

# Coaching Concept for Postdocs

„The day you start your postdoc position  
you already start thinking what is coming next!“

PD Dr. Alexander Schiller

## Understanding, attitude and human image

The coachee is an expert for goals and content, I am the expert for the process. As scientist, I partner with those I coach. Together we base our work on trustful relationship. „Problems“ and „conflicts“ are a motor for change. I facilitate the problem-solving process. Thereby, we undergo together a collaborative learning process.



Dr. Sivasailam Thiagarajan „Thiagi“ & Dr. Alexander Schiller

A successful coaching process leads to more self-awareness, a changed perception of the environment and to an expansion of possible interventions. This becomes apparent at the level of personality, relationships and interactions in professional and private life.

It is very important that this change process is voluntary and that coachee and coach can stop the coaching process at any time. Coaching is not a substitute for therapeutic or medical treatment.

## Methods and interdependencies

An outstanding universe of facilitation, training and coaching methods (influenced by S. Thiagarajan “Thiagi”, S. Covey, J. Whitmore, M. Wehrle) together with my experience as successful group leader provide the basis for my innovative coaching.

I coach via flexible facilitation. This interactive method is based on four pillars: adaptation while **listening** – facilitation of **introspection** – providing knowledge and **input** via „head, heart and hand“ – reaching constructive outcomes via **collaboration**. All four components comprise true interaction between coach and coachee following Covey’s and Thiagi’s principles ([www.thiagi.com](http://www.thiagi.com)).

Adaptation while **listening** – At the beginning of my coaching I listen carefully. Flexibility in active listening is used to find out obvious, true and hidden motivations of the coachee. These motivations will be used, for example, to describe powerful written SMART goals and perform a SWOT analysis.

Facilitation of **introspection** – During the entire coaching process, question techniques are an essential component for success. In doing so, I draw on a diverse repertoire. Here the coachee will be supported in generating a view into themselves. Priming factors will be identified. The inner team will be inquired (F. Schulz von Thun). Unconscious biases will be unraveled. Realistic and real-time self-awareness is carefully developed. Unlearning mechanisms will be identified.

Providing knowledge and **input** via „head, heart and hand“ – Following Pestalozzi’s principles, inputs will be given to the coachee via multiple redundant channels: intellectually (head), emotionally (heart) and physically (hand). For example, „clock on the ceiling“<sup>1</sup> is used to demonstrate how to change the perspective. In addition, playing cards with practical pieces of advice on 40 different topics (presentation, introspection, etc.) will be used. Storytelling (taken from mediation) is used to reach the coachee on a cognitive, mental and emotional level.



Reaching constructive outcomes via **collaboration** – A true collaborative process is focusing on WIN/WIN situations. However, true WIN/WIN situations are alternating WIN/LOOSE situations. The coachee understands that all his/her relationship-based interventions should follow alternating WIN/LOOSE situations to strengthen trustful relationships.

Finally, the transfer into the real world will be facilitated by the method of Transfer Strength (A. Koch): Openness for coaching impulses, self-responsibility for implementation success, relapse management in working life, positive self-talk during setbacks.

## Conditions

		Week 1		Week 2-36		
<i>Session</i>	<b>Chemistry Meeting</b>	<b>Foundation Session</b>	Optional 360° feedback with stakeholders (group leader etc.)	<b>Coaching Sessions</b>	Optional 360° feedback with stakeholders	<b>Evaluation Session</b>
<i>Format</i>	Face to face or virtual	Face to face or virtual		Face to face and virtual mix		Virtual
<i>Length</i>	Approx. 30 min	60 min		390 min (6.5 h on one day) or approx. 4.5 x 1.5 h or 9 x 45 min		30 min within 1 month of final session
	Free of charge	5 x 1.5 h of flexible mixed-format coaching over 3-6 months				

<sup>1</sup> This jolt requires the coachee to point to an imaginary clock on the ceiling and rotate his/her index finger in a clockwise direction. When asked to lower the outstretched finger below shoulder level (while still pointing to the imaginary clock on the ceiling) the coachee learns a lesson in perspective when he/she discover that it appears the finger inevitably rotate in a counterclockwise direction. [Link to Video.](#)

Coaching for postdocs comprises max. 5 x 1.5 hours (min. 500 € per 1.5 h + VAT). Detailed conditions will be given in the coaching agreement. Optimal coaching takes place over a period of 3 – 6 months. In this time, the coachee benefits from reflection, practical connection and installing new attitudes and habits. Confidentiality is a prerequisite for the coaching process. At the Foundation Session, a written contract is agreed upon that contains the scope, goals, framework conditions and evaluation criteria of the coaching process. I primarily ensure that the development process progresses. In order to reflect on myself and the coaching process, I regularly take advantage of advanced trainings, coaching education, supervisions/intervisions and collegial exchange.

## Special offer

True coaches undergo transformation. My transformation from a scientific leader into a facilitator, trainer and coach started in 2009. I am a habilitated chemist and successful group leader (Priv.-Doz. at University of Jena, junior professor from 2009 to 2017, > 40 publications, > 1.75 Mio. € funding, schiller-chemistry.de). I gathered a 20-years teaching experience at LMU Munich (D), EPF Lausanne (CH), UC Santa Cruz (USA), and FSU Jena (D). In addition, I am now a “Certified Facilitator” and “Certified Advanced Coach” with The Thiagi Group (thiagi.com). My company, Schiller & Mertens (scientistsneedmore.de), has trained over 7000 scientists worldwide in hundreds of seminars, coachings, consultings and lectures since 2011.



My experience as researcher and group leader enables me to focus on the real needs of scientists. Moreover, I use examples from everyday life in research. From my trainings and coachings given so far, graduate students, postdocs, group leaders, lecturers, professors, and directors can directly apply in everyday life. Postdocs will be coached

on one or more topics of the following competencies:

- **Scientific career versus career prospects outside the scientific community** (Introspection: R. Bolles “What color is your parachute?”, application documents, interviews)
- **Career Development Plan (CDP)**: strength analysis, career goals and life goal planning
- **Scientific Independence Plan (SIP)**: strategy to become an independent researcher (dependence – independence – interdependence by Schiller & Mertens)
- **Self-management** (S. Covey „The 7 habits of highly effective people“)
- **Academic writing strategies** (H. Sword „Air & Light & Time & Space“: BASE in academic writing, such as Behavioral, Artisanal, Social and Emotional habits)