

Coaching and Counseling

Differences, Similarities, and the Possibility of Combination

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Subject

Personal coaching and counseling (psychological consulting), along with mentoring, are the most important professional methods by which one person helps another progress.

Personal coaching and counseling is primarily concerned with the client's private life. On the other hand, *business* coaching and *employee* assistance focus on professional issues without ignoring other interests.

Business coaches are not »life coaches«. Strictly speaking, a coach does not recommend how to live your life, but rather helps people clarify and achieve their individual goals, including the development of skills and other resources.

Counselors also do not give advice in the first place, but help their clients to develop, especially by uncovering and removing psychological blockages and persistent misconceptions.

By following a *process*, both coaching and counseling make their success most likely, provided it is not canceled beforehand. To a certain extent, coaching and counseling can even be *combined*.

What Coaching and Counseling Can Do for You as a Client

Coaching and counseling follow different processes, but complement each other in their means. The underlying basic strategy is decisive: goal pursuit or situational action,

and personal development.

Pursuit of Your Individual Goals

- You better understand your current situation.
- You complete or renew your current goal setting.
- You define a strategy to achieve your goals.
- You make resources, tools and special skills usable.
- You understand and remove obstacles that prevent you from moving forward.

Situational and Flexible Practice

- Learn to make progress even in a complex, confusing environment.
- Start focusing more on your means than on your goals.
- Act in such a way that your risk will remain below a predefined limit.
- Make it a habit to take advantage of circumstances and coincidences.
- Establish agreements and partnerships with everyone who is worth something.

Developing Your Personality

- You begin to perceive, process and express directly your conscious experiencing.
- You learn to perceive your emotions less as foreign objects and more as something of your own.
- You improve your interpersonal relationships and open up to others more easily.
- You recognize *personal constructs* that take away your freedom of experiencing.
- You will be freer to share with others what it is that moves you.

Of course, these basic approaches can be combined in coaching and counseling prac-

tice. The coaching or counseling process is always conducted in such a way that progress is clearly visible after each section or session. This means that the participants always know where they are, whether they need to change their approach, and when the coaching or counseling is likely to be completed.

What Coaches Should Bring Along

Coaching and counseling are not unconditional. Regardless of whether you want to achieve your goals, expand your skills or develop your personality, you need the *determination* to do so and a certain *attitude* towards suggestions, criticism, successes and failures.

In addition, any sustainable change takes time. Coaching and counseling each follow their own process, which allows the client enough time to reflect and put new insights into practice. The coach or counselor also needs time between sessions to review past sessions and prepare for future sessions. They consider how best to manage the coaching/counseling process or what tools to use when it promises to be beneficial.

Who is not (yet) Ready for Coaching?

Many coaches would say: »Anyone who wants to be coached is ready«, forgetting the qualification »in principle« or »fundamentally«. This is because, in practice, there are obstacles to coaching that cannot be removed, precisely because they would have to be removed by the very actions that are hindered by them. It's a bit like not being able to find a flashlight in the dark to replace a blown fuse because you can't see anything.

These obstacles have to do with the fact that the person in question is not or no longer sufficiently able to evaluate himself, to ques-

tion himself and to take responsibility for himself. For example, someone who believes that he or she is indisputably perfect (or, conversely, a born loser) and does *everything* right (or wrong), but that his or her family, colleagues, circumstances, society, etc. are preventing his or her own success, will hardly benefit from coaching.

Lack of Willingness to Question and Change One's Own Behavior

- Only changed behavior leads to new results.
- Behavior includes communication, decision-making and delegation, depending on the objective of the coaching.
- Growth always involves certain risks.

Reduced Ability to Reflect and Self-Evaluate

- Everyone has »blind spots« that they cannot see for themselves.
- Reflection tells us which behaviors have helped us grow and which have not.
- Learning and growth require self-evaluation.

Need to Stay in »Victimhood« and Accusation of Others

- In »victimhood«, people see themselves as misunderstood, underestimated, and mistreated.
- They miss out on the opportunities that lie in taking responsibility for their own situation.
- Those who only blame others for obstacles are constantly standing in their own way.

In the following, the pronoun »they« is used for »he or she«, »their« is used for »his or her«, and »them« is used for »him or her«.

