

# Threads of Mastery in Coaching

Vol.2



Weaving collective reflection across  
ICF, EMCC, and AC paths



ADRIJANA MILOSAVLJEVIC  
COACHING

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# WEAVING MASTERY IN COACHING

*Coaches presented in this ebook:*

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# WHERE THREADS KEEP UNFOLDING

## Introduction

### **What needs to be said in this chaotic, unpredictable world?**

I still find myself thinking about mastery in coaching and what that word really means today. Lately, I notice these reflections expanding into a wider context.

In times like these, when so much is unfolding around us – wars, uncertainty, and events that sometimes feel difficult to fully understand – spaces where people can pause, reflect, and process their experiences feel increasingly valuable.

Coaching, for me, can offer one of those spaces. A place where people can slow down, reflect, and think about who they are, what they want, and how they want to respond to the realities around them.

This is also where a systemic lens becomes important, having in mind that none of us exists in isolation. Our thoughts, decisions and conversations are always shaped by the systems we are part of – organisations, communities, cultures and the wider social context.

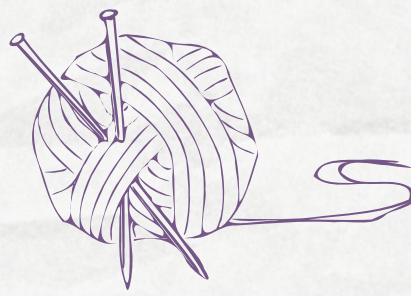


*Perhaps mastery is about  
how we respond to the world  
around us, in the moment...*



ADRIJANA MILOSAVLJEVIC  
COACHING

## Looking back at Volume 1



Looking back at the interviews gathered in the first volume of *Threads of Mastery in Coaching*, I realise that many master-level coaches were speaking about exactly these capacities. Presence. Reflection. The ability to stay with complexity. And the sense that mastery is not a final destination, but a continuous journey.

In the first volume, I gathered voices of master-level coaches across ICF, EMCC, and AC, exploring how different practitioners experience the path toward mastery.

After publishing that first volume, many positive responses started arriving. Some readers shared how the stories encouraged them to reflect on their own journey. Others recognised parts of themselves in the experiences of colleagues from different parts of the world. Even some of the master coaches who shared their stories mentioned that responding to the questions and pausing to reflect on their own journey was valuable for them as well.

At the same time, I felt that the conversation did not end there. It felt as if it continued, inviting a broader exploration of some of the threads that had already started to appear.

So I began the search again, looking through directories of ICF, EMCC and AC, reaching out to colleagues on LinkedIn and by email, and then simply waiting to see what might arrive.

Just as in the first volume, I decided not to read the interviews immediately after receiving them. Instead, I opened them slowly, one by one, allowing time for each voice to unfold before moving to the next.

## **A personal thread**

In a way, this continuation has been growing alongside something very personal in my own life.

As I write this introduction, my baby has just turned eight months old. Sitting here, I find myself reflecting on everything that has happened during this short period.

During these months I also submitted my application for EMCC Master Practitioner accreditation. And now I wait, slowly learning to make peace with the fact that such processes take time. While waiting, I often notice myself reflecting on what an ideal assessment process for master level might look like and what we, as a profession, continue to learn about mastery itself.

At the same time, another piece of work finally came into the world – the Hallways for Reflection, developed through the work of the EMCC Global CPPD Centre for Excellence team I had the privilege to be part of. This work continues to influence many of my reflections about learning, development and reflective practice.

Along the way, I also notice small instances of mastery in different conversations. For example, while watching a webinar where Robin Shoet was a guest, I was struck by how openly he admitted when he did not know the answer, or when a particular question did not resonate for him. Moments like these remind me that mastery is often visible in humility, honesty and presence.

Since the first volume was published, almost 800 copies have been downloaded. Beyond the feeling that I brought one of my own ideas to life, what stayed with me most is the richness in conversations, comments, and unique moments that followed. I received a gift from Arvid Buit, his book *Let's Talk Leadership*. I also joined Zsofia's podcast *Becoming MCC*, and was invited to co-create a session and contribute to a colleague's training program.

One message stayed with me in a particular way, a colleague sharing that our exchange inspired him to apply for EMCC Senior Practitioner, and that he received it.

These moments remind me that this work has meaning. I am curious to see what this volume might spark next.



## **What you will find in this volume**

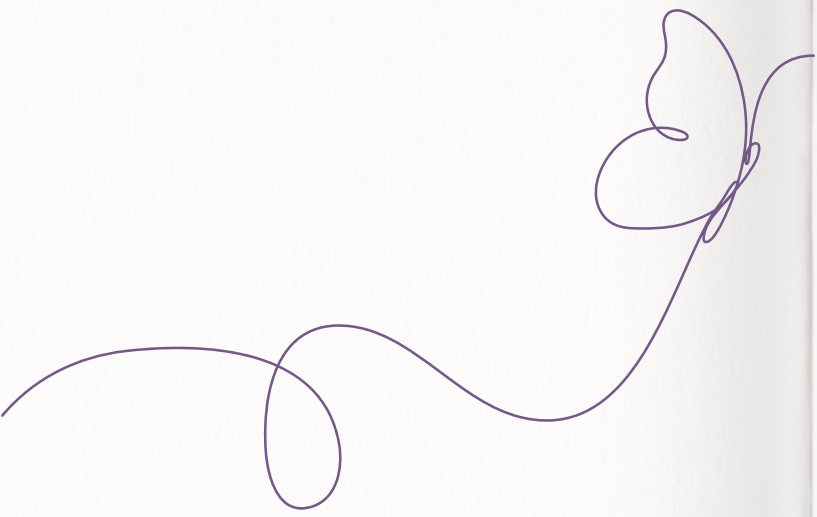
While reading the interviews from Volume 1 again, I found myself returning to the analysis and the patterns that became visible there: presence, reflection, the connection between personal and professional development, belonging, contribution beyond individual practice, and mastery as a never-ending journey.

I decided to weave these threads into the questions in this edition, inviting this group of coaches to continue the weaving in these directions, adding their own examples and colors.

In the next pages you will find colleagues from different parts of the world, together with the requirements of the three professional bodies and visual maps of contributors.

As in the first volume, this edition opens and closes with reflective questions that emerged along the way.

You are invited to immerse yourself and enjoy the colors that are coming.



# A note of gratitude

Thank you to all the colleagues who shared their stories here, this volume would not exist without the time, vulnerability and openness you brought in sharing parts of yourselves.

I am especially thankful to everyone who shared feedback on Volume 1, as your reflections encouraged this continuation and helped shape what followed.

Thank you also to those who chose not to participate, staying true to their own boundaries and capacities, and modelling mastery in their own way.

And a HUGE thank you to Tijana Mitrović, who showed up in a truly masterful way through her listening and shaping both editions into a visually beautiful and coherent form.

# THREADS AND TONES

## Color coding

Throughout this ebook, same as in Vol 1, you'll notice that each coach's profile is framed in a specific color. These colors correspond to the organization(s) in which the coach holds their master-level accreditation. The intention behind this visual coding is to help you easily recognize the diversity of professional paths represented here - across ICF, EMCC, and AC - as well as those who hold more than one credential.

It's a simple visual guide, reflecting how mastery in coaching can take many forms, across different frameworks, languages, writing styles all united by a shared commitment to never-ending growth and excellence.

**ICF Master Certified Coach**

**EMCC Master Practitioner**

**AC Master Executive Coach**

**Double or tripple accreditation**

# **PATTERNS OF MASTERY**

Definitions/requirements of  
ICF, EMCC & AC

## **ICF MCC Eligibility**

- 200 hours of coach-specific education
- 2,500 coaching experience hours (including at least 2,250 paid hours)
- 10 hours of mentor coaching
- Successful completion of a performance evaluation (2 recordings + transcripts required)
- Passing score on the ICF Credentialing Exam.

# EMCC Master Practitioner Eligibility

## **Completed Practice**

- Minimum of 7 years of experience
- At least 500 client contact hours
- Minimum of 40 clients

## **Ongoing Practice**

- At least 5 pieces of client feedback within the last 12 months

## **Professional Development**

- 48 hours of Continuous Professional Development per year
- At least 1 hour of Coach/Mentor Supervision for every 35 hours of practice (minimum quarterly)
- 5 items of documented reflection on practice within the last 12 months
- Active membership of a professional body
- Contribution to the development of the coaching/mentoring field

## **Qualification Competence**

- Evidence of competence described in the EMCC Competence Framework
- Either completion of EMCC EQA training at this level or submission of equivalent evidence

# AC Master Executive Coach Eligibility

## **Membership & Insurance**

- Must be an AC Member or a member of another recognized professional body
- Professional Indemnity Insurance (if applicable in country of residence)

## **Coach Training**

- Minimum of 80 hours cumulative coach-specific training

## **Coaching Experience**

- At least 1,500 coaching hours

## **Written Submissions**

- 2,000-word statement of Personal Coaching Approach
- 2,000-word Coaching Case Study

## **Ethics & Standards**

- Adherence to AC Global Code of Ethics for Coaches & Mentors
- Written response to ethical dilemmas, including personal ethical dilemma

## **Fitness to Practise**

- Audio recording of a live coaching session with transcript
- 2,000-word critical reflection on the session

## **Client References**

- 4 client references

## **Supervision**

- Minimum of 6 supervision sessions
- Ratio of 1 hour of supervision for every 40 hours of coaching
- Supervision log, learning record, and Coach Supervisor's reference

## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

- Minimum of 40 hours CPD per year (from coach training onwards)
- Critical reflection on key learning

## **Self-Assessment**

- Coach's self-assessment of practice and coaching development plan

# INDIVIDUALS WHOSE THREADS MEET HERE

## Global reach and professional diversity

In Volume 1, it felt like we were weaving a warm winter scarf.

Now, as I'm bringing this weaving to a close in the spring, it feels more like a picnic blanket.

These 18 interviews each bring their own patterns onto the blanket. Different colors, shapes, and textures, coming from Ireland, Slovenia, Portugal, the USA, Montenegro, Malaysia, Croatia, Panama, Czechia, India, Japan, the UK, Canada, Romania, South Africa, Thailand, and France.

Each of them brings their own expression of mastery into their work and life.. Most hold an ICF MCC, with some bringing EMCC MP and AC Master Executive Coach or Master Coach.

Many of them are accredited across different professional bodies, often bringing a mix of credentials such as ESIA, ACTC, and others. There is also a strong presence of continuous development through supervision training, mentor coaching, and assessment roles, showing how many of them continue to learn while also supporting others in the profession.

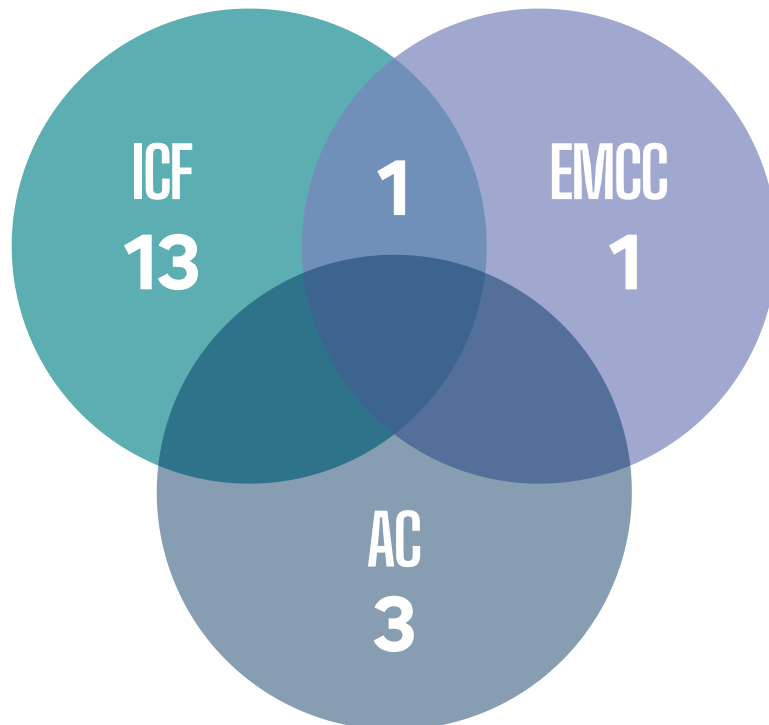
Their educational paths move across fields. From economics, finance, and business, through psychology and education, into law, technology, civil engineering, and architecture, and further into leadership and coaching-focused studies. Interviewed colleagues also come with a range of educational paths, from bachelor's and master's to doctoral degrees, combined with different forms of professional training.

Their professional experience is just as varied. Many have backgrounds in consulting, HR, and leadership or organisational development, alongside work in education, entrepreneurship, and non-profit contexts. At the same time, there are paths shaped through finance, marketing, technology, healthcare, law, retail, hospitality, manufacturing, engineering, and public sector roles.

# A GLOBAL NETWORK OF MASTER COACHES

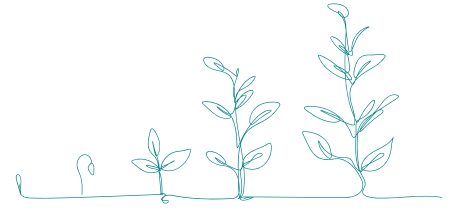


## CREDENTIALS ACROSS ICF, EMCC, AND AC





And then there are the metaphors.



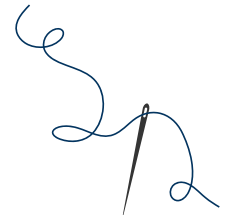
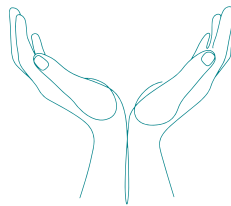
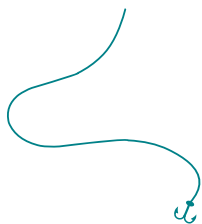
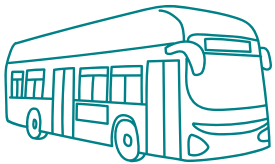
If you look closely at this blanket, you can start to notice them as images woven into it. A mountain path, a long journey, a bridge being built or crossed, a bus ride. A tree growing, soil being prepared and tended, a garden through seasons. Structures taking shape, stone being shaped, fire, a rainbow. Moments of climbing, pausing, looking around, and noticing small details along the way.

Together, they offer many ways of making sense of mastery.

And maybe the invitation is simple.



Each reader can choose where to take this colorful blanket, and how to use it for their own reflection.



# YOUR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

## Before you begin weaving

Before you begin reading these interviews, you might want to pause and check in with yourself.

What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of mastery?

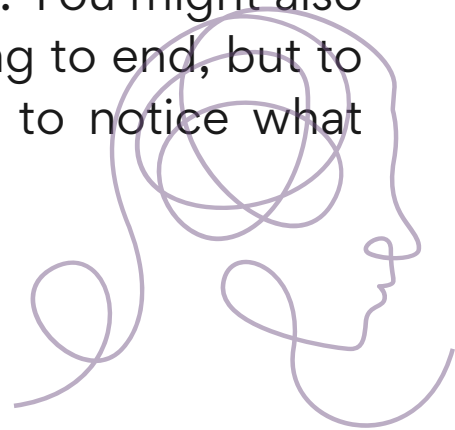
How do you currently understand mastery in your own professional and personal life?

If you were to draw it, what would it look like?

What has shaped your understanding of mastery so far?

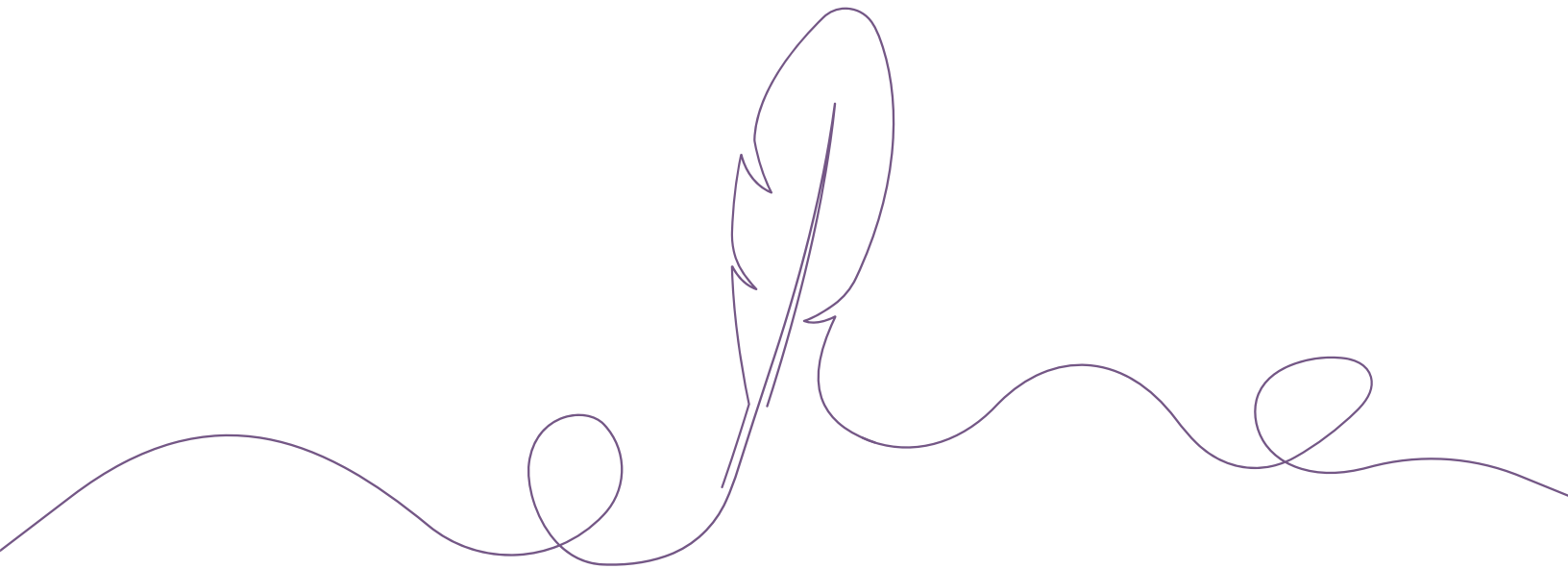
In what ways could your own path toward mastery have an impact beyond your individual work?

