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How is Coaching Different from Therapy?

By Susan Dunn

How is Coaching Different from Therapy? by Susan Dunn, MA Clinical Psychology, The EQ

Coach

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"The Difference Between Therapy and Coaching,"

by Susan Dunn, MA, Clinical Psychology

"Oh," said Bob, after listening to me explain what I do, "So coaching's like therapy for healthy people?"

No, because for one thing there are healthy people in therapy, and for another, coaches aren't doing therapy. In fact this strikes many of us coaches as funny, because we intentionally chose not to be therapists, and so are many therapists. Over 1/3rd of the members of the International Coaching Federation are therapists! In fact, I fit the hybrid of many coaches—I have a master's degree in clinical psychology, but had a career in marketing and PR. Why didn't I make therapy my profession? I was waiting for coaching to come along.

GRASS ROOTS

The field of psychology is at least 100 years old—Freud opened up his consulting room in 1886, and the American Psychological Association (APA) was founded in 1892. It is by all accounts experiencing

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major growing pains right now, and whether it's labor pains, or death throes remains to be seen. Therapy was originally based on the medical model of disease—there was something wrong with the patient that the expert must find and then fix. As in "cure."

Over the years, there have been many changes in the field of psychology, with new names (Winnicott, Jung, Adler) and new theories (Rational Emotive, Cognitive, Behavioral), but all assuming pathology.

Martin Seligman's Positive Psychology is a force in a new direction we're watching carefully, and the fact that he's started a Coaching School shows at least some affinity to the coaching philosophy.

FILLING A NEED

Coaching evolved to fill a need that wasn't being met. Haven't you looked at least once at a

professional athlete and said, "If only..." or "Well, sure, when you have that kind of help." We may not all be 6'5" with superb reflexes, but each of us has a unique set of strengths and just as much raw potential to develop if placed in the right hands.

We all know what a professional coach does for an athlete. It's a combination of teaching specific techniques and skills and a lot of work on "mental attitude," or whatever it's being called these days. (I think of it as Emotional Intelligence.) Sports coaches have long been into the mind–body connection.

But 10 years ago, who was around to do this for you when you wanted to build a business, or find a new career, or get unstuck, or create a retirement worth living for, or be a more effective father?

Not that you couldn't do it alone, but it would probably go quicker and better with fresh insight, perspective, and perhaps some specific expertise. Coaches are "change agents," but also are specialized. You may want someone who can help you with life balance, who understands your field (engineering), who has actually been a single Mother, who has served on a Board, who has built a successful business, who has been a manager or a professor, who has lost 50 pounds, who has helped someone else lose 50 lbs., or who is himself multicultural.

SO IT'S LIKE FRIENDSHIP?

No. Friends and loved ones have their own issues, agendas, perspectives, and points of view. They also "project"—that is, if they are timid, and you want to do something they consider daring, they" try and discourage you, and tell you it's "for your own good." I'm not talking about bungee jumping; I'm talking about starting your own business at age 50, or moving halfway around the world, or walking away from a 6–figure job because it's making you sick.

Friends are not trained to be objective, and the closer they are to you, the less likely they'll be objective. Everyone involved with you emotionally has a vested interest in what you do. They also, I'm sure you've found, do not have the time.

So for those of us who wanted more out of our lives or particularly out of ourselves, who wanted

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personal and professional development not in the pop-psych short-term-goal way, but as a lifelong proposition, where was there to go?

Reading self-help books gives theory for a mass market, but where could you get a personal and individualized program? It was time for something new for the millennium - coaching!

About 8 years ago, I was burning out of my then career field, and looking for something I didn't even know the name for. I went to a therapist who said I was depressed. Damn right I was. I said I needed to find a new career that was meaningful, and she said she "didn't do that," and didn't know anyone who did, but we could talk. She asked me about my father, a lawyer, and if I was 'supposed to have been the lawyer.' There were no female lawyers in 1966 when I graduated from college, my father is long dead, and I was beginning to feel I was and nobody had told me. What I was looking for was what coaching is all about--finding your passion (or reclaiming it) and going forward.

