1. As individuals, parents, family- and community members, coaches can:

- a. Keep themselves informed about neurodiversity and the conditions that are included in this umbrella term. The most frequently encountered are ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, and Dyslexia.
- b. Understand that stigma and shame connected to neurodivergence causes far greater impairment than the condition. Neurodivergence may be heritable, but it is never due to bad parenting.
- c. Understand that Neurodivergence does not always indicate intellectual disability (an IQ of less than 70) or mental illness. While neurodivergence includes those with intellectual disability and some with specific mental health issues, not all who are neurodivergent have intellectual disability or are mentally ill.
- d. Encourage family and friends’ families to consult knowledgeable community members, psychologists and psychiatrists to understand a child’s behaviour that

is flagged by teachers or caregivers. Early diagnosis provides a window of opportunity for valuable therapies, remediation and advocacy support to the child and the family.

### 2. As professional coaches:

Coaches in the Indian context will be well prepared if they are aware of the disorders under the umbrella of neurodiversity. Neurodivergence can also be acquired due to injury to the brain or stroke. A question pertaining to neurodivergence due to ADHD, ASD or Dyslexia in the pre-chemistry paperwork can open the subject of neurodivergence in an organic, less intrusive way.

Coaching neurodivergent individuals is adapted from Life Coaching. It is more directive. A coach wears a mentor and trainer hat occasionally when serving neurodivergent clients.

It is ideal to have a diagnosis and knowledge of what makes a client neurodivergent. However, given the scarcity of diagnosis in the Indian context, it is good to keep the challenges given here in mind.

Some issues that bring neurodivergent clients to coaching are:

- a. Inability to hold down jobs, being fired frequently or quitting.
- b. Communication and interpersonal challenges, due to impulsivity or narrow interests.
- c. Unable to prioritize, plan and execute
- d. Unable to set up routines and manage change.
- e. Time management, overcoming procrastination
- f. Advocating for their needs in the workplace or at home.
- g. Improving social skills
- h. Improving financial management
- i. Improving Physical health and wellness

This is obviously not an exhaustive list, and coaches will observe that these challenges are often presented by neurotypical clients as well. The difference in coaching a neurodivergent client is the support needed in the actual execution of action items and independently harnessing the learning from an experience. An instance of directive support is when coaches provide strategies to clients to help them overcome challenges of weak working memory or emotional regulation. Such support is likely to be faded as the client gains in confidence and begins to normalize the desirable behaviours.

Coaches who are interested in exploring neurodivergence can read about it at web portals such as [ADDitude.com](http://ADDitude.com), [CHADD.Org](http://CHADD.Org), [Autismspeaks.org](http://Autismspeaks.org), [autism-society.org](http://autism-society.org), [Idonline.org](http://Idonline.org) among others.

3. Does knowing if a client is neurodivergent matter in effective coaching? While the competencies that guide impactful coaching stay the same, knowing that a client is neurodivergent is quite critical for the coach, to set their expectations and prepare themselves. Neurodivergent clients need and require therapy support more often than neurotypical clients. Support from a psychotherapist and psychiatrist (for prescribing and managing medication) will leave the coach - coachee partnership available to brainstorm strategies and accountability measures for a desirable change. For instance, when coaching a known neurodivergent client, coaches are advised to keep in mind the situations that place

unnecessary demand on their clients. In other words, coaching a neurodivergent client also involves accommodating the client's need. An example is knowing that individuals on the autism spectrum struggle with changes in routine. Thus, a coach must avoid, at all costs, unnecessary and last-minute changes in session schedule or preview the conditions of changes beforehand, to prepare the client.

As coaching grows in popularity as a vehicle for positive change, it is recommended that coaches build a network of known and trusted psychotherapists, counsellors, and psychiatrists.