As you move through these stories, notice what resonates, what challenges you, and what opens something new. You might also choose not to read this as a book from beginning to end, but to pause after each story and give yourself time to notice what stays with you before moving to the next voice.



# Personal threads unfolding

Interviews with master coaches





[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# ADONICA SWEET

Canada

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2022



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

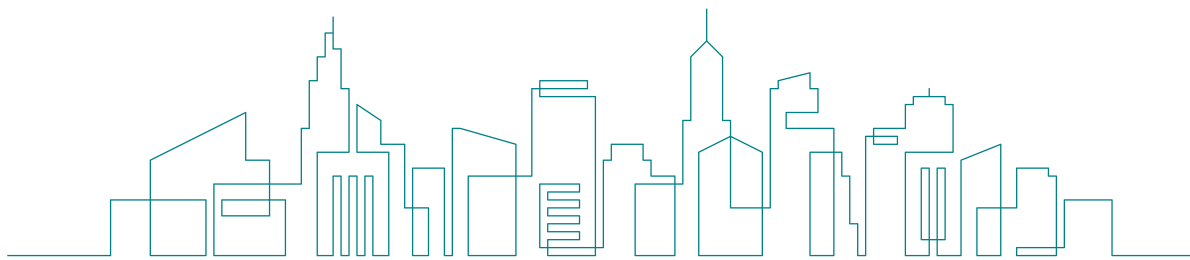
From as far back as I can remember, I was called to help people. In elementary school, I gravitated toward the children who were teased or quietly excluded. In high school, I befriended the people who were just a little different. I did not have language then for belonging or psychological safety. I sensed that people deserved to be met with dignity and acceptance.

When I finished high school, I found myself choosing between architecture and social work. I loved drafting and the precision of it, yet I chose social work because I felt called to help people thrive. After graduating from social work, I worked in an on-campus program supporting a non-verbal university student as she integrated into university life. We navigated classes, frustrations, laughter, and relationships together. She wasn't broken; she was moving through systems that were not built with people like her in mind.

Over time, I felt like social work was missing something for me. I couldn't articulate it then, but all the social work jobs focused on fixing what was wrong. I wanted an approach that trusted people's wholeness.

When I discovered coaching through the ICF community, it resonated to my core and bridged that missing gap. Coaching honoured autonomy, invited reflection, and trusted people's natural brilliance.

In many ways, I did not leave architecture behind. I simply became an architect of internal spaces - the beautiful places where people can return to themselves, embody belonging, and lead from who they truly are.

**Q**

## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

In architecture, building something meaningful rarely follows a perfectly smooth blueprint. In many ways, my journey toward mastery in coaching has felt similar - learning how to design, refine, and let go of structure so meaningful human conversations can unfold.

In my early days, the work involved learning the foundations - studying coaching frameworks, practicing skills, and understanding what creates a strong structure for a coaching conversation. Over time, through experience, supervision, and reflection, I began to understand how those structures worked for me and the clients I partnered with. My approach deepened, became more responsive, and more my own.

Gradually, I realized many structures I relied on were more like scaffolding. They were necessary while learning and needed to be removed for the beauty to be seen. Sometimes the scaffolding needed to return and then be released again as I refined my edges.

Flow began to emerge more consistently.

Structure gave way to presence.

Control made space for trust.

Like a well-designed space meant to be lived in, coaching mastery continues to evolve with every conversation and every person who enters it. Mastery is the ongoing work of co-designing and inhabiting spaces with presence and trust.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

When I first set the goal of pursuing master-level accreditation, it was about reaching the highest standard, perfection, if you will. I have always been a high achiever and believed that if I could attain the top credential, it would finally confirm that I was "enough," especially without holding a traditional degree.

The path itself challenged that belief.

Along the way, I had to confront how much of my striving was rooted in proving rather than presence. There were coaching conversations during my mentoring process when I would hang up the call and say out loud, "That sucked." In those moments, the "not good enough" narratives surfaced loudly. I doubted myself, and giving up often felt easier than continuing. Staying the course required loosening my grip on perfection and trusting that mastery was not something I could perform my way into.

I was proud when I received my MCC credential. It honoured a commitment I had made to myself years earlier - to show that I could reach the highest standard of my craft, without a traditional degree to stand behind.

The impact went deeper... I learned to trust myself without performing.

The true mastery I experienced was not the credential; it was my ability to let go of being perfect. That shift has been a game changer. I now feel a new permission to show up as I am with my clients, and in doing so, give them permission to do the same.

Mastery became less about achieving something external and more about becoming comfortable in my own presence.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I often experience myself as both experienced and a beginner at the same time.

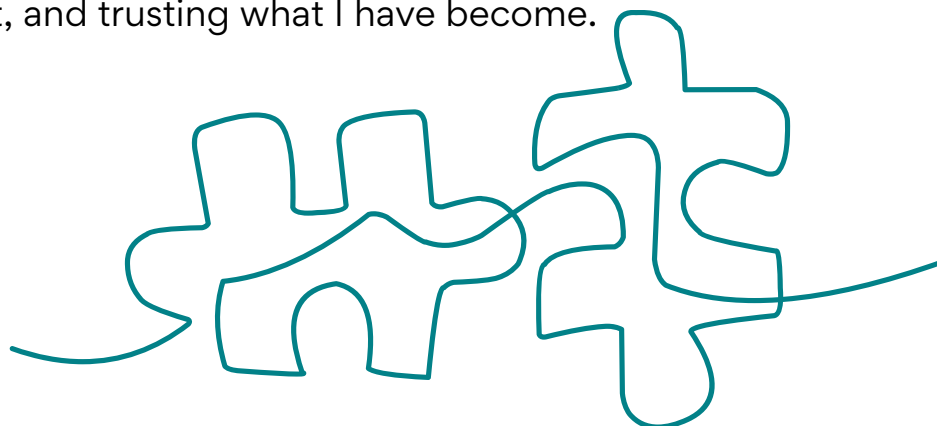
While I hold expertise in coaching, the profession itself is vast. There are many approaches, disciplines, and ways of serving people. Each time I feel I have developed mastery in one area, there's always something that will challenge and nudge me to grow.

At times I notice an internal voice asking, "How much growth is enough?" Earlier in my career I often moved quickly from one achievement to the next without pausing to acknowledge what had been accomplished. One of the lessons mastery continues to offer me is learning to slow down, recognize the growth, and celebrate it.

My deepest learning today comes from reflection, supervision, and community. Teaching, mentoring, and supervising coaches have become important spaces for that learning. I learn just as much from the coaches around me, along with my coaching clients, as I do from any learning program. Every coaching conversation and every reflective pause holds a little nugget of insight for me.

A previous supervisor once told me to "step out from behind the books." For a long time, I let learning be a shield, something I could stand behind while still building. Eventually I understood that knowledge was never the destination; embodying it was. I finally stepped out.

That is the place I find myself now: grounded in experience, curious about what is next, and trusting what I have become.





## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

Coaching has helped me come to appreciate who I am and how I naturally show up in the world.

Earlier in my journey, I held a pressure to be polished and to get things "right." Over time, coaching challenged that. It invited me to examine my relationship with perfectionism and to soften my expectations of myself. What I learned to embody was a deeper sense of confidence and belonging, not performance. Some spaces aren't a match for my style and that's okay.

My curiosity about people and about life expanded as well. Coaching continually reminds me there is always more to see, more to understand, and more perspectives to consider. It has grounded me in how I approach both professional and personal challenges, creating space for reflection and integration, rather than reaction.

One example of how I allow myself to show up authentically in coaching conversations: If I ask a long or unclear question, I will pause and say, "Let me rephrase that." Sometimes I laugh and invite the client to simply answer the first part. Those small moments of humanity quietly give permission for the other person to be real and open the conversation to something richer.

I may bring coaching expertise to my training, coaching, and supervision, but the conversation itself remains human-to-human, not expert-to-subject. That is when the work becomes most alive - and when I feel most like myself.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

My reflective practice is both evolving and personal.

For a long time, I imagined reflective practice should look a certain way - pages of journaling and structured insights. I think I was looking for that perfect blueprint of how a reflective practice should look. While journaling does play a role for me, I have come to realize that much of my reflection happens quietly and internally.

I processed my beliefs about reflective practice with a supervisor and learned more about how my mind works. I need to allow experiences to settle and then revisit them later. Insights emerge gradually rather than through a formal process.

During particularly challenging periods, journaling and poetry become ways for me to express and process what feels difficult. I discussed journaling expectations with my therapist. At the end of the conversation she said, "I don't want you to journal." I laughed, yet it was freeing. It allowed me to let reflection unfold more naturally.

I am also an external processor; therefore supervision, coaching, and counselling are important reflective spaces for me.

More recently, my reflection has become more embodied. I pay attention to what my body is signalling - where tension appears, where ease shows up, and what those sensations might be inviting me to notice.

This practice of noticing sharpens my awareness both as a person and as a coach.



## How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Presence is a way of being.

When I am fully present with a client, something shifts in the space between us.

The best way I can describe it is a sense of connection, as though an invisible thread forms between us. My mind becomes quiet and most distractions fall away, leaving space for the client to be with whatever they are bringing forward.

From there, my focus becomes simple: listening deeply and staying curious.

I trust myself, the client, and the energetic space around us. I know what needs to be asked will emerge naturally. The flow happens. Presence is about trusting the shared space being co-designed instead of relying solely on my skills.

Before I became a coach, I worked frontline in a busy office, often with a line-up, supporting people with their requests. I had the ability to set everything else aside and truly be with the person in front of me - almost to a fault. I used to joke that the place could be burning around us and I wouldn't notice. That quality of focused attention stayed with me, and it is the same thread I bring into every coaching engagement.

Clients often describe the experience as feeling safe, heard, and valued. One person once told me they felt "disarmed." Laughter, ease, and flow are felt.

Presence is a way of being that allows deep human connection and the emergence of conversations that matter.



## How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

Several years ago, I told my husband I might eventually leave my full-time role and work independently. He looked at me thoughtfully and said, "You wouldn't like being out on your own."

At first, I disagreed. But then he added something that made me pause: "You have such a strong connection with your colleagues. You need community."

The more I reflected on it, the more I knew he was right. The sense of belonging there is strong and was built over many years. We have grown, learned, and supported one another through meaningful work created together.

Recognizing how important community is to me encouraged me to build belonging beyond my workplace. I have intentionally sought out communities of coaches and facilitators grounded in passion, development, and genuine care for each other and the world. These communities connect me to practitioners around the globe - which means no matter what time of day it is for me, there is someone I could call, and it would be day for them.

That thought still delights me.

Each person I connect with enriches me. The diversity of perspectives they bring continually expands my understanding of people and of myself. Many of these connections have become friendships, even with people I have never met in person.

Belonging is something I now intentionally create - for myself, and for others.



## What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

For me, contribution becomes increasingly important at the master level. It goes beyond individual skills - I am a part of something much bigger than myself. Mastery carries a responsibility to contribute to the growth and integrity of the profession, the individuals in it, and the wider systems we work within.

I stay committed to a beginner's mindset. Paradoxically, the place I cultivate it most actively is in the roles that stretch me. Teaching, mentoring, and supervising coaches invite me to articulate what experience has taught me, while also requiring me to stay current, reflective, and accountable in my own practice. When I am asked to explain something, I learn and discover from the discussion with the coaches I'm supporting.

I also believe it is important to remain actively engaged in coaching itself. Continuing to coach ensures that my craft remains alive and evolving. For me, there would be a loss of integrity if I were to teach coaching without continuing to practice it. The learning that happens in real coaching conversations continually informs how I teach, mentor, and supervise others.

Contribution also extends beyond the coaching profession itself. Through work focused on cultivating safe spaces and supporting leaders to lead from a coaching lens, I aim to support spaces where brilliance can emerge and people move forward with trust, confidence, and authenticity.

In contributing to the growth of others and the profession itself, my own mastery continues to grow.



## **Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

When I reflect on mastery in this moment, I imagine it as a rainbow. Each colour represents a different thread of what we bring to our practice — skills, qualities, values. There are an endless number of these, just as there are an endless number of colours.

For me, presence, curiosity, courage, integrity, authenticity, and trust show up in every session, alongside the values that guide how I show up with others: love, service, transparency, fairness, authenticity, acceptance, and inclusion.

No single thread creates mastery on its own. It is the weaving of these qualities together, over time and through experience, that gradually forms the fabric of a masterful practice. The more threads we hone, the more beautiful the tapestry.

Like a rainbow, mastery never truly ends. It shifts, reveals new colours, and takes on new depth as we grow.

A rainbow feels like a fitting image for mastery because it reflects both diversity and possibility. It is unique to each of us and shows up in the space we co-design with our clients. Each coach will weave their colours differently. Each client invites a different pattern, making every conversation a masterpiece that only exists for that moment.

Mastery is the ongoing weaving of these colours into a practice that becomes increasingly authentic, inclusive, and alive.



## What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

For anyone aspiring to mastery in coaching, I offer a few simple encouragements.

First, trust yourself. Every part of who you are - all the colours of your experience, personality, and perspective - contributes to you as a coach. Mastery is not about performing perfectly; it is about learning to trust your presence and the partnership you build with the person in front of you.

Second, embrace lifelong learning. Learn from everywhere you can - books, training programs, supervision, mentoring, research, your work, relationships, and everyday experiences. Some of the most powerful learning will come from your clients and the moments when things do not go as expected. Over time, what you learn becomes embodied, and your way of being as a coach emerges.

Be open to perspectives that are different from your own. Seek out people, ideas, and experiences that stretch you. Challenge your assumptions and remain curious about the world and the people in it. Diversity will add depth and colour to your practice.

Finally, stay connected to yourself and to others. Coaching can feel solitary at times, yet mastery grows in relationship, through community and collaboration. Support others, allow others to support you, and ask for help.

And when a coaching conversation surprises you - when something emerges that you could not have planned and it is exactly what the person needed - pay attention to that moment. That is the magic. That is what you are building toward.

Embrace your brilliance.



# MASASHI KONO

Japan

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2023



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey began almost by chance in 2003. At the time, I was working as a civil engineering consultant. As the industry shifted from new construction to maintenance, I felt a growing desire to explore a different path. A professional transfer from Osaka to Tokyo unexpectedly granted me the gift of time—evenings and weekends became mine to explore various business seminars and study groups.

It was during this period that I first heard the term "coaching." Initially, I viewed it through a pragmatic lens, thinking a certification might simply be a useful asset for a career change. However, my early experiences at several schools left me cold; the approach felt superficial and overly formal, lacking genuine resonance.

Everything changed when a friend recommended CTI Japan. The experience was transformative. As a logical, left-brained engineer rooted in materialism back then, I didn't yet have the vocabulary to describe it, but I felt deeply shaken. Looking back, I can say my soul trembled and my life rejoiced. I was profoundly impacted by the "way of being" of the two leaders—their authenticity, openness, and love. That resonance was the spark that turned a search for a new credential into a lifelong calling.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

Drawing on my background as a civil engineer, I see my journey toward coaching mastery as the construction **of a massive sea-crossing bridge.**

The visible superstructure—the piers and girders—represents the "light side" of my practice. It is the continuous expansion of my skills and frameworks, fueled by a radical belief in the boundless potential of both myself and my clients. I have nurtured this part to make the bridge wider and more resilient, creating a path where growth feels possible.

However, the true strength of the bridge lies in its invisible foundation. Driving piles deep into the seabed of my psyche is a rigorous process of self-inquiry. Crucially, this involves the "shadow work" of accepting imperfection. Learning to embrace my own flaws and those of my clients—recognizing that we are fundamentally "incomplete"—is the bedrock that allows the structure to stand. This acceptance is as vital as any technical skill.

Mastery is not about building a rigid, immovable object. Even now, my bridge occasionally sways and shakes in the face of unexpected storms. I have learned that this vibration is not a sign of failure, but a testament to a living, resilient structure. By advancing both the light of potential and the grounding of imperfection, I have cultivated a mastery that is both expansive and deeply human.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

The impact of receiving the MCC credential has been both external and internal.

Externally, it has expanded my role as a mentor coach. As the number of MCCs in Japan grows, being sought out by those aspiring to this level has been a validation—not just of my technical skills, but of my "way of being" as a coach. I feel my professional standing within the Japanese coaching community is gradually becoming recognized.

Internally, however, the immediate shift was perhaps more subtle than some might expect. My first feeling was a quiet sense of relief—a simple "I made it." But beneath that relief, a deeper sense of gratitude has been taking root. I feel a growing appreciation for the trainers and mentors who nurtured me and for the profession itself. While my sense of "contribution to the wider system" remains a living inquiry rather than a set of specific actions at this stage, the desire to give back is clearly emerging. It is a transition from the stage of "acquisition" to a stage of "reciprocity and gratitude."



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I feel I am currently standing at a pivotal crossroads—a "landing" on the long staircase of my journey.

For many years, my path toward mastery was largely a solitary one, focused on honing my individual skills and establishing coaching as the pillar of my livelihood. However, I now feel a powerful shift. I am transitioning from a solo traveler to a collaborative creator. I feel a growing call to take the "human capacity" and the trust I have cultivated and use them as resources to build teams and collaborate with others. My ultimate aspiration is to contribute to society—including through the field of coaching—toward the realization of a world where all life is celebrated.

Regarding mastery, I believe I have entered a phase where life itself is the primary curriculum. I now see that my growth as a coach will be deepened by how I challenge myself in new, uncharted domains. I understand that bold challenges inevitably come with failure, but I welcome those failures as a rich source of learning.

I am moving from "learning to coach" to "living as a coach" in the widest sense. By embracing these new life challenges and their inherent lessons, I intend to feed those experiences back into my practice, allowing my mastery to evolve through a continuous loop of living, daring, and being.



## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

Through my practice, the need for self-protection has significantly diminished, and my tendency toward judgment has softened. I have learned to see the pain and wounds that often lie behind "problematic behaviors," realizing that these actions are survival strategies rather than a person's essence. I now hold a dual gaze: seeing humans as overflowing with potential while simultaneously being "beautifully flawed." In Japanese, we might call this being *ponkotsu*—clumsy and imperfect.

