



# Therapy, Depth Psychology and Executive Coaching: *where and how do they meet?*

by John Schuster

*The fields of coaching and therapy/counseling are distinct, have different histories and origins, and yet share similarities as psychological endeavors. This study condenses the many differences and similarities between coaching and counseling and the roles of those pursuing them. It concludes with two illustrations: (1) some types of coaching are closer to therapy than other types of therapy are, and (2) the wisdom traditions add a needed dimension of human experience to both fields as they pursue human wholeness.*

## Introduction

Discussions with licensed psychologists who seek coaching certification often leads to the question: what is the blend and overlap of coaching with psychology, therapy and counseling? The same question arises in discussions with coaches who are aware of the similarities and differences. The question has not been an easy one to address. This paper provides an overview of responses to that question as presented in the literature along with some original research through surveys and interviews. It explores how that question has been addressed by those in the profession of executive coaching so far. The reality is that the two fields blend and mix with varying degrees of self-awareness by the practitioners. The construct for presenting the ideas will be two-part. One, what are the issues that are addressed in coaching, and how do they differ from counseling or therapy (counseling and therapy will act as interchangeable umbrella terms for non-coaching, psychological work). And secondly, how do the two fields differ in their approaches, if any, on the issues that they share. These two parts are the what and the how questions.

Two notes: I will use a broad-based language, influenced by coaching, leadership development, depth or psycho-dynamic psychology, the neurosciences and CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy). Metaphor and imagery carry a type of thinking that complements science, and vice versa. Additionally, I will not fully define all terminology, like transference, and will assume readers have a working knowledge of the terms. Secondly, coaching and therapy are too varied country to country to pretend that this paper, or certain sections of it in particular, are true globally. Since I began coaching in the 1980's and began intensively educating and training coaches at the Hudson Institute of Coaching and Columbia University starting in 2001 and 2007 respectively, I have had the privilege to train coaches from over forty countries. Countries and cultures have different stories to tell about their approaches to the issues and opportunities raised in this paper. I approach this paper with my own North American point of view, hopefully informed by the many other cultures with whom I have worked.

## The What of Coaching and Therapy: same energy, different emphases

One of the practicing therapists who was interviewed was matter of fact: “the two fields are very similar in many ways,” is how Dr. Pat Raskin put it. (Talking with P. Raskin, Feb. 8, 2013). Her years of having a therapy practice and teaching at Columbia University, including her 10 years of teaching coaching, gave her a base from which to form an opinion. In extended conversations on the topic Raskin held that some of the issues that were brought to her as a therapist were also ideal for coaches.

What does therapy address? It depends on the therapist. When psychology was born with Freud (some would say it started with the experimental psychologists like Wundt with his lab) it created a language to deal with the concepts of those parts of our emotional-cognition systems that operate out of our awareness, starting with the unconscious. Today, neurobiologists might call these systems the low road (Goldman, 2007), as opposed to the high road of our conscious thoughts, the ones that are directable, at least to a point.

In large measure, early psychology, the clinical beginning, was aimed at how to help patients cope with and read the signs of this unconscious part of the mind. To get more “adjusted” or adapted to reality, the psychologist would support the client in pursuing the feelings and images of the unconscious as a starting point for decisions to make life happen more productively and effectively, with less internal conflict. Later-twentieth century psychology abandoned much of this early construct, instead opting for a more rational, more direct, solutions-to-problems approach, or an indirect evocative, client-can-find-her-own answers humanistic approach.

Now, 100 years plus since those early years, a similar goal is being pursued by coaches on behalf of their clients, but with somewhat different language and somewhat different assumptions. The goal may be to become a more effective emotionally intelligent leader, or to handle the stress of change. But human effectiveness, happiness and productivity, broadly understood, have been the goals over time and are now shared by counseling and coaching. And both are inherently involved in the inner space of the human psyche: “I need to make the explicit assumption that *all coaching is primarily a psychological endeavor*” (Bunning, 2006, p. 22), says one author who has addressed the connections between these two fields.

The following chart by Williams and Davis, two therapists who train therapists to incorporate coaching, gets at this drift over the decades. It also adds how this drift started within psychology itself—follow the chart left to center—a step into what they refer to as transitional models. A further shift then, from center to right, leads to the evolution into coaching:

The continuum is relatively self-explanatory. Although it could be expanded greatly on any of the dimensions/elements it includes, it is meant to capture a breadth of ideas and condense, something I will do quite often with tables as well.