4. In India as in other parts of the world, NGOs or not for profit groups are engaged in advocacy, activism, and Education for neurodivergence. Coaches can support these organisations and the service they render by offering low bono or pro bono coaching. The ICF Foundation has created the Ignite platform as a way to empower NGOs through coaching for social impact. Social impact coaching is an effective way to empower change from within.

Effective coaching is like an old house being opened to let in fresh air and sunshine. The sunshine is an opportunity to see the dust and cobwebs and remove them. The fresh air is an invitation to breathe deep and free, leave old ways of thinking and learn new behaviours. Awareness about Neurodiversity is a lung full of fresh air about differences in cognition.



### **Amita Bharath**

*Amita is passionate about coaching as a vehicle for strength-based learning and development. She has an MA in Special Education Needs and Inclusion. Additionally she is trained in ADHD coaching. She wants to make coaching available for neurodivergent students, adults and their parents, to support neurodiverse persons to lean into their strengths through coaching. She sees herself as an ally and an advocate for neurodiversity.*

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## ***Self-belief, compassion & authenticity empowers me to support clients through coaching.***

***An interview with Priya Sharma Shaikh,  
President of ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter 2020-2022***

***In your LinkedIn profile you describe yourself as a connections coach and growth catalyst. Please elaborate on that.***

Priya Sharma Shaikh: I know what it is like to be what I was before my self-awareness. I coach people to reconnect with themselves and once they do that they are

able to connect with others with authenticity. When I help people reconnect with themselves they feel liberated. They then are able to see others with a lot more kindness, abundance, and love. As babies we were very generous with our affection. As we grow we form impressions, stereotypes fall into place; we form perceptions of others and ourselves. We develop the way we choose to respond to situations we find ourselves in. Because we repeatedly have similar responses to certain situations, a habit sets in and eventually our personality develops, which then displays certain behaviours. The behaviours we project to the world form perceptions about us, which either connect or disconnect people from us. And suddenly we find ourselves midway in life, feeling - I don't have any friends, I lost the love of my life, I

Priya Sharma Shaikh (ICF-PCC) President of ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter 2020-2022 did not let a retinal detachment that resulted in a temporary loss of vision stop her from leading the ICF India Coaching Conclave 2022 to be a great success. Gayatri Krishnamurthy and Amita Bharath interviewed her about her vision for coaching, her purpose, and the conclave.

am stuck with this or I don't have that anymore. I don't have peace. I don't know what happiness is any more.

In my conversations with my clients I see they are not able to be comfortable with who they authentically are. When you are inauthentic you are masked ... you are spending your energy being someone you are not, in front of others. This does not serve you well over time and therefore you don't play at full potential in the arena of life.

So in the coaching process when a client has self-awareness and gets clarity of purpose, it is often one of the most beautiful and intimate moments of their life ... they finally get to MEET THEMSELVES and know what they are here for. From there begins their journey of authentic connection and growth.

### ***Tell us about the ICF India Coaching Conclave 2022.***

PSS: In 2018, it was decided that ICF Coaches in India will host an annual conference on coaching. Two such conferences had been hosted by Bengaluru in 2018 and Chennai in 2021. I put up my hand to take on the next conference in 2022. We were excited to have the baton handed to us. We conducted a survey to understand what coaches and people beyond our fraternity wanted from the conclave.

The responses helped us to focus on relevant data points in our subsequent brainstorming sessions. These resulted in us curating the theme of the conclave: It's time to rise and our vision – Making coaching more visible, comprehensive and accessible to all. The creative ideation and the visualization of the logo has the representation of RIPPLES, an initiative that was introduced at the start of my presidency, - we aimed for impact with

every bit of effort by us members.

We had 10 channels of work with allocated anchors and team members – collectively over 10 months over 50 people joined. However, it was thanks to the consistent efforts of about 25 coaches from across India that we had a hugely successful conclave and spread our vision of coaching to approximately 1000 participants and many more beyond.

