



Rachel Weiss

Coaching Skills

for Counsellors?

Why might counsellors be interested in acquiring coaching skills?

It's a separate profession, after all, tainted by lucre and commerce, whilst counsellors are often more comfortable distancing themselves from business, preferring to operate in the third sector.

I exaggerate of course. But a few years ago, I viewed coaching as a diluted version of counselling, which attracted less stigma and commanded higher fees and more robust clients. I was not enthusiastic.

At Rowan Consultancy we provided employee counselling services to several organisations. Some of these started asking if Rowan could provide coaching. I became more interested – what was coaching? How did it overlap with counselling? Could I become a coach? Did I want to? Should we hire coaches with no background in counselling?

Six years later, I am now an accredited coach with the International Coach Federation (ICF), whilst still practising as an accredited counsellor. I'd like to share some of my thoughts with you on the similarities and differences between counselling and coaching, on the usefulness of coaching skills for counsellors.

I'll describe two approaches: the first sees coaching as a separate profession from counselling, the second proposed a model called "personal consultancy" which integrates counselling and coaching.

Coaching as a separate profession from Counselling

The ICF defines coaching as: "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential...Coaches

honour the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole." Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable (ICFa)

How well does that description of coaching match your practice as a counsellor?

Much of it seemed familiar to me: my humanistic training encouraged client self-discovery; my subsequent cognitive behavioural therapy training emphasised agreeing and clarifying client goals and eliciting client-generated solutions and strategies.

ICF Core Coaching Competencies	
A. Setting the Foundation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards 2. Establishing the Coaching Agreement
B. Co-creating the Relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client 4. Coaching Presence
C. Communicating Effectively	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Active Listening 6. Powerful Questioning 7. Direct Communication
D. Facilitating Learning and Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Creating Awareness 9. Designing Actions 10. Planning and Goal Setting 11. Managing Progress and Accountability

Table 1: ICF Core Coaching Competencies (ICFb)

What was new to me was holding the client responsible and accountable. I looked at the ICF Core Coaching Competencies (see Table 1). Again there were many similarities and overlaps – between counselling and coaching: fewer with person-centred counselling and more with CBT. I felt that counselling included most of the competencies, but not the final three which were more focussed on results and planning actions.

My experience of Gestalt Therapy and Person Centred Therapy had little focus on planning actions and accountability, although Gestalt included client-planned experiments. I believed in Beisser's (1970) Paradoxical Theory of Change, which says that increasing awareness (ICF competency 8) will inevitably lead to change, without the need for any explicit goal-setting or action planning. My Cognitive Behavioural Coaching training certainly had a clear emphasis on the client setting themselves "homework" at the end of each coaching session, often involving practising new behaviours or thought patterns.

So I saw counselling and coaching on a linear spectrum, as shown in Figure 1, with clients being more robust and resilient towards the coaching end of the spectrum. I found coaching skills useful when working with my counselling clients towards the end of our work together, as they became more robust, had healed some old wounds and wanted to look forward to planning for the future. As clients become more robust they can "graduate" from counselling to coaching. "Psychotherapeutic 'pulling weeds' needs attention before coaching 'sowing seeds'" (Masters 2014).

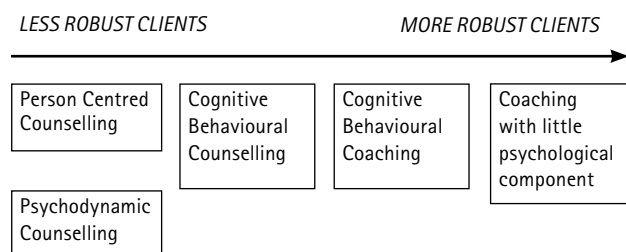


Figure 1: Counselling and Coaching as separate professions on a linear spectrum, with client robustness and resilience increasing at coaching end of spectrum.

At Rowan, our Head of Coaching is not trained as a counsellor. When he identifies a counselling need, he will refer the client to one of the Rowan counsellors. The client may

return for coaching later, once the weeding is done. Similarly clients ring us wanting help in changing and may not be sure whether they would benefit from coaching or counselling. They can start with a counsellor and then move on to a coach. But the trouble with this model, as all counsellors know, is that clients attach to their therapist – the relationship is key, so they are reluctant to move to another practitioner. Hence the growing need for professionals who can offer both counselling and coaching. Also humans do not move in a linear fashion from attending to underlying emotional issues rooted in the past, to attending to more future-focussed planning. I often find myself dipping in and out of counselling and coaching skills in my client work. Should I flag up the change each time? This depends on our initial contract. The view of counselling and coaching as separate professions says that whenever I start work with a client they and I need to be clear whether it is a coaching contract or a counselling contract.

Coaching is often seen as goal-focussed, with the key ingredients of goal setting, awareness raising, action planning and accountability. As I've matured as a coach I have less emphasis on action-planning and goal-setting. I will always ask the client what they are taking away from the session, and how this might apply to other areas in their lives, but the action may be to reflect on the insights gained. Recently coaching has perhaps come full-circle back to some counselling roots, with authors distancing themselves from goal-setting (Clutterbuck et al 2013) and aspiring to make coaching more transformational rather than simply transactional. Transactional coaching tackles the presenting, surface issue, for example how to tackle a difficult conversation at work. Transformational coaching aims to surface the client's underlying assumptions and patterns of behaviour, so that they can choose to change these if they wish.

I now see the counselling-coaching spectrum as almost coming full circle, see Figure 2.

