

Coach training for counsellors

Rachel Weiss has been researching which trainings are available for experienced and qualified counsellors wishing to add coaching to their practice

As a counsellor, coach and trainer, I've pondered whether there is a need for coaching training aimed specifically at counsellors, and, if so, what should be included in such training. This article, a result of pondering, investigating and interviewing, is a collection of ideas and questions. I hope it will stimulate conversation in this journal.

There are many reasons why counsellors might wish to learn coaching skills. They might want to integrate these skills with their existing counselling practice. As clients becomes more robust towards the end of counselling sessions, they sometimes wish to focus more on development and improving performance. Coaching techniques can help greatly with this. Other counsellors might wish to offer coaching as a separate service. Many are attracted by the faster pace of coaching, with more resilient clients and more lucrative rewards. Coaching training can add a focus on action, and behavioural change.

I approached my ponderings in three ways. Firstly, I examined coaching competency frameworks, comparing these with the diploma training required for counsellors, identifying overlaps and differences. Secondly, I investigated which coaching courses are currently available in the UK specifically for counsellors. And lastly, I interviewed three coaches, who have also been counsellors: Linda Aspey, Stephen Palmer and Nash Popovic, canvassing their views on coaching training for counsellors.

I have a few caveats. My choice of interviewees was based on those I had heard of, and so was not representative. My choice of professional bodies for counselling and coaching was influenced by those to which I belong or have easy access – a better rationale might have been to pick the largest professional bodies in their fields, whether UK or worldwide. There is also further scope for a more thorough analysis of coaching competencies from all coaching bodies – this would be useful and identify common ground – and a more comprehensive analysis of common aspects of counselling training or counselling competency frameworks would also be of use. Other interesting questions might be:

- What counselling training do coaches need?
- How does coaching training affect counsellors' counselling?



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PART ONE: COMPARISON OF COACHING COMPETENCIES WITH COUNSELLING TRAINING

I surveyed the competency frameworks of the coaching bodies in Table 1, opposite, omitting those requiring psychological background or specialising – for example, in executive coaching. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and COSCA, Scotland’s professional body for counselling and psychotherapy, were the counselling bodies I consulted. They do not have competency frameworks, so I compared their standards for counselling diplomas with the coaching competencies.

The coaching competency frameworks cover broadly similar ground. I’ve chosen to give the AC competency list in full, in Box 1, since it distinguishes between coaching competencies for all coaches, and additional competencies needed for executive coaches.

Association for Coaching

Coaching competencies for All Coaches

1. Meeting ethical, legal and professional guidelines
2. Establishing the coaching agreement and outcomes
3. Establishing a trust-based relationship with the client
4. Managing self and maintaining coaching presence
5. Communicating effectively
6. Raising awareness and insight
7. Designing strategies and actions
8. Maintaining forward momentum and evaluation
9. Undertaking continuous coach development

Additional competencies for Executive Coaches

10. Working within the organisational context
11. Understanding leadership issues
12. Working in partnership with the organisation

Box 1: The AC Coaching Competencies

Which of these coaching competencies do you believe diploma-qualified counsellors already possess?

Body	Abbreviation	website
Association for Coaching	AC	www.associationforcoaching.com
European Mentoring and Coaching Council	EMCC	www.emcc.org.uk
International Coach Federation	ICF	www.coachfederation.org
International Institute of Coaching	IIC	www.internationalinstituteofcoaching.org

Table 1: Professional Bodies for Coaching, whose competency frameworks were considered

Four of the first nine competencies are covered by counsellor diploma training, as specified by COSCA and BACP. Below are three coaching competency areas which I believe are not covered. They appear in all four coaching competency frameworks^{1,2,3,4}:

a) Meeting ethical, legal and professional guidelines.

Counsellors will need to become familiar with the guidelines related to coaching, although there will be a big overlap with similar guidelines for counselling.

b) Establishing the coaching agreement and outcomes.

Counsellors are familiar with contracting, but coaching contracting usually involves a more specific focus on outcomes. Confidentiality and frequency of meetings are usually different in coaching too.

Coaching emphasises questions that ‘respectfully keep the client focused on the challenge or goal for each session’ (IIC comp 3⁴). This is a key difference for me: as a coach I have been trained to clarify the goal for each session explicitly at the start of each session, to track and say when I notice us going off-topic. In a counselling session, I usually wait for the client to start on whatever is foreground for them and we often set off without a clear goal for the session in mind, although we have a goal for the work as a whole. Some counselling orientations will be more familiar with goal-setting eg CBT; for others, eg person-centred counsellors, this will be a new skill. Coaching also makes it more explicit that we check with the client whether they feel we are

achieving their goal for the session or not. However recent thinking in coaching has challenged the necessity and nuances of goal-setting⁵.

