

## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING AND ITS RELATED FIELDS

### ABSTRACT:

Carol Wilson, Head of Accreditation at the Association for Coaching, and Gladeana McMahon, Fellow of the Association for Coaching, explore the differences between coaching and the related disciplines of counselling, psychotherapy, mentoring and consulting. Coaching draws its influences from and stands on the shoulders of a wide range of disciplines, including counselling, management consultancy, personal development, and psychology. However, there are a number of core differences which distinguish coaching from its related fields. This article is based on a chapter of the book '*The Handbook of Best Coaching*', produced by the Association for Coaching and available at a reduced price of £20 on [www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com).

### Key points:

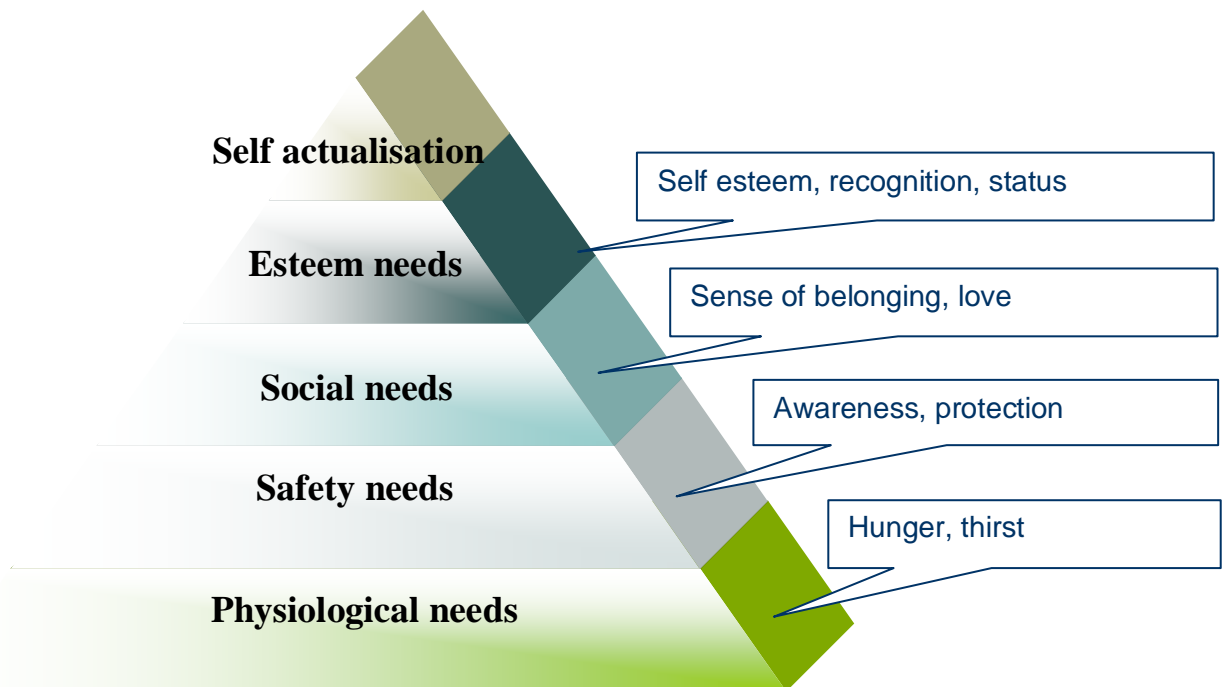
- **Origins and history of coaching**
- **Types of practitioners**
- **Definitions**
- **Comparisons**

### ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF COACHING

Coaching has its roots mainly in psychology and sports coaching. However, early psychology, up to and during the time of Freud and Jung, was largely remedial and remained so even when it later developed through behavioural and cognitive therapies. Therapy was about identifying what was wrong with the subject and attempting to fix it.