### ***How did you pull it together despite having the retinal detachment surgery a month prior to the event?***

Teamwork was the hallmark of this purposeful event. My retinal detachment was detected on 23 July, exactly a month before the conclave. We had already come up the curve on several of the work channels but we still had loads to get done. Overnight my left eye was blinded and I was advised immediate surgery. I spoke to the conclave secretariat Shripad, Sindhu and Devarajan, and proposed that one of them take on the baton from me as chairperson. I did not want the conclave to suffer. We were after all creating something HUGE that was poised to make great impact. The team collectively decided that I continue to be the chair while they would reach out on the phone for discussions and decisions. I need not worry they assured me. All would be well. Their compassion gave me courage and hope. I started chanting the 3 Idiots dialogue - ALL IS WELL until I went in for surgery on 25th of July. It was a tough time for me, but I slowly but surely, restarted my work. I acknowledge the team of volunteer coaches from all the six ICF chapters in India for every bit of their efforts that made this conclave truly make RIPPLES.

### ***Tell us about the Awards at the conclave. What made that come about?***

I'm a great believer in the power of good intentions, which somehow make magical things happen. Some time back there was

an entity with a name similar to the ICF that had an award ceremony. Several of our member coaches participated and claimed the awards distributed by them in great numbers. On speaking to a few of them we gathered the need of our coaches to have such validations. As ICF we have three global awards processes in place – Prism awards, Circle of Distinction and Young Leader Award. We have close to 1500 coaches across India working really hard to make a difference. So we thought, why don't we host ICF awards in India too, that could recognize and celebrate the organizations and individual coaches who have demonstrated a remarkable commitment to advancing the art, science and practice of professional coaching within their ecosystems and beyond.

Initially there was a lot of negativity and the opinion was we do the event next year, and make an announcement to do it next year. The initial working team -- Krishna Praveen (Hyderabad), Mamata Asthana (Mumbai), Pradeep Natarajan (Pune) and I were convinced to host the awards after speaking with Stephanie Norris, Awards Director, ICF headquarters. Assurance of support and encouragement from Pac Nararat Vachiramanaporn our regional head was also encouraging. Soon Sunny Bhasin and Debeshi Chakraborty joined us from ICF Delhi and we collectively decided to give it our best shot.

I'm so glad we went ahead because it was a grand success. We had hundreds of queries, a fantastic social media campaign, over 30 applications and a brilliant Jury panel too. It was a record time success story and I can't thank the team which literally flew with their assumed responsibilities. To finally host the award show and have 4 of those winners take away their prizes was an emotional high.

### ***Tell us something about your most memorable coaching moment.***

PSS: Every coaching session has been magical for me really whether there is an AHA moment or not because when I coach I am living my purpose. One such example was an international client who was going through a really difficult time in their work environment with their new boss, due to a recent acquisition. My client was expecting to join the C-suite but with the new boss in place, their coveted role remained a dream. My client felt cheated and demotivated. Sharing vulnerably without feeling judged, made them feel relieved. By the end of the process, they felt liberated, with the realization of the reason their insecurity and that the situation was of no fault of the new person who had come in; that they are probably feeling scared about the whole new situation they have got to take care of. This led to exploring how my client could be a support to their new boss, and before they realised they had lifted the weight off their shoulder.

### ***You have done so many different things Priya, how did you come to be a coach?***

PSS: Coaching happening to me was serendipity. From a very young age, I have been that person who listened. Listening made me feel compassionate and completely present and people felt valued and heard and enabled to move forward. Seeing people make a shift was fulfilling.

After I turned 50, I did a weeklong, intensive reflection of all my life journeys – marriage, parenthood and work in frontline sales and marketing functions in media, FMCG, education, finance. The common thread in all my experiences that gave me joy and be PRESENT in the here and now were: 1. Connecting with PEOPLE 2. Listening to their STORIES 3. Feeling Compassion for

them and enabling them to take mindful action.