How is Coaching Conducted?

The Coaching Process

In principle, coaching follows a very specific procedure called the *coaching process*.

1) Contract and Order Clarification

This first step serves to define the framework for the coaching to follow: expectations, time and place, scope, compensation, etc.

2) Concern and Context Exploration

First, the coachee and the coach examine the initial situation: How does the coachee's world look like, what are they involved in, who are the people they deal with? How do they feel, what is an issue or problem for them?

3) Definition of Goals and Resources

The coachee then describes their ideal situation: what would be different, what would be the same? From this, realistic goals are derived. It is important to clarify which resources are already available and which could be added.

4) Formulation of a Development Path

The coachee and the coach now consider which paths can lead the coachee from their current situation to their goals. By taking into account the available and obtainable resources, they select the best path.

5) Implementing and Enforcing Changes

It is less about a single step and more about the development path itself. If everything is going smoothly, the coach is usually less needed than if the coachee keeps encountering new difficulties. If it turns out that goals cannot or should not be achieved, an alternative path may need to be pursued.

6) Review and Conclusion

The path traveled is reflected upon once the set goals have been achieved.

Of course, this is only the »external process«, which in particular does not describe the growing mutual trust between coach and coachee.

Why Does Coaching Work?

This question is often asked: Why do you need a coach and not just consult yourself about your goals and the changes that will bring you closer to them? The answer is as clear as it is obvious: because you can't see yourself from the outside. Without an dialogue partner, it is difficult for an individual to assess whether his train of thought is correct or whether his resources are sufficient. He finds a touchstone and a sounding board in the other person.

What Does Counseling Involve?

The Counseling Process

Unlike coaching, counseling does not follow a standardized process. In general, however, it can be said that a progressive self-understanding of the client takes place, so that one can speak here of a counseling *process*, which the counselor supports within the framework of his possibilities. The client goes through several stages in the process, for example entering the counseling at level 3 and leaving it at level 6.

Level 1

The person has no desire to change, does not perceive their own emotions. They has no inclination to communicate with others and blocks internal communication.

Level 2

The person has limited differentiation of personal meaning structures. They perceive emotions as alien or as something from the past. They do not feel responsible for their

problems. They talk about the processes and problems of their individual self as merely exterior.

Level 3

The person gradually recognizes the conflicts in which they are involved. They perceive their experiences as objects. They express their experiences only in retrospect and as something negative and distant.

Level 4

The person discovers that they are oriented toward personal constructs. They perceive their emotions as present, but do not yet accept them. They cautiously communicate their initial emotions to others.

Level 5

The person realizes that they can verify their self-image based on their experiencing. They discover new emotions within themselves and how they perceive them. Their inner communication becomes more precise; they talk about problems for which they are responsible.

Level 6

The person recognizes their self-responsibility. Their constructs dissolve in the immediacy of the experiencing. They gradually accept that they are experiencing a flow of emotions. They share their emotions with others.

Level 7

The person is guided by their experiences, intentions and attitudes. They experience their emotions as direct and nuanced without fear. Their internal communication is clear and they are happy to share their content.

This is therefore an »inner development« that the client goes through. The counselor acts like the helmsman of a sea-going vessel, to whom the captain (client) sets the course and whose task it is to ensure that the course is maintained even when disruptions occur.

Why Does Counseling Work?

The thought and emotional traps that we often find ourselves in as individuals sometimes make it impossible for us to get out of them without outside help. We are stuck in them because they paralyze the very thoughts and emotions that could set us in motion.

The counselor helps their clients to recognize and resolve these inhibitions.

From my Coaching Practice

Common Concerns

The concerns of my clients include the following elements on a regular basis:

- Doubts about the principle of success, lack of self-development, therefore lack of motivation
- Unclear goals and motivation, resources not valued
- Feeling of not being able to make progress because of other people's obstacles
- Feeling overwhelmed without being able to delegate tasks
- Other people's motives seem unfathomable, incomprehensible
- Feeling uncomfortable being dependent on others
- Lack of clarity about one's own feelings: How should I behave?
- Desire to verify the correctness of one's own professional or personal path.
- Feelings of inadequacy, self-image as a loser
- Feelings of guilt about one's own successes
- Perceived need to talk to a »stranger« for once

The selection shows that three sets of questions predominate:

- a) Am I on the right track or should I change direction? Can I accelerate my progress?
- b) What do I want to achieve, which path should I take? How can I make steady progress, what resources can I draw on?
- c) Do I have a chance or are the obstacles insurmountable? Does it even make sense for me personally to pursue fixed goals?