A simplification is to say that counselling is a deficit model, dealing with what is wrong or missing, whilst coaching is more focused on the positive. This emphasis on the positive is highlighted by the IIC competency framework, but not the other three frameworks. IIC competency 1 includes 'ensures that every coaching session ends on a positive note'⁴. Similarly, IIC competency 2 includes 'creates a positive enjoyable experience for the client'⁴. To coach, counsellors may benefit from learning how to be more positive.

c) Designing strategies and actions and Maintaining forward momentum and evaluation.

All four coaching competency frameworks place great emphasis on helping clients create plans to achieve their desired outcomes, and on client accountability for implementing these plans.

For example, ICF competencies include:

*'Promotes client's self-discipline and holds the client accountable for what they say they are going to do, for the results of an intended action, or for a specific plan with related time frames.'*³

This accountability of the client will be foreign to some counselling orientations. However, *transformational* coaching has less emphasis on accountability and more on the coach as a Thinking Partner⁶.

Clearly the additional competencies for Executive Coaches are not covered by counselling training, for example three-way contracting with the client's line manager, although some counselling courses may cover systems thinking, which would prove useful for understanding organisations. Kinder⁷

outlines how training for workplace counselling requires additional skills to standard counselling training. Similarly executive coaching requires additional competencies to standard coaching, as may other specialisms such as divorce coaching.

Similarities

All four coaching competencies included Active Listening and Building the Relationship. These are central to counselling training, so I would expect counsellors to be more skilled here compared with coaching trainees coming from different backgrounds eg business.

So could a specific coaching training for counsellors omit these skills, taking them as a given? I think a short introductory course could, but in my own coaching training I benefitted from revisiting the basics and practising these skills. On the other hand, when designing Rowan's coaching skills training for counsellors, we spent less time on these relationship competencies and more on the issues of integrative practice.

PART TWO: THE COURSES

I have identified five providers catering specifically for counsellors who wish to train as coaches in the UK. I'd be delighted to hear about others.

- i) **The Centre for Coaching, London** (www.centreforcoaching.com) offers a five-day Certificate in Coaching, with two options: a course only open to counsellors or a course open to all. Peter Ruddell from the Centre says: 'We originally offered the counsellors-only option, as we believed counsellors would like the opportunity to discuss the issues involved in being both a counsellor and coach. But counsellors seem to prefer the open course and to train with others from more varied professional backgrounds, such as psychologists, HR personnel, teachers, trainers, consultants,

managers etc. However, with the growing interest in coach-therapist practice we may consider running it as a counsellor-only option again.'

ii) **The University of East London** (www.uel.ac.uk) offers a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Integrative Counselling and Coaching, for those who already have at least a Certificate in Counselling. The course consists of two modules: 'Evidence Based Coaching Theory and Practice' and 'Personal Consultancy'. Nash Popovic, course leader, believes that integration of these two practices is the future of our profession: 'In my experience, clients want both a chance to deal with their internal conflicts and explore the "why" questions on one hand, as well as to make tangible behavioural changes and achieve their goals on the other. To paraphrase Albert Einstein: 'Counselling without coaching is lame, coaching without counselling is blind.' I wonder if there is a place for another module on 'Evidence Based Counselling Theory and Practice', so that coaches could join too?

iii) **CSP Coaching** (www.cspcoaching.com) offers a five-day, BACP-endorsed course in Plymouth, 'Life and Business coaching for Counsellors and Psychotherapists', which includes business skills eg how to lead change.

iv) **Rowan Consultancy, Perth** (www.rowan-consultancy.co.uk) is preparing a two-day, BACP-endorsed CPD course for counsellors, introducing coaching skills. We aim to combine the best of both: introducing coaching competencies, models and theories, and helping you consider how you could integrate coaching into your existing counselling practice. The course can also help you decide whether to proceed with further coaching training in a mixed group. There is the option of progressing to gain the Certificate in Coaching Skills, credit rated by Edinburgh Napier University, by undertaking being

coached yourself and attending an additional day's training.

v) **Carolyn Mumby Consultancy** (www.carolynmumby.com) is planning a counsellor-to-coach training, which aims to lead to the ILM Level 7 Certificate in coaching.

Several coaching trainings are open to professional groups, including counsellors, for example diplomas from www.naos-institute.com and www.fusion-coach.com. Since these other groups include executives and teachers, I'm not sure how much they build on counsellors' existing skills.