Coaching happened like a beautiful accident in my life. Different people played their part in this serendipitous discovery. Someone who suggested coaching helped me understand what it is: it helps people to move forward, by listening and holding confidential space for them. Then more serendipitously, coach training happened - pieces of a puzzle fell into place and things rolled thereafter.

make an impact, and that is only possible when we live authentically and believe in ourselves. Coaching made me believe in the power that lies within me, and I wanted to leverage that, and help others feel the same way. I wanted to help my clients be the hero of their life. So, despite the naysayers in my core circle I chose to make Coaching my profession at the age of 50. Today I'm a PCC coach and a practitioner of tools like HOGAN, Extended DISC, Enneagram, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. I simply love what I do.

There is in each of us, the opportunity to



**Priya Sharma Shaikh (ICF-PCC)**

*Priya Sharma Shaikh was the President of ICF Mumbai Charter Chapter for the term 2020-2022. She is a storyteller, a growth catalyst and a published author of JUNGEE: A warrior's journey. She calls herself a 'Connections Coach'. She helps clients connect with themselves, make meaningful connections within their ecosystems, and make mindful personal and professional choices to be the hero of their life. She is also a practitioner of tools such as HOGAN, Extended DISC, Enneagram, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming.*





# Essential Elements in Building your Coach Brand

*By Lara Matthai*

After 15 wonderful years in global marketing, social media and branding roles, I was fortunate to experience the power of coaching and discover that I had both skill and passion for it. In pursuit of becoming a Professional Certified Coach with the ICF, I developed a deep appreciation for the art and science of coaching.

As a marketer at heart I am always inclined to look at the coaching world with the concepts and ideas I worked on for over a decade. So, when someone recently reflected aloud on the proliferation of coaches and said, “Throw a stone and it will likely hit a coach”, my immediate reflection was, “What an opportunity to leverage the power of branding!”.

A crowded marketplace, low differentiation, many comparable offerings and everyone vying for attention form the perfect conditions for good branding to drive significant advantage. That said, creating a logo, a tagline or a mission statement does

Lara Matthai leans into her branding expertise to break down the basics of building your coaching brand.

not equal creating a brand. Good branding is all about building trust and preference with the target clients or audience the brand aims to serve.

This article offers three basics to start coaches thinking about their brand building journey. They apply equally to personal brands and business brands.

## **Brand Purpose:**

Today’s consumers are discerning. They aren’t just looking for price and functionality, they are also looking for association. Who am I associating with? What do they stand for? What shared values emerge from this purchase? It’s no surprise therefore, that consumers today prefer organizations with a higher purpose – one th greater than

merely making a profit. A brand's purpose outlines its reason for being, why it exists in the world.

Let's apply this to coaching.

Some become coaches to save others from the hardships they experienced, some to give back, some are skilled in the art of coaching, others have a specific expertise to share.... Whatever your reason for becoming a coach, it is likely to be bigger than just running another business or making a profit. As a coach looking to create a coherent brand, go back to your why and identify what still motivates you. The why that remains should align every part of your business, guide your mission, values and identity, allowing others to create stronger connections with you, beyond your immediate offering.

Assuming you have already defined your target client or audience, the below questions could help you as a coach to start shaping your brand purpose:

1. How clearly and convincingly can you articulate your purpose?
2. How aware of your purpose is your team or those you work with?
3. How does your current portfolio reflect your passion for and commitment to your purpose?
4. How have your ongoing choices (e.g., to take up or decline an assignment, to offer pro-bono work, to scale or not...) been honouring your purpose?
5. How can you and your business intentionally live up to your purpose even more?

These questions can serve as your compass, helping you as a coach make conscious choices. It can serve as a framework for your team to make the right decisions, help attract people who relate to your cause, create greater trust and loyalty

among customers and ultimately, harness the immense energy that comes from staying aligned with your authentic purpose.

### **Brand Differentiation:**

A Google search throws up about 20,50,000 results for "Leadership Coach in Bangalore". Try "Life Coach in Bangalore" and that number increases to about 90,10,000 results.

