

Differences Between Coaching and Therapy

COACHING	THERAPY
Views both parties as naturally creative, resourceful and whole.	More apt to view clients from a medical model.
Does not diagnose or treat.	Diagnoses and treats.
Trained to work with functioning clients.	Trained to work with major mental illness.
Works with clients that are able to form an alliance and have common goals.	Works with clients with entrenched problems.
Co-Active® model.	Therapist the “expert.”
Coach and clients on a peer basis.	Hierarchical difference between therapist and clients.
Alliance designed by coach and client together.	Treatment plan largely designed by therapist.
Focus on evolving and manifesting potential.	Focus on healing and understanding.
Emphasis on present and future.	Emphasis on past and present.
Action and being oriented.	Insight oriented.
Solution oriented.	Problem oriented.
Explore actions and behaviors that manifest high self-esteem.	Explore genesis of behaviors that create low self-esteem.
Regard and coach negative self-beliefs as Saboteurs (temporary obstacles).	Analyze and treat origins and historical roots of negative self-beliefs.
Coach and client ask: “What’s next/what now?”	Therapist and client ask: “Why and from where?”
Works mainly with external issues.	Works mainly with internal issues.
Discourages transference as inappropriate.	Encourages transference as a therapy tool.
Accountability and “homework” between sessions held as important.	Accountability less commonly expected.
Contact between sessions for accountability and “wins” expected.	Contact between sessions for crisis and difficulties only.
Uses coaching skills.	Uses therapy techniques.

It should also be acknowledged that the difference between some types of therapy and personal coaching aren’t always clear-cut. Many therapists are “coach-like” in their orientations and the two do share some common ground. Both disciplines can be working with fully functioning individuals/couples who are facing difficult situations. Both professions focus on helping people make changes and accomplish goals that really matter to them.

Adapted from <https://coactive.com/learning-hub/fundamentals/res/topics/FUN-Coaching-vs-Therapy.pdf>