

CONVERSATIONS...

IN SEARCH OF THE INNER SELF

ICF Bengaluru
Charter Chapter

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Thriving as a coach

From the Editorial Desk

Believe, Live and Thrive

We extend a warm welcome to our readers. We have a wide variety of articles. The one which resonated the most with us is about Overthinking, written by Pankaj Dixit. As editors of this issue, we stand guilty of it. And many members must have experienced it as well. The questions, “Should I write an article?”; “What if it is considered too ordinary”; “Others have expressed this view” and “Anyone could have Googled and written this article” and many more points are pondered, perhaps over ruminated. We are glad that talented chapter members have found the time and the will to contribute articles. We have to overcome this fear. We urge other members to stand firm against the overanalytical tendency of the mind, and express themselves. The creative subconscious awaits our willingness to wander.

And as you wander into the by lanes of the right brain, explore holding space for the co-creation of flow in your sessions. Refresh your coaching approach when you read Nikhil Benegal’s article about inviting Flow into the client’s life: it raises the simple and appealing quest for human happiness by optimising the flow of experience (If the name of the Father of Flow Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi mystifies you, here’s a clue: say Me-High, Cheeks send me high).

This is a perfect segue into the interview that this edition features. The interview format has been curated from a spontaneous, authentic and delightful conversation shared between Vijaylakshmi. S, President of the ICF Chennai Charter Chapter, and the editors. Read what makes “Viji” tick and her perspective on all things coaching.

There are other submissions on financial coaching, building a coaching business, mentoring and the learning from it. We invite original articles on any topic related to coaching. We have found that requesting articles on pre-established themes often leads to hesitancy and overthinking. Yet you may have noticed that we still have themes. Taking the editorial bit between the teeth, we have taken to “crafting themes” to corral the articles after our members submit. The Theme for this fifth edition is Thriving as a Coach. Do work those coaching muscles against the CoachWorld puzzle, the crossword In this edition. Collages, Haikus and other forms of artistry are eagerly awaited.

As editors, we have been privileged to work and interact with many members, some of whom will be writing in our future editions. This has been a source of joy and a lot

of learning. We invite other people to join us on this side of the table and help us curate future editions. The diversity of the team is bound to enhance the quality of our conversation.

We look forward to hearing from you. Feedback and feedforward will only help us improve our quality and widen readership.

So drop us a line at conversations.icfbengaluru@gmail.com.

Before closing this editorial, we must thank our designer and publisher Vidhi Vala for her excellent and painstaking work for the Fifth edition.



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Amita is a new and as yet uncredentialed coach. She is passionate about coaching as a tool for learning and development. She has an MA in Special Education needs and Inclusion and ADHD coach training. She wants to make the coaching intervention an option for neurodivergent students, families, and adults in India. Amita also partners with NGOs in the Diverse Learning Needs space to create greater acceptance and awareness of neurodivergent persons in our midst.

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From The President's Desk

I take this opportunity to congratulate Gayatri and Amita in brilliantly editing our 5th edition of our magazine. Six stalwart members have contributed to the Fifth edition of our wonderful Magazine. Special thanks to Pankaj, Bikramjit, Mukesh, Vijayalakshmi, Nikhil and Amita, for contributing their time and effort to the latest edition of our wonderful Magazine.

When you read, you exercise your comprehension and analytical abilities. It fires up your imagination and stimulates the memory centres of your mind. One of the advantages of reading is that it engages various parts of your brain. Writing takes that up many notches.

This magazine of ours is an example of how volunteers can come together and create things. Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." I would also like to appreciate all our members for contributing in their own way-- be it adding spice to our "Chai Pe Charcha", being part of our "Funtastic café" or enriching our learning sessions by participating in them.

I strongly encourage you all to actively participate and create more value and learning for all of us. Please contribute to this wonderful Magazine such that there is a diverse representation of ideas from our Charter Chapter to make it the best on the Globe.



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Coaching and Inviting more Flow Experiences in What We Do

By Nikhil Benegal

Flow is about optimising an experience, in such a way that a person's interaction with their environment 'flows' seamlessly from moment to moment. This has them feeling highly effective and motivated, immersed in their activities, and optimally successful. This is brought about by engaging in just-manageable challenges by tackling a series of goals through continuously processing feedback about progress and adjusting action in response to the feedback. This is how psychologist and researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi described and created the idea of Flow.

The phenomenon of Flow is experienced as something desirable, to have more of, and one of the core activities recommended by Sonja Lyubormisky, who has been studying human Happiness and has a Ph.D from Stanford University in the field. This experience has long fascinated coaches who want to help clients be happy and successful in all facets of life.

If coaching invites a client to introspect about what they feel, think, want, say, and do—so that they can go back to being happier and more successful—then can this process help the person to optimize their experience or invite 'flow' more often?

As coaches what would be the questions we could ask? We typically start by asking the 'importance' question to gauge whether the client is willing to seriously commit to making changes and learn and grow: "What makes it important at this time for you?"; "what impact might this have if you don't do anything about it?" and questions of this sort. What else is necessary to

Nikhil Benegal opens a line of enquiry for inviting Flow into the coaching conversation. Could the coaching session co-create the conditions to reliably generate this most desirable, immersive state? Read on and write in.

generate conditions for optimised experience or Flow?

For Flow to happen,

- ‘Mistakes must matter’, the challenges must be important to the person.
- Challenges of import must be ‘just manageable’, matching the person’s current skills with a bit of stretch to keep it challenging.
- Information must be clear; what the person needs to do to be ‘successful’ must be unambiguous.
- Feedback must be as immediate as possible, available easily to enable constant monitoring.

Let me attempt a coaching approach that I use. All my dear fellow Coaches are invited to add, amend and improve upon this!

The ‘importance’ and the ‘just-manageable’

While the first-mentioned could be enabled by the ‘importance’ questions, the second– about ‘just manageable’ challenges– might be addressable by:

“What’s the real challenge here for you?”