In the sixties, humanistic psychology was developed, the key figures being Abraham Maslow, renowned for his 'Hierarchy of Needs', and Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy. The breakthrough made by these psychologists was that they started to look at what was right with people rather than what was wrong – focussing on their best potential rather than their problems. The Hierarchy of Needs places 'self actualisation' at the top of the human evolutionary journey.

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow focussed on the top of the triangle: how to reach the pinnacle of achievement and satisfaction. He believed that the process of reaching upwards would solve problems lower down on the way.

It was not until the 1970s that a tennis coach applied the principle to coaching. Tim Gallwey was no ordinary sports coach; he explored psychology, was the devotee of an Indian guru and his key breakthrough was to understand the value of enabling people to learn about themselves or to become 'self-aware'.

Gallwey found that when he taught his tennis trainees how to learn, they performed better than when taught how to hit a ball over a net. He defined the 'opponent inside' as being more limiting than the one on the other side of the net. What made the difference was that as well as awareness, Gallwey understood the significance of directionality: awareness of where you are is not enough to bring about change; you have to know where you want to get to.

He wrote a series of books called 'The Inner Game', applying this self directed learning to people's lives and work and named the process 'life coaching' to distinguish it from his sports coaching. This term causes confusion to this day for the uninitiated, who equate 'life coaching' with regular sports coaching, a practice which is remedial and better described as instruction; the conventional sports coach spends the lesson time correcting the player's technique, directing the player and highlighting what is wrong, the opposite of Tim's principles of life coaching.

Executive, business, career, personal and other types of coaching are all based on the same principles as Tim Gallwey's Life Coaching, and these were redefined as Performance Coaching by Sir John Whitmore during the 1990s. Coaching is a process, like accountancy, and the process remains much the same regardless of which type of coaching is taking place.

Other practices have grown from similar roots alongside coaching, such as positive psychology, Neuro Linguistic Programming, management training and personal development.

## **TYPES OF PRACTITIONERS IN RELATED FIELDS**

Let us now take a look at the different practitioners and what they do:

### **Performance Coach**

A Performance Coach (or 'Life Coach' to use Tim Gallwey's term) will work on improving the performance of an individual by facilitating that individual in setting goals, strategies and actions. There are currently three major bodies for coaching: The Association for Coaching, the International Coaching Federation and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council.

### **Psychiatrist**

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor with further specialised training in the field of psychiatry but, surprisingly, not necessarily any training in psychological therapies. Psychiatrists are concerned with diagnosing mental illness and prescribing drugs to treat it. A psychiatrist may have undertaken training in psychology and therapy or may refer a patient on to a therapist. The UK professional body for psychiatrists is The Royal College of Psychiatrists.

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### **Counsellor**

A Counsellor practices one or more different types of therapeutic intervention. The training extends from a part-time diploma up to higher level degrees. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy is the main professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in the UK.

### **Psychotherapist**

A psychotherapist will have received training to work with deep-seated emotional difficulties. There are a number of bodies that represent psychotherapy in the UK, the two lead bodies being the BACP and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

### **Mentor**

A great deal of confusion is caused by different uses of the term 'Mentor'. In some organizations the word is used to describe performance coaches as defined in this article. I would define Mentors as people who impart their own experience, learning and advice to those who have less experience in the particular field. In modern business, the practice of delivering mentoring in a coaching style is on the increase.

### **Consultant**

A consultant is someone who brings additional knowledge and processes to an organization and who may carry out work on behalf of that organization.