Coaching Case Study: Goals and Development Paths

1) Situation

My coachee, Mr. M., was at a turning point in his professional situation, requiring him to gain the trust of others in his skills and determination to get things moving, to convince. He also struggled with similar situations in his personal life.

While he was quite successful in convincing the person he was talking to in one-on-one conversations, he found contact with groups of people who listened to him and evaluated his ideas based on his behavior and presentation unpleasant and he fell far short of his potential. This proved to be a serious obstacle to his professional advancement and weakened his self-confidence.

Mr. M. had negative feelings towards groups that make decisions together («committees»). He felt that he was at their mercy because they determined his life while pursuing goals that were not his own. He therefore saw himself in the role of «victim» from the outset.

2) Intervention

The conversation also revealed that the coachee attributed the causes of his past

successes and failures to external circumstances, other people, and random influences. Research has shown that individuals who seek success perceive these causes differently than those who aim to avoid failure. (You can find more information about this in the paper mentioned below.) In other words, the coachee did not view his personal ability and will as significant factors in his achievements. Instead, failure was primarily the result of circumstances, and success was primarily the result of chance.

What is missing here is the belief in »self-efficacy«, i. e. the attitude that you can change things yourself, that you are the architect of your own happiness.

Mr. M. therefore constantly felt that he was in a situation in which he could only lose. By reliving past experiences and role-playing, he was able to penetrate this feeling more deeply. He discovered that it was based on fears from the past that had taken on a life of their own («ghosts»), meaning that they were completely inappropriate for the situation at hand.

The coachee was so focused on his weaknesses that he hardly noticed his strengths. In his case, these included, for example, his strong powers of persuasion, his very powerful oral presentation and his well thought-out arguments. We defined a number of measures to promote these strengths on the one hand and to make my coachee more aware of them on the other.

3) Performance Review

A few weeks later, it became apparent that the self-awareness that had been stimulated by the coaching and the measures that had been implemented in the meantime were already bearing fruit. Mr. M. had held various discussions with individuals and groups, in

which he made suggestions on how he could contribute his personal knowledge and experience to various organizations. The reactions were consistently positive. The interviewees were pleasantly surprised by the ideas presented to them and were probably also amazed by Mr. M.'s eloquence and energy.

My coachee had really developed and gained new perspectives and opportunities within a short space of time.

It is because of the way the brain works that we keep going down the same path and think it will take us somewhere else this time. If it then goes wrong, as it did before, we »automatically« invent reasons why it happened to us again. In general, the best way for a person to change their actions in the long term is to become aware of their reasons in order to get out of the »inner compulsion« to act in a similar way again and again under similar circumstances.

This worked out very well for my client.

4) A Lesson Learned

Is the constant pursuit of success really so self-evident? You could, for example, live only for your faith or for the happiness of others, rather than for your own professional or even financial success.

Absolutely right. But if you want to change your situation and achieve something, of course you want your efforts to succeed. But if we give up all effort, aren't we also giving up on ourselves? That would also be legitimate, but such a life can probably only be realized in a monastery or barracks in the long run. For the vast majority of people, however, striving for success provides the necessary guidance and strength.

Is it Possible to Combine Coaching and Counseling?

During a coaching session, we sometimes reach a point that is far more akin to counseling than coaching, which is essentially fact-oriented. Of course, this is particularly the case when it comes to emotions and experiences. (In some cases, there are even points of contact with psychotherapy - of course, coaches/counselors may only cross this line with appropriate permission). Since the processes described above are both external (in coaching) and internal (in counseling), there is no methodological reason why both paths should not be followed at the same time. Of course, the coach or counselor needs to be trained and experienced in both disciplines. It goes without saying that the needs of the client come first when it comes to the concrete form of the consultation.

Web Resources

en.rolandkapeller.de/assets/files/RKapeller_Success_Seekers.pdf

Discuss With the Author

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