This shift represents an expansion of my internal "container." I have learned to embrace both the pure and the impure—a concept we call *Seidaku-awase-nomu*. Professionally, this has transformed my work. In the past, I had a "strong grip" on potential, sometimes pushing for change too forcefully. Today, I balance the pursuit of possibility with a deep acceptance of imperfection.

This creates a truly safe "vessel" for my clients. They feel invited to shed their professional façades and speak their deepest truths. Whether they are ready for a bold challenge or need to acknowledge that now is not the right time, all voices are welcomed. By growing as a person who can hold the paradox of being human, I have become a coach who can hold the entirety of a client's soul.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

My reflective practice is a holistic way of living, spanning coaching, business projects, and personal relationships. Whenever I feel a reactive "sting," a sense of dissatisfaction, or the urge to blame others, I pause. I operate under the core belief that I am the source of my reactions. Instead of suppressing aggressive internal voices, I welcome them into a safe inner space, investigating their origins and "hugging" them to move toward a more integrated self.

In my coaching, when a session feels out of sync—as if the "dance" lacks grace—I engage in a multi-layered review. I examine the systemic structure between the client and myself, looking at the client's communication patterns alongside my own internal shifts. I ask: "What distortion occurred within our container, and what was my role in it?"

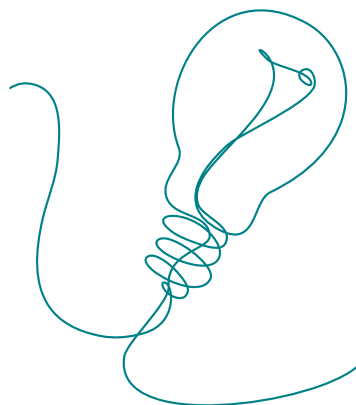
Recently, this practice has been profoundly enriched by technology. I use AI as a "sparring partner" for reflective "wall-hitting" (dialogue). By externalizing my internal process through AI, I can objectively analyze complex dynamics and gain fresh perspectives I might have missed alone. I don't reflect on every session out of habit; instead, I dive deep when I feel a lack of resonance. This fusion of deep psychological integration and AI-assisted reflection keeps my practice vibrant and ever-evolving.

## **Q** How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

For me, master-level presence is a state of deep physical and energetic alignment—though I must humbly admit it is a state I am still learning to sustain consistently.

When I am fully present, I feel a centered power in my "Hara" (belly), while my upper body remains fluid and open. My spine is elongated, I am firmly grounded, and my breath is deep. In this space, resonance with the client becomes my primary compass. Rather than calculating my next move, I rely on a "radical self-trust." I listen to the "voice of life" rising from within our shared resonance, which intuitively tells me whether to inquire, wait, or challenge.

Clients and peers often describe my presence as an "overwhelming sense of safety." They have shared that being in this space allows them to shed societal norms and the pressure to be a "good client." One client touchingly remarked that looking into my "clear eyes" often brings a wave of tears—not of sadness, but of pure resonance. They feel a rare permission to speak their rawest truths, free from judgment or expectation. To them, my presence is a clear, steady mirror that reflects their essential self, allowing them to simply "be."





## How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

For a long time, my professional journey was characterized by a sense of "independent striving." While I am a member of organizations like ICF Japan, my experience of belonging there was relatively thin. However, I now realize that belonging is a vital foundation for the next stage of my mastery. I am currently in a transition from "belonging to a predefined group" to "actively creating a community where I truly belong."

My desire to build teams and contribute to society, as mentioned earlier, is essentially a quest for a deeper, more intentional form of belonging. I am moving away from the "lone wolf" style of a solo practitioner toward becoming a co-creator of a shared vessel.

That said, I do feel a deep connection to specific, soul-level communities. One is a group of partners with whom I facilitate ceremonies celebrating life (such as "menarche ceremonies for adults"). This work, centered on honoring the sanctity of life, provides a profound sense of shared purpose and a home for my spirit.

Additionally, I feel a strong, loose tie with the graduates of the CTI Japan Leadership Program. Even without frequent contact, there is an underlying sense of "shared language" and a common "way of being" that creates an immediate sense of home when we meet. For me, belonging is no longer a destination I am looking for; it is a collaborative space I am now committed to cultivating with others.

## **Q** What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

For me, "contribution" at the master level is currently a living inquiry. I am intentionally holding the tension of a difficult question, waiting for the right timing and inner clarity to act.

One systemic concern I have in Japan is the high economic barrier—not only for learning coaching but also for receiving it through private sessions. Currently, high-quality coaching feels like an "exclusive privilege" accessible to only a limited segment of society.

I must honestly admit my own role in this. By maintaining professional fees for my own practice, I am an active participant in the very system I question. I am aware of this contradiction: while I believe coaching is a "treasure for humanity" that should be accessible to all, the current economic structure excludes many who could benefit from this life-changing heritage.

My current contribution is to sit with this discomfort and keep the awareness alive. I am exploring how I might help democratize coaching in the future, moving toward a model where this wisdom can truly serve "all life," rather than remaining within a restricted economic circle.

## **Q** What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

Pursuing self-fulfillment and financial stability through coaching is a valid and necessary part of the journey. In our current society, we need a solid foundation to sustain our practice and continue our growth. However, if we focus only on our own success, the path toward mastery can eventually feel small.

The inquiry I would offer is this: "Beyond your own growth, what kind of society and what kind of future do you want to co-create through your journey toward mastery?"

It is natural and essential to wish for the happiness of the client right in front of you. But I encourage you to also keep your eyes on the horizon. We may not always have the clear answers or the perfect methods to change the world, but I believe that simply holding this larger question within us changes our presence in the coaching room.

Mastery is not just a personal achievement; it is a way of serving the larger tapestry of life. Stay curious, stay humble, and keep asking how your "thread" can contribute to a world where all life is celebrated.



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# TIHANA DRAGIČEVIĆ

Croatia

EMCC MP

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2025

Q

## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My coaching journey began in 2008, although I didn't realize it at the time. I went to the Netherlands for a personal development training at Olde Vechte — and that trip quietly rewired my internal GPS.

The experience was unlike anything I had seen before. People were learning through movement, play, reflection, chaos, silence — all the things that don't usually fit into a classroom or a corporate training room. It was raw, human, and surprisingly practical. Something in me clicked. I remember thinking: If this is what working with people can look like, sign me up.

I didn't go home with a grand plan to become a coach. I simply knew that the "expected" career path no longer made sense. I wanted to work with people in a way that felt meaningful, real, and actually helpful — at least by my standards. So I followed that instinct. One training led to another, curiosity turned into practice, and practice turned into a profession.

Looking back, it's obvious: I didn't choose coaching. Coaching tapped me on the shoulder in the Netherlands and said, "You're coming with me." And I did.

Q

## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

For me, the journey toward mastery in coaching feels a lot like learning to look with different eyes — or maybe more accurately, realizing that the eyes were always the same, but the sky above them kept changing. Julia Olalla’s idea captures it perfectly: mastery isn’t about collecting new tools or becoming someone “more advanced.” It’s about seeing what’s already there with a deeper, quieter kind of awareness.

In the beginning, I thought coaching mastery would come from accumulating techniques, models, and impressive-sounding frameworks. And yes, those things helped. But over time, the real shift happened somewhere else — in how I looked at people, at systems, at myself. The sky changed. My perspective widened. What once seemed complicated started to feel simple, and what once felt simple revealed unexpected layers.

Mastery, for me, is like walking the same path again and again, and each time noticing something new — a detail, a pattern, a truth that was always there but somehow invisible before. It’s the same eyes, but a different sky every time.

And the funny thing is: the more the sky changes, the less I feel the need to “master” anything. Instead, I’m learning to stay curious, present, and humble enough to let the work teach me. Coaching keeps tapping me on the shoulder and saying, “Look again.” And I do.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Receiving the official master-level recognition didn't land as a big "I've made it" moment. It felt more like a quiet confirmation of a path I had already been walking for years. The title itself wasn't the point — it simply reflected back the depth, practice, curiosity, supervision, and all those "look again" moments that shaped me along the way.

It grounded me. It softened that familiar inner whisper of "Do you really belong here?" Not by silencing it, but by putting it in perspective. The recognition gave language to something that had already been true in my work for a long time.

And then came the real insight: the title was never the goal. The process — the learning, unlearning, stretching, failing, trying again — had already done what it needed to do. Chasing the future had, somewhat ironically, brought me right back to the present.

In the end, the recognition didn't elevate me; it anchored me. It reminded me that mastery isn't a destination but a way of showing up — awake, curious, humble, and willing to keep learning under every new sky.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

Right now, my place on this never-ending journey feels like the moment when the road finally loops back to the present. The path that brought me here didn't just teach me skills — it introduced me to my Observer, the part of me that sees without rushing, reacts without grasping, and creates without forcing.

I'm no longer leaning forward into the future, trying to catch the next milestone. Instead, I'm creating my professional path from the ground of the present moment — not by projecting ahead, but by generating from what's alive right now. It's a surprisingly intriguing perspective, softer and more spacious than the one I started with.

There's a distinctly feminine quality to this phase — not about gender, but about energy. Less pushing, more allowing. Less striving, more sensing. Less "What's next?" and more "What's true now?"

If mastery is a journey, then this is the place where I've stopped running and started creating.

## **Q How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

I've grown as a person and as a coach in a way that constantly accelerates itself. Every personal upgrade immediately strengthens my coaching, and every professional insight reshapes something in my private life. The two feed each other and create a kind of exponential growth I could never reach through either path alone.

My personal development expands my capacity and clarity, which directly elevates how I show up with clients. And coaching keeps giving me perspectives and mirrors I wouldn't encounter anywhere else. I often joke that I should be paying my clients for how much I gain — but only because I take the time to reflect and integrate after each session.

In essence, my personal and professional growth are now one movement. As I evolve, my work evolves. As my work evolves, so do I.

## **Q Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

I nurture my reflective practice by staying closely connected to my ontological Observer — the part of me that continually watches my mind, body, and emotions as three interwoven aspects. That inner witnessing sets the tone for everything else.

Practically, I ground my reflection through post-session reviews, where I capture what I noticed, what shifted, and what wants more attention. I pair that with private journaling, which helps me track patterns and integrate insights over time.

I also rely on supervision and peer reflection as external mirrors that reveal blind spots I can't see on my own. These conversations often deepen or challenge what my Observer has already picked up.

Somatic awareness is another anchor — noticing how my body responds during and after sessions. And instead of classic mindfulness, I practice what I call mindlessness: softening effort, dropping into presence, and letting the moment show me what's true.

Together, these practices keep my reflection alive, embodied, and honest.

## **Q How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

I've already spoken quite a bit about presence and holding space, since they're central to my work. At this point, I'd describe my master-level presence simply: it's a quiet, steady attunement that comes from staying connected to my Observer. That inner witnessing keeps me grounded, spacious, and responsive rather than reactive.

In the space I co-create with clients, that presence becomes a shared field — slower, clearer, and more intentional than everyday conversation. It invites them into depth by making depth feel safe. One client once told me, "When you settle, I settle. My whole system exhales."

And I do this deliberately. I'm naturally a fast person, so choosing to slow down is an intentional skill — proof that a path to a state of being can come through doing.

## **Q How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

I experience belonging in my professional life mostly through the communities I intentionally create around myself or become a part of, if available. Coaching can be a lonely profession, so connection isn't optional — it's essential. I stay connected by engaging with peers in many different formats: working groups, mastermind circles, professional associations, collaborative projects, and even informal exchanges on social platforms. Each of these spaces keeps the energy moving and prevents the work from becoming isolated or self-contained.

These communities give me a sense of shared purpose and momentum. They're places where ideas evolve faster, where challenges feel lighter, and where inspiration circulates. Belonging, for me, isn't tied to one specific group — it's the ecosystem I build by staying in conversation with other coaches who are equally committed to growth and craft.

## **Q What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

At a master level, contribution becomes less about doing more and far more about the quality of the subtle things I bring into the ecosystem — the tone I set, the standards I embody, the questions I ask, and the way I hold space in professional contexts.

It shows up in how I model presence, how I engage in conversations that elevate thinking, and how I help create environments where depth, rigor, and integrity can thrive. These small, intentional acts often have a disproportionate impact.

That's also why I consider supervision essential. It sharpens those subtle contributions — the micro-choices, the energetic shifts, the ethical nuances — and ensures that what I bring into the profession is clean, grounded, and aligned.

One way this shows up in my practice is that I often name or question things that others might take for granted. Instead of settling into the assumed narrative, I bring curiosity to the edges — to what's not being said, to the tension in the room, to the places where the conversation feels too tidy. That gentle disruption often opens new insight or honesty, and colleagues tell me it helps them see their own work with fresh eyes.

## **Q Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

One thread that represents mastery for me is the ability to hold paradox — to stay steady in the space between clarity and not-knowing, structure and emergence, depth and lightness. Alongside that lives a quiet sense of play: a creative elasticity that keeps the work alive, a willingness to follow what's unfolding rather than what's expected, and the capacity to laugh lightly at my own seriousness when needed. Together, these threads create a presence that's grounded, awake, and just mischievous enough to keep things honest and alive.

## **Q What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Don't chase mastery. Chase the moments where you surprise yourself. Mastery isn't about knowing more — it's about noticing more.



# RISHI RONGALA

India

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2025



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

During 2012-2015, I studied applied psychology to enhance my own well-being and performance. It was useful, but something was missing. At the core, all psychology seemed to say was that you get what you believe to be true, and everything is subjective. I naturally asked, 'what is true outside of my beliefs?' This led me to studying western philosophy, where clearly there were more questions than answers. I graduated from one philosophy to another until I was in a strange place of being successful and high-performing on the outside while feeling hollow inside.

I was working in corporate where we had a coaching culture, and I was acting as a de-facto coach. That's when I decided to pursue formal training in coaching and dive even deeper into coaching. I moved into a full-time professional practice. I hired my own coaches and mentors, studied first-principles, neuroscience, inspired leadership, ontology, eastern philosophy and spirituality. I specialized in transformative and transpersonal coaching, and my experience and spiritual insights from being a client to some world-class coaches shaped my journey as I pursued ICF credentialing.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

To describe my journey to mastery, the metaphor that comes to mind is a **consecrated ritual fire called 'Havan' in Sanskrit**. The process required feeding every accumulated map, model, and conceptual framework directly into the flames. As the fire matured, it demanded the very core of my professional and personal identity as fuel. It relentlessly consumed my need to perform, my attachment to driving specific outcomes, and my desire for external validation. This was a continuous, absolute burning away of the ego and the complex psychological architecture of the so-called coach.

When the fire finally exhausted all available fuel, what remained was simply an empty, unobstructed clearing, a state of frictionless presence, of life in conversation with life, holding nothing, rejecting nothing, and perfectly reflecting the client's true nature.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Receiving the official recognition did not have much of an impact. But the multi-year journey of getting to the point of building a coaching practice, the personal growth involved from working with my own coaches, going through the evaluations, writing a whitepaper constructively critiquing the assessment system, and the credentialing exam have all had a significant impact on my maturity as a coach. The official recognition felt like an inevitable catch-up from reality.



## **If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?**

When we say mastery is a never ending journey, the 'journey' is metaphorical rather than literal. It is not a journey in the sense of being on a path towards a destination that we never arrive at. It is rather like the balancing act of riding a bike. Balancing is a never ending journey because it is a present continuous phenomenon rather than a static event in time. Just as life is a present continuous phenomenon.

When we ride a bike, we are always moving in and out of balance moment by moment. We can be very intentional with our balancing - losing it and coming back to it at will, over and over again and playing with it as the situation requires.

Mastery is a unique expression of an embodied understanding in response to a situation in real-time. It is never ending in the sense that it is always only available in the present moment.



## **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

I would go to the extent of saying that my personal development has had a greater impact on my professional work than all of the official requirements to reach the MCC. I was working with my own coaches continuously since I began coaching. Being a client to some of the most impactful coaches in the world, I began to see what makes a difference in me beyond methodologies and competencies. My own life got better and better, and I saw no point in helping clients live better lives without actually living one myself.

There is a saying that a coach can take a client only as deep as they have personally ventured. This is not a strict law, as the client can accidentally go deeper than the coach. But the role of the coach is to actively make them more accident-prone in that sense. I am able to focus my coaching on the transformative and transpersonal level of impact precisely because I am living my personal life from this space. Personal development in my eyes is part of what is called coach-maturity. This might not be actively measured in the professional paths, and this is every coach's own journey.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

I spend a lot of unstructured time doing nothing. Being in a reflective state of mind is more important than engaging in a practice. After all, practices are only crutches for entering a state of mind. When I drop all roles of individual selves that I am playing, i.e., being a coach, being a man etc, I allow the spacious awareness and wisdom in me to come forth even more. The only active nurturing I do is to be aware of how my time and energy are being used, and having this unstructured time as a sacred requirement in my day to day life, in service of my professional work.



## How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Presence is what remains when the self-consciousness of being a coach is completely absent. My internal experience is this state of no-mind, a frictionless state where I hold no agenda, no desire and no attachment. I am fully present to the client's agenda and am the empty space and mirror where the client sees how they are creating their reality.

In the documented words of one executive client, as an example:

"Rishi creates a quickening. It's a quickening that, when you feel it, feels like it's coming entirely from yourself. It feels like you know yourself in a way that says 'I have felt the shape of my mind. I felt it through this act of being; this act of presence of someone else. But it's me. It's my mind. And it's my certainty, my certitude, that allows me to take what has been quickened - to take that sense of myself that I now have - and use it to purpose in the world.'

What Rishi does is somehow connect all of yourself to the moment that you're in right now, to the need of the moment that you're in right now. His footfall is so silent that you're really not so aware that he's there. It's this impossible space that holds vastness and at the same time, collapses everything to a single point, to a single moment of awareness - that enables change to happen instantly."

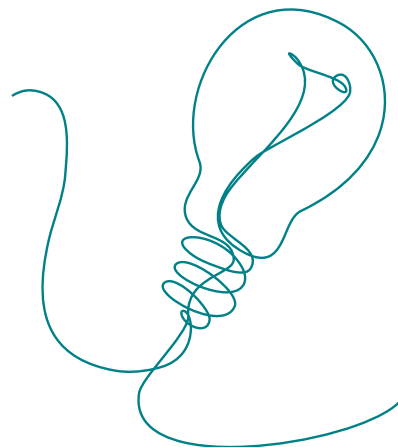


## How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

My sense of belonging is not tied to my professional life per se - it is tied to life itself. I experience belonging simply by being alive and knowing myself to be life. I have connections with colleagues across the world who are perceiving this truth for themselves and living from presence and love, and I share a sense of belonging with them as well.