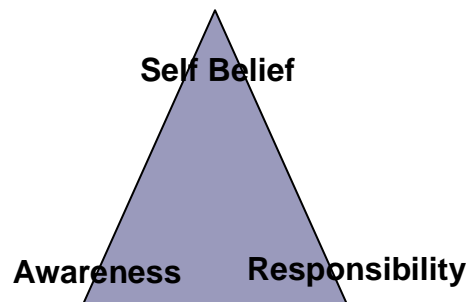
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The various practitioners fulfill their roles in these ways:

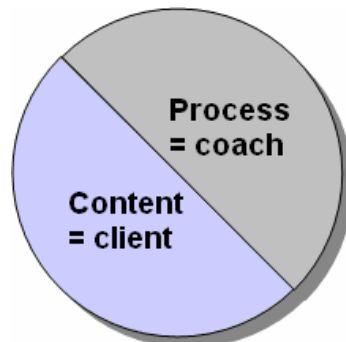
## Performance Coaching

Performance Coaching is about improving the performance of an individual or group, not by telling but by questioning to facilitate awareness and self-directed learning. There are a growing number of categories in coaching, such as life, executive, team, group and career coaching, but the process is largely the same and can be generically defined as Performance Coaching. Just as the more successful an athlete is, the more likely he or she is to work with a coach, performance coaching is not necessarily about fixing problems but about helping successful individuals and teams to become more so.

The core principles of coaching are awareness, responsibility and self belief:



Although the control of the process lies with the coach, the content always lies with the client, making the coaching experience an empowering, productive and enjoyable one:



Coaching can be practised either one to one or with groups of any size and is used with teams to achieve a unified and supportive force. The roots of communicating in a coaching style are ancient and inherent in all people; some are natural coaches who were raised in a coaching atmosphere. For others, it is possible to learn the skills and change their style of communication, hence the growing popularity of coaching in corporate and public organisations. Good leadership is virtually synonymous with good coaching skills.

Occasionally, emotional baggage may surface during coaching and the coach may refer the coachee to a counsellor or therapist. However, sometimes the process of coaching is found to dissolve deep seated blocks and traumas which have been holding the coachee back, simply by its solution focussed approach, without the necessity of deeper exploration. Coaching has also produced results in physical healing, sometimes combined with related fields such as Neuro Linguistic Programming and Grovian Clean Language.

## Counselling

Counselling is focused on helping people with emotional distress which stops them from being able to function as well as they would like. Counselling timeframes can be as short as 6 sessions or less or as long as 3 years or more once a week. Counselling is more concerned with getting people who are functioning below normal back to a normal level. The types of problems that are suitable for counselling are bereavement, relationship difficulties, parenting problems, work-related issues such as bullying, stress, a general unhappiness with life and family challenges.

There are many different types of counselling models to choose from. Most fit one of three main types:

- The Psychodynamic, which attempts to make conscious the unconscious motivations and their origins which drive us all and through such understanding enable beneficial change to take place. This approach does not aim to teach strategies or techniques to clients.
- The Humanistic, which sees individuals as unique and focuses on creating a therapeutic climate where the individual can get in touch with his or her own specialness and by doing so the unwanted aspects of behaviour will change.
- The Cognitive-Behavioural, where the emphasis is on using skills and strategies to change self-defeating thinking and behaviours.

Cognitive-Behavioural therapies are likely to be short-term and focused whereas psychodynamic and humanistic are more likely to be longer-term.

There is a shortage of Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT) in the UK even though the National Institute of Clinical Evidence (NICE), the body that advises the NHS on the best treatments, has listed CBT as either the only or one of the treatments of choice for a variety of psychological conditions.

## Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy relates to therapeutic interventions that are geared towards people whose personality is damaged in some way. Perhaps the person has been given a label such as "personality disorder", which is a way of describing the variety of ways an individual may not be able to function. For example, Dependent Personality Disorder would be where a person is unable to function independently and is always looking to another person to look after them even if it means staying in a highly destructive relationship. Alternatively, a person may develop a condition such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder where she cannot leave the house or continue to work because the fear of contamination is so great leading the person to wash their hands obsessively many times even to the extent of making them bleed from washing. This would not be considered a personality disorder but would be considered a condition serious enough to need more specialist help. Psychotherapy is usually long-term of up to 4 or 5 years and if the psychotherapist is of an analytical persuasion visits may be twice instead of once a week during this time.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is a half way point between consulting and coaching; Mentors may empower and motivate their mentees, but it is not their primary role to do so. Like

coaches, they provide support, but it is through imparting their own experience, knowledge and case histories to their mentees.