“What do you feel now that you can do next?”,

“What do you want to do?”,

“What degree of comfort do you feel thinking of what you want to do next?”, and then maybe by the ‘no-limits’ questions such as:

“What would you want to if there were no limits to time, energy, money?”,

“What would you want to do if there were no limits of any sort?” and follow up with:

“What holds you back now?”, and

“What can you do now with what you have and are able to do?” type of questions. And then:

“What might be the most manageable small

step you will take first of all?”, and “What next?”, and “What else?” and so on until the challenge is ‘just manageable.’ The idea here is for the client to explore a balanced ‘challenge to skill ratio’ that stretches them enough to absorb them in the challenge without stressing them out, or on the flip side, boring them to distraction.

Clear Information

The third-mentioned condition for Flow is Clear Information on action required to be successful. This could be invited by:

“What comes up for you as ‘clearly required’ to do to achieve what you desire?”,

“What’s clear for you as the first single step that you can take?”,

“What can you do to be clearer about every step you need to take?”

Here, the client could be invited to first try what comes up as the most obvious and immediately ‘do-able’ thing to do, in the direction of the goal that matters, and then step up the challenge as confidence and skill increase.

Immediate Feedback

And then onto the fourth-mentioned– about Immediate Feedback– for continuous processing:

“What will make you immediately ‘know success’; know that you are progressing on the right track?”

“What can you do to arrange for constant ‘soon-as-possible’ feedback on your progress?”

Immediate feedback may be spontaneously occurring in some activities – like driving in Bangalore traffic! It may be unclear and slow as well as in leadership behaviour impact where a more deliberate effort may be required to get it. The client needs to have a

readily readable scoreboard, or may have to be resourceful enough to arrange it for themselves. Sports and games have dynamically updated scores called out or on scoreboards and are ideally suited for that reason to invite Flow. Immediately knowing the success rate of the last rally while playing tennis makes it clearer as to what I should be doing next: more of the same play; the same but differently; or something quite different. Imagine the disruption to the flow of my game if I did not know whether the last point was won or lost!

Following through

A check-in on actions to be taken can round off a commitment to experiment with inviting Flow. And the following session can

review actions taken and status of progress, to learn the practice of inviting Flow in activities where 'mistakes matter'.

In conclusion

While coaching approaches are intuitive, coming as they do out of our listening, and follow a broad structure suggested by the ICF competencies, this article is an attempt to trigger thinking amongst coaches on what might be the general contours of the subjective spaces we could co-create with our clients that will invite 'flow' into their experiences. After piquing their interest in this exploration, could these conditions enable 'flow'? And could this be a sustainable and reliable tool for the generation of this desirable state of being?



Nikhil Benegal (ICF-MCC)

Nikhil Benegal is an executive coach and a behavioural assessor. He is interested in how the coaching process and relationship space can advance genuine learning and change – in domains of work as well as generally in life.

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Picture credit Bikramjit Maitra

Types of Mentoring: Learning is the Key

By Bikramjit Maitra

I came across the term coaching after I decided to exit my corporate career. As I reflect on my corporate experience, I realize I did get a bit of coaching, albeit informal, but a lot of mentoring. I recall I benefited immensely from those learnings. These mentors had intelligence, the ability to communicate, and the ability to build trust. Many times, they were my role models as well. Even now, as a practicing coach, I receive mentoring and I value mentoring a lot.

It is important to introduce my favorite definition of learning at this point. "A process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning" (Ambrose et al., 2010). The other quote about learning I often remind myself of is "As long as I live, so long do I learn." This quote is from Sri Ramakrishna. If we combine these two, we understand that life is ever-changing, and learning is the means of being in control of those changes. We often use the expression "self-learning," where perhaps "self" is redundant as all learning ultimately depends on the effort put

Learning, Mentoring and Coaching have supported Bikramjit Maitra's process of growth across his professional career in corporations and as a coach. Read his insightful first person narrative about mentoring.

in by ourselves. When external influence is minimal, we often add 'self' to highlight that aspect. However, all learning primarily depends on the self. In general we may talk about a few learning aids where active participation of others is required. Some common aids are training, facilitation, mentoring, and coaching.

Structurally, so-called learning through training, mentoring or coaching and self-learning are not very different. In both situations actual change is implemented by the individual. The difference is in getting the impetus for change. In Training, there is a simulation process and learning happens more through the verbal channel. In the case of mentoring, learning happens in part by telling, and partly by co-creating situations.

In the case of coaching, learning is accomplished by asking powerful questions to make people think. I want to narrate three significant learning experiences I have had without getting into the semantics of the methods involved.

The first one was at the beginning of my career. I was a young service engineer. I used to go to customer organizations to maintain their electromechanical accounting machines. It was one of my earliest calls to go alone to a distant client site. It was the end of the month and they wanted the device fixed at the earliest. But I was not able to fix it, and it became so late at night that I had to catch the last train. I reached home extremely late.

The next day my manager called me as soon as I got to the office. He told me if I stayed so late in the future and took the risk of traveling on the last train, he would not be responsible for me. He told me that even if I could not fix the problem, I should leave the client site much earlier. He said if required, he would speak to the client and take responsibility.

Later he explained, “If you lead a team, the client is your responsibility, but team members' welfare and safety are of equal importance. So, if your security is compromised, it would be my failure. You did not even try to reach me, which means you thought I would not be accessible”. He said that “for me, that is a big failure”. He reminded me of what he had said to me on the first day. He had said that as ‘you will be alone, you should give very high importance to your safety’.

He admonished me, “You did not understand what I meant. But after this experience, I hope you will never forget this. In doubtful situations, always try to reach me.” He also said when you become a leader,

you also make sure that your team members can approach you without hesitation when they face any issue.

One of my other mentors was my superior and a couple of levels senior to me. He was very deliberate and had a severe façade. When we became close, I realized he also had an excellent sense of humour. He had the unique ability to ask seemingly naive questions to make people climb the wall with frustration. I remember once I was trying to convince him to get his support to change a policy. This was just after taking charge of a large team for the first time in my career.

I had written an application with all my arguments. He asked me to leave the document with him and return after a couple of hours for a discussion. When I met him, he started asking me about policies with no connection to the one in discussion. I tried hastily to deal with those questions and drive the debate back to the specific policy I wanted changed. This went on and on, and after 45 minutes, he told me, “it seems you do not know enough about our policies. You have the handbook; read and understand all the guidelines and then come back tomorrow for a discussion.”