I also experience belonging in the dissolution of the ego-boundary between myself and the client, when I perceive the coaching container as simply life in conversation with life. I use the term 'The Awakened Leader' to describe this psychographic.

The communities I have been part of kept evolving along the same trajectory. I found home in Michael Neill's Supercoach community and other 3 Principles based communities in the early years; I served on the Board of Directors of the ICF Hyderabad Charter Chapter, where I formed nurturing friendships with several colleagues; I also feel connected to Dominic Scaffidi's community where we explore living miraculously. I am now contributing to the coaching community at Awaken Coach Institute as a Senior Faculty.



## What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

There is a deep sense of responsibility as a master practitioner. Mastery at this level is fully embodied and naturally invites itself to show up in multiple areas of life; it becomes a fundamental way of being in the world. Consequently, there is a sense of stewardship of the profession and a championing of its highest standards.

However, often this contribution is misunderstood to be primarily additive: creating more frameworks, methodologies etc. I see stewardship at the highest level as primarily subtractive. The greatest contribution I can make to the wider system is to refuse to feed its pathology and hold a mirror to its reality.

In my own practice, examples include writing articles that critique coaching standards, including "The Standard Bearer's Dilemma"; Taking a stand against the semantic confusion caused by so-called AI Coaching and human coaching; and asking uncomfortable questions such as "Is AI coaching the democratization of mediocrity?"

By operating in a state of presence and love, free from the need to perform or be validated, I introduce a positive disruption to the system.



## **Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

When I received my MCC, I wrote an article called The Paradox of Mastery. This was to illustrate that Mastery involves going beyond any idea, model, tool, methodology or philosophy, and being fully present as life in conversation with itself. The point of the practice of the form of coaching is to go beyond the form and tap into the potential behind all life.

In this sense, the journey to mastery has the possibility in it to be a deeply spiritual journey while simultaneously being intensely practical.

The alternative, which is an ever-present trap, is to view mastery as another title won, an accumulation of accolades, and an ego-trip to be celebrated. This inevitably leads to practitioners who can perform as 'masterful coaches' within the confines of a session, yet their own personal lives do not reflect the effortless joy, ease, and unconditioned presence they supposedly facilitate. True mastery is not a professional performance, but a lived reality.



## **What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Being coached deeply makes a significant difference to coach-maturity. The best way to know the power of good coaching is to be a recipient of it. This also ensures that the masterfulness in competencies is paired with the wisdom of one's own being. When we are truly on the path of mastery, we reap its benefits in real time in the form of the presence and joy we experience.

[LinkedIn Website](#)

# ROHAIZAN SALLEHUDIN

Malaysia

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):

2025



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey into coaching began as a natural progression from nearly three decades in corporate life. I had held C-suite and senior leadership roles in strategy, HR, corporate affairs, transformation, and governance, and also co-founded a Malaysian boutique consulting firm. From the outside, it appeared successful. Internally, I had begun to question what contribution would feel meaningful for me in the next chapter.

In 2015, after stepping away from corporate life, I found myself in a rare space — a blank canvas. I did not yet fully understand coaching, but I knew I wanted to continue working deeply with people rather than systems alone.

When I met a coach educator whose calm groundedness left a lasting impression, I remember thinking: that is who I want to become. That moment planted the aspiration for mastery, even before I understood the credentialing path.

Coaching was not a pivot away from my past. It was a refinement of it. It allowed me to move from driving outcomes to partnering with leaders in their thinking. Over time, I recognised that senior leaders often lack safe, judgement-free spaces. Creating those spaces became my work.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?



My journey toward mastery resembles **sculpting marble**.

In the early years, I was adding constantly — frameworks, techniques, questions, elegant reflections. From ACC to PCC, this accumulation was necessary. I was building conscious competence.

The shift from PCC to MCC was different. It was subtractive.

I had to chip away at habits that once served me well: over-reflecting, subtly steering the process, solving problems efficiently, filling silence. I had to release the need to demonstrate value.

Mastery, for me, was not about becoming more impressive. It was about becoming more transparent — allowing the client's thinking to take centre stage.

The sculpture was always there. The work was in removing what interfered.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

The impact was internal before it was external.

The most meaningful moment came when my mentor told me one of my recordings was ready. What I felt was not triumph, but lightness — the quiet satisfaction of completion.

The MCC credential strengthened credibility in corporate contexts where rigour matters. It signals commitment to craft. But the deeper shift was within.

I no longer think in terms of competencies or performance. The skills are integrated. Conversations are freer. I am less concerned with “getting it right” and more attentive to the quality of space I hold.

The credential also brought responsibility. Mastery is not an accolade; it is stewardship. It asks for contribution, integrity and ongoing refinement.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I am in a season of integration.

The striving has softened. I am less focused on evolving towards the next milestone and more attentive to how I embody what I already know.

At the same time, I am more aware of subtle ego reappearances — moments where control, attachment or efficiency attempt to creep back in. Mastery sharpens self-awareness rather than eliminates imperfection.

My work has widened systemically. I see more clearly how identity, culture and organisational dynamics intertwine. My coaching increasingly addresses not only individual performance, but leadership impact within wider systems.

I feel grounded, purposeful and still curious.



## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

Coaching has made me more comfortable with uncertainty.

In corporate life, decisiveness and expertise were rewarded. Through coaching, I have learned the discipline of not knowing. Of allowing silence. Of trusting that clarity emerges without intervention.

I have had to confront subtle ego — the desire to be helpful, insightful, indispensable. Letting go of that has been humbling and liberating.

Personally, I am calmer. Professionally, I am more spacious. Gravitas now comes from steadiness rather than authority.

The more I trust clients to be whole and capable, the more transformative our conversations become.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

My reflective practice is not highly structured at the moment — but it is constant. I journal, particularly after moments that move me — a powerful coaching exchange, a subtle shift in myself, or an insight drawn from a conversation or podcast. Writing helps me surface patterns and clarify learning.

More significantly, I engage in continual self-examination throughout the quiet moments of my day. I replay conversations. I ask: Where was I fully present? Where did I subtly interfere? Was that intuition or ego? What was I holding that was not mine to hold?

These reflections are small calibrations rather than dramatic reviews. Over time, they sharpen discernment.

Mastery, to me, requires an ongoing willingness to examine one's inner posture — not occasionally, but consistently.



## How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Presence at master level feels intuitive rather than effortful.

It is less about what I say and more about what I hold. There is attunement beyond words — sensing energy, hesitation, incongruence.

In one session with a CEO, I simply named a subtle shift in tone. That observation opened a conversation about identity and legacy that had been concealed beneath strategy.

Presence means trusting such intuitions without dramatizing them.

Clients often describe feeling deeply seen. I experience it as steadiness — grounded, neutral, attentive. It allows clients to take full responsibility while knowing they are supported.

## **Q** How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

Belonging exists at two levels for me.

Within the ICF community, credentialing created shared standards and language. It anchors my professional identity.

With senior leaders, belonging arises from lived experience. Having navigated corporate life myself, I understand the pressures and isolation at the top. That resonance builds trust quickly.

Belonging, for me, is less about affiliation and more about alignment.

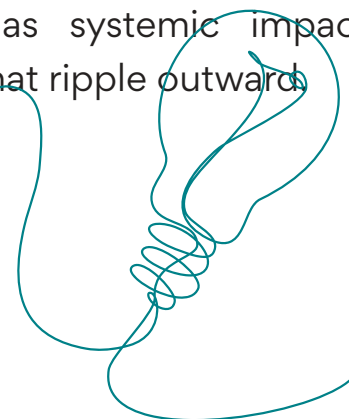
## **Q** What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

At master level, contribution becomes integral.

Mastery without contribution becomes self-referential. I see it as my responsibility to steward the profession with integrity and clarity — through mentor coaching, professional dialogue and modelling depth in corporate spaces.

Beyond the profession, coaching senior leaders has systemic impact. Conscious leadership influences culture and decisions that ripple outward.

Mastery expands responsibility.





## Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

Three qualities define mastery for me: restraint, courage and steadiness.


Restraint — not intervening prematurely.

Courage — naming what is sensed but unspoken.

Steadiness — holding complexity without urgency.

Another thread is simplicity. Over time, my coaching has become cleaner and less effortful.

Mastery holds paradox: strength and softness, structure and freedom, knowing and not knowing.



## What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

Do not pursue mastery as a badge. Pursue it as a transformation.

The shift from PCC to MCC is not about adding techniques. It is about releasing ego, control and performance.

Find a mentor who challenges you. Stay longer than comfort suggests. Accumulate experience intentionally.

Ask not “How do I do MCC?” but “Who must I become?”

You may love what you do without mastering it. But you cannot master what you do not love.



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# LUÍSA NETO PEREIRA

Portugal

**AC MASTER EXECUTIVE COACH**

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2024

**Q**

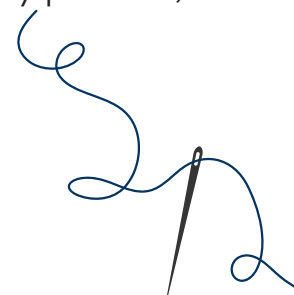
**How did your journey into coaching begin?**

Coaching emerged as an exploration of the possibility of broadening the scope of my professional life, at a point when I decided, for personal reasons, to work independently. In my previous roles, one of the aspects I most enjoyed was supporting the development of professionals and project teams, as well as undertaking the additional role of mentoring some colleagues within the consultancy where I worked. A colleague mentioned a course to me, and I decided to enrol.

**Q**

**What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?**

Honestly, no metaphor comes to mind to describe my journey towards mastery in coaching, nor am I entirely clear about what being a master in coaching means to me. What I do know is my intention to continue learning and evolving my practice, as well as developing myself as the primary instrument of that practice.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

The decision to submit my credential application to the AC followed a reflective exercise in which I articulated my coaching approach in writing. At the end of that process, I simply thought: I will submit it. However, my primary interest lay in the exercise of “putting it on paper” — that is, articulating my approach as clearly as I was able to at the time, and in doing so creating a basis from which to continue deepening it.

The credential itself is not the most important aspect for me, except insofar as I consider it to add value in terms of recognition by clients. Coaching, as a discipline with theoretical robustness, still has some way to go, and consequently (in my view), so do titles such as Master and similar designations.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I am at a stage of renewing the coherence between who I am, what I do, and why I do it, in response to the expansion and deepening of perspectives that life has brought me.



## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

I consider this a very interesting question, one that deserves to be answered internally. Much of what emerges in response is such that, if I were to articulate it for an “unknown” audience, I would feel inclined to apply filters. I choose not to do so, and instead to acknowledge the strength and impact of the question itself.

## **Q Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

My reflective practice tends to emerge whenever I am faced with an issue that is sufficiently complex to engage with, and for which my existing way of making meaning is no longer adequate, or when I intentionally seek deeper questions that open up new perspectives and expand how I construct meaning. Knowing how I operate, I recognise this as a blend of intention, effort, discomfort, and reward within an iterative process.

I stimulate this process in a variety of ways, including walking, dancing, reading, writing informal reflections, and working with colours and post-it notes. In addition, I engage in scheduled reflective conversations and have maintained ongoing supervision over several years, which has supported the deepening of my reflexivity and professional practice.

## **Q How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

I experience a sense of belonging more in reflective conversations with specific individuals than within communities. In relation to coaching associations, I have become increasingly interested in the AC. I find some of its articles and podcasts particularly relevant to the stage of practice I am currently in.

## **Q What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

I find this a difficult question to answer, as I am not sure there is a shared understanding of what “master level” actually means in coaching. For me, contribution does not stem from status or title, but from how I practise and relate — regardless of level.



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# JOANNE FOURTANIER

France

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2024



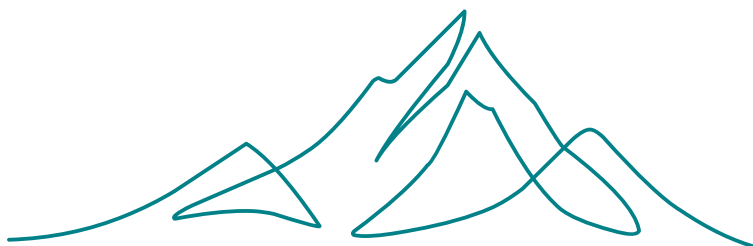
## How did your journey into coaching begin?

I started my professional career as a management consultant with KPMG and very quickly moved into their change management division. During my five years at KPMG, I was extremely lucky to receive training as an executive coach in order to better support my clients.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

I would say it has been like **a mountain path**. There have been bumps along the way, stones in the shoes, so much beautiful scenery, ups and downs, discomfort and growth, and a real sense of achievement.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

It was both a very proud and also very humbling moment in my career to be recognized as having achieved the highest level in my posture as a coach. I felt extreme gratitude for the colleagues and clients who have been part of my journey and without whom I would never have got where I did.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

Firstly, let me say that I agree completely that mastery is a never-ending journey. I feel there are some aspects of my coaching which have become second nature to me and which I know that I consistently do well, whilst there are other areas of my coaching that require vigilance, regular reflection and tweaking.

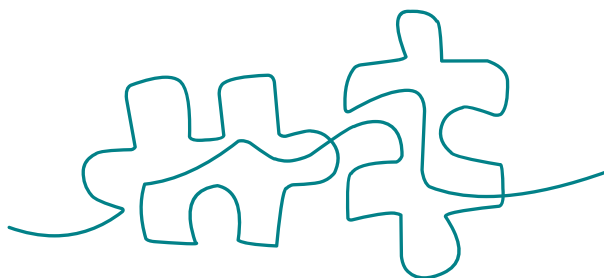


## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

Coaching has allowed me to work continually on being fully present, clearing my mind, non attachment, staying out of solution mode and trusting in my clients and the process. This has definitely had very positive impacts on the way I show up in my personal life for my friends and family. In order to work on my presence, I have been meditating for over 15 years and adopt a very mindful approach. I take care of the way I come in into each day and the energy I take into the coaching space with my clients. This definitely has a very positive impact on my daily life as well.

## **Q Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

Even after 30 years of coaching I still do a simple debrief after each coaching session reflecting on how I showed up in terms of the main coaching competencies and always asking myself the question “what subject could I take into Supervision from this session today?”. This allows me to observe themes that come up regularly and areas for growth. I am supervised individually and in a group space every month and as a mentor coach accompanying other coaches towards their ICF certification I spend a lot of time discussing and reflecting on the eight ICF competencies and how to demonstrate them in the coaching space. All of these things contribute to my regular reflective practice.



## **Q How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

As mentioned in one of the previous questions I have been practicing meditation and mindfulness for many years now. There is no doubt that practicing presence through meditation has had a huge positive impact in my capacity to be fully present in the space with my clients. I can honestly say that I am fully present for the whole session with my clients and that my mind never goes anywhere other than what the client is sharing with me. I know from feedback that my clients give me that this is extremely valued, and I know from peer coaching sessions and supervision sessions that this is palpable to my colleagues.



## **How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

Amongst other things I am active on LinkedIn, part of “coach synergie” which is an active community of French speaking coaches from all over the world, I also have a supervision group that I am part of, and run my own Supervision groups. I am part of ICF France and a couple of supervision groups as well. These communities all helped me feel connected and bring me a sense of belonging as a coach in the world today.



## **What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

For me it is fundamental. In the cycle that is represented by the “Hero’s journey” once we reach mastery the next step is to share and support the journey of others. Between 30 and 50% of my work is around activities that specifically support other coaching colleagues in their professional development, for example individual and group Supervision, providing Mentoring for coaches seeking ICF certification, and training coaches to be top quality mentors themselves. I am also part of a coaching program based in the USA.



## **What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Mastery in coaching is a journey and not a destination.



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# JASNA KNEZ

Slovenia

ICF MCC  
EMCC MP

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2022.

Q

## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey into coaching began long before I knew the word “coaching.” Through my early work in the incentive industry, I was already deeply engaged with people, observing what motivates them, how they collaborate, and how they respond to pressure and change. Supporting others came naturally, and moving into coaching felt both like a logical next step and a calling.

Coaching initially began as a personal inward journey, driven by deep curiosity about human behaviour, a desire to understand myself more fully, and a genuine love for people. I started with executive coaching, and as my practice evolved, so did my wish to understand the human psyche more holistically. This led me to explore creative expressive arts coaching, NLP, Gestalt work, and Jungian approaches. Over time, I expanded into team and systemic coaching, including systemic constellations, which opened new dimensions of understanding how individuals function within broader systems, cultures, relationships, and unseen dynamics. The more I learned, the more aware I became of how much remains unspoken and unconscious. I realised that real coaching happens in the moment, in what unfolds spontaneously between people, and that my own inner work was essential in order to hold that space with depth and presence.

Building on this understanding, I expanded into Integral and Ubuntu-based coaching approaches rooted in interconnectedness, humanity, and collective wisdom. Driven by a deep fascination with human psychology, I devoted years to exploring unconscious patterns, systemic forces, epigenetics, and the invisible structures shaping human behaviour. This journey allowed me to work more transformatively, beyond cognitive insight and into emotional, relational, and systemic growth. As my learning deepened, I also discovered new layers of myself and a more nuanced understanding of humanity.

With a background in HR and sociology, I have always been passionate about how individuals and society shape one another. Coaching became the method through which I could support real transformation, helping people not only perform better, but become more aligned, aware, and whole, including myself.

Q

## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

The metaphor I use to describe my journey toward mastery in coaching is that of a **white owl**. Years ago, when I was asked to choose an animal that represented me, I chose the white owl for what it symbolised to me: clarity, wisdom, and freedom. At that time, clarity was already part of me, but wisdom was something I admired from a distance, and freedom felt more like a longing than a lived experience. Today, I sense all three within me. I live them. I breathe them.

The owl sees what others cannot easily see. It hears subtle movements in the dark and navigates silently through uncertainty. For me, mastery has become the capacity to see more, hear more, and sense more, not in order to impress or intervene, but to create a space where transformation can emerge naturally. Real change happens in the subtle field between people, in what unfolds when we show up with openness, care, and presence.