### **Consultancy**

Consultancy performs several different roles for organizations, such as filling gaps in knowledge, experience or staff availability and advising on direction and strategy. A consultant may bring in the services from all the other coaching related disciplines as well as areas such as finance, logistics and marketing.

## **COMPARISON BETWEEN COACHING AND ITS RELATED FIELDS**

In conclusion, these are the key differences between coaching and other disciplines:

### **Coaching is solution focused**

Coaching always focuses on moving the coachee forward. Counselling and therapy may sometimes do this, but not always. Psychotherapy is a broad field and is usually sought in order to fix a particular problem arising from past trauma. While therapy and counselling are usually about dealing with damage and distress, coaching is about identifying and achieving desire.

### **Coaching is coachee led**

Psychotherapists sometimes use techniques which lead and influence the patient and which could cause damage to the psyche if applied by an insufficiently experienced practitioner. However, coaches are trained not to lead, judge, advise (except occasionally and with permission) or influence their coachees. Their role is to respond to the desires and expressed needs of their coachees, and to operate with the belief that the coachee has all the required knowledge to solve his or her own problem. The role of the coach is thus limited to one of a facilitator and supporter, unleashing the coachee's potential. There are some models of coaching such as the Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching approach that have a psycho-educative element where the coach may facilitate coachees in uncovering information which they are unlikely to find out or understand on their own.

### **Coaching is about improving performance**

The focus of coaching is to enhance performance. Although this may be the result with therapy and counselling, it is not a driver. Mentoring is usually aimed at improving performance; however, coaching sometimes deals with psychological issues in order to achieve this, whereas mentoring is about imparting facts and experience.

### **Coaching is about facilitating self directed learning**

Mentoring, while having similarities to coaching, is fundamentally different. A mentor has experience in a particular field and imparts specific knowledge, acting as advisor, counsellor, guide, tutor, or teacher. In contrast, the coach's role is not to advise but to assist coachees in uncovering their own knowledge and skills and to facilitate coachees in becoming their own advisors.

A simple analogy with driving a car helps to define the differences:

- A therapist will explore what is stopping you driving your car
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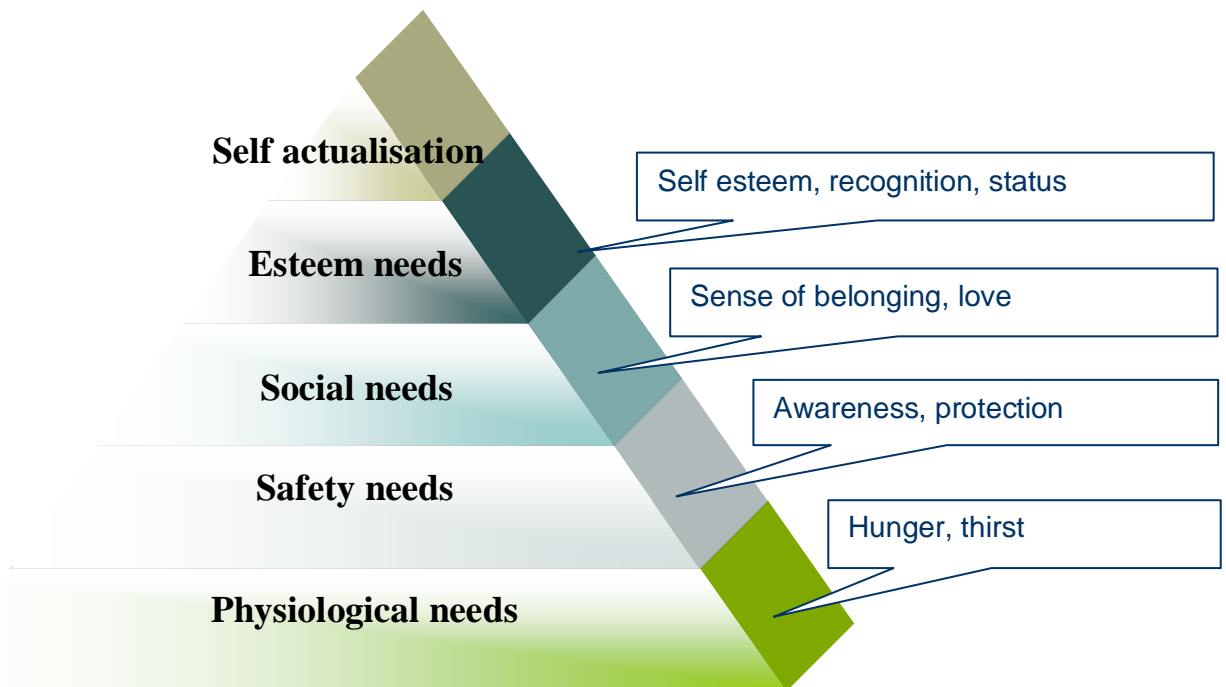
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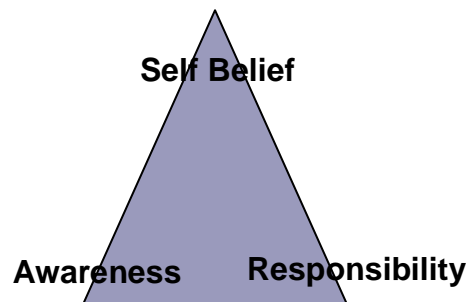
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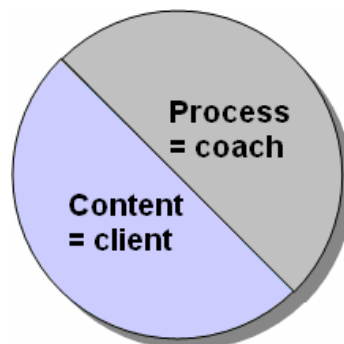
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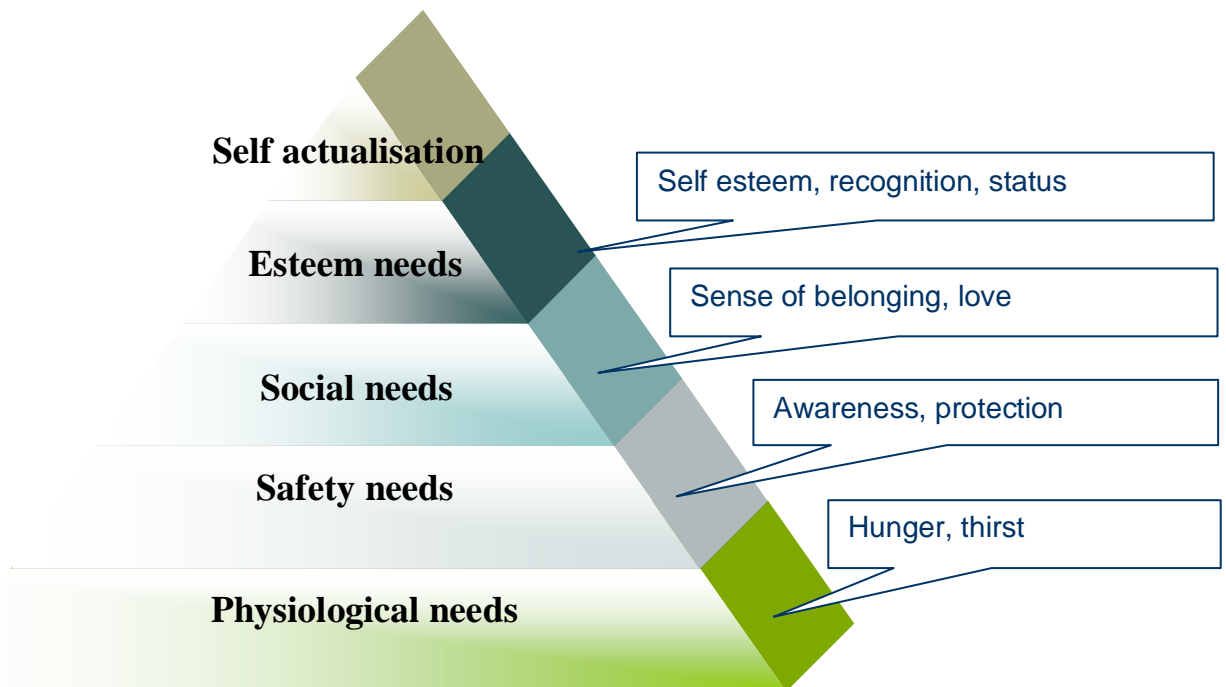
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Other practices have grown from similar roots alongside coaching, such as positive psychology, Neuro Linguistic Programming, management training and personal development.

