



Colorado
Charter Chapter

The Informed Coach: Understanding Critical Distinctions Between Coaching and Psychotherapy and Knowing When to Make a Referral

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Critical Distinctions of Coaching and Psychotherapy (Therapy)
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Coaching Key Points

- Anyone can call themselves a coach.
- Coaches can't provide therapy or pseudo-therapy.
- Coaching is predominantly present and future focused.
- Coaching is about action and goals, coaches and clients are equals, and they collaborate.
- The client is the expert. Clients are creative, resourceful, and whole.
- Coaches do not assess mental states, use scientific evidence, or make assessments.
- Coaches are truthful neutral guides that make huge requests.
- Coaches only talk about the past if it is relevant for forward movement.
- Clients hire their coaches in order to be pushed and challenged.
- Coaching is typically done by video conferencing or phone.
- Coaches can barter their services, provide pro bono coaching, and be friends with their clients.
- No sexual relationships between coach and client, but they may receive gifts from their clients.
- Coaches do not keep records or limit their record keeping to client prep forms or client self-report.
- Coaches are bound by confidentiality.
- Coaches are not regulated in most states.
- Coaches typically work month to month, but there is a growing trend to offer coaching programs in four, six or twelve month increments where there is an overall program fee.
- Coaches can work towards certification- Associate Certified Coach (ACC); Professional Certified Coach (PCC); or the highest level Master Certified Coach, (MCC). Working towards certification is not time limited.
- Coaches have written coaching agreements, a written policy and procedure, and a set fee structure.

Therapy Key Points

- Therapists are regulated by the state in which they live. Here in Colorado it is called the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA).
- Therapists can be **licensed clinical social workers, certified addiction counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists.**

- Unlicensed therapists must be supervised by a licensed clinician.
- If therapists are practicing therapy they must be registered with the appropriate division of DORA while they are completing requirements of licensure.
- Once they are registered with the state they have four years to pass an exam and complete the requirements.
- After licensure, they must renew their license every two years and also must engage in required hours of approved continuing education.
- Therapists are considered experts, who assess, diagnose and treat mental health disorders.
- Therapists use a disease based medical model and the DSMIV-TR that lists hundreds of mental health disorders. Medication can also be used along with therapy interventions.
- Therapist must be trained or be receiving on-going training in the therapy method they are using. They must provide research, if questioned, to support why they are using a particular therapy method.
- Therapists work with the past, along with unconscious and conscious motivation in order to help clients **heal**, understand why they are doing the things they do, and then change the ineffective thoughts or behavior.
- Therapy sessions are face to face with only a few exceptions to this rule.
- Therapists during the therapeutic relationship are not supposed to accept gifts, and they can't be friends with their clients. (There are somewhat official guidelines around friendships.) No dual relationships.
- Therapists can't provide a trade, but they can provide pro bono services.
- Therapist must uphold confidentiality according to HIPPA Laws. They must keep records and they must be kept locked up. Therapists also need to have a written Disclosure Statement.
- Therapists receive payment at the time of service. They sometimes receive payment directly from the client or from the client's insurance company or their employee assistance program.

When to Refer or Add other Professionals

Examples of when to refer a client to a mental health professional are: depression; other mental health conditions, marital difficulties, family dynamics, addictions, disabilities, and suicidal concerns. Other areas are: medical, financial, criminal, spiritual, skill training, discrimination, or job safety (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 138-9).

Your Professional Network

It is helpful to have a professional network in your coaching tool box. You can find good doctors, lawyers, accountants etc. at local chambers of commerce or other specific local organizations. For therapists you could use [Psychology Today](#) "Find a Local Therapist", or [Good Therapy](#) Website.

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