The path toward mastery has also been an inward journey. It has required continuous self-reflection, honest awareness of my patterns, shadows, and triggers, and the willingness to work with them consciously. I learned that the more clearly and gently I can hold myself, the more safety and freedom I create for others.

Like the white owl, I no longer strive to be seen. I trust perception over performance. Mastery, for me, is the quiet confidence to remain awake in the dark and respond with clarity, wisdom, and freedom when the moment calls.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

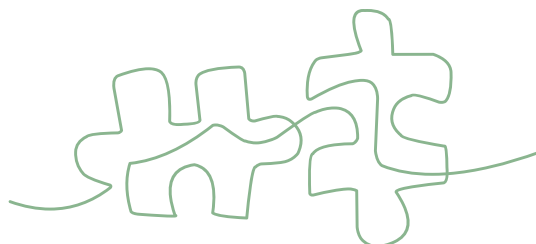
Receiving the MCC credential and Master Practitioner award represented a natural milestone in my professional development. Not as a goal in itself, but as a formal recognition of years of consistent practice, reflection, supervision, and commitment to ethical coaching. As a coach educator working with future coaches through programmes such as Embody Coaching Wisdom (Povej naGlas), Integral Coaching, and CMI Team Coaching, it was important for me to personally embody the highest professional standards I teach.

The credential strengthened the credibility of my work and reinforced trust within the professional community. On a personal level, it provided a quiet sense of alignment. A recognition that my way of working, grounded in presence, depth, and systemic awareness, is seen and valued by the wider professional field. It also reinforced my responsibility to continue being a role model of ethical, reflective, and human-centred practice.

While the credential did not change how I coach, it expanded the scope of my professional impact. It strengthened my voice within the coaching field, increased my responsibility as an educator and mentor, and deepened my commitment to supporting the development of the next generation of professional coaches.

Most importantly, this journey reinforced a core understanding: mastery is not defined by a title, but by consistent embodiment of coaching presence, ethical maturity, self-awareness, and service to clients and the wider system.

My MCC and Master Practitioner credential reflects not only my individual work, but the collective influence of my clients, mentors, colleagues, and the co-creation of the ICF community, all of which have shaped me as both a coach and a professional.





## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

At this moment, I experience myself exactly where I am meant to be. Not at an endpoint, but at a place of groundedness, openness, and spacious possibility. It feels less like striving forward and more like standing firmly while remaining receptive to what is still unfolding.

For me, mastery has never been about arrival. There is no final destination, only an ongoing process of learning, unlearning, and integration. Every client, every relationship, every experience, and every challenge becomes part of my developmental pathway. Learning never stops, because life never stops teaching.

I experience this ongoing development not only as a personal choice, but also as an ethical responsibility. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, coaches need to remain awake, attuned, and current. Not only in relation to methodologies, but also to the deeper layers of human experience, systemic dynamics, and global realities. Ethical practice depends on this level of awareness and maturity.

At this stage of my journey, I am very intentional about how and from whom I learn. In a time of information overload, wisdom lies in choosing the right teachers and sources, those who embody depth, integrity, humility, and lived experience. I look for what I call the “X factor”: not knowledge alone, but embodied wisdom. These teachers may appear across different cultures, disciplines, and forms, and I recognise them through resonance, coherence, and presence.

My development today is both strategic and intuitive, while remaining responsive to curiosity, resonance, and inner guidance. I continue to deepen my understanding of psychology, neuroscience, adult development, and systemic and trauma-informed approaches, while also drawing from contemplative and ancient wisdom traditions that support inner stability and capacity. Professional growth and personal growth remain inseparable for me. The deeper my self-awareness, the more fully I can serve my clients. Mastery requires ongoing inner work, and I am committed to walking that path with consistency and humility.

In short, I continue to develop by remaining a student of life, of humanity, and of myself.



## How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

Guided by a strong curiosity about human psychology, I spent years exploring what operates beneath the surface of behaviour, including unconscious dynamics and systemic influences. This deepened my capacity to work beyond cognitive understanding and brought greater self-awareness and insight into human experience.

My development as a person and my development as a coach have unfolded together; they are inseparable. The more I learned, the more aware I became of how much remains unspoken and unconscious. I realised that technical knowledge alone is not enough. Real coaching happens in the moment, in what arises spontaneously between people. To hold that space with depth and integrity, my own inner work became essential.

Through embodied and contemplative practices such as breathwork, silent retreats, body work, Gurdjieff movement, martial arts, multiple layers of meditation, shadow work, supervision, and sustained self-inquiry, I learned to recognise my fears, doubts, and habitual patterns. Over time, I learned to meet both my shadow and my strengths with greater compassion. Curiosity gradually replaced control, and presence replaced effort.

For me, curiosity is not a technique but a way of relating. I learned to cultivate it moment by moment by noticing what happens within me: in my body, emotions, thoughts, and in relation to others. How I understand. How I use myself. How I show up. How my lenses shape what I see, and how to prevent them from interfering with the client's process. I also learned that we, as human beings, are naturally resistant to change. One of my greatest breakthroughs was learning how to create a space where others feel safe enough to tolerate discomfort and stay with what is emerging. This required profound personal work and the integration of both light and shadow. Along the way, I learned that curiosity is truly an act of love, as one of my mentors often says.

This personal development profoundly shaped my professional work. It strengthened my nervous system, increased my tolerance for ambiguity, and allowed me to remain grounded and responsive in complex and emotionally charged situations. My coaching became less about applying methods and more about creating a safe, human space where clients can encounter themselves honestly and access meaningful change.

Over time, coaching stopped being something I do and became something I live. What now forms the backbone of my practice are approaches rooted in interconnectedness, humanity, and collective wisdom. From this place, my work is grounded in wholeness, relational depth, and systemic awareness, honouring both the individual and the wider systems they are part of. In this way, personal growth continues to shape a professional practice that remains human, grounded, and alive.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

My reflective practice is an integral part of how I live and embody coaching and it is not a separate activity. It is how I stay in relationship with myself, with my work, and with life. It lives as a quiet, continuous orientation that accompanies me before, during, and after every coaching & mentoring & supervision conversations. At its core is contemplation, a way of being with experience without rushing to interpret, fix, or resolve it. This contemplative stance actively builds capacity. It supports the regulation of my nervous system, deepens my tolerance for ambiguity, and allows me to remain present with intensity, uncertainty, and not knowing.

I nurture this practice through ongoing self inquiry and a disciplined willingness to pause, sense, and question my own responses, assumptions, and impulses as they arise. Reflection unfolds through the body as much as through thought. I regularly ask myself whether an intervention truly served the client, or whether it responded to something in me. I pay close attention to what lingers in my body, emotions, and energy during and after sessions, receiving these signals as guidance rather than something to bypass. Silence, journaling, and time in nature create the spaciousness in which understanding can surface in its own time.

Professional dialogue forms another essential layer of my reflective practice. Supervision, both receiving and offering it, provides a relational field where complexity, ethical tension, and uncertainty can be held with care. Serving as an assessor and verifier further strengthens my reflective capacity, exposing me to diverse practices, developmental stages, and cultural contexts. These encounters continually stretch my capacity to stay open, discerning, and humble.

Ultimately, reflective practice is how I grow not only as a coach, but as a human being. It expands my capacity to hold more of life and it is from this capacity that my coaching remains grounded, responsive, and in service of what truly matters.



## **How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

For me, presence at a master level is not something I apply; it is something I inhabit. It is the integrated totality of who I have become through conscious development, self-inquiry, and lived experience. Presence is how I use myself as an instrument in the coaching process: responsive, attuned, and in partnership with what is emerging, rather than attached to outcomes or techniques.

In my experience, presence naturally evokes response and movement. Simply arriving fully invites movement. Through the embodied self, presence touches others subtly and powerfully, creating resonance through uniqueness rather than effort. And from that place, something intangible yet meaningful unfolds. In this space, clients often rediscover a quiet inner strength that allows them to continue, even when the path forward is not yet clear. In this way, presence becomes both the ground and the invitation.

I recognise presence in my work through distinct yet interwoven qualities: alignment with my personal values; creative and generative energy; emotional range and regulation; heart-based relating with myself and others; intuition; and refined sensitivity to the relational and systemic field. Influenced by Gestalt, these are qualities I consciously and continuously develop, embody, and leverage. For me, the art of coaching lives in how I notice, honour, and trust what is alive in the moment.

At this level, I am comfortable with not knowing. Silence, ambiguity, and emergence are welcome companions. I trust the process and remain honest with myself, pausing to sense whether an intervention truly serves the client or responds to something in me. This inner discipline keeps the client's agenda, autonomy, and learning at the centre.

Clients often describe feeling deeply seen, heard, and met. Sometimes beyond words. Peers and mentors experience my presence as calm, spacious, and ethically grounded, with attunement to both subtle cues and systemic dynamics. In my presence, they often slow down, reconnect with themselves, and allow what is true to surface. In that space, transformation does not need to be forced; it finds its own way.



## How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

My sense of belonging in my professional life has been deeply shaped through community-building and service to the coaching profession. When coaching in Slovenia was still largely unrecognised and without clear professional standards, I joined a small group of committed colleagues to help lay the foundations of the Slovenian ICF community. We came from different backgrounds, yet were united by a shared purpose: to establish coaching as a credible, ethical, and professional discipline: not for personal recognition, but for the benefit of people, organisations, and the future of the profession.

We invested countless voluntary hours in building structures, meeting formal requirements, and nurturing a professional community grounded in ethics, quality, and mutual support. We wanted to be ambassadors of the profession, not of our titles. From an initial group of around twenty members, the community grew within five years to more than eighty, with over half holding professional credentials. For a small market, this represented a significant shift in awareness, standards, and credibility. Serving on the board of ICF Slovenia for two terms was very meaningful experience. It shaped my understanding of belonging as being in service to something larger than oneself: holding space for others, sharing knowledge, and contributing to the integrity and evolution of the profession.

Alongside this, I co-created the EMCC Balkan accreditation process lead by my colleague Irena Antolič, supporting coaches across the region on their path toward individual accreditation. This work included building regional capacity, developing assessor teams, promoting professional coaching supervision, and strengthening EMCC professional standards. While this required substantial voluntary effort, it was also a deeply personal journey. Through many meaningful conversations and shared challenges, I continued to grow in humility, discernment, and presence. I continue to serve as an assessor and verifier across all accreditation levels, believing that strengthening professional standards ultimately strengthens people, clients, coaches, mentors, and the profession as a whole. In recognition of this contribution, I was awarded the role of Honorary Ambassador of EMCC Slovenia.

Another important sense of belonging comes from the Alumni community of the Povej na Glas coaching school, where learning and dialogue continue beyond formal education. Together, these communities of practice, service, and shared responsibility are where I experience a deep and lasting sense of professional belonging.



## What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

For me contribution is not something I add to my work; it is woven into how I live the profession. It grows naturally from presence, responsibility, and a sense of belonging to something larger than my own practice. Over time, contribution becomes less about doing more and more about being in service to people, to the profession, and to the systems in which coaching takes place.

It is a core value of mine that the work I do has meaning and impact, and this form of contribution does exactly that for me. It means helping create conditions in which quality, ethics, and learning can genuinely flourish. It shows up in holding space for others, supporting professional standards, and engaging in conversations that invite reflection rather than certainty.

Whether through community building, accreditation work, supervision, or assessor development, my intention is not to shape others in my own image, but to support their clarity, integrity, and maturity as practitioners. I see this as a quiet yet powerful way of contributing to the profession, one that supports not only individual coaches, but also the development of a more mature, discerning, and responsible market.

In my practice, this also means working systemically. I stay attentive to the wider field in which a client or a coach operates, cultural, organisational, and professional, and to the impact our choices may have beyond the immediate moment. Contribution, at this level, asks for humility: the willingness to question my own assumptions, to slow down, and to act with care rather than urgency. Being good ambassador of a profession.

Serving as an assessor and verifier has taught me that contribution is not about authority, but about discernment. Each conversation sharpens my listening, deepens my ethical sensitivity, and reminds me that standards exist to protect relationship and trust, not to create hierarchy.

Ultimately, contribution is my way of giving back what coaching has given me: depth, awareness, and presence. It is how I help the profession remain human, grounded, and alive. Today and for those who come after us.

Q

## Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

For me, mastery is a calling.

A way of living.

A way of being.

It is the willingness to meet myself and another exactly where we are, with compassion and honesty, even where there is discomfort. One of the central threads of mastery is presence, not surface presence, but depth of presence. The kind that allows another human being to feel, met without agenda, without pressure to perform or arrive somewhere else.

Mastery is not something to be chased, nor is it defined by techniques or tools. Tools matter, yet they never replace humility, groundedness, and the courage to remain fully available, human to human. A pattern I recognise deeply is subtlety. Mastery, as I experience it, is a refinement of perception and responsiveness. It is the ability to notice nuance, to stay attentive to what is easily overlooked, and to respond from presence rather than impulse. Change is not driven, but invited, emerging in the relational space that opens when we meet one another with care and openness.

The journey toward mastery also unfolds inwardly. It asks for an ongoing commitment to self-observation and honesty, to recognising personal patterns, sensitivities, and edges, and to working with them consciously. As my capacity to hold myself with clarity and compassion grows, so does my ability to offer safety and spaciousness to others.

Another colour of mastery, for me, is relational humility. Mastery deepens when personal ambition gives way to collective purpose. When the work is no longer about what I can do, but about what wants to emerge between us. It reflects the understanding that coaching is a relational art, and that who we are is the most powerful instrument we bring into the room.

Mastery is not a title.

It is a lifelong commitment to presence, truth, compassion, and depth.



## What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

Mastery is not something you chase. It is something you grow into. And is not achieved by accumulating tools or techniques; it develops through who you become as a coach and how intentionally you are developing your coaching maturity.

If you aspire to mastery in coaching, my encouragement is simple: focus first on who you are, not on what you can do. Meaning to focus on presence, self-awareness, and ethical maturity, rather than on performance.

Techniques and models are important, yet they are secondary to the coach's capacity to remain fully present, unattached to outcomes, and genuinely client-centred. Mastery begins when coaching is no longer driven by the need to demonstrate competence, but by the ability to respond to what is emerging in the client's process. Developing mastery requires ongoing inner work. Coaches need to explore their own patterns, triggers, assumptions, and biases. This self-awareness supports psychological safety, reduces unconscious interference, and allows the client's agenda and autonomy to remain central. I strongly encourage continuous reflective practice, supervision, and learning from experienced practitioners who demonstrate integrity, humility, and embodied wisdom. Discernment in choosing mentors and learning pathways is essential at this level.

Finally, remain open to not knowing. If you believe you already know, begin again. Create and honour empty space in every conversation, as insight and transformation often emerge there.

Mastery is not a title. It is a way of being. A way of living. A commitment to meet every person, and yourself with honesty, compassion, and depth.

[LinkedIn](#)

# SVEA VAN DER HOORN

South Africa

**ICF MCC**

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2018



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

I thought it started when I noticed that if I coached a leader, they had influence over many people's lives ie employees, who in turn lived in families and neighbourhoods - so the ripple effect was significant. However I subsequently realised that I had used a team and individual coaching approach when I was appointed as a senior manager in a statutory labour law organisation. It was just after the South African political transition to democracy in 1994 and we were charged with workplace skills and people development from people with zero work experience through to highly qualified and experienced lawyers and alternate dispute practitioners. No blueprint.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

Tending the soil. The plants will grow themselves. The coach's job is to offer conducive conditions for growth that are particular and specific to each client (plant). Expect seasonal change. Do what you can in each season that is supported by the season. Don't try to flow on an ebb. Know that some things must be allowed to die to make space for new growth. Nurture small shoots - they may become a mighty oak, a hedge that provides a habitat for much life, an exotic flower that blooms for just 24 hours and is captured in a photograph for time immemorial. There will be weeds, some noxious and some just not what you wanted. Discern between a lovely looking something which turns out to be poisonous, and a boring or even ugly looking something which is a life giver or protector. Celebrate along the way - nothing lasts forever.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

It was a real damp squib. I was renewing my ICF mentor coach registry entry and when I opened my profile I saw next to my name MCC. I wondered if it was a tech admin error, or a strange joke. I wrote in to enquire and received the response that an e-mail had been sent to me 3 weeks earlier telling me that my recordings had both passed and I had been awarded the credential. Did I search for that e-mail. Nowhere to be found. A few days later I received the re-send of my results. By then it felt like the story of Piglet who set off with Winnie the Pooh to take Eeyore a balloon for his birthday - all excited. He stepped in a small hole, fell forward and onto the balloon which popped. He sat up, and looked mournfully at the little piece of rubber dangling limp and torn. It did not feel celebratory at all.



## **If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?**

I am even closer to my love of the way words make worlds. I love the intricacy that blossoms when we change a word, vary the intonation, pace or pausing. The way the conversation then moves along differently. Small differences that have a significant effect. I spend time willingly listening to my own and other people's recordings to experience the wide variety of ways in which learning and growth are co-constructed between coach and client. I notice how the socio-linguistic community in which a coach usually does their work brings nuances, flavours and context specificity into their coaching. Some would say that I am even more language obsessed than before. I would say i am just the same, but more adept at expressing what i am noticing.



## **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

I have become better at chairing formal meetings, and framing and smoothing conversations which are a tangle and a muddle. I am by nature and by preference a listener and watcher, who nudges the conversational process, rather than being in the spotlight. Coaching settled me into being more spotlight willing. I decided that my awareness of fair and unfair discrimination, justice and fairness may as well was becoming a central thread in my work. So I stepped into ethicality and good governance - via leadership and team coaching, and into ethical dilemma navigation via working as a supervisor. My keen interest in the counter intuitive and seeing connections between things that appeared not connected made me a natural for the non-linear logic of decision-making coaching. And when COVID lockdown turned people's lives upside down and inside out, I expanded my end-of-life coaching into end-of-life-as-you-know-it coaching.



## **Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

Voice to text transcripts are my go to. I like to work with what I actually said and not what I think I said. I have a few different practices / disciplines - look for repetitiveness and tweak if more habit than responsive in the moment; look for novelty - what surprised me in a session about my contribution; ask myself if I had been sparkling what might I have done / been different in the session. I have diaries and journals from 40 years ago and randomly pick them up to read and see what is staying the same and what is changing.