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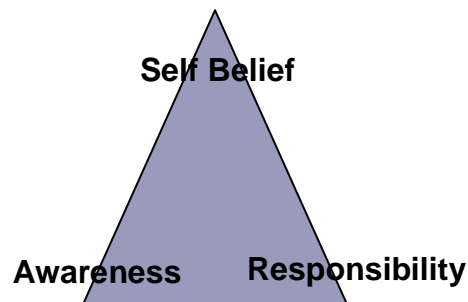
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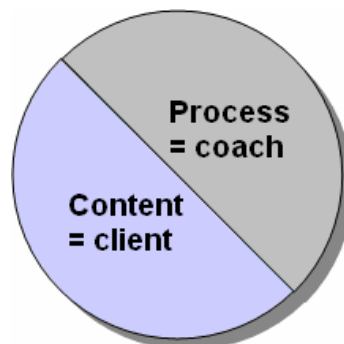
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Performance Coaching is about improving the performance of an individual or group, not by telling but by questioning to facilitate awareness and self-directed learning. There are a growing number of categories in coaching, such as life, executive, team, group and career coaching, but the process is largely the same and can be generically defined as Performance Coaching. Just as the more successful an athlete is, the more likely he or she is to work with a coach, performance coaching is not necessarily about fixing problems but about helping successful individuals and teams to become more so.

The core principles of coaching are awareness, responsibility and self belief:



Although the control of the process lies with the coach, the content always lies with the client, making the coaching experience an empowering, productive and enjoyable one:



Coaching can be practised either one to one or with groups of any size and is used with teams to achieve a unified and supportive force. The roots of communicating in a coaching style are ancient and inherent in all people; some are natural coaches who were raised in a coaching atmosphere. For others, it is possible to learn the skills and change their style of communication, hence the growing popularity of coaching in corporate and public organisations. Good leadership is virtually synonymous with good coaching skills.

Occasionally, emotional baggage may surface during coaching and the coach may refer the coachee to a counsellor or therapist. However, sometimes the process of coaching is found to dissolve deep seated blocks and traumas which have been holding the coachee back, simply by its solution focussed approach, without the necessity of deeper exploration. Coaching has also produced results in physical healing, sometimes combined with related fields such as Neuro Linguistic Programming and Grovian Clean Language.

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There are many different types of counselling models to choose from. Most fit one of three main types:

- The Psychodynamic, which attempts to make conscious the unconscious motivations and their origins which drive us all and through such understanding enable beneficial change to take place. This approach does not aim to teach strategies or techniques to clients.
- The Humanistic, which sees individuals as unique and focuses on creating a therapeutic climate where the individual can get in touch with his or her own specialness and by doing so the unwanted aspects of behaviour will change.
- The Cognitive-Behavioural, where the emphasis is on using skills and strategies to change self-defeating thinking and behaviours.

Cognitive-Behavioural therapies are likely to be short-term and focused whereas psychodynamic and humanistic are more likely to be longer-term.

