

# On Mastery

**Tony Latimer**

*Author's Disclaimer: Nothing in this article is true. It is a collection of the author's perceptions, albeit perceptions that have served him well and in behaving as if they were true provided (in the author's perception) a useful and productive version of "reality."*

Hours do not equal skill.

In my forties it was time to remove the accumulated flab of a decade of corporate travel, so I signed up for martial arts. A decade later I was ready to achieve the ultimate, a black belt. I was invited to attend a class I did not know existed: the black-belt-only class.

It was there that I re-discovered being a beginner. Getting the black belt simply meant I had covered the basics. Now it was time to *really* start learning.

Yet up to that point I had still done good work. Long ago I had the satisfaction of putting my hand through a stack of concrete roof tiles. I could perform a decent kata. Even with basic skill you will do good work.

I had my basic coaching skills down, but I worried I wasn't a good coach. I beat myself up for years before realizing that just being there and listening with no other intention than to help does help.

Like little grasshopper (for those of you old enough to remember David Carradine), by being consciously on the journey and seeking daily improvement you will do good work on the way.

I started on the credentialing ladder when my coaching log had enough hours for MCC. I found a mentor and realized I had much work to do even for PCC! Hours served did NOT equal skill.

Then came the challenge of making the shift to MCC. Like little grasshopper, the search to find someone who could explain coaching mastery in language that an ex-corporate manager could understand took me around the world.

My understanding (a perception that serves me) of what coaching mastery means is being totally in the moment and present, working at a deep level, and co-creating an environment where the client can achieve deep awareness and breakthrough.

You cannot be in a state of flow, listening and responding in the moment from your subconscious, if you are firmly in your conscious awareness figuring out the next "powerful question" or step in your model.

To quote the ICF, "The coach's inability to move beyond standardized coaching questions or a standardized model will result in a score below the MCC level."

So, which coach training is right for you?

Pick one you can afford.

Pick one where you connect with the teacher.

Pick one that works for you geographically.

Pick one rooted in the application that you want to practice.

And having learned and practiced...let go!

Mastery is like driving a powerful sports car and taking the turn off the highway to an unknown mountain road, leaving the discipline of lanes and speed limits for the twisting, undulating road with a surprise around every corner. You no longer mutter “mirror, signal, maneuver.” Your senses observe and integrate sight, sound and feel—the shadow across the apex of the next curve, the feedback of tire grip through the wheel, the twitch of the chassis through your seat, the growl of the engine and gears as you instinctively allow your body to do the right thing without consciously thinking about it as your entire being is focused on progressing forward as quickly as possible.

When you have this experience you wish the road would never end.

You can't learn to handle the mountain road while you stay on the highway.

Take the turn. Try the mountain road. You won't get every corner, every gear change, every line perfect; but the road never ends.

**Tony Latimer**, MCC, works with C level leaders to build sustainable coaching cultures through his [Profitable Leadership](#)™ programs and provides a free mobile app from [www.thecoachingapp.com](http://www.thecoachingapp.com) to support this. Leveraging 30 years in Europe, Scandinavia and Asia-Pacific in the IT sector he challenges senior leaders and their teams to achieve astonishing results. A constant thought leader and innovator of learning approaches, he writes for press and industry magazines, is a guest expert on radio, and keynote speaker at HRD and Leadership conferences. Global and Regional clients include multi-national corporations and government agencies.

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