

# Is Coaching Just a Part of Counselling?



## *Coaching -v- Counselling*

### Is there a difference between Counselling and Coaching?

Most people have heard the terms between Life-coaching and Counselling. Often they are mixed up and used in the same way as are Counselling and Psychotherapy used together. Is there a definition that separates the two theories? So that ordinary members of the public can differentiate between the two therapies?

They are so like one to the non-professional they are sometimes linked-together. Even those in the professions may find it difficult to define the differences such as life and career coaching.

For although Coaching and Counselling have many similar traits. They also have clear differences: –

1. **Life Coach:** – A person who counsels and encourages clients on matters having to do with careers or personal challenges.
2. **Counsellor:** – A person trained to give guidance on personal, social, or psychological problems.

For the purposes of this article, I would like to look at Life Coaching and Counselling.

Many professional counsellors and coaches agree that they can coexist. Perhaps even flourish. Clients will be better off if both services are available from well-trained practitioners. If possible, both are offered in the same practice.

It is generally agreed that coaches should be certified through a formal process. Around three years study, with built-in theory and experience. It is also understood that coaches work within clearly defined parameters. Where clients are referred to counsellors as soon as a psychological problem is discovered.

This is where, perhaps, a greater divide is observed. Where coaching and counselling are defined on what each profession offers the client.

### **How coaching helps the client**

All the coaches I know, believe that they help clients work on their future goals. I am sure my life-coaches offer a general view of the profession. Often creating a new life plan with the client's help. Counsellors, in the view of my known coaches, spend time examining the client's past. Looking for solutions to emotional concerns. They suggest that counsellors establish relationships with clients. Relationships that have a shared responsibility. Whereas they establish relationships that are less formal in structure working as a team.

Coaches try to help people with services unlike those provided by a personal trainer. They serve clients who are trying to cope with anxiety. Life adjustments and personal challenges. Coaching can help in these scenarios. `Wellness` is a trend on the rise and coaching is part of that trend.

It is not the case that all counsellors see the distinction. Perhaps they acknowledge the value that correctly and professionally trained life coaches can offer. Many maintain that the basic training of a counsellor. Carries the same techniques and theories used by life-coaches.

Ask any counsellor and they will agree to this. They will say that they agree some of the coaches go through good training programmes. They are skilled and effective. In Counselling Counsellors will further maintain, they offer clients a great deal more. A weakness in the Counsellor armoury is that they are not good at marketing their self-same services.

Good coaches should make it clear that they are not counsellors. They should refer clients when it is obvious that the client needs more than a coach can offer. It is also obvious that counsellors should market themselves. And the services they offer in a better manner than they do today.

## What can Coaching offer?



A cynical counsellor will point to the coaching courses offering a diploma after just a few weeks training. Poorly trained coaches, advertise services that should only be offered by accredited counsellors.

Regulating Counselling would set Counselling and Coaching apart. The services of the two professions would be clear to the public.

The public will know that counsellors and coaches are professionally and adequately trained.

Coaching, while not regulated, have a body called 'The International Coach Federation'. They offer the only globally recognised independent credentialing programme. They recognise some 20,000 coaches throughout the world operating in 60 countries. And have 120 authorised bodies in those countries.

The ICF defines coaching as:- 'partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process. Inspiring them to maximise their personal and professional potential'.

Coaches help people improve their performances and enhance the quality of their lives. They listen, observe and customize their approach to individual client needs. They seek to elicit solutions and strategies from the client. They believe the client is naturally creative and resourceful. The coach provides support; to enhance the skills; resources and creativity of the client.

## Is this the difference between coaching and counselling?

One of the best quotes I have read about the two services was made by Patrick Williams. An American psychologist who moved into coaching in 1990. He believes that coaching is the hottest trend to hit the self-improvement business. He quotes Adler and Jung; who saw individuals as creators and artists of their lives. They involved their clients in goal setting and life-planning.

He also says that Carl Rogers work with client-centred therapy is a pre-cursor to coaching.

Then he quotes `Therapy is about uncovering and recovering whereas coaching is about discovering`.

### **What is the difference between coaching and counselling?**

True professional counsellors and coaches see similarities between the two. It could be said that counselling moves people from a state of dysfunction to functional.