There is a shortage of Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT) in the UK even though the National Institute of Clinical Evidence (NICE), the body that advises the NHS on the best treatments, has listed CBT as either the only or one of the treatments of choice for a variety of psychological conditions.

## Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy relates to therapeutic interventions that are geared towards people whose personality is damaged in some way. Perhaps the person has been given a label such as "personality disorder", which is a way of describing the variety of ways an individual may not be able to function. For example, Dependent Personality Disorder would be where a person is unable to function independently and is always looking to another person to look after them even if it means staying in a highly destructive relationship. Alternatively, a person may develop a condition such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder where she cannot leave the house or continue to work because the fear of contamination is so great leading the person to wash their hands obsessively many times even to the extent of making them bleed from washing. This would not be considered a personality disorder but would be considered a condition serious enough to need more specialist help. Psychotherapy is usually long-term of up to 4 or 5 years and if the psychotherapist is of an analytical persuasion visits may be twice instead of once a week during this time.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is a half way point between consulting and coaching; Mentors may empower and motivate their mentees, but it is not their primary role to do so. Like

coaches, they provide support, but it is through imparting their own experience, knowledge and case histories to their mentees.

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Consultancy performs several different roles for organizations, such as filling gaps in knowledge, experience or staff availability and advising on direction and strategy. A consultant may bring in the services from all the other coaching related disciplines as well as areas such as finance, logistics and marketing.

## **COMPARISON BETWEEN COACHING AND ITS RELATED FIELDS**

In conclusion, these are the key differences between coaching and other disciplines:

### **Coaching is solution focused**

Coaching always focuses on moving the coachee forward. Counselling and therapy may sometimes do this, but not always. Psychotherapy is a broad field and is usually sought in order to fix a particular problem arising from past trauma. While therapy and counselling are usually about dealing with damage and distress, coaching is about identifying and achieving desire.

### **Coaching is coachee led**

Psychotherapists sometimes use techniques which lead and influence the patient and which could cause damage to the psyche if applied by an insufficiently experienced practitioner. However, coaches are trained not to lead, judge, advise (except occasionally and with permission) or influence their coachees. Their role is to respond to the desires and expressed needs of their coachees, and to operate with the belief that the coachee has all the required knowledge to solve his or her own problem. The role of the coach is thus limited to one of a facilitator and supporter, unleashing the coachee's potential. There are some models of coaching such as the Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching approach that have a psycho-educative element where the coach may facilitate coachees in uncovering information which they are unlikely to find out or understand on their own.

### **Coaching is about improving performance**

The focus of coaching is to enhance performance. Although this may be the result with therapy and counselling, it is not a driver. Mentoring is usually aimed at improving performance; however, coaching sometimes deals with psychological issues in order to achieve this, whereas mentoring is about imparting facts and experience.

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A simple analogy with driving a car helps to define the differences:

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## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING AND ITS RELATED FIELDS

### ABSTRACT:

**Carol Wilson, Head of Accreditation at the Association for Coaching, and Gladeana McMahon, Fellow of the Association for Coaching, explore the differences between coaching and the related disciplines of counselling, psychotherapy, mentoring and consulting. Coaching draws its influences from and stands on the shoulders of a wide range of disciplines, including counselling, management consultancy, personal development, and psychology. However, there are a number of core differences which distinguish coaching from its related fields. This article is based on a chapter of the book 'The Handbook of Best Coaching', produced by the Association for Coaching and available at a reduced price of £20 on [www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com).**