I was agitated and frustrated but could do nothing. So that evening, I went through the policy handbook thoroughly. The next day I went to meet him armed with a copy of the policy handbook for ready reference if we get into any dispute. As soon as I went to his desk, he asked me to wait and fished out my application, and with a flourish, he signed it along with his recommendation of my proposal. I was stunned. I asked him why he did not sign it earlier. He said, “Now that you know all the policies of the organization you work for, that gives you the right to try and change one if you find it not working out in a particular situation. As a

manager and a leader, you need to know and respect the policies and implement them with the right intent. If you do not know them well, how can you do that? When you gave the application, I read it and realized the merit of the same, but I wanted to make you know all other policies with similar depth.”

I had to agree that if he did not force me, I would never have been so thorough with the organization's policies. This learning has helped me tremendously in many challenging situations in different organizations.

I have also come across mentors who do or say things that may not be the best to pursue. I call them "negative" mentors.

When I joined my first job, we were allocated a technical mentor who conducted our specialized training on electromechanical accounting machines I would be maintaining later. Even after our training, we used to talk to him and get his insights into different technical problems we came across in the field. He was highly knowledgeable and very patient with us. But after a while, those machines became obsolete and were replaced. We migrated to newer technologies relatively quickly. But it was tough for him. The organization planned

for technology transfer for new generation machines. A few of us conducted the sessions. He did not feel good about it and chose not to join.

We witnessed how within a year he became an insignificant employee from a technical guru. Soon, from being a technical guru and mentor, he became our most aggressive fault finder. Many times the fault finding was entirely baseless. One of my most important lessons was from this. I call this to be a negative mentoring experience. I realized if I am not careful, I too could find myself in a similar situation in my career. As a result, I invested two hours daily to keep myself updated throughout my professional career.

Coaching, Mentoring and learning experiences play a key role in the trajectory of a successful coach. That said cultivating a mind and attitude to learn is vital for any coaching and mentoring effort to be successful. As a coach, every coaching session is a tremendous learning opportunity. I have a peer mentor to share the experiences of each coaching session I undertake. Analyzing what went well and what could have been better has made me a better coach.



Bikramjit Maitra (ICF-PCC)

Trained as an Electrical Engineer, Bikramjit Maitra, has worked in diverse leadership positions in corporate. Now he is an executive coach and also provides advisory to establish business aligned people practices. Bikram is a PCC from ICF and SP from EMCC. He built his coaching practice with the belief that anybody can significantly improve with sustained thoughtful efforts.

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Evoked Awareness of the mind to Manage Overthinking

By Pankaj Dixit

If the only thing people learned was not to be afraid of their experience, that alone would change the world.

- Sydney Banks

In these days of increasing uncertainties, more and more clients I see are reporting overthinking as a problem that they are unable to manage. We know that overthinking is one of the most common problems in our lives. However, it seems to be getting worse every day. In a study, it was found that as many as 73% of young people have reported feeling the effects of overthinking.

(Source: <https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/what-causes-overthinking-and-6-ways-to-stop/>)

Pankaj Dixit invites the reader to observe the mind with awareness as a way to manage overthinking and burdensome intrusive thoughts.

Overthinking is excessive thinking, worry, and mental agitation that interferes with effective action, performance, and achievement. It is a psychological state in which the mind obsesses over concepts and ideas, typically to the point of irrationality.

We all have intrusive thoughts from time to time: thoughts that are unwanted and unwelcome. For some people, these thoughts can be so persistent and distressing that they significantly impact the quality of the individual's life. Despite this, there is still a



lot of misinformation about intrusive thoughts and how to deal with them.

Overthinking is not just a symptom of anxiety or self-doubt. It's also a mental state where you think about the same things over and over again. It's been said that many people are prone to overthinking because of their perfectionist tendencies, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence and imposter syndrome. (Imposter syndrome is a state of self-doubt and a feeling of being a fraud, without any reasonable evidence. In this frame of mind you are continuously worried about what people are thinking of you and when they will find you out.)

It is no secret that overthinking can be dangerous. In fact, it can lead to a whole host of problems, including anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. But the question I often encounter from my client is: "How can I stop it?"

The human brain is a remarkable instrument. It can solve problems, answer questions, deal with issues, hold a

conversation, and more. However, the human brain comes with some significant drawbacks: it's not perfect, and there are plenty of people who might argue that it's far from perfect. For example our brain filters, deletes and modifies the information it receives from the senses based on memories, context and our current mood and state.

One common misconception about overthinking is that it is possible to simply stop having intrusive thoughts. However, this is not the case. Intrusive thoughts are a normal part of human cognition, and everyone experiences them to some degree. The key is not to try to stop the thoughts, but to manage them in a way that is helpful and healthy for you.

The bad news is that you can't really stop your thoughts. Thoughts are beyond your control and the more you try to stop them, the more forcefully they reassert themselves. But there is good news. And the good news is that thoughts can't harm you if you don't give value to them. The problem of overthinking is not that you think too much, but that you don't listen to yourself. It's a problem of your inner voice, which recognises the compulsive and continuous nature of these thoughts, not being clear or strong enough. The mind is constantly generating thoughts, and it is impossible to stop these thoughts from occurring. However, it is just as important to remember that thoughts are just thoughts. They are not reality. Just because you have a thought, it doesn't mean that you have to act on it.

The answer is to evoke awareness.

Under the 'Communicating Effectively' group, the ICF enlists 'Evokes awareness' as a core competency for the coaches. This is defined as: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such

as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy.

It is interesting to note that this competency was earlier called 'Creating Awareness'. The ICF has thoughtfully renamed it as 'Evokes Awareness' because awareness is not a matter of creation. It is recognised. Every single one of us already possesses it at all times. It is a matter of evoking or invoking. Awareness is not something you create—it's a matter of recognizing that you're already aware.

Awareness cannot be gained by resisting or denying anything. Awareness can only be attained by letting go of all striving, resistance and denial. Awareness is what allows you to take a pause and observe that you are aware of your body, your mind, your thoughts and then notice the one who is aware. Even though you can't 'see' it, you have no doubts about it. You "know" it, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that you are this "knowing" itself. This is the place from where you can notice everything else and still remain unaffected by anything. This is the place where insights can be found.