There are many people who do not fit that picture, as they are functional when they need help. Coaching provides an alternative. Because it has a role that is narrow, unlike counselling. Although it is said to be limited having a narrow role. It helps individuals to set and reach manageable goals.

You may recall that I have mentioned that in my past career I recruited and trained direct-sales people. Getting them to set goals. Not only to set them but to reach them which is the greatest motivation of all. How did I help individuals to do this? It may sound simple (must be when I thought of it) but it was highly effective? First, I found something in their lives that they really wanted. And if they had a spouse or a partner also involved. I looked at their sales figures and before our meeting had calculated their average. This gave me their average income.

In our meeting, we put a price on what they really wanted. Something that told them on attainment it would show a success. Together we looked at the price. There is always a price no matter what it is we want. That price had to be paid, I divided that by the average sales figure I had calculated. Then I asked my sales person if they felt they could reach that sales figure every month. Because they had surpassed it on many occasions the answer was always `yes`.

Accepting this, they could see when their goal would be reached. We agreed with a monitoring plan. Just to sweeten it I said that every time they surpassed that sales figure I would treat them to dinner. Without their knowledge, everything based on the average sales. I knew that they would soon reach their goal. I suppose I counselled by uncovering and recovering and I used coaching by discovering. Both long before I heard about professional counsellors and life-coaches.

April Summers is a counsellor at a maximum-security prison in McLoud, Oklahoma. Summers has herself used a coach and believes coaching is an important helping profession. Although one with a limited reach. It helps clients set and reach manageable goals. Especially, someone who does not know where to start or how to tackle a big change in their life, she says.

Coaching's emphasis on goal setting. And focusing on the future is akin to solution-focused counselling. Yet, client bases for coaching and counselling are not interchangeable. Coaches work with healthy clients. Ones who are striving to improve their circumstances. Counsellors

work with persons needing help. Hoping to identify dysfunction or trauma to heal and resolve old pain.

Not every counsellor would say they focus on dysfunction. Many take a wellness perspective with clients. They see their main purpose as helping individuals to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, it is still true that people are reluctant to see professional counsellors. There is still a prevailing notion that only individuals with serious mental problems seek out counselling. Young people, in particular, are much more likely to want to see a coach. The stigma of seeing a life coach is almost non-existent.

### **Coaching has a unique role to play.**

As helping professionals, primarily working with people who are generally healthy. But still, need support. understanding of basic counselling techniques can make for a better coach.

Most professional counsellors believe that they qualified to coach clients without more training. Counsellors can use parts of what they had in training. Some cognitive therapy and solution-focused work and a little Carl Rogers. Most counsellors with little other work can do (coaching). Eighty percent already are. Counsellors simply need to do a better job of defining their expertise. Highlighting their coach like services and marketing themselves to the public.

Marketing is perhaps the weakest part of a counsellors armoury. As opposed to the life-coach who tend to advertise their services in a more aggressive way. The general conception of a coach is being enthusiastic and determined. Whereas the view of a counsellor is someone who is parochial and circumscribed.

Counselling at its heart is the ability to LISTEN. Listen to what a client is relating. In that listening to respond to the client to help them explore. Then clarify and work toward resolving issues they may have in their life.

To do this the qualified Counsellor needs to help them look into their past life. Trying to understand why the client is having difficulty with a particular issue.

I understand that counselling is all about helping a client. Resolving an issue by helping them to understand why they have the particular problem. Having done so helping them to accept and live a fuller life in the future.

Counselling is required by all age groups from every walk of life. It is not restricted by demographics. Usually, a client seeks the help of confidential counselling by a referral from their General Practitioner. They feel they are having emotional difficulties. Which they feel are beyond their control in certain areas of their life.

Sometimes a client will feel a complete loss of hope. Before seeking the help of a counsellor. They may be bottling up their feelings of anger, anxiety, grief. Or a myriad of other emotional feelings. To such an extent that their frustration is shown as an overwhelming stress. Which in itself has a major impact on their well-being? They recognise that they can no longer manage the situation and look to someone they hope can take it all away. Clients may also suffer from disorders or addictions. Smoking, alcohol or drugs, they may have been subjected to traumatic events in the early life. Abuse, both verbal and physical and even into adulthood the same abuse may occur.

