

Table 1
Therapy vs. Coaching

THERAPY	COACHING
Is a medical/clinical model, relies on diagnosis, pathology	Is a learning/developmental model, focusing on attainable goals and possibilities
Deals with identifiable dysfunctions in a person	Deals with a healthy client desiring a better situation
Therapy patient usually has difficulty functioning	Coaching client desires to move to a higher and better level of functioning
Is about fixing the past	Is about understanding the past as context and creating the future
Deals mostly with a person's past and trauma, and seeks healing	Deals mostly with a person's present and seeks to help them design and act on behalf of a more desirable future
Asks WHY?	Asks HOW? And WHAT? Asking WHY is avoided as it seeks to go for insight, not creation
Helps patients resolve old pain; focuses on relieving pain and symptoms	Helps clients learn new skills and tools to build a more satisfying successful future; focuses on goals
Doctor-patient relationship (The therapist has the answers)	Co-creative equal partnership (Coach offers perspectives and helps the client discover own answers)
Focuses on process and feelings	Focuses on action and outcomes
Assumes emotions are a symptom of something wrong	Assumes emotions are natural and normalizes them
The Therapist diagnoses, then provides professional expertise and guidelines to provide a path to healing	The Coach stands with the client and helps him or her identify the challenges, then partners to turn challenges into victories, holding client accountable to reach desired goals
Therapy style is one of patient nurturing, evocative, indirect, parenting, cathartic	Coaching style acts as a catalyst to challenge, is direct, uses straight talk, accountability
Progress is often slow and painful.	Growth and progress are rapid and usually enjoyable
Limited, if any, personal disclosure by the therapist	Personal, relevant disclosure by the coach used as an aid to learning
Therapist is responsible for both process and outcomes	Coach is responsible for process; Client is responsible for results

Williams, P. (2003). The potential perils of personal issues in coaching. The continual debate: Therapy or Coaching? What every coach MUST know! *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, 2(2), 21-30.