More can be said about the differences between coaching and the traditional styles of therapy. Classic therapy was based upon a doctor and patient, an expert and a client, with the

| <b>Traditional Therapy</b><br>(old style) | <b>Transitional Models</b><br>(gray areas) | <b>Coaching</b><br>(a new option) |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Psychoanalytic                            | Solution-focused brief                     | Whole life coaching               |
| Paradigm of pathology                     | Paradigm of solutions                      | Paradigm of possibility           |
| Orientation                               |  | Orientation                       |
| Process                                   |  | Outcome                           |
| Feelings                                  |  | Action                            |
| Inner world                               |  | Inner to outer worlds             |

*Williams & Davis, p. 40, 2001*

client somewhat neurotic (anxious) or extremely sick (if hospitalized and delusional). The wounds of childhood were carried into adolescence or adulthood for these clients: they had come home to roost in some set of behaviors, sensations, thoughts or dysfunctions, and a doctor of

psychology was needed to help address them. The early psychologists worked hard to be seen as scientists, not philosophers, and these early doctors addressed the issues of brain dysfunction and other types of schizophrenia that lead to mental hospitals along with the issues of anxiety and neurosis that higher-functioning persons experienced on a more daily, less intense basis. All of this is true today, but now psychiatrists are the medical doctors, mainly providers of pharmaceutical solutions, and the therapy that the early psychologists also provided is left to the therapists and psychologists and counselors for the talk-it-through process of increasing the client’s awareness (Harris, 2011).

Coaches avoid working with psychosis of course, and very rarely think of themselves as working with the wounds of childhood. Instead they want to be thought partners for the clients as they address the challenges of leadership, or change, or a life or work transition they face. As one the psych-therapist who also coaches put it: “In psychoanalysis, the client or patient is, in principle, saying “Life hurts...analyse all of me so I can get well, or, so I can handle my life that has become so difficult, or, so I can get to know myself better” (Beck, p. 21). The patient or the client will, of course, present a more specific formulation. What Beck is driving at is the big picture of therapy.

| Content of the Issue  | Therapy  | Coaching  | Notes   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Anxiety</b>  | Yes, even extreme, and with medication           | Yes, to a degree  | For coaches, will be seen as performance  |
| <b>Long term damage, even from childhood, as identified by client</b> | Yes, common                                      | Rarely so identified, perhaps as applied to relationships at work | Coach & Therapist work together with same client at times                         |
| <b>Delusions and mania</b>  | Yes  | No  | Maybe the easiest to delineate  |
| <b>Meaning of life</b>  | Yes, Jungian trained therapists specialize here  | Yes, there is a market for purpose-based coaches                  | Many therapists are not trained for these spiritual questions. Coaches often are. |
| <b>Career, meaning of career, find better work fit</b>                | Yes  | Yes, very often   | Coaches can do this within the organization                                       |
| <b>Emotional intelligence issues. intimacy</b>                        | Yes, but often different language.               | Yes, but again work emphasis most often.                          | Very common for both fields   |
| <b>Leadership challenges, team challenges</b>                         | No, not usually in that market, but moving there | Yes   | Kets de Vries at INSEAD, psychology therapy exception                             |
| <b>Confidence, self-esteem, shyness</b>                               | Yes  | Yes, as it affects performance                                    | Coaches use language of introversion  |

The table on page 3 illustrates one way to look at the different subject matter, the content, the “what” of coaching versus counseling.

In coaching, going back to Beck, the client is saying, “Coach me, so I can handle my relations with certain situations/feelings/bosses/new sales targets/women/men/work/myself/employees, etc., in a better and more satisfactory way”. This difference is vital because it is this that sets the framework for the way in which the work will be done” (Ibid, p. 21).

What is clear from the interviews, reading and surveys completed for this paper is that there is little salient substantive theoretical confusion on this issue. Therapists do not seem to be arguing that coaches are inappropriately doing amateur therapy, nor do coaches argue against therapy, in spite of an occasional article that may take that angle. In particular cases for coaches and therapists, however, there are definite times of questioning, and what may be worse, lack of awareness—“am I prepared to coach on this issue?” is how it might be phrased by a coach. Wandering into deeper issues than a coach could handle, or on the flip side, using therapeutic methods when a lighter coaching touch might do, are two ways the confusion or gaps between the fields may happen.