Insights come from a deeper place than from thinking or conceptualizing - they're more about recognizing than inferring, concluding or deducing. Another way to say this could be that they come from the heart rather than mind.

As a coach my endeavour is to bring the client to this place of being present and look around. This is the place of insights. I often use mindfulness as a tool to evoke awareness. Mindfulness is an effective tool to deal with the problem of overthinking because it invokes your capacity to be aware of and be detached from your thoughts. In other words, mindfulness is the gap between our thoughts, a gap that can be experienced and can offer perspective.

Overthinking occurs when we become so concerned with exploring and evaluating a thought that the thought consumes us. Overthinking is a problem because, at its core, it's exhausting and unproductive. Mindfulness is a powerful tool that can help you break the cycle of overthinking. By learning to focus on the present moment, you can train your brain to stop dwelling on past mistakes or future worries. Mindfulness can also help you to accept things as they are, which can be a huge relief when you're feeling overwhelmed by your thoughts.

To support clients who seek help for overthinking, I typically employ a mindfulness

exercise. By progressively bringing awareness to their breathing, their body, and their thoughts, I guide my clients to notice that they are separate from all of these sensations and none of these sensations can actually touch their true reality. We don't have to stop our thoughts; we just have to stop giving them importance. With regular practice, clients often report an increased awareness of the gap between self and the thoughts. This awareness alone is sufficient to calm them down and enable them to accept things as they are and take the most appropriate action.



Pankaj Dixit (ICF-PCC)

Pankaj has been coaching leaders and managers for career advancement and transition for over 10 years. Widely traveled with exposure to multinational and multi-cultural environments, he has worked for over 25 years as a leader and business unit head in Fortune 50 companies in the banking and the IT industry. He helps his clients to discover the mindsets and mental attitudes which stop them from achieving their goals. He coaches them to leverage their strengths while challenging them to grow out of their comfort zone.

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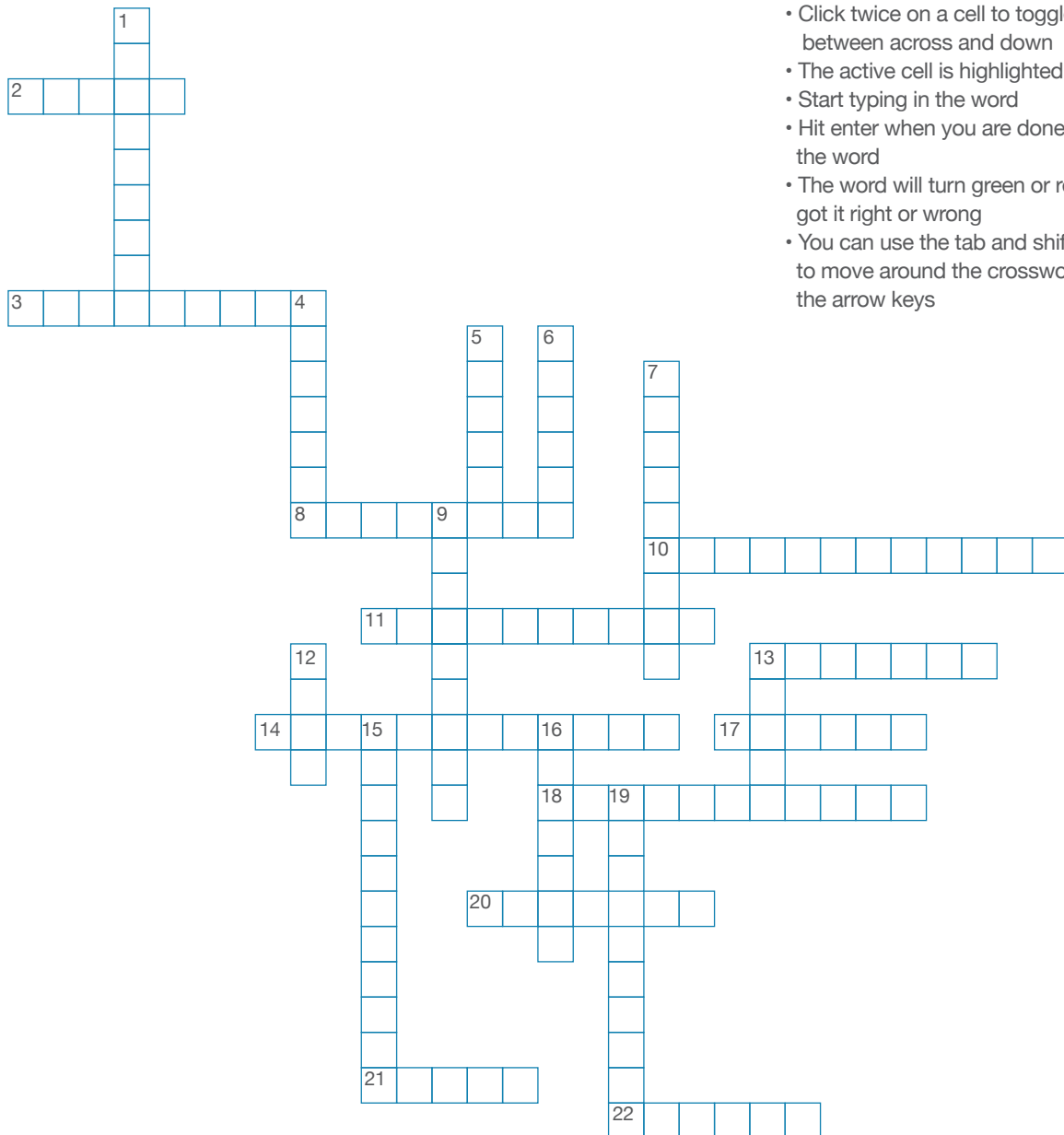
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The Coachworld puzzle

by Amita Bharath and Gayatri Krishnamurthy

[Click here to play online](#)

