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Reflecting on the descriptions and definitions of counselling/therapy and coaching in the Participant Handbook, where do you think the places of similarity and divergence are between the therapy/counselling/psychology you currently practice and the coaching which you aspire to offer?

I feel this is a really useful question. Whilst I feel there are many similarities between therapy and coaching there are also differences and I acknowledge that coaching is not another way of doing therapy (Vaughan Smith 2006). I feel that self-awareness and the capacity to learn and build on that learning are similar in both counselling and coaching. Coaching uses the concept of 'appreciative enquiry' 'OSKAR' (T2C Handbook 2019, 28), which is a solution-focused framework approach that highlights:

- Outcome
- Scaling
- Know how and resources
- Affirm and action
- Review

When I use some solution-based therapy techniques in the counselling space, such as scaling, I am working with a similar model, both models rely on the client's self-awareness.

I am finding that the relationship and rapport is a key aspect of both coaching and counselling. On an energetic level, I am mindful of the differences (CI 75). Counselling can often feel 'heavy' due to the idea of the client unburdening themselves from the feelings that they have been carrying for a long time. Whereas, in coaching, there is a 'lightness' around the process and it is diagnosis-free and there is no interpretation. In coaching, the client isn't seen as being wounded, damaged or in any way 'needing'. The idea that the client is healthy, has a strong resourced self and is capable of moving themselves into the future feels like such a significant shift from a counselling approach (CI 96 & 97), where there is often a need to interpret what the client is carrying, this can be linked to metaphor work, for example, 'I've got the worries of the world on my shoulders'. If this metaphor were to occur in coaching there may be a requirement to identify an emotional or a therapeutic need which is beyond the coach's capacity to work with safely (CI 73).

In coaching, there is an alliance between the coach and coachee and an understanding that there is a 'curiosity' which enables freedom and empowerment for the future. For me, this takes the form of a 'what could *you* do?' attitude (CI 82), with the coach encouraging the coachee to engage more of themselves in the life they currently lead and, in doing so, work on being even more focussed in regard to their personal goals and ambitions (CI 91-94). "*There is a spirit of discovery*" and uncovering in coaching, which feels exciting and adventurous (ibid, 45).

Sitting alongside this 'spirit of discovery' suggests that coaching is concerned with focussing and clarity, for example, if the coachee starts to tell their story, as the coach I will gently ask them if what they are talking about is what they want to work on (CI 85). This is a shift from my counselling practice in which I am listening for connections and clues to the client's unconscious and other processes (CI 87, 92). Coaching feels very coachee-led and as a coach I think I will need to remind myself not to lead with my own agenda for the coachee. I feel excited by the prospect of working in a way where the coachee tells the coach what they need/want in a very clear way. In counselling there may not be such a clarity at initial stages,

although I can use my counselling skills to encourage and offer space which can bring the client to a place of clarity but this may be a longer process. I am noticing a shared skill for both practices could include reframing and challenging.

2. What theoretical and practice experience do you bring from your previous therapy/counselling training that meets the competences and capability indicators at senior practitioner level? (Please reference the competences and capability indicators of a senior practitioner in coaching (see Participant Handbook))

As a person-centred counsellor, I am giving the client the invitation to work. For me there is a sense that the relationship has some mutuality, and any difficulties will be aired and explored (CI 77). The notion of transparency interests me as it has two parts, one is about what I do not do and the other is about what I do, do. The first of these is about being natural and having authenticity. This resonates significantly for me, trying not to hide what is going on within me (CI 74). The second one could be called immediacy which is actively communicating my 'here and now' experiences to my client. For me it is not pretending to understand a client when I do not. Early on as a trainee counsellor, I would bring my counsellor part into the room in the belief that I had to change from a normal human being into a counsellor.

My approach is different now as I have a willingness to directly communicate my experience to my client as to how I am experiencing him or her. This has brought a freshness and curiosity to my practice that is both beneficial to me and the client. I have a greater appreciation and confidence in working with my own vulnerability and the impact this can have for the client as a positive experience (CI 74).

I have developed a way of working which connects with the client's experience, for example, I will often ask the client "what is going on with you now?" as I am aware that the client can get caught up in the externals and hook into internal thoughts rather than acknowledging what is going on either in the body or on a feelings level (CI 90). As a person-centred counsellor, I pay attention to the body, noticing if the client is getting agitated as this may mirror what is going on in my body which I am happy to share with the client as an important piece of modelling.

Reality checking and self-talk are techniques which work well to identify the individual's process. I encourage clients to start writing down their negative self-talk in order for them to start noticing how their thoughts influence their behaviour and beliefs (CI 94). Responsibility taking in the counselling session encourages clients to take responsibility for their behaviour and emotions. I have become comfortable bringing my curiosity to what the client feels and this is a significant help when a client is coming from a place of denial and blame (CI 84, 85).

3. What skills and experience do you have from other aspects of your professional life that already give you a reach into the practice and purposes of coaching and what in particular do you need to grow/learn? (Please reference the competences and capability indicators of a senior practitioner in coaching (see Participant Handbook))

I am a person-centred practitioner. Coachees can experience deep feelings in the coaching process and what I am learning is that coaching works with the client's thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and assumptions (CI 89). My current practice in coaching is to do a 'check in' at the beginning of a session and ask how the coachee feels. If the coachee identifies a feeling that is difficult, such as anxiety, I would ask 'if you were able to do X without feeling anxious

'how would that feel?' and then moving on to 'check this out' and asking questions like 'is this something you would want?' (CI 84, 87, 97). The exploration of feeling can be worked with without the felt experience by offering an empathetic response to that state, through questions like 'what would you rather feel?', in order to stay close to the coachee's feeling, but providing a free safe space to explore and test out the possibility of creating change by identifying goals.

I realise that coaching is less focused on the affective or emotional state of the client than counselling. In coaching, it feels like timing is important, by this I am referring to the ability to judge when the client's emotion may be shifting, and an empathetic approach can be effective in processing of emotions in a solution-focused way. I need to remember that coaching is a focussed process (CI 91-95). I feel this will be a challenge for me as I do like the client to have space for storytelling, as in counselling I use this process to work with the client's frame of reference (CI 74).

4. What have you discovered about yourself from completing this reflective assignment?

I have discovered the differences between therapy and coaching. What also lands in me is the lack of stigma with coaching, it is seen as a positive activity like attending the gym. I have been interested in developing my own conception of 'the emotional muscle', which I have used in my counselling practice.

I feel I need to come out of a 'counselling mode' and be mindful of my coaching brief. I am thinking about ways to remind myself of this and I think, as a visual learner, Julia Vaughan Smith's description of the coaching model (ibid) - which refers to mapping, envisioning the future, exploring, generating and moving to action - could help me stay on track with maintaining my 'coaching style' (CI 74, 84, 92).

5. How will your new understanding influence your future practice?

My intention is to do more listening and create rapport early on in the session to allow trust to build. I want to be clear in my contracting (CI 80) and enable the coachee to focus in on their goal, what they want to get out of the session and consider my language (CI 88). I have a tendency to use scaling and start to consider the usefulness of this; what is my intent? (CI 87)

I am aware that triad work along with giving and receiving feedback will assist me with these goals (CI 79).

References

Turner, T. (2019). *T2C/Therapist to Coach Participant Handbook*. Trish Turner Coaching, Consulting and Counselling

Vaughan Smith, J. (2006) *Therapist Into Coach*. McGraw-Hill Education