## An illustrative case

As is apparent, therapy and coaching approach the work of human growth differently, but they also share commonalities. To make it easier to compare, let us take a case of leadership. This example is perhaps more in the coaching than the therapy domain. But therapists have indeed found a place in the leadership development field, much more so, and rightfully, than coaches finding a place in the domains of therapy. Here is the case.

A psychologist may say: “Leaders are like everybody. None of us escape childhood unscathed. We are all damaged and have programs lodged in our unconscious that do not serve us. A coach may say: “I know no perfect leaders—they all have blind spots and can improve lots of things including their emotional intelligence.” A psychologist and coach can look at the same issues and use their language and concepts, and both can be correct and useful. Since they have their version of a hammer they will treat what they see as their version of a nail. The therapist will ask—how are not we all damaged by growing up in ways that need work? The coach—how can any of us not have important skill deficiencies to work on?

Let’s illustrate this difference with a case of an executive who is known to get angry often at work. Some employees can

handle it, but many avoid him. He gets less current and more filtered information as an executive because of this, and his temper contributes to high turnover. Good talent leaves when it is treated poorly. The following table is offered as an illustration, not a definition, and offers a matter of emphasis and range, not exclusive domains. There is overlap between the columns, but the purpose of the chart is to illustrate differences more than similarities and can be read accordingly. (Not every type of therapy is represented below, only the more psychodynamically classical one. This is for the point of illustration.)

The too-easily angered executive table is shown below.

Therapists address past damage showing itself in the present as limited thinking and less than optimal behavior for a leader. The above chart attempts to show some of that approach. Coaches do some of the same work, but are not equipped to go

after the past psychic damage directly. They are trained to make referrals to therapists for such work when they see it for what it is. Coaches do address worn out mental models, tied to emotional systems, that are in the way of high-functioning states of being and acting in the world by the client. They choose to work, in general, with a higher-functioning population not thinking they need therapy, which is problematic, since many who think they do not need therapy are probably in need of it. The chart is also an attempt to capture this coaching emphasis on skills and learning.

## The Middle Ground of Therapeutically Informed Coaching

If there appears to be a gray area between coaching and therapy, that is because there is. The fact that many therapists, and more

| Activity/Process                | Therapy Emphasis  | Coaching Emphasis  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Diagnosis</b>                | Root of the problem: Father Wound   | Impact of the problem: subordinates demotivation is severe                                       |
| <b>Description</b>              | Neurosis: Big compensation, loudness is compensation for insecurity. Anger is an old complex.               | Blind spot and lack of emotional intelligence. Long habit of yelling when under pressure         |
| <b>Emotional Intensity</b>      | Leader needs emotional release for healing  | Leader needs deep transformational understanding. May tear up as part of learning.               |
| <b>Awareness of Cause</b>       | Damage done as child carried over to adulthood. May look for dreams and other signals from the unconscious. | Client may or may not be aware of the roots.   |
| <b>Number of sessions</b>       | Multiple sessions   | Multiple sessions  |
| <b>Future orientation</b>       | Envision new way of being and interacting angrily less often from a wound that is healing                   | Envision new way of being competent in interactions.   |
| <b>Homework: self-awareness</b> | With cognitive-behavioral approaches, planning emphasized. Other approaches trust insight more exclusively. | Practice new ways of handling stress. Start small. Strong emphasis on concrete planning          |
| <b>Social Support</b>           | Attempt to anchor new awareness permanently with counselor  | Enlist his team for help, feedback on mistakes, ideas to use opportunities to improve            |
| <b>Awareness exercises</b>      | May need to journal. Learn to meditate. Watch life style.   | May need to journal. Use yoga or spiritual practices. Find supportive practices outside of work. |
| <b>Elapsed Time</b>             | 6 months of work to recalibrate and restructure the brain   | 6 months. May include executive decisions and other work-related issues.                         |



