

Achieving Change by Helping Relationships

Coaching, Counselling and Therapy
in Comparison

30 NOVEMBER 2017

HELPING RELATIONSHIPS

COACHING

COUNSELLING

THERAPY

Helping Relationships

by Bali Polyanki

By training I am a counselling psychologist, and I help people to achieve change in their everyday life. In my work I use the approach and tools of Transactional Analysis (TA). Briefly, TA is based on the theory that every person is an amalgam of three personality states (Ego states): „Parent”, „Adult, and „Child”. TA stems from the field of Psychotherapy, but it soon turned out that it has practical applicability to environments like Organizations (e.g. Coaching), Education (e.g. Group Discussion), and Counselling* (e.g. Marriage Counselling). Why? Because it helps you improve your relationships and communication ability with other individuals or groups.

The goal of this article is twofold. On the one hand, I would like to define the differences and similarities of **Coaching**, **Counselling** and **Therapy** for myself. On the other hand, I wish to share it with you and invite you to think about your view of these areas. To accomplish this, I will build on my own professional experience, studies and some publications, listed at the end of this article. Let me start with three preliminary thoughts.

**When I use the word counselling, I refer to psychological counselling.*



Helping Relationships

CONTRACT and OPEN COMMUNICATION



How I See Helping Relationships

First of all, I call these three areas, or interventions, as helping relationships in which at least two persons are needed. The professionally trained person (Coach, Counsellor or Therapist) has a **contract** with the other person (Coachee, Client or Patient) who wants to achieve some change. They work together as defined in the contract, at a designated place, time, frequency, for a previously agreed compensation to achieve a set goal (change). If TA, as an approach, is used, they will maintain „**open communication**” while working together. This means that they openly make their thoughts and feelings, wishes and concerns transparent in a constructive way towards each other during their journey to achieve the goal.



Secondly, I think that people choose these three helping relationships for their different problems. They go to the therapist if they have serious troubles with alcohol consumption. They find a counsellor if they wish to improve their marital life. They contract with a coach if they want to become better leaders at their workplace. These are just some examples. Later I will dig deeper.

Thirdly, I believe the professional helpers need to be equipped with different competencies and orientations towards (1) their own role in the helping relationship; (2) their clients and their problems to be solved; (3) and the tools they use during the intervention to achieve change. Let us see these interventions now one by one.

COACHING



How I See Coaching

In Coaching, the goal is the development, growth and increased effectiveness of the person. It usually happens within the organisation where the client works. The focus is on how things are done. We mainly look into the future when working together. The coach helps the person to decrease as much interference and utilize as much of their potential and resources as possible to increase performance. The coachee acquires facts and develops new skills and behaviours stimulated by coaching. The question is how these can be best achieved and sustained. The coach uses tools to help the person reduce their internal obstacles by generating awareness and reinforcing responsibility.



The coach helps the client to connect their professional life with their personal aspects. Due to this, the client will be able to better see their professional roles, function better in these roles within the organization, and integrate these roles with their private life. The products of coaching usually are self-belief, self-motivation, choice, clarity, commitment, awareness, responsibility and action. Because of all of these, I believe Coaching is about applying emotional intelligence in practice in various work environments.

COUNSELLING



How I See Counselling

In Counselling, the goal is to help the client to focus on the resources they already have. By using these resources they can achieve a more creative and fulfilling life. It develops awareness, options and skills for problem management and personal development. I see its aim in increasing autonomy in relation to the person's social, professional and cultural environment. It enables people to overcome difficulties of their daily life like in partnership, losses or career related challenges. The counsellor helps the client to be and stay at ease in daily life. During counselling we can get to know the resources of the personality in a more realistic way. After mapping them, they can be re-structured in a more constructive manner.



Problems that are accepted by most people belong to the territory of counselling. They are problems that are not pathological but part of our lives. Time after time we suffer from them. That is why I don't think counselling is healing (I will leave it for therapy). I believe that healthy people come to counselling wanting more autonomy being able to make more decisions and choices in their daily life.

THERAPY



How I See Therapy

The goal of Therapy is healing. The patient seeing a therapist usually suffers from a trauma or a significant life event experienced earlier in life and due to this, they cannot (or just to some extent) regulate their own life. This is why, to some extent, it needs to focus on past. Therapy aims to facilitate the client's capacity for self-actualisation, healing and change. The psychotherapeutic process enables the client to recognise and change archaic, self-limiting patterns. It basically deals with the pain of the past in the present so that the patient can be free to live their lives in the future. The aim is for clients to understand themselves and their relationships and create options to live their lives in an aware, creative, spontaneous way and be open to intimacy.



I see it the most intensive intervention of the three as re-structuring of the personality may happen in it. In order to this happen, the therapist needs to provide Protection against the client's fantasized disaster. The therapist also needs to have enough Potency (power) to provide the needed support and Protection. The therapist must be confident that they do possess more power than the patient's fantasized parent. When these conditions can meet, the therapist can give Permission to the client for a more constructive and effective change. I see it an intense intervention experience for both parties.