There are other clients who simply cannot cope with their life as it is or where it is going. They may feel pressurised and under great stress at home, school or work. Some may need the help of a qualified counsellor. They have heard of a serious illness in someone they love if not themselves.

### **Such is the myriad of daily challenges that confront a counsellor**

Just after leaving full-time education I achieved the first part of my dream as a part-time professional footballer. My only understanding of coaching then was the guy who used to stand on the touchline and shout abuse at us. We tried to gain an advantage over our opponents by scoring more goals than we allowed them to score. He was responsible for what we did during the week when we were not playing. Ensuring that we were fit enough. Fit to run around kicking a leather case-ball wearing large boots. Which in wet weather were difficult to even lift off the ground let alone control a ball. especially as the pitches on which we played turned quickly to mud baths in the rain.

Coaching today has taken on a new meaning. Although the sports coaching I speak of still exists. People are seeking access to life coaching to help them develop their greatest potential. In their daily living through personal development.

Looking at the life-coach and all that entails as opposed to our image of counselling. Earlier, I mentioned that I worked in the commercial marketplace in a high management position. In the business environment, I operated in most of the time I believe I was a coach. I worked in a one-to-one situation. I would look at the raw talent of the individual. Coaching them to apply their talents in their dealings face to face with the public. Building their confidence and self-belief. There were major tasks I had to undertake, to help them achieve and feel worthy. I just did not call it life-coaching, I called it sales-training. So, was I a counsellor or life coach?

When working with someone I saw it as essential that they should set goals. In all facets of their life both social and business. For life balance was important even then. Although again this term is classed as a new term evolving from modern teaching.

## **Coaching reality is all about self-awareness and the ability to make choices.**

Recognising that everything they did had an impact on their lives and not just in a business sense. I think one of my hardest roles was to help a person understand. Their family life was inter-related to their business life.

Life coaching is about helping a person live more fully in the present. With the future in mind.

I had a saying, ***'What can I do today to make tomorrow better?'***

*`Coaching is a profession that is profoundly different from consulting. Also mentoring, advice, therapy, or counseling. The coaching process addresses specific personal projects. business successes, general conditions and transitions in the client's personal life. Relationships or profession is what is going on right now. Discovering what your obstacles or challenges might be. Then choosing a course of action to make your life be what you want it to be`. Carmine Leo Life Coach*

Coaching can be defined as helping a client produce fulfilling results in their personal and business lives. A coach empowers their client to find their own answers. While at the same time supporting and encouraging them to make correct choices.

Just as in counselling clients range from young and old and from all walks of life. Once the domain of large corporations now even the small business takes an active role in group coaching. Through associations such as a Chamber of Commerce. They attend because they are looking for changes in their lives. they want things to be different. Hope that they find the positive and constructive changes they can make.

Many want help determining goals in their life. Coaching about what steps they need to take to access those goals. They may want to start their own business or change their careers. Begin a new job with their present employers or even building relationships. They seek access to a coach because they want more order and life balance. They seek less stress, less financial pressure or less confusion in their behaviour.

*"You get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them. But by building a fire within."* Bob Nelson

## **So, in light of that what makes a good coach?**

To be a coach you need to build an alliance on equal terms with your client. You need to support and encourage your clients by setting achievable goals. Many people set themselves unrealistic goals. When they experience lack of results they defend their position with negative comments. A coach's role is to talk through the goal. If the client cannot really see themselves

attaining the goal. It cannot be a goal. I had a test when people set out their goals for me, I used to look at each one and ask **WHY?** Why do you want to do that? For I believe and have proved this belief over and over that unless an individual knows WHY? Why they want to achieve something they will never achieve it. It will remain a dream. A coach will keep people moving forward towards their dreams and goals. Having ascertained the WHY the HOW becomes a whole lot easier.

Just like a counsellor, the core competency of a coach is an acceptance of people from all walks of life. With goals and ambitions from the small to the great. They must, just as in the counsellor, show no judgement. Listen objectively to their client with the client's agenda in mind. The coach must remain truthful at all times. Never giving false hopes so that the bond of respect and confidence is established one with the other.

So, although there are many facets of Coaching and Counselling that can run side-by-side. They are different. In as much as the way, the Coach and the Counsellor help their clients to achieve what they want in life.