all the time, can and are doing coaching is one indicator of the continuum. As one high-performance coach who had a therapy practice for many years said: "I like coaching, and am freed up by it, but it still all about mother." She was alluding to the central fact that early relational patterns in childhood, the ones Freud explored, the ones still being looked at by the very popular attachment theorists today (McLeod, 2007), form an important undercurrent within coaching. Most psychologists would know this. Many coaches would not. And coaches would not know a number of other primarily psychological terms, but are still be able to navigate the territories of coaching successfully, because, to mention two reasons, the issues of coaching don't command them and because of which clients self-select for coaching. For this study, four books were explored for what the therapists' and psychologists' approaches are to coaching, and how they incorporate aspects of coaching into their work. Three were decidedly psycho-analytic and European (Beck, 2012, Brunning, 2006, Kets de Vries, 2009) and one was American, (Williams and Davis, 2002) more eclectic in approach than psycho-analytic, and already cited in the above chart.

Beck asserts the concept of the unconscious is the water-shed concept that separates what she calls therapeutically informed coaching approaches to others that are not so informed: "What separates psychodynamic theory from other theories, and is unique and exclusive, is the concept of the unconscious. Psycho-dynamic theories emphasize the importance of our unconscious mental life" (Ibid, p.11). ...psychodynamic theories... operate with "non-intended motive transformations (changes, distortions, redirections of instinctual impulses, desire or intentions) which can be analyzed psychologically" (Ibid, p.5.). Finally, Beck goes on: "It is the original motives that are repressed, which means they make their appearance in a distorted manifestation, which can be interpreted. It is the original motives that are relegated" (Ibid, p. 12).

There are a few points to make about Beck's distinction. First, if a coach or a therapist conceptually, and through practice, works with the unconscious elements of the client's energy and issues, it is therapeutically informed work. Secondly, while modern neurobiological work describes the human brain as largely operating out of our awareness, this idea of the unconscious can lead to a more passive view of how the out-of-awareness realms work than Beck's psychodynamic version of an active, energy-laden unconscious. The idea of mental/emotional

factors being out of awareness can be far different, in other words, than the idea that these factors are out of awareness *and*, from this hidden source, are actively seeking expression and creating distortions in thinking and behavior. The psychodynamic school sees the unconscious as an actor that

needs to be dealt with more than a silent, under-awareness set of largely neutral operations.

Kets de Vries, decidedly steeped in psychodynamic models and in the leadership development world at INSEAD, says

"unconscious forces affect... patterns of relationships with bosses, colleagues, and subordinates and many other aspects of the work-related parts of life. Every executive and every employee brings the inner theatre, with all its dramas and comedies, to the workplace" (Kets de Vries, 2009, p. 5). The energy and dynamism of his view, like Beck's, lie in the terms he uses; ones like comedy and dramas of the inner theatre. While many coaches would not use the term unconscious to name the inner energies of the client with which they work, they often work with the unconscious side of the client in ways often quite similar to how psychologists would. A closer description of how this happens will follow when the highlights of a survey are covered.

## The implications of the unconscious

A further observation by Beck describes why it may be difficult to make comparisons of therapy with coaching: "In most cases coaching is presented as the *theoryless*, meaning without being associated with any theory whatsoever" (Beck, p. 14)....Unlike psychodynamic theory, coaching is difficult to define as a category, and constitutes a very imprecise name for a lot of different work aimed at personal development and performance" (Ibid). Beck and her colleagues proceed and categorize coaching anyway, and the term by Beck, "therapeutically informed coaching," may be the most important construct concerning the gray area that this paper explores.

The coaching field is largely influenced, without knowing it (that "theoryless" tendency that Beck mentions, which is not as true as it once was, as there are now some highly sophisticated coaching schools, and it will be less so in the future of this still young profession-being-born) for the most part, by the Jungian versus the Freudian view of the unconscious. Freud saw the unconscious as a cauldron for the personal, the negative and repressed sex and aggression, and Jung as a cauldron for those things, plus the universal, the positive and the drive for wholeness and balance. To the degree that coaching sprung up mostly

*...the unconscious is the water-shed concept that separates what (is called) therapeutically-informed coaching approaches (versus) others that are not so informed*

on American shores and is about possibility and wholeness while seeing the client as capable of his own best solutions (and also getting in his own way) it harkens back to the negatives of Freud's unconscious but even more so to the positives of Jung's. (The sometimes large professional gulf between Freudian theory and its later derivatives and Jungian and its derivatives, starting a century plus ago after their initial close collaboration, is another reason therapy and coaching are often confused about each other—their roots are not known or studied.)