"There is probably a wider gulf between psychodynamic therapy and solution-focused therapy (for example) than there is between solution-focused therapy and coaching" (Jinks and Popovic 2011)

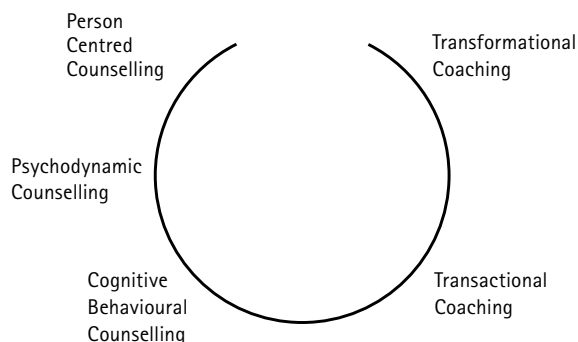


Figure 2: Counselling and Coaching coming full circle?

Personal Consultancy – the Integrative Coach-Therapist

There is an emerging professional body of consultants who encompass both counselling and coaching training in their practice. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) have a coaching division for counsellors who are also coaches or have an interest in coaching. The Association for Integrative Coach-Therapists (ACITP) is a professional body for practitioners wanting to combine coaching and counselling – instead of belonging to separate professional bodies, with no discussion of integration. Personally I have found both organisations helpful in clarifying where I stand as a joint practitioner.

James Henman recently wrote, “I present myself as a therapeutic coach/personal trainer in the process of change.” He works as an integrative practitioner. An integrative practitioner will market themselves as such; they will contract with you in the first session to use both counselling and coaching approaches, usually seamlessly.

Jinks and Popovic’s (2011) model of personal consultancy provides a useful map (Figure 3) where you can position your practice. I tend to move around the map, sometimes focussing on behavioural change, other times delving into deeper issues from the past which affect the present. Where do you see your practice on this map?

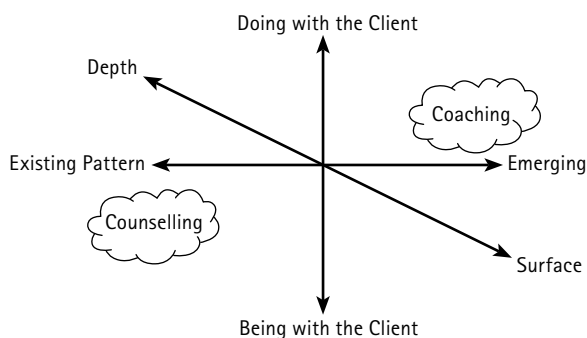


Figure 3: Personal Consultancy Model : adapted from Jinks and Popovic (2011)

It is a three-dimensional model:

- the vertical axis ranges from the consultant Being with the client (non-directive and reactive) to Doing with the Client (more directive, pro-active and focussed).
- the horizontal axis ranges from the client’s Existing Pattern (emotional, cognitive or behavioural in the past and present) to the client’s Emerging Pattern (desired, strived-for patterns in present and future).
- the depth axis ranges from the “depths” of the intra-psychic, inner world of the client to the “surface” of the client’s external manifestations, events and behaviours.

Popovic and Jinks (2013) postulate that Integrative Coach-Therapists navigate this personal consultancy space in partnership with the client and that this wider approach can be a more comprehensive way of helping clients than coaching or counselling on its own. I have added two clouds indicating where I see stereotypical coaching and counselling being located. Stereotypical coaching involves the consultant Doing with the client, at surface level, focussing on emerging patterns, whilst stereotypical counselling involves the consultant Being with the Client, at depth, focussing on existing patterns, in the trust that this will result in change.

I have found coaching skills, competencies and models a useful addition to my counselling practice, enriching and expanding it, to fill more of the personal consultancy map in Figure 3.

Coaching Training for Counsellors

If this has whetted your appetite to gain some coaching skills, you may wonder what coaching training is available. There are plenty, ranging from courses which focus on workplace coaching to life coaching training, or coaching courses associated with particular orientations such as the Kinharvie Institute’s Gestalt Coaching course in Glasgow. However I have yet to find any coaching training in Scotland aimed specifically at counsellors. Other courses assume no prior counselling skills and so start by teaching basic listening skills. It’s always useful to have some revision, but I think there’s a place for counsellor-specific coaching training, which builds on our existing skills – given the extent of the overlap.

To this end Rowan Consultancy is providing a two-day “Coaching Skills for Counsellors” course, launching in Perth in February 2015, focussing on coaching competencies, introducing two coaching models and including debate on how counsellors can integrate coaching skills into their existing practice.

There are some coaching courses for counsellors in England, for example, a 5-day course on Life and Business Coaching for Counsellors and Psychotherapists from CSP Coaching in Plymouth and a Postgraduate Certificate in Integrative Counselling and Coaching from the University of East London.

We hope that Rowan’s “Coaching Skills for Counsellors” course will contribute to a Scottish debate about the interaction between the counselling and coaching professions. There is room for counsellors who don’t coach, and coaches who don’t counsel, but is there space in the middle for people who do both – whether integrated or separately?

I leave you with some questions:

- Is there a need for a Coaching interest group within COSCA or space for discussion on this topic?
- How many COSCA members also practice as coaches? If so do they do so separately, or as part of an integrative practice?
- Is there interest in COSCA holding a joint meeting with one of the professional Coaching bodies?

I look forward to your responses and thoughts on this emerging area – either by letters to the COSCA Journal, or you can contact me directly on rachel.weiss@Rowan-consultancy.co.uk

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Rachel is an accredited counsellor, coach, trainer and mediator. She delights in helping people lead more satisfying lives at work and home, through increased self-awareness and by giving them focussed time to think. She wants to transfer the rich learning of counselling into the workplace to aid in leadership and organisational development.