- Click a cell on the crossword grid, or click a clue
- Click twice on a cell to toggle between across and down
- The active cell is highlighted in blue
- Start typing in the word
- Hit enter when you are done typing in the word
- The word will turn green or red if you got it right or wrong
- You can use the tab and shift-tab keys to move around the crossword, and the arrow keys



ACROSS

2. this is the _____ edition of our chapter magazine
3. When a person is emotionally ready to grow by identifying problem areas and working to overcome them, they are this.
8. Coach the person not the problem
10. a practice of being present mentally and physically in order to be in a state of synchrony between mind and body.
11. a profession where expertise and advice is provided
13. coaching that supports coachees integrate mind and body experiences
14. Coaching conversations are this to grow trust and safety
17. principles intrinsic to an individual
18. Check-ins keep the coachee on track and _____
20. an intervention that helps a client overcome emotional issues towards better mental health
21. The psychologist behind the Growth Mindset
22. _____ and Comfort do not coexist (Rometty)

DOWN

1. motivation which involves doing something personally rewarding to you
4. Support a coachee by eliciting reflection and action steps towards a goal
5. a refusal to admit an obvious truth or reality
6. minimal standards of conduct created by professional organizations
7. providing the coachee another view
9. queries that elicit thoughtful responses from the coachee
12. Model of coaching which helps coachees to learn
13. What goals must be
15. Marshall Goldsmith's developmental exercise
16. a person who provides group or individual learning through goals, tools and assessments
19. accelerating the growth of the coachee through the right tools

Answers on pg.26



“Build awareness, EQ skills in society to undo elitist coaching image”

Interview with Vijayalakshmi S, MCC MP



Master Certified Coach Vijayalakshmi is President of the ICF Chennai Charter Chapter. A powerhouse of Coaching talent and energy, she was, in 2021, highly commended at the EMCC Global Coaching

Awards. Vijayalakshmi integrates her rich experience in Management Consulting, Mediation, Human resources, and Law with her commitment to Coaching excellence.

About a year ago, “Viji” as she is known, and the ICF Chennai Chapter Management Committee helmed the first ever virtual ICF India global conclave. The Conclave was scheduled finally in August, on the heels of the deadly second wave of Covid -19. The impact created by the global conclave, aptly themed Coaching For Growth, is a testimony to the resolute human spirit of the Chennai Chapter, the volunteers and the other ICF India chapters.

This is part one of an interview curated from a reflective, spontaneous freewheeling

conversation between Master Certified Coach Vijayalakshmi and the Editorial team of Gayatri Krishnamurthy (ICF-PCC) and Amita Bharath.

Amita Bharath: Your Linked. IN profile says “Plays at Full potential” as the principle that guides you through life. Explain to our readers what this means for you.

Vijayalakshmi: So, for me, “play” is a very meaningful verb for me. I have been very fortunate to have been exposed to a lot of sports in my growing years. I think the whole concept of sport, apart from the competitive winning and losing, is about enjoying the play itself. Being a good player allows in you that dimension of playfulness, that lightness, which is so important. You really need to be in the moment, really enjoying what you are doing, feeling that adrenaline rush of enjoyment. That has stayed with me with pretty much everything I did in my life. So, if I think of a verb, top of mind, I think of Play.

Amita: How does this idea infuse your work as a coach?

Vijayalakshmi: That is how I show up as a coach. In my coaching engagements with clients, there will be that element of play, that lightness, which I think makes difficult things easy to navigate. I think that there is greatness in everyone, and most times we are too afraid to be in touch with that greatness. In all our lives there are persons who have been there in the background, who shine a light or hold our hands while we get in touch with that greatness. So, “playing at full potential” is something each one of us can do. Coaching, I think, fits beautifully into this as it is all about that playful partnership.

Gayatri: Who has played that role for you?

Vijayalakshmi: I think my parents did some tremendous role modeling there without ever sort of giving any gyan or teaching these things. I think I was very fortunate to grow up with parents who had an absolute, immense and a very innocent sort of trust and faith in their children, that their children would turn out right. Given that space, there is no way you can't flower and bloom.

There are other important people who played that role, but I think it's also been about people who kind of come and go into your life; some who are there and some who may not even be there in your life anymore

It has been a big thing for me to do my parents proud in terms of embodying some important values that they taught or just being good human beings, rather than in the typical way.

I have had teachers in school & college who played that role, friends, and mentors who have done that. And sometimes even strangers that you spend 2 days with who, with that one conversation, can put you in touch with who you can be.

For instance, by stature I am not very tall, just about five feet but I had the audacity to want to play basketball. While I was fast and athletic, my sports coaches' faith in me, against opponents twice my size. With that sort of space, it's natural that I would fill my own big shoes.

Amita: With everything you are--Coach, Mentor, Consultant, Chapter President, Mother, Wife, Daughter, colleague - and you do, how do you balance Being and Doing?

Vijayalakshmi: I think 'Being' and 'Doing' are two sides of the same coin. If you ask me, I'm quite a “Be-er”, I can be very reflective, I can be very much content with that space and at the same time, I know I can be quite a “Do-er”. I mean I'm quite a mover. I don't like just intellectualizing things; for me, action is very important. And I think the balance is quite seamless. So, when you are doing itself, you can be in the state of being. You can take those reflective timeouts to be in touch with yourself when you are doing.

I'll go back to what I said earlier about play; when you are in a state of play, it's a very primal state. It's how children are. Nobody teaches children how to play, and if you can do that, you are so much in touch with yourself, you are being yourself, you are authentic, you're all of that and yet at the same time, you are doing stuff, so the 'doing' and 'being' don't seem like disconnected pieces. I don't balance it out, I think it just all neatly kind of fits.

Gayatri: It's not easy, striking this fit between Doing and Being. Recalling the course by Prof. Peter Hawkins that we attended together and the idea of Labour and Resource, have you had to labour which is certainly Doing, and not Being. What if any is the secret sauce?

Vijayalakshmi: You know, “playing from

source”, it’s a beautiful concept that I picked up from Peter’s teachings. There is no secret sauce really. I think I do my best when I am very detached from the consequences, when I am detached from my audience, I’m not playing to the gallery and when I am completely doing it with my own sense of purpose and passion. The moment I lose track of that, and I bring in all these other variables, then I lose touch with my source, and it becomes very stressful.