Much coaching is influenced by what is generally considered the mindfulness movement, which is a kind of somatically rooted, presence-based coaching that is friendly to Buddhist practices of self-awareness (Silsbee, 2008). This segment of the coaching field, with an Eastern consciousness tilt, sees the out of awareness mental functions more as the neurological low road and a passive force for the negatives of habituation, not an energetic psychodynamic cauldron of both the good and bad instincts of human growth and our animal behavior. Meditation is often the practice of choice for the self-awareness work of the coach in the mindfulness subset of coaching.

In working with and educating many (over 1000 certified coaches in 14-plus years of work) who have become coaches in practice, I have found most have no real exposure to “the psychological sciences,” as Raskin described them. But some coaches, a minority but not an insignificant one, are trained to take into account the original more distorted motives of the client as

Beck described them. These motives and dynamics are often not taken into account in the shallower forms of problem-solving work to which coaching can be limited by many practitioners, and which on the positive side, is all that is needed by the client. When issues of transference come up, for instance, accomplished coaches, without formal use of the language from therapy, would deal with the issues of boundaries and projection professionally with their own language and concepts. Less accomplished coaches, and those not well trained in boundaries with clients, could give advice and project upon the clients and be projected upon, without very much awareness of what was happening.

Psychologist/coach Pat Adson, was the most emphatic of those psychologist/coaches interviewed on this point of transference. She asserted that there are very few times “when I need to allow formal transference to take over and spend many months re-parenting the client so he can go out into the world more secure” (Talking with P. Adson, Jan. 25, 2013). As a coach Adson uses the power of metaphor and has written a book (Adson, 2004) on how to use archetypes, universal symbols, as a way to coach with clients for a host of challenges. She and other coaches, the well-trained ones and those therapeutically informed and who have done their own inner work to attain psychological insight, are inclined to move into this unconscious arena as a part of their practice. They have found ways to combine coaching and therapy within engagements for leaders, the primary consumers

| Therapy and Coaching with the Unconscious Foremost in Mind                   |  |  | Non-psycho-dynamic therapy and coaching  |   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Depth Psychology   | Shared psycho-dynamic view   | Depth Coaching   | More rationally based therapy  | Shared non-psycho-dynamic view  | More rationally based coaching   |
| Content: therapeutic issues for clients. Life issues equal work.             | Both work on the “thoughts behind the thoughts”, or the original motives and impulses  | Content: Leadership and performance challenges for clients   | CBT: cognitive behavioral therapy in many forms. Clearly define goals and outcomes.                      | Both work to get thoughts, motives and actions aligned. Shift the context of the issues. Assess current actions given goals | Solution-based coaching akin to CBT. SMART goals and strategies and actions.         |
| Attempts to understand the earlier dynamics that need correcting and healing | Original or early motives, dynamics plumbed for current application. Leadership style as an expression of the “inner theatre”. | Approaches therapeutically and neuro-science informed. Attempts to anchor new mental/emotional neural networks and habits. | Life issues for clients: career, relationships, relating to self   | Question assumptions and check behavior toward the meeting of positive goals  | Leadership issues for clients: getting work done by self and as managers/leaders     |
| Individual Outcomes  | Shift the ground of thinking   | Individual and company outcomes  | Identify issues and the subtle and blatant ways clients block their stated goals. Cost/benefit thinking. | Coaching and Therapy through better thinking and new disciplines and practices.   | Increased ideation for new ideas. Use of metaphor and non-linear thinking is common. |

of coaching, in ways that work for the client and the businesses and organizations that hire them. More on how coaches do that will come in the section on how the language of coaching and therapy differ.

Coach and therapist Mark Horney from Columbia University agrees with Adson. Originally concerned about the boundaries between the two fields, after several years of coaching, this trained therapist is much less concerned now—"I can see how it works now—coaching in executive settings—and the lack of psychological training is not a problem for the clients I observe coming to coaching" (Talking with M. Horney, Jan. 25, 2013).

### Some coaching can be closer to therapy than other types of therapy are

The two tables on the previous page may help illustrate the connections of coaching to therapy at different levels of "depth", the phrase often used for work with the unconscious, or at psycho-dynamic levels. I will also refer to this level as the thoughts behind the thoughts. Both coaching and therapy include approaches that expressly avoid or ignore, or expressly include and emphasize the depth, or psycho-dynamic level.