## **How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

I am told I coach with my eyes - from soft glow to laser precision. I did know that I listen with my eyes. Strangely though when I am in an audio only situation eg coaching via telephone call, I experience heightened sensitivity about pace, tone, volume of voice. Presence at the mastery level includes a wider span of attention, more noticing and curiosity with profound acceptance that whatever is happening is possibly significant and possibly not. Ambiguity and possibility have always been my at ease spaces evoking creativity, patience and just being - like floating in a sensory ocean, simply noticing not assuming, judging etc. And highly attuned discernment as a companion. Others describe me a steady in a storm, calm in chaos, pragmatically optimistic, unafraid to fly where angels fear to tread (this one took me by surprise).



## **How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

I was chameleon like for many decades, finding ways to be myself and simultaneously fit in. As a child of immigrants I did not speak the same language as what was spoken around me, I was more an observer than a participant for the first 3 years. To this day I enjoy solitude and remote places in nature. I light up when around irreverent humour, non-linear logic, imagination and a designing way of approaching life. Rigour, discipline, coherence and quality are aesthetically pleasing to me, especially when they are in interplay together. My sense of belonging in professional life is at times limited by my awareness of accountability and transparency so I tend to become an exile when the community I am in is busy with how lovely the emperor's clothes are and I'm seeing no clothes.



## **What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

I'm not sure whether my response to this is connected to master level. My sense of being of service and contributing to a benign and hope inspiring world was with me before I embarked on mastery whether academically or professionally. I see the challenge as how to be part of the elite exception group without stepping into elitism status and posturing. Perhaps it has to do with how to be simultaneously a lighthouse and just another human being getting on with work and life as best they can, for themselves, for others and for humanity. A combination of sovereignty and humility.



**Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

Caring about the philosophical, epistemological and methodological tenets that inform how you show up and how you engage with clients and stakeholders. Diversity with coherence, rather than a mixed muddle of contradictory concepts and practices.



**What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Be aware of your relationship with failure, disappointment, frustration and more. They together with aspiration, inspiration and perspiration will be companions on the journey. Listen to yourself not more not less than you listen to others. Be selective in what, with whom, and how you journey. Take your quest very seriously, and yet hold it lightly. Be like a toddler learning to walk. You'll be falling down often so have the equivalent of a soft landing and some reliable sturdy objects or people to pull yourself back up and give it another go. Make recording and doing quality review your standard practice. Use reflective practice to alert you to what to take to deliberate practice. Be firm and kind with yourself and any fellow mastery companions.

[LinkedIn](#)  
[Website](#)



# JAN STUDENÝ

## Czechia

## ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2025

**Q How did your journey into coaching begin?**

I was a tennis coach and I was interested more in how to work usefully with the clients, first I met coaching I almost immediately knew that this is gonna be my life mission.

**Q What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?**

Nice one. First which came to my mind is - Trip around the world... I've met a lot of nice people, went through a lot of challenges, few times I wanted to quit because building coaching business was a quite tough one.

**Q What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?**

The biggest one was in certainty and self-confidence

**Q If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?**

Still on my way, with no end, still there is a lot to explore or come back to... so the mission is to sustain and still add something to it...

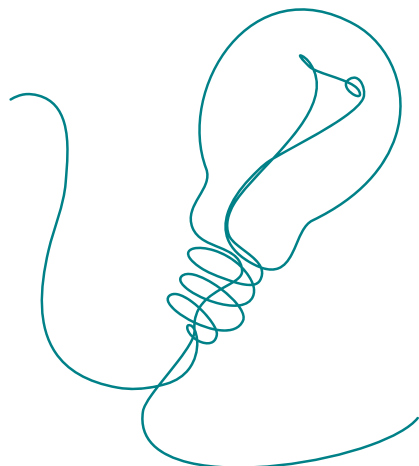


**Q** How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

As I mentioned already, the level of certainty and self-confidence in my life. I feel more like I don't need that much support from the space around me. I have this in myself

**Q** Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

I came back to my coaching sessions. I look to my coaching moves and trying to recognize what works good and what can be better. Also have my MCC colleague and we discuss a lot about coaching 1 hour every week. Its super useful.



**Q** How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others – clients, peers, or mentors?

Sometimes clients says that the level of listening and me being with them is unique...that they don't have this kind of experience. To be honest I feel I'm that present and I'm listening that deeply, but sometimes are the days which I don't sleep that good or so, and it can influence a bit. Overall I think client don't recognize this in coaching sessions. Its very important for me to stay in good mental shape.

**Q** How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

Thankfully to my MCC colleague and MCC group where we talk a lot about coaching I feel that belonging. Also as a co-owner of coaching company we have around 200 coaches in community, its also giving me this feeling of belonging.



**What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

Sometimes I hear a lot of myths around coaching. I think the role of mine is to speak about coaching and discuss with the other who experienced coaching on just surface level to spread idea about how important is to know coaching from this deeper MCC perspective.



**Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

To be as an example for the others. Don't want to sound mean but... I know that makes sense to go to MCC and spread coaching on this deeper level, if somebody is positively influenced by this example I have the warm feeling.



**What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Don't waste your time by thinking if its worth it... IT IS. :)



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# CATHERINE FINGER

United States of America

**ICF MCC**

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2025



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

While I've been identifying, developing and coaching leaders throughout my long career, I started my Executive Coaching business officially in 2019.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

As a lifelong learner, I found myself "hooked" on coach education and research when I first delved into it after having been challenged by a colleague to complete my first coaching certification in 2017. As I grew in confidence and service with my clients, I was attracted to deeper levels of learning and found myself blossoming personally and professionally.

This process of becoming more of who I was at the deepest level led me to continue my coach training and to enhance my skills and gain more certifications along the way. To date, in addition to earning the ICF MCC and the EMCC SP, I have completed certifications in positive psychology health and wellness coaching; addictions coaching; Emotional Intelligence coaching and assessments; mentor coaching; coaching supervision; author coaching; personal coaching; and executive coaching. I am also a licensed Chaplain and have completed numerous trauma-informed and crisis training certifications for first responders.



## **What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?**

The process of becoming certified at the ICF MCC level has been a beautiful journey of growth and affirmation for me. My coaching has improved, my ability to relax and lean into my intuition has sharpened, and I experienced a deep sense of "homecoming" as a coach practitioner along the way. Receiving the ICF MCC recognition feels like an external endorsement of my coaching and coaching contributions and comes at just the right time in my career as I contemplate the creation of a non-profit organization.



## **If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?**

I feel tremendously grateful and content in my journey as a coach practitioner right now. And I see a wide open door of exploration, wonder, and support before me as I delve into new areas of learning, contribution and service. The lamp of learning shines ever more light onto my coaching professional path and I have decided to pursue the EMCC MP accreditation next. I am finding a strong correlation between training and personal expertise as I "go and grow," and I look forward to strengthening my service to others as I continue to learn and expand my offerings and understandings.



## **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

I've become more at peace with myself and my practice--and experienced a beautiful sense of "coming home" to being my best self as a person and practitioner. The rhythms of life that I have created around my coaching practice mirror how I most like to live my life and express myself in every other area of my life--so there is a deep synergy at work in my life--and I am grateful. Gratitude shapes my life and frames my contributions to clients and to colleagues.



## Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

I walk and I pray and I practice gratitude by noticing who and what is wonderful all around me throughout each day. Most mornings begin with a strong cup of coffee and a pen in my hand as I write my "morning pages" with a soulful fervor. I have the luxury of building in "thinking time" into my schedule and I actively pause to reflect and to write again most afternoons. And I draw...pictures...feelings, impressions, visions--I draw and see what takes shape before me. And I listen to dear friends share their journeys out loud with me through both coaching coaching supervision sessions--and I benefit from their journeys. I also enjoy the luxury of monthly coaching supervision offered by my spiritual director as I've done for the past five years and I enjoy one peer coaching supervision session a month as well.



## How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Presence is a deep breath taken and held together in the safety of shared agreements and compassionate understandings co-constructed with clients. It feels like a warm, translucent ocean filled with colorful life waving between, beneath and all around us as we wander together through emerging ideas and topics.



## **Q How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

Oh my--I am blessed with so much belonging in my professional and personal life--and I am grateful. I've long been connected to professional organizations in my life before coaching.

Affiliating myself with ICF at the local level was a natural first step for me--which grew into board service and deep friendships created that endure today. And as is so often true--that first step into coach training led to becoming affiliated as a coach trainer with two spectacular organizations. And that first step into board service expanded into numerous opportunities to serve and learn--expanding my professional and personal connections ten-fold. I happily belong to communities within the ICF and EMCC worlds at the local and national levels as well as Chaplain organizations. Additionally, I am very involved in local business leadership and service groups as well as my local church. Each affiliation deepens my sense of belonging, presence, and being fit for purpose and each fills my cup beautifully.

## **Q What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

Contributing to the coaching profession is a natural outcome of growth and development at any level for me. I believe in "giving back" and in offering service to the organizations, systems and communities around me. This commitment hasn't changed now that I am at the MCC level.



## **Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

I would highlight the thread of service to others and to the organizations that help give us voice and direction as professional coaches. There is no perfect organization--just as there are no perfect humans--and I encourage all of us to continue to unite, serve, and work to improve our systems as we grow together around the world. Coaching matters--and we need more of it at every single level around the world so we can support the people within our respective spheres of influence.

The other thread I would offer is to hold the issue of compensation lightly and wisely. While we do all deserve to create a compensation system that supports and nurtures our professional and personal needs--what if we could share our power and contributions as we see fit? What if there is a non-profit organization in need of one of us to create it--to offer support to people in need whom we have not yet met?

Let us stay open and responsive to doing cool things for other people in need simply because we can...without attachment to results and without attachment to compensation whenever our capacity allows.



## **What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

For me the journey of pursuing the ICF MCC invited me into a deeper practice of reflection, consideration, scholarship, and meditation. My journey also opened doors of access into communities of people and practices I had not yet encountered--and this has been another transformative experience for me.

If you are "aspiring to mastery in coaching," I encourage you to listen to your heart. Do you hear that still, small voice calling you deeper? Are you curious about what else might be "out there" in terms of your personal and professional development?

GO FOR IT! Jump in--the water's fine--and you might just discover a portal into a whole new world.

[LinkedIn  
Website](#)



# GEORGINA CORSCADDEN

Ireland

## AC MASTER EXECUTIVE COACH

Coaching Fellow, Master Coach,  
Psychologist, Master Trainer

**Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):**

2006

**Q** How did your journey into coaching begin?

Curiosity, and always interested in people, hearing their perspectives, truly listening to really hear others

**Q** What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Further recognition and one of the 1st to do this. Deepening knowledge and perspective.

**Q** What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

Lionheart energy, presence & being.



**Q** If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

Always learning. Times are changing in the world, and human beings need more support than ever. It should not be the privilege of the few.

**Q** How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

CPD was always a key anchor and committed to this from the very beginning of my career. Coaching has changed enormously, and more anchors are needed for the process both for the coach and coachee. Developed and evolved resources and designed tools for my coachees. Remain open and curious

**Q** Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.

Mindfulness, walking coaching with another coach. Volunteer in different environments to expand my perspective

**Q** How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Presence requires deliberate focus and calm for the body to follow. Really being present with no distractions is 'felt, experienced by both coach and coachee

**Q** What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

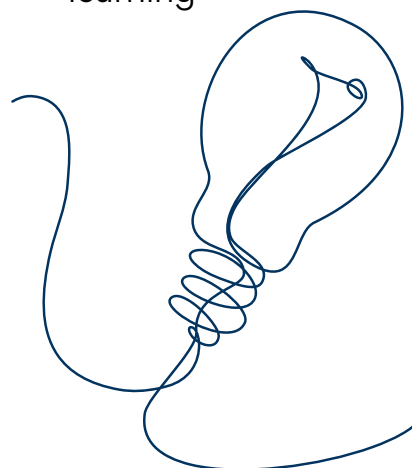
Contribution is about enabling all boats to rise higher. It is about sharing best practice tools as over 35 years coaching experience.

**Q** Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

Build a trusted network, and always be reciprocal with others, give and receive, not take.

**Q** What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

Do it for real internally vs the credentials. Keep your mind open to learning





[LinkedIn](#)  
[Website](#)

# MILENA NIKOLIĆ

Montenegro

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2025



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey into coaching started while I was working in the people development field, 12 years ago. At that time, after working as a career counselor, I moved to roles as L&D and HR consultant, soft skills trainer, and assessor for various assessment tools. In coexistence with solid experience, there was a clear feeling that something was missing.

Exploration of different approaches, and exclusion of some (like psychotherapy), brought me to coaching education. Even though my knowledge of coaching at the time was super limited, still, something resonated, so intuitively I followed that path. Over the next two years, I completed my coaching education and began practicing individual, group, and team coaching. Soon after, I started educating and supervising future coaches.

Everything unfolded quite quickly over a few years. The process was intense and exciting, with a lot of trainings, education, and professional endeavors, which also led to different kinds of learning. Looking back, I realize that I didn't know what I was looking for at the beginning, but clearly recognized it when I found it.

Q

## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Receiving the official master-level recognition felt genuinely pleasant, mainly because it came with ease. From the very beginning, I accepted a phrase often connected to mastery and MCC mentoring: taking it lightly. At first, it was meant to refer to details and competencies, but for me it naturally applied to the whole process.

On my path toward MCC, what especially interested me was embedding and modeling flow, which became one of my main inspirations for understanding mastery. In that sense, the impact of the recognition has been mostly internal and process-oriented. Confirmation came, that approaching something important and delicate with lightness has its place and value, and that insight has stayed with me.

The impact is subtle and relative. I may not be fully aware of it, and perhaps I never will be.

What it has clearly influenced is my experience of coaching itself. I now see coaching more broadly and recognize even more the value of continuous development, especially through supervision and reflection. It brings both greater responsibility and greater capacity to observe myself and my work, to notice nuances, and to sense moments when I move closer to, or further away from - mastery.

Q

## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I experience this moment as the beginning of a deeper exploration of mastery in coaching. It feels as if I have opened a door that leads into a wide field of learning and inquiry.

Rather than a point of arrival, this place feels like expanded awareness, of what mastery can be, how it shows up in practice, and how subtle and dynamic it really is. There is a sense of curiosity and openness, and less of a need to define or finalize anything.



## **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

Coaching has helped me become the person I wanted, and needed, to be, both professionally and in a more holistic sense. Over time, my coaching practice has shaped not only how I work, but also how I relate to myself and to life.

Professionally, coaching has given me a sense of freedom that I didn't have before. It allowed me to choose the kind of work I do, to focus on projects that are aligned with who I am and what inspires me, and to bring my work, time, and life into better balance. That freedom has been deeply important to me.

On a personal level, coaching has offered perspectives and skills that support the way I want to be in relationships and in the world. It has helped me stay open, listen more deeply, and connect with people, with nature, and with ongoing growth. Over time, it has also made me more comfortable with who I am and how I am.



## **Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

I nurture my reflective practice through regular, simple, and ongoing habits. On a daily level, I take short reflective pauses, often before and after coaching sessions, to notice what is present, what has shifted, and how I showed up.

Reflection is also supported through peer reflective practice and supervision.

In addition, when I offer reflective practice or supervision to fellow coaches, that work becomes a reflective space for me as well.

For me, reflective practice is more of a flow than a set of moments, an ongoing, conscious process that runs through my work and daily experience. This continuous reflection helps me stay present, responsive, and open to learning.

## **Q** How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?

Because reflection is almost always present for me, it is sometimes easier to describe presence through its absence. When I notice that presence is missing in a session, it is usually not a comfortable moment. Presence creates comfortable feeling of flow.

I haven't received very detailed or technical feedback about my presence over the years. What I have heard, consistently, over more than a decade, is simple and clear. Clients, peers, and mentors have described me as present, unhurried, and able to stay in the space without rushing toward outcomes. One of the pieces of feedback that stayed with me the most is being described as an example of how to be in the here and now.

## **Q** How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

Most of the time, my sense of belonging emerges in direct connection, with the people, teams, or groups I work with at a given moment. It is situational and relational rather than tied to a specific structure or role.

Underneath or before that is general sense of belonging to couse and community of coaching.

I am a member of both the ICF and EMCC bodies, although I would not describe myself as an active member.





## **What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

My sense is that contribution to the coaching profession and to wider systems is equally important for all coaches, regardless of level. For me it is a shared responsibility that exists at every stage of development, to contribute to the systems and professions we are part of through how we practice and show up.

At the master level, the possibilities for contribution may be broader, mainly because the field of understanding coaching is wider. With that comes wider perspective, and perhaps greater influence, but not a different kind of responsibility.

Supporting others and maintaining high standards of quality in my own practice is a main way of contributing for me. This shows up in how I work with clients, how I support fellow coaches, and how I hold myself accountable to the integrity of the coaching process.

For me, contribution is about consistency, responsibility, and care in everyday practice.



## **What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Exploring excellence is deeply inspiring in any professional field. The journey toward mastery in coaching offers exactly that kind of possibility.

From my own experience, and from what I have witnessed in the work of fellow coaches, exploring mastery tends to expand the space we have for understanding and working with our clients. This does not necessarily happen through acquiring more skills or competencies, but often through the experience of the journey itself.

In that sense, the path toward mastery mirrors what many of our clients are seeking, not perfection, but a more masterful way of being in their own lives.

[LinkedIn Website](#)

# STEVE JEFFS

United Kingdom

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):

2019



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

Looking back, I can see that coaching was present in my life long before I formally trained as a coach. I've always been curious about how people think and how expanding awareness changes the decisions people make.

When I was studying at University, I often learned best by asking questions with classmates. Exploring different ways of understanding the material helped me deepen my own thinking, and it also helped others clarify theirs. That pattern of curiosity and inquiry has stayed with me.

Earlier in my career in the Air Force I was responsible for training people who would operate in high-stress, high-threat environments. Debriefing after exercises was always centred on awareness and responsibility — helping people examine their motivations, assumptions, and the stories they told themselves about what was happening. The goal was to help them see the situation more fully and recognise the range of choices available to them.

