

Coaching and Psychotherapy: Some Distinctions

How is coaching different from psychotherapy?

Though coaching and psychotherapy share a lot of common ground, each uses distinct objectives and methods. The following sections compare and contrast these disciplines.

COACHING

A coach helps individuals and couples identify, clarify, and achieve personal and/or couple goals and aspirations. Coaching provides the client(s) with necessary support, challenge, and guidance.

Coaches help their clients learn through action. Coaches collaborate with their clients in the service of the client's self-discovery and achieving the client's personally chosen goals. Emphasis may be placed on navigating a religious faith crisis, achieving professional goals, adjusting to a life transition, reversing procrastination, sticking to a diet, or improving a personal relationship.

A coach asks questions that lead the client(s) to their own workable solutions. The coach helps the client(s) tap into their own biggest dreams and deepest desires. Any goal is balanced with the clients' other values. Coaches help clients turn their dreams into action. Because the spirit of coaching is experimental, it uses failures as opportunities to learn. Coaching employs a playful, creative approach to discovery even when it's tackling tough issues.

If a coaching client demonstrates signs of significant psychological distress, psychotherapy will be recommended, and appropriate referrals will be made.

Because coaching is not covered by health

insurance policies, coaching is paid for on a cash basis. Payments are made in advance of each session.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy aims to treat clinical problems such as depression, phobias, emotional trauma, eating disorders, obsessions, addictions, etc. Psychotherapy patients are often experiencing serious emotional distress. Psychotherapy often begins with an evaluation and diagnosis. This may include diagnostic interviewing, testing, and a review of contributing historical factors. Treatment provides structured experiences or homework assignments designed to relieve specific symptoms. Therapy is usually considered complete when initial symptoms are mostly resolved or eliminated.

Most psychotherapy clients use insurance to pay for services. This usually requires that the insurance company pre-authorize service. The company then pays its portion and the client pays a co-pay and/or deductible.