As can be seen by now, and as emphasized in the above tables, simple answers to the questions raised in this study do not exist. Consider the following three statements:

- In some ways all types of therapy are quite different than all types of coaching, like who wants the therapy, or what the presenting issues are.
- In some ways both coaching and therapy point the same direction and share similar goals, like supporting people through change, reducing anxiety while increasing effectiveness, and developing leaders.
- In yet another way, like the above chart portrays, *some types of coaching are closer to therapy than other types of therapy are, and vice versa.*

It is no wonder that the consuming public, and the practitioners of coaching and therapy, have differing opinions about the two fields.

### The How: Similar Differences in Coaching and Therapy

A review of the language and terminology of the two fields, both involving human change and effectiveness, points to another factor that supports the boundary between coaching and therapy, while acknowledging certain similarities. Over several decades of practices and study, the fields of leadership development, the human potential movement, and coaching coined their own amalgamated language and terminology for most internal phenomena of human motivation, of inner conflict and lack of alignment, and of self-reflection and awareness. These terms, often

less cumbersome and specialized than psycho-therapeutic language, nevertheless refer to many of the same inner energies and states of mind. One such term would be presence, a common term from the field of coaching and leadership. One accomplished coach, Dr. Pam McLean, a former therapist and now a leader of a coach training organization, writes about presence: "Good coaches know that what sounds simple takes a lot of attention to cultivate, and nowhere is that more true than in the development of presence. The impediments to a full presence are mighty forces: our habits, our ego, the Board of Directors in our head directing us, and more. Our presence is intimately linked to cultivating our inner landscape" (McLean, 2012, p. 36).

The conclusion can be drawn that similar psycho-dynamic and self-awareness work goes on under the two different guises, both linguistically revealed and concealed, of coaching and counseling. Here is a chart to illustrate the point of language and terminology differences, something that the earlier tables also capture to various degrees.

### Terminology and Language Comparison

Not all of the paired terms shown in the table on the next page are meant to indicate that the mental/emotional phenomena behind the language is identical in both coaching and therapy. To take one example, full repression is deeper and different than a blind spot that, with some feedback, can be overcome. But a crisis of meaning in therapy and a lack of passion for work in a coaching client may indeed be very close to each other. The reality is, as has been pointed out numerous times, a continuum is at work here, and in the hands of different coaches and therapists, with varying goals, and with clients themselves bringing their varied language to the sessions, the differences and similarities between coaching and therapy can be both magnified or lessened.

### The Coaches' Survey: How Do Coaches Tap The Unconscious?

Language is not the only, perhaps not even the major, force for determining sameness or distinctions in the methodologies of coaching and therapy. To get at this question further, I turned to the field of coaching. I chose to purposely employ a psychological term, upon which I asked numerous accomplished coaches to reflect, in order to gather data on how they perceived their relationship to depth psychology.

Seven advanced coaches, all in the United States, in their 50's and 60's and one in her very active 80's, responded to a single question on the unconscious in an email survey conducted in early 2013. As a group they attended a live two-hour presentation on Jungian psychology and another one on attachment theory. Two days later the survey question went out to them. The question concerned how they work with the unconscious of the

| Therapy Term                      | Related Coaching Term                         | Note   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Wound/Complex                     | Hang up/skill deficiency/uptight              | Therapy has healing built-in to its name. Coaching is about learning.  |
| Unconscious                       | Out of awareness, low road                    | The unconscious is not used for the more CBT types of therapy either   |
| Transference/projection           | Trigger/hook/mirror                           | Coaches know they have to work boundaries with clients and the clients, with those around them                                 |
| Over adapted                      | Compliant/no voice                            | Much leadership training teaches the overly compliant to voice their opinions and assert                                       |
| Under adapted                     | Mustang/not a team player                     | Entrepreneurs may be too independent to be in work systems not of their own making   |
| Block/ego defense                 | Blind spot                                    | Something to become aware of as they can stymie performance  |
| Psychosis                         | Break with reality                            | When reality gets distorted by internal fields of fantasy/projection   |
| Consciousness                     | Mindfulness                                   | The mindfulness movement, tied to Buddhist practices and research on meditators, has a large impact on some coaching segments. |
| Neurosis                          | Impacted by stress/lack of executive presence | Generally anxious and out of presence  |
| Suppression                       | Sacrifice                                     | Willingness not to act on impulses or even best interest for a time  |
| Crisis of meaning                 | Without passion                               | The wisdom traditions, including religions, if incorporated by the practitioner, adds to both fields                           |
| Wholeness, self-aware             | Self-aware, emotionally intelligent           | Both describe optimal states of human effectiveness.   |
| Repressed: client stuffs feelings | In denial, blind spot: client stays unaware   | In coaching, the client will likely be given feedback  |
| Depressed                         | in doldrums, low energy                       | Business/career performance pressures may not allow grieving and natural "low" periods   |