Later, while completing my master's degree in psychology with a focus on business psychology, I had the opportunity to work with a coaching psychology firm. Around the same time I was working in leadership development in the Middle East, running assessment centres and writing detailed development reports. What struck me was that organisations invested heavily in assessments, but the reports often sat unread and little changed.

Coaching felt like the missing piece — a way to actually support people to think, learn, and develop. That realisation led me to formal coach training and into full-time coaching work.

Q

## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

Two metaphors come to mind, and interestingly neither of them feels particularly exciting.

The first is **a tree**. A tree simply grows and becomes more tree-like over time. It deepens its roots, extends its branches, and becomes part of the ecosystem around it. It provides shelter, stability and support for others, often quietly and without drawing attention to itself. In some ways that resonates with how I experience the journey toward mastery. It's not a sudden transformation but a gradual deepening — more grounded, more connected to the wider system, and more able to support others in their growth.

The second metaphor comes from basketball. When I was younger I sometimes played with older guys who didn't look particularly athletic. They weren't fast, they didn't move much, and at first glance they looked easy to dismiss. But then they would calmly hit shot after shot from all over the court. No flashy moves, no wasted effort — just an embodied understanding of the fundamentals.

That image stays with me in coaching. Earlier in my career I worked much harder in sessions. Now the work often looks simpler and quieter. There's less effort, fewer moves, and more trust in the fundamentals of the conversation. What might look relaxed or even unremarkable from the outside is actually the result of years of practice and understanding.

In that sense, mastery feels less like achievement and more like simplicity.





## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Achieving the MCC recognition was probably closure, in a way. It's the top of the credential tree. Before that there was always this sense of "I could probably get it... but I haven't actually done it."

Even when I had the experience and the hours, there's still a difference between thinking you're operating at that level and actually going through the process and being recognised at that level. So part of it was simply achievement. That feeling of, "cool, I got it." A sense of completeness in the achievement sense, not in the journey sense.

The bigger impact actually came through the process of getting there. Through supervision and reflection I had to look quite closely at my coaching and notice where I really had mastery and where I had familiarity. There were places where habits had crept in — things I was doing because they had worked before, rather than because I was consciously choosing them.

That process helped me become much more intentional in how I coach. Interestingly, it didn't necessarily change what I do in sessions very much. It changed my awareness of what I'm doing and why.

So the recognition itself was satisfying, but the deeper impact was the confidence that came from doing that reflective work and realising, "yeah... I've done the work."



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

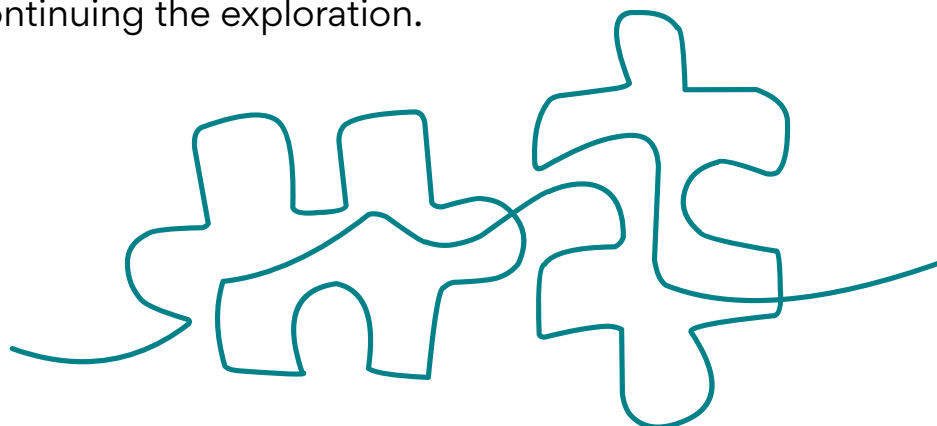
The first image that comes to mind for me is Miyamoto Musashi. I don't know a huge amount about him, but what I do know is that he spent much of his early life fighting duels and winning them, and eventually reached a point where it stopped being about defeating opponents and became about mastery of the craft itself.

What strikes me about that is the discipline of practice. The work isn't about proving anything to anyone anymore — it's about continuing to refine the craft.

That's a bit how coaching feels for me now. I really enjoy the partnership in the conversation, the collaboration, and the efficiency that can emerge through a simple question. There's also a paradox that I've come to appreciate more and more: the confidence to not know. I don't feel a need to arrive with answers. And yet there's a kind of knowing that the not-knowing won't stop the conversation from producing something simple and useful.

If I try to picture where I am on the journey, I can't really see the start or the destination. The image that comes to mind is walking along a path in the middle of a forest. There's a lot to explore, and the forest is interesting.

There's no urgency about getting somewhere. It's more about enjoying the walk and continuing the exploration.



## **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

One of the biggest things coaching has brought to me is an appreciation of partnership. In coaching we talk about partnering with the client, but the more I've worked in this profession the more I've realised how important that idea is to me more broadly.

In a coaching conversation we're trying to create the conditions where the client is willing to partner with us and also partner with themselves. When that happens something shifts. The conversation becomes less about the coach doing something to the client and more about two people showing up to explore something together.

The concept of partnership and being coach-like is central to everything I do. It was something I explored in my doctoral research and it's something I bring into the work I do with organisational culture change. It is a key outcome that I hold for leaders I work with to help them bring more aligned collaboration (partnership) to their teams.

Ultimately, it is about us coming together, helping each other be at our best, and aligning our connected best to achieve shared outcomes. Coaching helped me see this and put words around it.

## **Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

One of my favourite ways of nurturing reflective practice at the moment is a conversation series I'm having with a colleague exploring paradoxes and myths in coaching. We're asking questions like: what do we think is true about coaching, what might actually be a myth, and how do our own experiences shape the way we see the profession?

What I enjoy about these conversations is that we're not trying to arrive at a neat answer. In fact, we often start by acknowledging that we probably won't solve the question. The value is in the exploration itself — looking at the topic through my lens and then through my colleague's lens, and noticing what becomes clearer through that dialogue.

I have similar conversations in some of the mentor programs I run. When coaches bring different perspectives and experiences into the discussion, it creates a rich space for reflection.

For me, reflective practice is less about finding the right answer and more about continuing to explore the question.

## **How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

When I think about this question, the first thing that comes to mind is actually the faces of some of my clients and the way they show up in the coaching conversation. There's a shared permission that seems to emerge in the space between us.

I do want to acknowledge that clients have been on a journey as well. Working together over time, we've been able to create a space where they can show up in that way. It's very much co-created. One of the things I appreciate in experienced Master coaches is the ability to create that space for the client.

In that space, presence feels a little different. Presence creates the space. It creates the safety. It allows me to show up however is needed in the moment.

But it's also about me not having to show up, because the client is.

That's the paradox of presence that fascinates me. The more present we are as a coach, the less present we need to be as a coach, because our presence invites the client to be more present with what's happening for them.

There's a subtlety in that — almost a kind of quiet magic in the coaching conversation.

## **How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

This is actually something I've been reflecting on quite a bit recently.

I've started becoming more active in communities of master coaches. I really enjoyed connecting with other MCC coaches at the ICF conference in San Diego, and I noticed there was something about those conversations that felt quite natural. I think there's a sense that we've travelled similar paths in the profession, and I find myself wanting more of that kind of connection.

At the same time, I also experience community through the coaching community that I host. It's a space where coaches can come together, share perspectives, and support each other's development.

Although if I'm honest, the places where I feel the strongest sense of belonging tend to be smaller groups. Smaller, more focused communities where people can go deeper in the conversation and there's a stronger shared purpose. That intimacy seems to create a different kind of connection.

## **Q** What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

I think contribution at a master level is actually an untapped resource in the coaching profession.

When I think about communities more broadly, whether it's traditional communities, church groups, or other social systems, and there's often a role that elders play. They're respected not just for what they know, but for the perspective and experience they bring. I sometimes think there's a parallel role for master coaches in our profession.

The challenge I see is that coaching is such an independent profession. Most of us are running our own businesses, working in different contexts, and we don't share the same organisational structures that naturally bring people together. So if those conversations are going to happen, we have to deliberately create the spaces for them.

Recently I was having a conversation with a group of master coaches about this. There's a huge amount of wisdom in the profession, and part of me worries that a lot of it could simply disappear over time.

## **Q** Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

One thing that strikes me when I look at the word mastery is that we often use it as if it stands on its own, but it is really a connected word. Mastery of what? When we talk about mastery we often talk about it as a destination, but we do not always pause to ask what it is that someone is actually mastering.

The analogy that comes to mind for me is martial arts, where people often talk about the black belt as the goal because it carries this sense of achievement or arrival. Yet achieving a black belt is all about mastery of the basics. It reflects an ongoing competency in all of the foundational movements and principles of the art.

This idea resonates quite strongly for me in coaching, because the supervision journey toward MCC was largely about returning to those fundamentals. Looking again at the competencies, the markers, and the simple elements of the coaching conversation reminded me that mastery is often less about complexity and more about deep familiarity with the basics. A reminder to come back to the beginning.

Once the foundations are deeply understood then they can be combined in different ways, which from the outside may look sophisticated, but the underlying elements are still very simple, masterful.



## What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

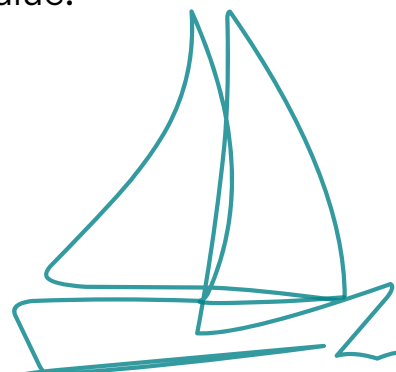
I was recently having a conversation with a coach where something came up that feels relevant here. As coaches we often have moments in a conversation where we feel an intuition that something is wanting to happen in the dialogue. Even if we are not fully conscious of it, there is this sense that something could be contributed.

For newer coaches this often shows up as offering content (a metaphor, sharing an insight, or giving some advice) because it feels like that contribution might help move the conversation forward. The first thing I would say is that this intuition is not something to dismiss. It is actually one of the understated powers of coaching. It comes from listening deeply and being connected to the client and the relationship.

What is useful to notice is that when we offer that contribution we are actually answering a question. The question might be something like “what metaphor might help here?” or “how could this idea be framed?”

The shift toward mastery is to notice the question that is emerging and offer it back to the client instead of answering it ourselves. When we ask the question, the client gets the first opportunity to explore it.

Very often their answer will be richer than anything we might have offered, and we can still contribute our perspective later if it adds value.



A portrait of Eileen Woodford, a woman with short blonde hair, wearing glasses and a dark blazer over a white top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a solid dark blue.

[LinkedIn Website](#)

# EILEEN WOODFORD

Ireland

## AC MASTER EXECUTIVE COACH

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2025



### How did your journey into coaching begin?

Very simply. I was always being asked how I managed to brush myself off and embrace the challenges and trauma which came my way (broken my back as a child, lost my parents in a car accident, death of my husband). I never thought about it until it was pointed out to me, and then I started to look at how I did do it and realised it was innate in me; I would fall (metaphorically) and struggle, and then I would get a surge of energy and move forward if only a few steps at a time. It just seemed a natural process which was within me, a fighting spirit. My mother told me that twice I had nearly died before I was two years of age from rubella and then double pneumonia, yet I fought and refused to give in. I can now recognise this surge within me, it is not conscious it just seems to happen, however, I do recognise that it is after I accept a situation that it occurs so my recipe may be:

acceptance = energy = movement.

When Coaching began to be visible, I found out as much as I could about the profession and then chose to study for a Diploma in Personal and Business Coaching in 2005 - 2006. It was the best decision I ever made, both from a personal development point of view and from a professional point of view as it was the start of what has been a very fulfilling career.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

My journey toward mastery in coaching has been like a bumpy road at times with many diversions! Since I qualified in 2006, I have worked either part-time or full-time as a coach depending on my life circumstances which at times were difficult for health reasons of those I dearly loved. My priority was always them and I do not regret a single decision I made during those times, and I know that those experiences have only benefitted me as a person and as a coach. After the death of my husband 6 years ago, initially there was no movement at all and I stepped away completely for a while to recover. This was what was needed and now the road has become so much smoother professionally as I have the ability, again due to changing circumstances, to focus completely on my work and professional development.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

It had taken years for me to have the confidence to pursue the accreditation (again due to the bumpy road) and last year when I did pursue it and then achieved it, the impact on me was huge. It was the recognition of my skills and ability and being able to say to myself “I can do this” – despite receiving excellent feedback over the years. I felt lighter and I felt like a professional who could stand over her work.

If anything, it has made me hungrier for learning and it has also given me the confidence to become more involved within the AC as I feel what I have to say has value, and that is because I now value myself more. It also means that I feel a commitment to the AC and for everything they stand for in upholding the ethics and standards of coaching.

It has also had an impact on how I show up and collaborate with clients and companies with which I am an associate. I navigate these relationships with more presence and certainty.

## **Q** If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

On a never-ending road of continuous learning. We will never know everything, but the journey is wonderful. Even stronger than ever is the constant curiosity I still feel about coaching and different disciplines within. Keeping my skills sharp and aligned through CPD and supervision.

Mastery is also something to attain within, which needs constant nurturing. It is very much about inner skills and capacities as much as external coaching skills. I also believe it is a personal acknowledgement of what we do not know yet, and the humility to accept that.

## **Q** How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?

As I said earlier, the first coaching course I did was a huge journey in personal development, and each year I do more which again brings me on another foray into my inner self. This has all shaped me to be more effective as a coach, and also the process of coaching others and the skills needed have also impacted me as a person. The two are completely interlinked. The increasing awareness which has happened over the years as a person is directly linked to the continuous professional development I do as a coach and the supervision which I attend.

Everything I now do is through the lens of personal awareness (developed through coaching) which brings development even if incidental. It has become natural and organic and gifts me with a wonderful sense of grounding and belonging which is highly beneficial within my coaching practice.

## **Q Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

I believe reflective practice for everyone, not just a coach, is vitally important as it helps us to have a look at how we are, how we behave, how we react and so much more. There is huge learning in these reflections, both in the writing down and then in the reading. However, reflective practice does not always have to be written, taking the time to be aware of these things and connect head to heart to actions is important. Too often we can get stuck in the cognitive processes without connecting to feelings and action, and reflecting on this is incredibly important and can give us great personal insight.

For my own reflective practice, it is about making time throughout the day to just 'stop' and connect to my body - feelings, sensations, thoughts, and checking in with myself. I walk in nature very regularly - experiencing the weather, absorbing the sights, sounds and smells. And I journal, sometimes very focussed and at other times I just let whatever comes to the page arrive without judgement. Breathing exercises and yoga are also part not just of my day but also me. They strengthen my self-connection and ability to reflect.

In fact, none of these practices stand alone as each one feeds into the other and when I neglect one area it affects all

## **Q How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

Over the years I have continuously worked on bringing my attention to my body and breathing so that I can connect with myself almost immediately whatever the situation. This ability which has strengthened over the years, really helps me to stay grounded, focused - present, both with myself and with my client(s) as at one stage I struggled with a very busy mind. It has helped me experience much more inner calm, and I have been told by clients that they can sense that from me and it helps create a safe space. I believe that if a client/peer/mentor senses your state of being/energy, then they will react accordingly and therefore it is vital that we have the ability to ground ourselves first before we work with others.

## **Q How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

I have a deep sense of personal belonging as I have a strong heart connection. This connection has really come about since I lost my husband in 2020 and I sense him in my heart, opening my heart to him, and that sense of love in my heart has created this sense of personal belonging. This has also come about due to many challenges within my life and the inner strength my parents helped to nurture and then my husband. I have always been independent and thrive in interdependent relationships. This sense of being 'ok' on my own, I know is made stronger by close relationships where I can step away to recover and breathe on my own.

I also feel very connected within the Harthill Consulting Community, where we meet regularly for community inquiries, webinars etc. It's an international community and I feel I belong. I know I can reach out to any of them, and I hope they feel the same about me.

## **Q What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

It is since I achieved the master accreditation that I now feel I can contribute more to the coaching profession. I have just volunteered for and been accepted as a mentor with the AC and I am very eager to begin this journey. I also co-facilitate on a Diploma in Coaching (accredited by the AC) and I have noticed I have much more confidence which I observe is encouraging the students in a different way. I am putting this down to the change within my own self-belief which has a ripple effect.

I believe these are both contributing to the coaching professions.

**Q** Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

The thread for me is Connection which I believe is one of the most powerful words, as if we lose connection with self, others and our surroundings (community, environment etc) then we are not complete.

The colour for me has always been orange, it grounds and excites me at the same time. I'm very visual and imagery is important.

The flower is a sunflower



**Q** What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

The coaching bodies (for me the AC) are all very open and encouraging, and the level of support when I eventually had the courage to follow the mastery route, was wonderful. Go for it, enquire and get the facts and details and ask questions if unsure or in doubt.

A teal speech bubble containing the word "LinkedIn" in white text.

# ROBERTO BERNAL

Panama

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):  
2017



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey in coaching began after the training, as people started asking me for one-on-one support after the group training.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

A **long bus trip** that travels through multiple states in the company of different companions who share the seat next to you, full of beautiful landscapes, amazing discoveries, but also doubts, questions and a constant search for answers.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

A formal validation of years of experience and also a process of relearning new, more demanding and at the same time more powerful skills in alliance with the coachee and from full confidence in their potential without my intervention.

**Q** **If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?**

Returning to visit the places I liked most from the initial journey, to get to know them and enjoy them even more.

**Q** **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

They go hand in hand, because the more you grow as a person through self-knowledge and the discovery of your purpose, the more capable you are of genuinely being at the service of others to help them do the same.

**Q** **Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

Journaling, prayer, coaching processes for myself, and writing post in LinkedIn.

**Q** **How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

It consists of putting my entire nervous system at the service of the other, to act as a receiving antenna that captures the same frequencies with which the other person transmits and does not transmit, in a space of mindfulness.

## **Q How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

I experience a sense of belonging by fulfilling the mission for which I am in this world through my work and family, as these are the two areas where I manifest my co-creative power.

## **Q What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

For me, the role of master coach has not changed my vision of fulfilling my mission, because my vocation goes beyond being a Master Coach; reaching that level was simply another optional step, it could happen or not, regardless of my mission.