USER-FRIENDLY: CONVENIENT, EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE & AFFORDABLE

Not surprisingly, since it evolved to fill a need, coaching is very user-friendly, mostly done by telephone, from wherever you and/or your coach happen to be. It uses your time efficiently. No wait, no

drive time, no dress code, no need to cancel because you're on vacation. It's stream-lined, cyber, results-oriented, and becoming more affordable all the time as it becomes more competitive.

AND WHO ARE THE COACHES?

Well, some are therapists, but they come from all walks of life. There are credentialing schools (I direct one, EQ Alive!), but the "requirements" for the field are established by the individual consumer. As Thomas Leonard, the founder of Coaching said, "Check your credentials at the door and leave your Boy Scout badges at home." He himself was an accountant who had a knack for helping people with the more important things in their lives.

WHAT KIND OF COACH FOR YOU?

Coaches help people, and in the most amazing ways. Soon I think there will be a coach for everything, and I think that's wonderful. Now there's a Potty Training Coach. If you're laughing, you haven't been there, as I was - thousands of miles from any family member stumbling around with my friends, the blind leading the blind, and confused by the conflicting advice I was hearing and reading, and a pediatrician who said, "You'll know when he's ready." Not this first-time mother!

There are coaches for ADHD (the Canadian Medical Association has recommended coaching as part of their multi-modality treatment plan), Depression, Divorce, Elder Care, Communication, Leadership, Conflict Resolution, Relationships, Intuition, Introverts, eZines, Marketing, Real Estate, Retirement, Breast Cancer Survival, Emotional Intelligence, Fathering, Public Speaking, Career, and Writing. If you can't find one for what you want, visit Premier Coach Referral™—
<http://www.webstrategies.cc/coachreferralservice.htm> . We'll find one for you.

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For those who have the income to invest in personal and professional growth and are used to paying for professional services, coaching makes sense. It's definitely an idea whose time has come.

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I'm Not Looking for a Friend, I'm Looking for a Jedi Master

By Susan Dunn

Coaching's been around for about 10 years but there are still lots of people who haven't tried it yet, and don't know what it's about.

Two major confusions in people's minds are:

- What's the difference between coaching and therapy, and;
- What's the difference between coaching and a good friend

Coaching's similar to therapy, except that therapy focuses on your emotions, particularly unresolved ones from the past and defective patterns of thinking and reacting that have developed.

In coaching, we're concerned about feelings – my specialty is emotional intelligence after all – but the focus is on managing them and moving forward. Taking action is what coaching's all about.

Now what's the difference between a coach and a good friend? A lot!

I have friends and I'm also coach, and I help friends, but not at all in the way I work with clients. With friends, it's give and take. There are also set patterns to most relationships. If you go to a friend for advice, first, they aren't trained, so they're likely to tell you what they would do, not explore with you your options and best solutions. Secondly, friends have their own issues and agendas which cloud things.

Coaches are trained to be 100% on your side, and to remain involved but subjective.

You're not looking for a friend, you already have friends. You're looking for a Jedi master – someone with wisdom and experience who can point the way. In fact, someone who will say "Try? There is no try. Do or not do." Coaches motivate!

The best way to find out how coaching is different from either therapy or friendship is to try it! All coaches offer a FREE complimentary sample session. Look up some on the Internet and give it a try.

Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach, offers coaching and Internet courses for your personal and professional

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development. Visit her on the web at www.susandunn.cc and <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> for FREE ezine.

I'm Not Looking for a Friend, I'm Looking for a Jedi Master
You May Need A Coach To Get You Where You Want To Be
What is Coaching?

Before You Make Your New Year's Resolutions, Make the One Decision That Will Make Them Work!
MY CAREER IS IN THE DOLDRUMS...Do I need a Coach or a Therapist?

Natural Pain Management
Expand Your Professional Coaching and Consulting Business
Brian Garvin's MLM Secrets
How To Overcome Dandruff
30 Minute Marketing Miracle



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