From a customer lens, so much of what is offered in the coaching industry looks identical and sometimes dubious. 'Discovering your true potential', 'Finding your purpose', 'Becoming a great leader' is offered widely and in some cases is magically "just one coaching program" away. In the realm of coaching or professional-personal development, offerings from coaches, books, workshops, trainers heavily overlap, making it difficult for customers to make informed choices.

From a coach's perspective, we realize that coaching is a journey and that every coaching experience is different – hinging on several factors such as the knowledge and expertise of the coach, their mastery over the process, the coachee's experience, the psychological safety and the value offered. Each coaching session is unique and cannot be repeated exactly, even when rendered by the same person.

So how can you differentiate and help your audience choose you? As a coach, you could begin by asking yourself these questions:

1. What is your audience looking for and how do they make purchase decisions?
2. How well do you know what other coaches in your domain offer?
3. What is truly different in what you bring to the table? (Often more than one)
4. To what extent does each of your

1. differentiations help the coachee?
5. What do your coachees appreciate in your offering?

Remember that differentiation is what is valued in the eyes of the coachee, not solely what you, as a service provider, believe is different. Also, you don't need to always find a differentiator; you can create one. Genuinely having clarity on how you are different or would like to be different, is the first step to creating a unique value proposition. It allows you to target your coachee before they target you. Positioning yourself clearly makes it easier for people to choose you and be confident in investing in your services when they are ready - the purchase decision is easier, the trust is higher and the chemistry is likely to be better. It also saves you time, money and effort in not advertising to those who aren't the right fit for your services.

### **Brand Promise:**

When you buy from Nike or McDonald's or Amazon or Ikea, you already have certain expectations about speed, product quality, service etc. These expectations may not have explicitly been shared with you but are your lived experience of the brand's promise. A brand promise is the promised experience that your customers can expect every time they engage with you. The more consistently a brand delivers on its promise, the stronger the brand's value grows.

As ICF credentialed coaches, we know that the rigorous focus on developing coaching competence, the commitment to a Code of Ethics and the continuous learning journey that coaches embark on enhances our ability to deliver an enriching and effective experience. Credentialed coaches have typically invested a significant amount of time, money and energy in their journey to mastery and can implicitly or explicitly commit to delivering at a high standard.

In addition to the above standards, as a coach, even if you don't explicitly share a promise, you can use the following questions to define one:

1. What do your clients expect from their experience with you?
2. Which are the attributes you can confidently deliver on?
3. What other attributes would you include which are core to your brand purpose/differentiator?
4. Seek feedback whether these are believable, beneficial and consistent.
5. How can you monitor performance to ensure these promises are being met?

Every touchpoint with your coachees – how your content is written, the way you advertise, how you sell and deliver on your offerings – should fulfil the promise you make. In coaching, we know that you cannot always separate the service from the provider. The brand and personality of the service provider are often inextricably linked and hence the promises you choose to put up may extend to how you need to show up too.

While Covid-19 took its toll on numerous businesses over the last few years, the business of coaching has not just survived, it thrived! Coaching has grown into a nearly \$3 billion industry over the past few years\*. However, a large part of it remains unregulated. In an age where you can buy a coaching certification for under \$20 on online platforms, it is incumbent on credentialed coaches to deliver on their brand promise – not just for the credibility of their own brand but the larger brand of the coaching profession itself. As coaches we often nudge our clients to a place of deep self-awareness - Branding starts from the same place of self-awareness, as it uncovers the human soul and spirit behind a business.

\* The 2022 ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study commissioned by The International Coaching Federation (ICF)

All views expressed are personal and not related to any organisation.