## **Q Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

Being a Master Coach is not a value judgment that says how good you are as a coach; but it is important to aspire to that level if you are interested in being the best you can be as a coach, knowing that it requires the humility to let yourself be supervised by others and leave things behind in order to validate that what you do at a professional level conforms to certain safe guidelines for the client.

## **Q What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

It carries much more weight when a recognized international organization says you are a Master Coach than when you do it yourself, because that validation must come from a third party and not from yourself.



[LinkedIn  
Website](#)

# ADRIANA GEORGESCU

Romania

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this  
credential/accreditation/award(s):

2024



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

As a teenager, I was gifted in math and physics, but what actually fascinated me was influence – what makes people shift.

That question took me into corporate marketing — I wanted to understand markets from the inside. There, I kept finding myself in conversations where I was less interested in the project at hand and more curious about what was really going on for the person leading it. (People have always told me things. Probably, because I listen, I see patterns quickly and offer something specific to that person, in that moment.)

At some point, I discovered that the thing I'd always done naturally had a name and started doing it fully.



## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

Rock climbing.



As an actual climber, I have solid technique — there's no skipping that. But every route is different. The holds are different, the angles are different. I cannot use a recipe - I have to make good decisions, in the moment.

Coaching mastery feels exactly like that. The fundamentals deeply learned. Reading what's in front of you and responding to what's actually there.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

The MCC mattered to me as a signal that something I'd been building internally had reached a threshold that others could recognize.

I was also surprised to pass on my first attempt while intentionally avoiding to coach in the American style that many assume is the only way to earn MCC.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I invest significantly in understanding my clients' industries and positions before we begin — that preparation makes the coaching sharper.

I am also more aware of my specific strengths and I deploy them strategically rather than instinctively.

My MCC mentor and my clients' feedback helped me see them clearly: I am comfortable with silence. I am compassionate but not easily rattled by emotional content. I challenge with gusto. My intuition and decision-making in the moment work.

**Q** **How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

I was always direct, always more interested in what's actually going on than in what's polite to notice. Coaching has made me more patient: it sharpened my instinct into something I can deploy with precision.

I enjoy being direct with leaders, because I know what they actually need: honesty, delivered with care, is more useful than comfort.

**Q** **Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

I enjoy thinking about my clients between sessions. It happens naturally when I take a walk and suddenly something clicks about what somebody actually needs.

I read widely, mostly outside of coaching literature. I find that concepts land differently when they come from science, business, or social psychology rather than coaching frameworks.

I also have conversations with my mentor and trusted peers — thinking out loud with people whose judgment I respect.

Q

**How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

Stillness with direction. I'm holding the larger pattern and I have space to move. My clients describe it as feeling seen.

Q

**How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?**

My deepest sense of professional belonging comes from the clients and leaders I work with over time and remain connected to. I also feel close to the MCC Journey and Beyond peer group and my climbing community.

Q

**What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?**

I work with leaders inside global organizations and our coaching conversations ripple outward into how teams are led and decisions get made.

I also write — for LinkedIn primarily, with serious attention to what's actually useful to senior leaders.

Q

**Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?**

The first is cross-cultural fluency. I work with leaders across American, European and Asian professional cultures, and these cultures have fundamentally different relationships to authority, feedback, directness, and vulnerability.

Also: the leaders I work with are operating in conditions of genuine uncertainty — geopolitical, organizational, technological. If I'm not updating my understanding of what it means to think clearly under those conditions, I'm not actually with them.

Q

**What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?**

Most coaches plateau not because they lack skill but because there's a move they've decided — quietly, not quite consciously — they're not going to make. The confronting question. The naming of the dynamic in the room. The willingness to be wrong about what's happening. Mastery lives on the other side of whatever that is for you.



# THOMAS YATES

Thailand

ICF MCC

Year in which you received this credential/accreditation/award(s):

2026



## How did your journey into coaching begin?

My journey into coaching started around 2009, well before I had the words for it. After many years as a teacher, I transitioned into administrative roles and have always been curious about how people learn, grow, and make sense of their experiences. Even then, colleagues often said I should have been a counselor—people would come to me, seeking to talk and get help.

As I started developing my coaching skills, I noticed that when I moved from telling to asking, from directing to listening, something deeper happened. People didn't just acquire knowledge; they began to reflect, take responsibility, and change. Coaching provided structure to what I had been doing instinctively: fostering insight and growth. What started as a technique became a philosophy. I moved from helping people perform better to understanding who they are and how that shapes their actions.

This shift—from doing to being—became foundational. Coaching was no longer just a skill set but a way of engaging with people and with life.

**Q**

## What metaphor would you use to describe your journey toward mastery in coaching?

For me, mastery is like **tending a garden** through many seasons. Early on, you focus on tools, techniques, and visible results—planting, watering, structuring. But over time, you start to understand the deeper rhythms: timing, patience, environment, and unseen growth.

There are seasons of rapid progress and seasons when nothing seems to be happening. Yet beneath the surface, roots are forming. Like any garden, we can't dig up the seeds every day to check their progress without disturbing their growth. We must trust the process—watering, caring, and giving time for roots to take hold before anything breaks through the surface.

The MCC journey, in particular, felt like shifting from managing the garden to trusting it—allowing growth to emerge rather than forcing it. Mastery is not about controlling the outcome; it's about creating the right conditions for something meaningful to grow.

And importantly, the gardener is also being shaped. The more I grew as a coach, the more I realized the work was equally about cultivating myself—my presence, awareness, and humility.



## What impact did receiving the official master-level recognition have on you?

Receiving the MCC was both a milestone and a reflection. Having just recently earned my MCC, I feel a quiet sense of calm. More than validation, it has clarified what truly matters. The process required deep reflection and revealed as much about myself as it did about my coaching. The real growth was internal.

The MCC didn't make me a master; it increased my awareness of what true mastery entails. One of my mentors often asked me, "How can you go even deeper with your coachee?" That question always stays with me, guiding me to explore what lies beneath the surface with presence and patience.

Now, coaching feels like a continuous journey of growth: presence, awareness, and trust. In that sense, achieving the MCC seems less like a final milestone and more like a new beginning. Less doing, more listening. Less technique, more trust. An ongoing process of discovery.



## If mastery is a never-ending journey, how would you describe the place where you are right now?

I see myself currently in an integration phase. Earlier, I focused on expanding my knowledge through learning models, frameworks, powerful questions, and approaches. Now, I am concentrating on distilling and embodying what truly matters. My coaching has become calmer; I am less attached to outcomes and more focused on the process. I observe more, speak less, and trust more.

At the same time, I feel a stronger desire to contribute—whether by developing others, designing programs, or supporting the growth of coaching within organizations and communities. Although my journey continues, my focus has shifted from acquiring skills to honing them, from proving my worth to serving others, and from personal mastery to collective impact.

## **Q How have you developed as a person through your coaching practice, and how has your personal development shaped your professional work?**

Coaching has fundamentally shaped my understanding of myself. It has required me to examine my assumptions, biases, and patterns. Through coaching, I have learned to slow down, sit with uncertainty, and trust the process of inquiry. This has not only made me a better coach but also a more grounded person. My professional work reflects this transformation.

I focus on helping others discover who they are— their values, fears, visions, and identity. I've come to believe that lasting change doesn't come from doing more but from seeing differently. In that sense, my growth as a person is connected to my growth as a coach. The deeper I explore my own work, the more space I can create for others to do the same.

## **Q Please share examples of how you nurture your reflective practice.**

Reflection is a fundamental part of my work. After coaching sessions, I often review key moments—not to judge performance, but to understand what was happening beneath the surface. What did I notice? What did I overlook? Who was I being in that moment?

I also engage in regular supervision, peer coaching, and discussions. These help me identify blind spots and challenge my thinking. Besides formal practices, I reflect through journaling, quiet contemplation, and meditative walks. Many of my most valuable insights come from outside structured settings.

Importantly, I reflect not only on my coaching but also on myself—my reactions, assumptions, and presence. Over time, this has become a way of being.



## **How do you experience presence at a master level in your own coaching, and how is your presence experienced by others — clients, peers, or mentors?**

Presence, on a deeper level, feels like quiet attentiveness. It's not about being intensely focused or performing well — it's about vulnerability and being fully present. In these moments, I care less about what to ask next and more about what's emerging. I notice shifts in tone, hesitation, and energy. I listen not just to what is said but also to what remains unsaid. Part 5.06 of the ICF Competency Maintains Presence — “Is comfortable working in a space of not knowing”- is in my coaching DNA.

Last year, I coached a group of senior division leaders at an automotive company. Several of them mentioned that the coaching experience felt like something they had lost over time. Earlier in their careers, they had had time to sit together, reflect, and imagine what was possible. But over the years, that was replaced by back-to-back meetings and constant demands. In our coaching sessions, they found themselves returning to that space—able to reflect, envision, and even reconnect with the excitement they once had earlier in their careers.

We need to offer our presence to our clients as a space — to think, feel, and explore without pressure. It may seem simple, even ordinary. Yet, it is within that simplicity that meaningful insight occurs. Presence, for me, is less about doing something special and more about removing what blocks my coachee from moving forward.



## How do you experience belonging in your professional life, and are there any communities you feel connected to?

Belonging, for me, is found in the coaching community—especially among those committed to growth and reflection.

Through my work in developing programs, teaching, coaching, mentoring, and contributing to the profession, I feel a shared sense of purpose. There's an understanding that we are all involved in something bigger than ourselves. For nearly 15 years, this has also been central to our institution's mission: to promote the spread of coaching throughout Thai society. We strongly believe that fostering a coaching culture in Thailand is essential for its ongoing development.

At the same time, belonging isn't about fitting in. It's about sharing your own perspective and experience with others. My work in Thailand and other cultural settings has reinforced the importance of respecting local viewpoints while staying aligned with global standards.

Belonging, then, is both connection and contribution.



## What role does contribution to the coaching profession/wider systems play at a master level?

At a master level, contribution becomes crucial. It is no longer just about individual practice, but about strengthening the profession. This manifests in my work through teaching, program design, mentoring, and fostering coaching cultures within organizations. I see coaching not just as a service, but as a skill that can transform how people lead and collaborate.

Contribution also involves upholding standards—making sure coaching is practiced ethically and with integrity. Ultimately, mastery isn't something to possess; it's something to share. For this, I thank the ICF for their dedication to elevating the coaching community's standards and ideals.



## Are there any additional threads, colors, or patterns that represent mastery for you and that you would like to add alongside themes above?

One important theme for me is simplicity. As I grow, coaching has become less complicated, not more. The challenge isn't adding more, but removing what isn't necessary. Another theme is responsibility. Mastery brings a deeper awareness of impact—how our presence, words, and questions influence others. Lastly, there's the theme of humility. The more I learn, the more I realize how much remains unknown. This keeps my work meaningful and alive.

I often think of the coaching journey as a quilt. Each of us contributes our own piece—our patterns, experiences, and perspectives. We stay true to ourselves and share our art, yet together those pieces form something larger, more unified, and more meaningful. Each piece is beautiful on its own; collectively, we create something that reflects shared purpose and connection.

In that sense, mastery isn't just a personal achievement but a contribution to something bigger than ourselves.



## What insight, inquiry or encouragement would you offer to someone aspiring to mastery in coaching?

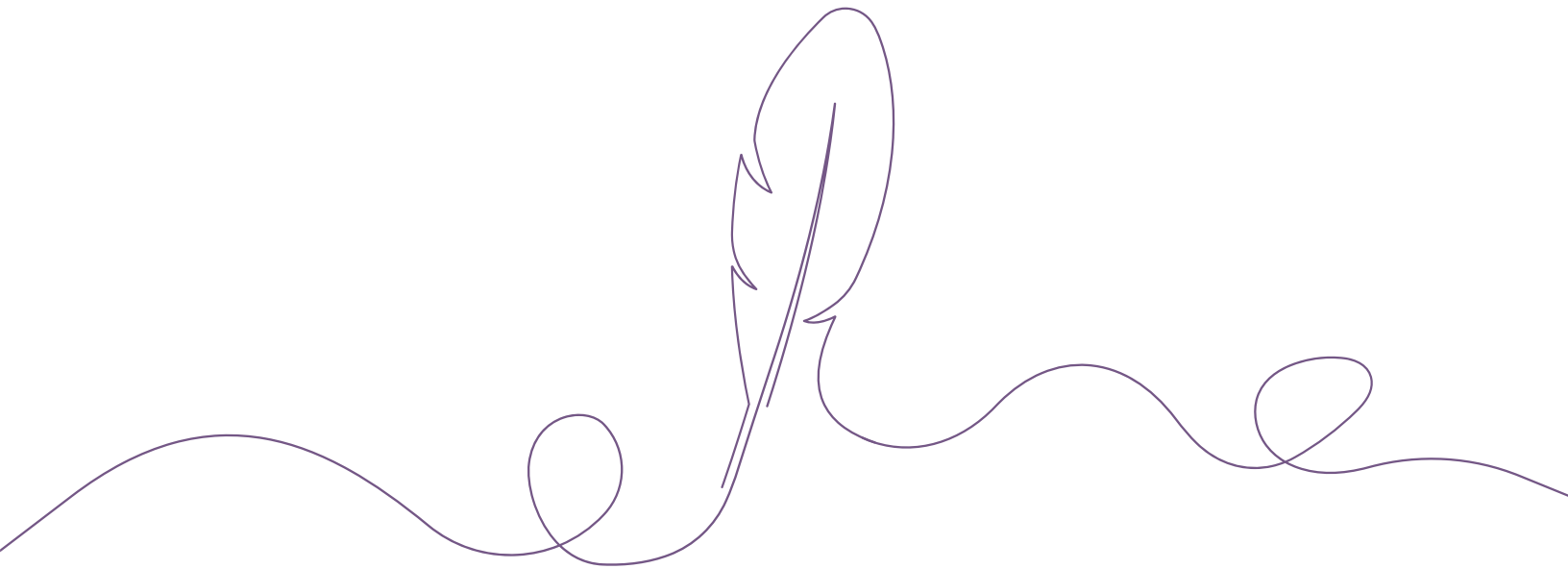
Instead of striving for mastery, focus on developing your ability to listen, stay present, and reflect. Ask for feedback. Engage in supervision and mentorship. And most importantly, do your own inner work.

A question I often revisit is: Who am I being when I am coaching? This question goes beyond technique and reaches the heart of the practice. Mastery isn't achieved just by gathering knowledge but by deepening awareness. It develops steadily through consistent practice and honest reflection.

Trust the process. Stick with it. Over time, your presence will turn into your strongest asset.

# Emerging patterns and insights

Reflections and personal analyses



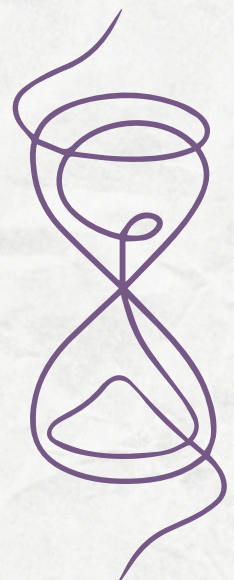
Some of the questions in this volume grew out of threads that appeared in the previous one, through the responses of 27 coaches.

Reading this new set of interviews, I found myself coming back to those threads, and noticing some new ones. What follows is simply my way of making sense of what I read and what I notice along the way.

## **Different paths into something that keeps evolving**

I could see very different paths into coaching. Often starting long before people had the words for it. Different backgrounds are still very present in how people think and work today.

At the same time, in many of the answers, mastery shows up as something that keeps evolving. Something people stay in, and continue to grow through.



## **The person behind the answers**

What stood out to me is how much of themselves people brought into their answers. Not only what they do, but how they reflect, what they question, and what they are still working through.

There is openness in that. And a readiness to share things that are not finished.

I also noticed (again) different ways of expressing this. Some responses are longer and more reflective. Others are short and very direct. I find value in both. Each of them can open a different way of understanding mastery in coaching.

## **Nurturing reflective practice**

Reflective practice shows up in many different ways.

For some, it is writing or more structured reflection. For others, it happens in movement, in nature, or in everyday moments. Supervision appears as an important part of this, a place where thinking is stretched, where blind spots become more visible, and where practice continues to develop with others.

What I found myself drawn to most were the metaphors, especially those connected to nature. A garden being planted, cared for, and grown over time. Roots and branches. Something that needs attention, patience, and presence.

## **Learning in relation**

Alongside individual reflection, learning also happens in relation. Through supervision, conversations, and exchange with others. There is also a sense of things becoming simpler over time. Letting go of techniques. Trusting the process more. Allowing things to unfold, instead of trying to manage everything.

## **From individual to collective work**

It also feels like there is a shift from individual work towards something more shared. A need for connection, exchange, and development together.

After the first volume, I already had a sense that there is a need for a space like this. Reading these stories now, that feeling is even stronger.

An idea that keeps coming back to me is creating a community of master coaches with two intentions: to continue this journey together, learning from each other and supporting each other's development, and at the same time to come together and explore how we can contribute beyond our individual work, into the communities and systems we are part of.

# THREADS BECOMING A COLORFUL BLANKET

Collective threads coming together

As I place the last threads into this colorful picnic blanket, I notice something in myself shifting.

I am learning to hold things more lightly. To leave more space for questions, instead of rushing toward answers.

Maybe it will be a sunny day, and I will simply lie on this blanket, enjoying the warmth and the view.

But it would not surprise me if the wind comes, and I find myself running across the park, trying to catch it.

Either way, I know I will continue to weave, to wonder, to try different ways of thinking and creating, and to keep asking questions about everything and anything.

I think this is my path toward mastery.

To ask with a little less fear, and to keep searching for answers, as things keep unfolding and new questions keep emerging.



# THREADS YOU TAKE FORWARD AS YOU KEEP WEAVING

Staying with this for a moment

As you come to the end of these stories, you might pause for a moment and notice what is still with you.

What stayed with you the most?

Which thread do you feel drawn to explore further?

What, if anything, shifted in your thinking?

What will you take from this into your own practice?

And what is one small step you feel ready to take today? :)





# From here...

**Sit on the blanket we've woven together,  
soak in the sun whenever you can,  
and wonder what you will weave next,  
in your own unique way and colors,  
as your own mastery unfolds  
through the seasons ahead.**



ADRIJANA MILOSAVLJEVIC  
COACHING