

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING AND COUNSELING

Coaching has become a new frontier, something like the internet. Psychotherapy has become more and more popular with the average person. It's been found to be useful in a myriad of ways, i.e. for individual problems, couple counseling, families and addictions. But, not all people are dysfunctional, in fact, most who see counselors are probably not but just need to get through a particularly difficult life circumstance. Therapists and life/relationship coaches may offer similar but also very different things. Unfortunately, for some, there is still a stigma attached to using therapy.

Here are some of the differences between a coach and therapist:

1. You do not get a DSM diagnosis with a coach
2. You cannot use your health insurance to pay for coaching but I am willing to do sliding scale.
3. A coach should not see you if you have a serious DSM diagnosis and are not being treated for it with a licensed mental health therapist and/or physician. If you are, then a coach can supplement those services.
4. One mental health professional describes the distinction this way "Wellness is the trend. In the medical model, people can see a doctor if they are ill. However, if they want to prevent disease and illness, then they can see a personal trainer, a nutritionist, a massage therapist. This can apply to counseling. If you are ill, see a counselor. If you are focused on prevention and maximizing your emotional health, see a coach." Lynn Mitchell, Chicago
5. In counseling, the counselor is generally more directed to help a person with a specific issue and aids in the understanding of that issue from a personal point of view and how to deal with that issue more effectively so that the person does not get hurt more or can get rid of some of the hurt they are dealing with. Counseling is a much more in-depth and longer process.
In life coaching, we help the person adapt better to the outside world and become aware of their own limitations and work on those in order to be able to handle the difficult issues in a more effective manner.
6. In coaching, it is important that a client is motivated and generally emotionally healthy. This is not the case with therapy, where people may feel resistant to using therapy and may be more or less emotionally unhealthy.
7. Therapy focuses on the clients' past while working through trauma, depression or any other presenting problem in order to help the client see their patterns and why they are using outdated defenses. Once that is achieved, the client can then learn how to use healthy and helpful ways of navigating through life. Coaching, on the other hand, is more focused on the present and future.
8. A coach primarily helps a client by:
 - a. defining his/her goals
 - b. Formulating a plan that will use the skills of the client
 - c. The coach holds the client accountable for his/her progress. The coach provides structure, encouragement and support.

You will be asked to sign a professional disclosure statement outlining the nature of services provided for you and a statement that you understand these differences.

Patricia Winchild, Life/Relationship Coach