PART THREE: OPINIONS OF PRACTITIONERS

The opinions below are drawn from correspondence with Linda Aspey, Stephen Palmer and Nash Popovic, together with my own thoughts and those voiced in discussions on the LinkedIn AICTP group and the BACP Coaching Division group. They are not representative of any one individual, except myself.

Additional skills counsellors need to become coaches

a) **Theories of change and learning styles:** In coaching, there is a greater focus on changing behaviours and improving performance. So a counsellor may need to learn theories of change, learning styles, and how to have a more equal relationship with a more robust, and perhaps more demanding, client.

b) **Marketing and sales skills:** In order to build a practice, coaches need marketing and sales skills, which counsellors often lack. Some counselling courses include such training, but these may differ from those needed to build a coaching practice.

c) **Context knowledge:** 'As counsellors, our clients are often distressed and/or

suffering from a clinical disorder such as anxiety or depression. Usually our training reflects our counselling client's needs. However, many coachees, but not all, are functioning well and may just want to look at one aspect of their work, performance or development. It's important that training looks at these items which can be overlooked in counselling training.' (Stephen Palmer, Centre for Coaching, personal communication, 2013.)

This raises the question of how much context/subject knowledge coaches need, as opposed to process skills. This may depend on whether you aim to deliver transformation coaching (to change attitudes) or transactional coaching (to achieve specific behaviour change). I've found it useful to be familiar with time management theory, assertiveness techniques and conflict management, when coaching transactionally. But do these need to be part of coaching training? Topics included by some coaching courses for counsellors include: goal theory, self-efficacy, motivation, perfectionism, procrastination, health and wellness coaching, stress and resilience.

Coaching skills that counsellors already possess

Counsellors already possess excellent skills in building relationships, listening and engendering trust. They raise awareness in clients and help them see new possibilities. 'We are all in the business of helping people learn to become more aware of who they really are, free themselves from the echoes of the past, enabled to draw upon their creativity and response rather than react to life's challenges.'⁸

What counsellors need to re-learn that other coaching trainees won't need

Confidentiality: This is very strict in counselling but can be more flexible in coaching – for example including the line

manager in sessions and providing progress reports.

Accountability: Coaching work is far more visible and accountable to the person commissioning it. In EAP counselling there is usually no reporting back on individual cases, but in workplace coaching the evaluation may be more transparent and shared between coach, sponsor and client.

Boundaries: These are more flexible in coaching than in counselling, eg:

- some coaches invite clients to attend networking meetings with them
- coaches often self-disclose more to their clients than do counsellors
- coaches may coach several members of the same executive team

Switching modes: If counsellors are entering coaching training in order to practise as personal consultants, then, in addition to standard coaching training, they will also need to learn how to integrate counselling and coaching, including 'how and when to switch from one mode (eg counselling) to another (eg coaching) in a safe and ethical manner.' (Nash Popovic, personal communication, 2013.)

CONCLUSION

As a result of my investigations and conversations, I suggest the following topics need to be included in coaching training courses for counsellors:

- ethical, legal and professional guidelines for coaching, including competency frameworks
- contracting
- action plans and accountability
- building a practice
- coaching assessment
- the differences/similarities between coaching and counselling
- integrating coaching and counselling

- context-specific knowledge, eg 360-degree feedback, psychometric profiles, systems thinking, time management, health and wellbeing, divorce

Depending on which counselling orientation the individual is trained in and what type of coaching they wish to practise, there may be additional skills and competencies to add.

I'd like to end with some wise words from Fiona Adamson in a recent AICTP LinkedIn discussion:

'I sometimes think that, if we aren't careful, we could design courses that essentially drown us in information and cut us off from our humanity, until we forget that it is actually the meta skills that count as much as the models; how we are with people, can we be truly present and listen deeply, can we be open-hearted as well as open-minded. These are aspects I believe that come with time, experience and good support as we learn by doing, and reflecting on our doing. This cannot be rushed.'

I look forward to your responses on this topic!

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References

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- 2 EMCC Competence Framework 2010. www.emccouncil.org/webimages/EMCC/EMCC_Competence_Framework.pdf
- 3 ICF Core Competencies. www.coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=2206&navItemNumber=576
- 4 The Six Categories of the IIC Core Coaching Competencies 2013. http://internationalinstituteofcoaching.org/core_coachinga.php
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Further reading

For a comparison of different accrediting coaching bodies, see Hall L. Clarity around accreditation. 2011. www.coaching-at-work.com/2011/02/22/clarity-around-accreditation/