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**Lara Matthai (ICF-PCC)**

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# ***What are our Services Worth?***

***By Sreenivas Nagappa***

Pricing is a vexing question for everyone. As Coaches we probably think the problem is unique to our profession but reflect, for a minute, and you will realise, whether it is Maggi or Mercedes, a plumber or a painter -- everyone faces this dilemma. And, if you go by how everyone is claiming to have the lowest prices, it is apparent that no one has discovered the best way to do this. Here are some thoughts on addressing this but this is still, (a) work in progress and likely to remain so, and (b) very individual-specific.

We often think price should be a function of cost. And management literature talks extensively of cost-plus pricing and a host of related approaches starting with what it cost me to make or create the product or service that I sell. And you need to know your cost if you need to figure out if you are making or losing money. But as a coach what is our cost? If we lease an office maybe, we should consider that lease cost. If we hire staff, consider that too. But the big

**Sreenivas Nagappa provides insightful advice on pricing coaching services to the client.**

number is the cost of our time. What is one hour of our time worth? And if you spend an additional hour commuting, should not that also be added?

I prefer to approach pricing from the perspective of the buyer (rather than my own perspective as the seller). What value does my product or service unlock for the buyer? There is a simple and powerful definition, in the Oxford dictionary, of value that is worth considering:

***The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.***

And this is in the eyes of the Buyer.

So, the real question to ask is "as a result of someone using my Coaching services, how much are they benefitting (the value) ". And therefore, what can be my share of that value?

How aggressively should I price my services?

As in everything in life, the answer is 'It depends'.

What determines Pricing? It is a function of:

- value of my product or service to the buyer-- the more quantifiable the better
- perception of the value created – never discount the value of anecdotal evidence
- my expectations – what should I be earning from this assignment/ is there a likelihood of a future stream of revenue?
- buyer's expectations – apart from the value created, do they have other seller's benchmarks
- my cost structure – specifically if I have out of pocket costs
- attendant terms & conditions – will they pay me today or next month
- emotional considerations on both sides – what is the risk / do I like the person / what pressure am I under to close the deal

We often think of low pricing as getting a foot in the door. But look around you – raising prices is seriously difficult. So don't kid yourself – your "introductory pricing" is here to stay.

And then, separate the strategy from the tactics. However valuable a buyer might find your services, there is a human tendency (particularly in Asia) to bargain. Most of us hate this part. But just as we advise our Coachees – it is inevitable and hence is there a way I can learn to embrace it; Okay, if not embrace then at least give it

a warm handshake!

Assuming you have done your homework and benchmarked yourself and are feeling good about your proposal, prepare yourself for what might be on the bargaining table:

1. Other Coaches are cheaper: Talk of what you bring to the table. And even if the buyer seems sceptical, consider the possibility that it is just an act. After all, why is she spending time talking with you if your price is completely unacceptable to her.
2. No Budget: Probably true of small companies but not true of large corporates for whom the spend on coaching is miniscule. Either this means that the value you are providing is not there or not recognised, or the Buyer just wants to bargain. If you are confident, call the bluff.
3. Can you mitigate Risk to the Buyer: If you are not able to deliver, will the Buyer be in a tight spot? Can you make a money back offer (ensure you agree on criteria of success beforehand)? Do you give the flexibility to the Client to terminate the contract early?
4. Can you make a non-monetary offer? Just like the shampoo that boldly announces 10% extra without changing the price. Maybe an extra 30 minutes, maybe some tool that does not cost you much, maybe a report, maybe an offer to convert an online session into an in-person one....
5. Ask for something in return. As in "if you can give me one more Coachee maybe I can consider the price".
6. Explore the options e.g., "if the sessions do not have to be in person, I can consider..."

And finally, even if the outcome is not in your favour, do not take it personally. Stay in touch with the other party and over time build that level of comfort. And keep getting

better at what you do thereby raising the value of your offering.

All of the above is easier said than done.

Practising it, for me, has been a conscious effort with a fair share of self-doubt. Having traversed the road, I can vouch for its efficacy now.



### **Sreenivas Nagappa (ICF-PCC)**

*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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