In the lives that we lead and the political systems we are a part of, with multiple stakeholders, sometimes you can’t do that, and those are moments when I realize I’m not playing at my best. I think there are 2 things that I can think of that allow me to do this. One, I try my best to be detached from consequences, I want to enjoy the journey, the process, not so much the destination. In the process, (I try to) do everything the right way, and not really be bothered about consequences.

The second thing is irrespective of what the task on hand is-- whether it’s a small little communication that needs to be sent out, or a major project--my level of sincerity is just the same. I don’t do too much cost-benefit analysis, saying, “What’s the ROI on this?” In fact, I don’t think in terms of ROI, I think it just takes the pressure off me. So what if I don’t get return from this investment; that kind of detachment and being sincere about whatever I am doing allows that. And the moment I don’t see that I know that’s not the state I would like to be in.

it’s not like I was always like that. It has taken some shifts and experience; it has taken that maturity to understand that sometimes all that matters is the journey because you may not even be there until you reach the destination. You might have to move on to something else.

Amita: You call yourself a Coaching Evangelist. What is your vision as a Coaching evangelist?

Vijayalakshmi: My vision for evangelizing coaching is, how beautiful it would be if every person could pick up the phone and have a personal coach and say that “Hey, you know what, I want to have a conversation,”. I know this is a very simple way of putting it, but the point is, today, coaching is for a very limited few, it’s kind of elitist. There are certain barriers. There is a reason why it is like that, and I think that’s where the challenge is, but I think there has been a huge opportunity as well. In a country like ours, it’s not that the coaching-economics is always the bar. What if we could create that accessibility, what if coaching was so commonplace... that’s my vision.

Gayatri: This reminds me of something that I keep talking to people, that they need to write a will, it’s a passion of mine. I will tell people, and it’s amazing how many educated people don’t write a will. So, the availability of the person who will write the will is there, the will to write the will is not there. How do we address the crux of the problem: we want everyone to have a coach, do they know they need a coach?

Vijayalakshmi: it is, which is why I think creating coaching awareness is a very, very important thing. all the efforts that we do as ICF, or you know even other bodies, movements like ‘Coaches for You,’ and others, these are all drops in the ocean, but I think we got to start somewhere.

Some years back, maybe a few decades back, nobody would talk about going to counseling, and mental health. Nobody would really talk about it, but today I was overhearing two teenage girls talking the other day, “Oh, I think you know, she needs to see a therapist.” I don’t even know whether they know what a therapist does,

but at least people are talking about it. Today, people don't talk about coaches. When you say "coaches", there is a certain limited understanding.

The fact is a lot of our super stars, especially in the world of sport and other arenas have coaches. I mean, have you heard of a superstar who doesn't have a coach? And yet, this message is something that people don't kind of understand. So, I think it's important to make coaching easier to understand, is to break it down a little bit; remove the jargon around it, make it accessible.

We just want people to experience what coaching could be, it is that awareness creation through good quality coaches. And again, that's the other problem, because it's an unregulated profession; there are a lot of people who are probably not even trained in coaching skills who call themselves a coach. So, it's almost like caveat emptor, 'buyer beware'. You've got to be very careful that you don't land up with the wrong coach and you can be scarred for life.

There are challenges at both ends, but in an unregulated industry, creating this awareness, talking about the value, can be a challenge but we really must get to it.

I mean, 'we' is not just the coaches. I am saying that I know during the pandemic, the Government was driving so much awareness-creation on mental health. Everybody was talking about mental health. It would really be very nice if institutionally, at the school level, say ages 15 to 17 years, we can drive that awareness about coaching slowly, steadily, maybe over the next few decades. but I think we must start and that's really the way to go.

I am not saying that everybody must experience coaching as an intervention, I am talking about basic coaching skills: how do you listen to the other person; how do you emotionally, intelligently understand the other person; how do you build trust with another human being; how do you ask the right questions; how do you develop critical thinking in learners. Some of these things that can be made into modules and packaged because these are all people who are going to be our future workforce and they really need to pick up on emotional intelligence. Some of these things when addressed at the right time can have far reaching consequences and I think the coaching profession will be a beneficiary.



What is financial coaching and Is It for Me?

By Pankaj Dixit

Background

In my coaching practice with corporate executives, I meet quite a few people who are earning decently but are not managing their finances well. Many times, they are quite aware of this. They still feel that they have no time or expertise to do so. I find it strange that they do not prioritize how their well- and effortfully earned money can work for them.

What is financial coaching?

Financial coaching or money coaching is fundamentally about helping people discern how to make improved choices about their

Pankaj demystifies money or financial coaching for the busy corporate executive. Read on to explore how financial coaching can strike that balance between earning well and aligning money related mindset, behaviours, planning and investment.

money. A financial coach does not tell you where to invest your money; instead, they help you to figure out how to think about money so that you can achieve your personal financial goals. A financial coach may work with you to develop an investment plan based on your personal situation and aspirations. In addition, they may help you to create a budget and develop the right habits so that you can stick to your budget. Finally, a financial coach may work with you to improve your attitudes and behaviours around money. Financial coaches will not advise clients on specific investments though you may be able to discuss ideas with them if you have an investment in mind.

How does financial coaching differ from financial advising or planning?

Financial coaching is structurally different from what financial planners or advisors do. Financial planners and advisors give you specific advice on where to invest your money.

Usually they are affiliated with or employed by financial institutes and they help you to invest your money, according to your financial goals, in the appropriate schemes which those institutes offer. There are also independent financial planners and advisors who offer unbiased, affiliation-free advice. A Financial coach does not advise you on where to invest. They work with you to look comprehensively at your overall finances and at your perspectives about budgeting, investment, and savings. This includes your attitude

and behaviour towards money. They help you to look at these more holistically, making sure that you set your financial goals, and you learn behaviours and actions which align with your goals. They would also make sure that your financial goals are aligned with your values, your passions and preferences, your family background and your context and culture.

A financial coach can help you to learn to be independent in your decisions related to money and take control of your finances by making wise decisions in selecting the best, most suitable investment products available. In this way, they will help in your choice of investments and to create a savings plan and budget. Working on a current and desirable budget is an integral part of financial coaching. Your budget must match your financial aspirations.

