**Comparisons Coaching vs Therapy / Counselling**

Training, coaching mentoring and counselling / therapy are all on a similar continuum, however they are all different. A big difference lies between coaching and counselling or therapy. Coaches are not counsellors, nor should they venture into the therapy territory. The table below from Bruce Peltier’s book ‘The Psychology of Executive Coaching’ helps to give coaches a clearer separation.

The original edition was written in 2001. The wording in red signifies contemporary development and thoughts on coaching, as the practice has evolved.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Coaching** | **Therapy** |
| Present and future focus | Focus on the past |
| Action orientation (with reflection) | Passive orientation (listening) reflective |
| Data is information from key others, as well as from the client | Data from client |
| Growth or skill orientation | Pathology orientation |
| Problem is person environment mix | Problem is intrapsychic (found in the person) |
| Information sometimes fedback to key members of the organisation by client (with great care and led by the client not the coach) | Information not shared with others |
| Definition of client unclear (may be the organisation that is paying the coach’s fees) (now in coaching, the clients is the person being coached. The purchasing organisation is seen as the ‘sponsor’) | Client is clearly the person you work with |
| Organisation must feel enhanced by the coaching. There must be enrichment and outcomes for the client. | Client (person) must feel enriched |
| Confidentiality is complex | Confidentiality is clear and absolute |
| Meetings of variable length (depending on formality and nature of topic) | 50 minute sessions |
| Meet in executive’s workplace or a ‘neutral’ site | Work in therapist’s office |
| Flexible boundaries, including social settings. Boundaries defined by coach, client and professional bodies. | Rigid boundaries |
| Work around personality issues | Work through (resolve) personality issues |
| Organisation may choose coach. With matching meeting between parties. | Client chooses therapist |