### Key points:

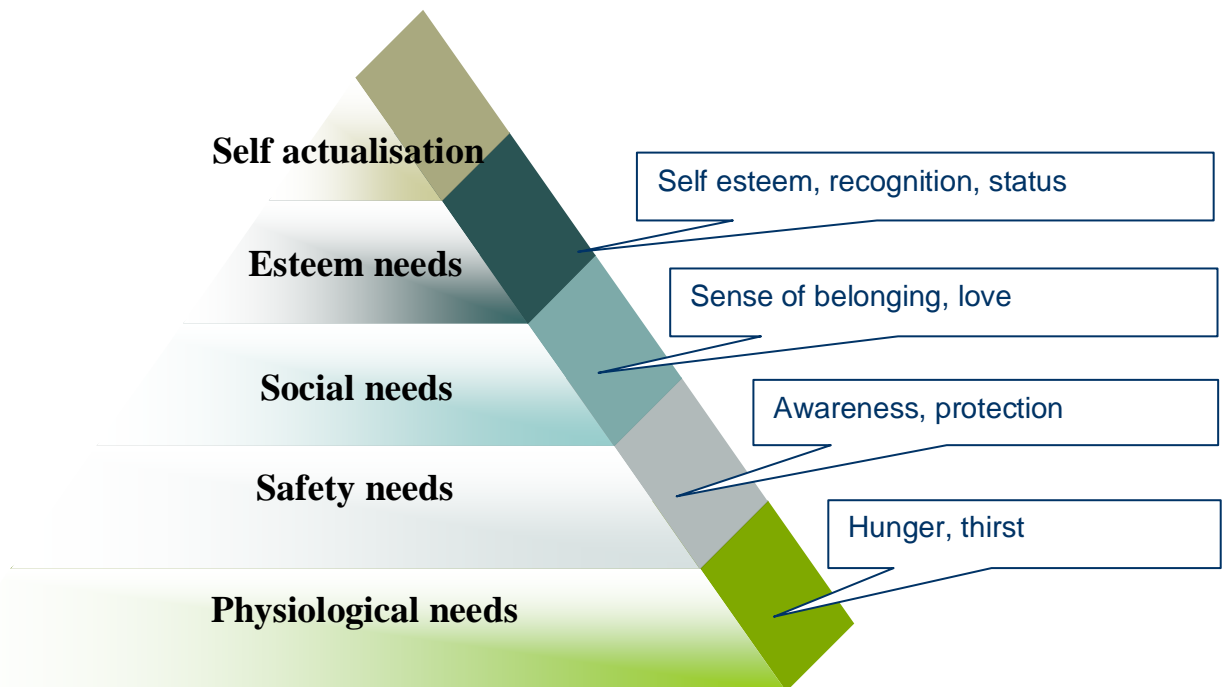
- **Origins and history of coaching**
- **Types of practitioners**
- **Definitions**
- **Comparisons**

## ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF COACHING

Coaching has its roots mainly in psychology and sports coaching. However, early psychology, up to and during the time of Freud and Jung, was largely remedial and remained so even when it later developed through behavioural and cognitive therapies. Therapy was about identifying what was wrong with the subject and attempting to fix it.

In the sixties, humanistic psychology was developed, the key figures being Abraham Maslow, renowned for his 'Hierarchy of Needs', and Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy. The breakthrough made by these psychologists was that they started to look at what was right with people rather than what was wrong – focussing on their best potential rather than their problems. The Hierarchy of Needs places 'self actualisation' at the top of the human evolutionary journey.

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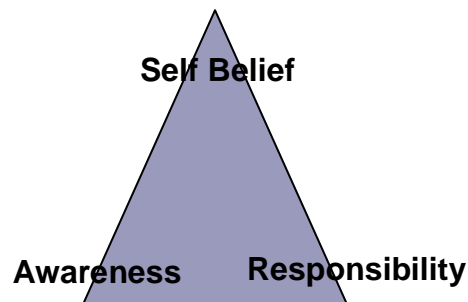
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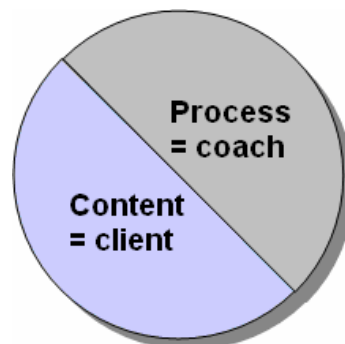
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