How does financial coaching work?

A Financial Coach works quite similarly to a life coach or an executive coach. In other words, it is a highly customized approach. But as a practice a financial coach would usually start with asking questions to understand your current financial state and your goals. They may encourage you to list your assets and liabilities, your income, and expenses. They may enquire about your status, your family background, your culture and so on. Then they will work with you to

find out what you would like to achieve with your money in the short-term and the long-term.

With all this information they will help you to create your financial plan. Together you and they will draw a blueprint of your journey towards these financial goals, help you identify the limiting beliefs and roadblocks on the way. And help you identify alternatives that are aligned with your goals.

What can I expect as a result of financial coaching?

The results from financial coaching will depend upon what you want from it. You may have specific goals regarding your money and finances. You may also identify behaviours such as stopping wasteful spending, remaining disciplined within your budget, dealing with procrastination about investment, strategies to come out of debt and these can be achieved through financial coaching.

Having said that, usually financial coaching will result in a well-drawn out personal wealth plan and a roadmap to achieve it. You may also be able to identify and develop the right personal behaviours and habits related to your budgeting, spending, debt, savings, and investments.

Is financial coaching for me?

Financial coaching can be useful for those who would like to improve in managing their money by changing their behaviour, habits and attitude towards money, savings, and investment.

To determine if financial coaching is for you, you should be clear in your expectations from financial coaching. Here are some examples of some reasonable goals and expectations you can have from financial coaching:

- I would like to have clarity around my financial goals.
- I would like to inculcate proper savings and investment habits.
- I would like to learn about budgeting and savings so that I have enough to invest towards my financial goals.
- I would like to change my spending and investment patterns.
- I would like to know why I cannot save money or invest in the right place to achieve my goals.
- I have some investment ideas, but I am unable to move forward. I would like to bounce my thoughts off a knowledgeable person's expertise.

To contrast here are some sample unreasonable expectations from financial coaching:

- I would like to know how to double my money in the next 5 years.

- I would like some tips on the best equities scrips where I can invest my money for short- and long terms.
- I would like to know where to put my money to get the best returns.
- I would like to invest in futures and options or crypto currency and would like to learn how to start to make brisk money.
- I have some money to invest and would like some advice on where to invest.

Financial coaching, as can be seen here, is not about being a finance wiz or an investment advisor. This applies both to a coachee and the coach. To get a sustainable and satisfying coaching experience, this is an important but often neglected aspect. Money may not be paramount to many coaches, but we all need to know our baseline for long term sustenance.




Pankaj Dixit (ICF-PCC)

Pankaj has been coaching leaders and managers for career advancement and transition for over 10 years. Widely traveled with exposure to multinational and multi-cultural environments, he has worked for over 25 years as a leader and business unit head in Fortune 50 companies in the banking and the IT industry.

He helps his clients to discover the mindsets and mental attitudes which stop them from achieving their goals. He coaches them to leverage their strengths while challenging them to grow out of their comfort zone.

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Building a Successful Coaching Business

By Mukesh Sharma

One of the first lessons I was given when I started training as a Coach was that a Coach lived for two things.

- To make an impact in the lives of people he/she coaches
- To make good money while doing so

Since then, I have met hundreds of Coaches within India and outside, and this is what I have learned.

1. Every coach has been making a big impact – absolutely, undoubtedly. Most of the coaches, however, are not making a great income from Coaching. The coaches might be making good money from other services like consulting, training, running workshops, but from a pure Coaching perspective, apparently Coaches are not making enough.

As per the ICF 2020 Global Coaching Study, the average annual income of a Coach in Asia is a paltry USD 33600. Even for the USA, it is just USD 62,500.

Mukesh Sharma breaks down the process of establishing a successful, remunerative coaching business. He urges coaches to lean into a detailed, entrepreneurial approach.

The global average is USD 47, 100 which is Nothing to celebrate. The same study also said 93% of the Coaches provide other services to enhance their incomes.

2. 'If you are a good Coach, the money will come'. This is what perhaps most of us heard before we became full time Coaches. I am also aware that for some, this is completely true. I just wish that it were true for more Coaches. This article is an attempt to explore this subject in some detail and also share some of my learning over the past 10 years. These are my learnings alone and need not be the whole truth for all.

Most Coaches focus the most on enhancing their coaching skills; they attend

webinars and conferences; take courses and get certifications on the various facets of Coaching: team coaching, group coaching, systemic coaching, different assessments etc. The list is long and never ending. There is always something to learn. There is no doubt that It is important to continuously sharpen one's coaching skills. However, along with this, we also need to look at the business part.

Let us look at the coaching business as two parts :

1. Getting clients
2. Delivering the service.

We tend to concentrate and excel at the second part in a disproportionate manner. Maybe as we provide great and impactful service, we are reluctant to talk about money. Now I know that many coaches don't become coaches for the money. They have achieved what they wanted to achieve and now just want to give back to society. Even for them, I believe, it will help if they approach it as a business. How do you make a great impact if there are not enough clients?

If we are to look at it as a business, what are some of the areas we would need to look at?

Some of the basic questions you may like to answer are:

Why do you want to set up a Coaching business?

There are going to be a number of challenges to overcome to be successful in a business. Perhaps having a strong why would help you to stay on course in spite of any difficulties you face.

What would be some of your goals for the next 1, 3 and 5 years to achieve from this business?

Can you set some goals in terms of the

number of clients you want to service?
Amount of money you would like to earn?
Number of days or hours per week you would like to work?

What is the mindset you need to develop to be successful in this endeavor?

An Entrepreneur mindset is quite different from an employee mindset. You would need to take a certain number of risks, perhaps do a lot of stuff you are not used to doing, and face adversities on many fronts. Are you ready to handle them without crumbling?

If you have explored and answered these questions in depth, you are ready to start your business. The next step is to consider some of the following questions.

a) What is your business model?

There are hundreds of ways to start and build a business.

- Is your business going to have a brick & mortar or completely online presence?
- Do you just want to start as a freelancer? Are you going to go it alone or are you ready to invest in setting up a full-fledged company with employees? If so, will it be a Proprietorship or partnership or Private Limited or an LLP?
- Will you go it Alone or with some partners?

b) What is your target market? Some of the aspects you can ponder upon are:

- Will it be Businesses, Individuals, Students, or Just Women?
- Are you focusing on any specific geographies?
- Any niche you want to focus on: Career Coach, Leadership Coach, Life Coach.
- And last, but not the least, What is your Unique Selling Proposition?

- c) What are your products and services?
- One- on -one coaching; Group coaching.
 - Any specific tools that you use?
 - Any specific coaching model that you employ?

d) What is your revenue model going to be? How many clients would you need to reach these revenue goals? How many services/products would you need to sell to achieve your monthly/quarterly/annual targets?

- e) What is your marketing plan?
- Do you have a marketing plan to attract your target market?
 - Will you offer Free sessions or adopt paid-for strategies?
 - Would you need to conduct some seminars/conferences?
 - Would you need to write some content for social media platforms?

I hope by now you have a fair idea of what all you would need to do to set up Coaching as a proper business. All these possibilities might look quite overwhelming. You might look for some support from fellow coaches and join some groups to exchange ideas with

other coaches. You could even form an alliance with like minded coaches and embark on the journey together.

Here, I would like to share an easier way to start your coaching journey. These days, you have many companies who enroll coaches on contract. These companies have developed the ecosystem to sell coaching in large numbers to large corporations. They take care of the 'getting business' part and they use their coaches on contracts to deliver the service. Some such well-known companies are BetterUp, CoachHub, CoachSource and many more. Each has its own requirements, for e.g., type of certifications, number of hours of coaching hours, work experience etc. But once you get in, you just have to deliver the service and everything else would be taken care of by the company. It is a win-win situation for many coaches.

We are great Coaches and deserve to be compensated well for our services. With the right approach and some real hard work, it is possible to meet both your goals of creating an impact and earning a handsome amount of money while doing so. I wish you all the best.



Mukesh Sharma (ICF-PCC)

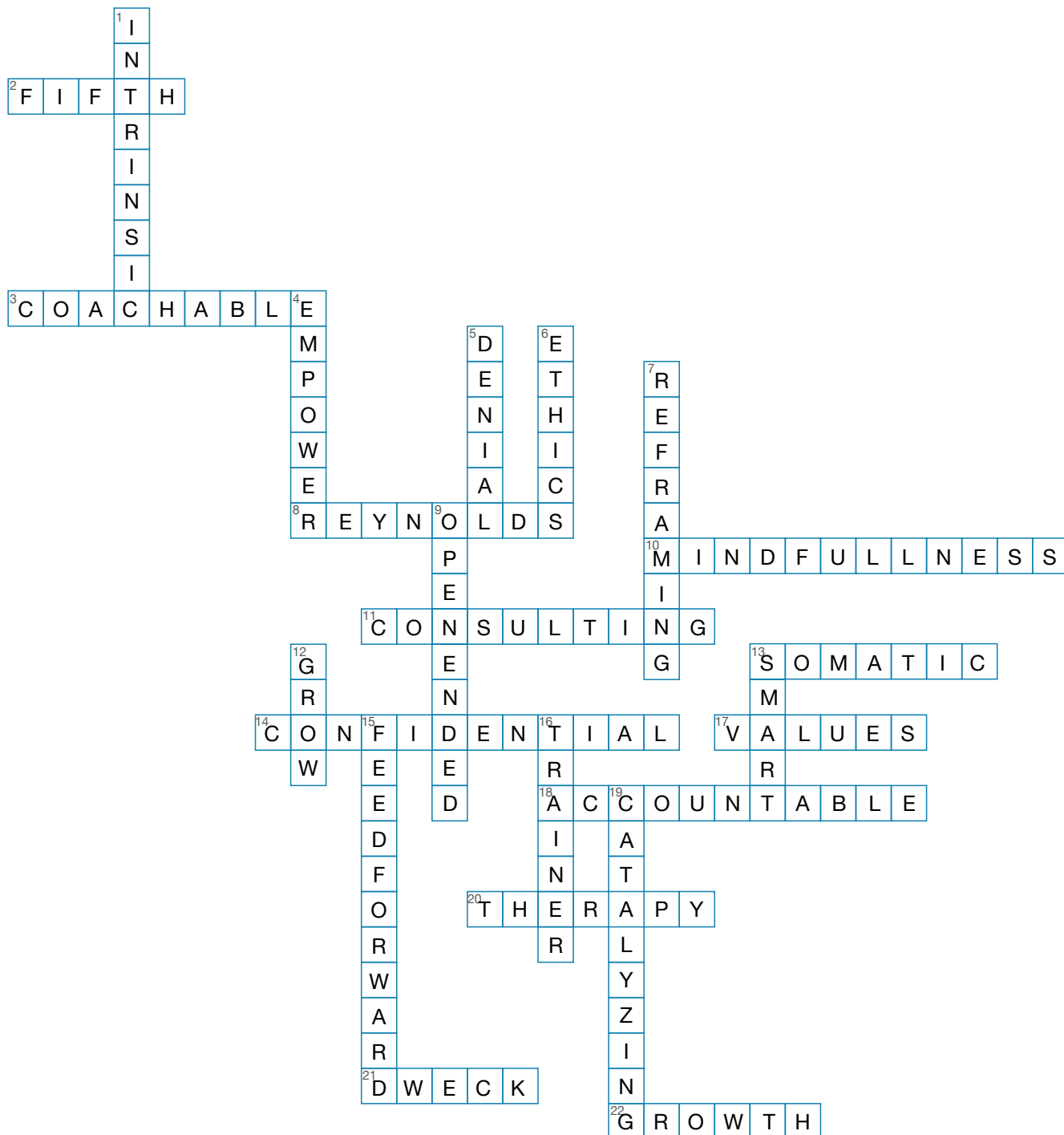
Mukesh Sharma is a leadership coach based out of Bangalore. He is a member of the ICF Ethics board (IRB). He is currently studying different ways of serving people thru coaching and would love to be connected with like minded coaches.

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The Coachworld puzzle

Answers





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