client. The coaches — one was a psychologist — were able to relate to the non-coaching, psycho-dynamic term “unconscious” with a limited explanation, knowing that their commonly shared coach training process at the developmentally sophisticated Hudson Institute of Coaching, was indeed built upon the foundational work of early psychologists.

The table on the next page describes the 21 responses consolidated in six general categories. They seven were asked to describe the three most common/useful processes they use when working with the unconscious of their clients.

## Coaches Work with the Unconscious

Much could be said, and indeed books have been written, on all of the process categories cited above. The clear point to keep in mind is that these accomplished coaches all had multiple ways of by-passing the surface thoughts of the client and to go to the

thoughts, mental models and energy behind the surface for the good of the client. Coaches not referring to the unconscious as such means little when it came to the client actually benefitting from incorporating what the therapists would say are out-of-awareness energies, blockages and patterns that are revealed and incorporated. The above table makes a point. While the psycho-dynamically inclined therapists may be the historical holders of the view of the unconscious as an active agent (and not only an out-of-awareness place) both coach and therapist can activate and channel the same inner and formerly inaccessible energy for the client.

## The Wisdom Traditions: an Added Element

In one of the interviews for this paper, and in one of the surveys with the coaches, the wisdom traditions were mentioned as a part of the coaching and therapy process. Chip Conley, executive



in residence at Saybrook University, shared his thoughts about coaching and therapy: “Both need the wisdom traditions. Psychology by itself can’t get you there” (Talking with C. Conley, private conversation, Mar 21, 13). Conley was pointing to the limits of psychology and what it can include as a science. Paradox and mystery, often part of the human experience, does not sit well with most of psychology—Jungian approaches again being the biggest exception perhaps (although the transpersonal psychologists, a field of psychology not covered for space considerations, may disagree)—and yet much of human existence may indeed rest on, or end, in mystery. Science can often tell us what and how, without approaching why.

Conley advocated for inclusion of the wisdom traditions, the great religions and philosophies and their approach to the ineffable and unknowable, in any growth process of lasting significance for a client, in both coaching and counseling. With the element of mystery not readily allowed in work performance settings or even in many life situations—like much community and non-profit work—Conley believes a big part of the human experience is left out. With these traditions introduced with care, however, many persons, certainly not all, but the large number \so inclined who experience the ambiguity and transcendent unanswerable questions, may be able to lean into the mysterious aspects of life more readily. Wisdom traditions draw upon the intellect to a point, and then, through symbol or metaphor or ritual, draw upon the poetic/mythic syntax not in the realm of rational thought. Jung agreed with what Conley advocates in this passage: “Everything I bring forth is not written out of my head,

but much in it comes from the heart also, a fact that would beg the gracious reader not to overlook” (Jung, 1953, p. 118).

This may bring us to the final similarity and difference between coaches and therapists. If either coach or therapist wants to work in the dimensions of spirituality and transcendence, the religious and philosophical material of the wisdom traditions, they can readily find means to do so within their field. The transpersonal or Jungian and mindfulness traditions within therapy, and those same traditions within coaching, plus the more popular authors and practitioners who have moved into coaching, can find the same permission by the field and encouragement among both their peers and their clients to work in the wisdom tradition space that Conley encourages. In this respect, perhaps because they draw upon deep wells of the wisdom traditions themselves, both therapists and coaches become spiritual directors. They work in the area Jung called the cure of souls. Most CBT practitioners would avoid such language, but Conley and many others would say that such language is a needed addition.

## Summary

No amount of surveys, interviews or analysis will eliminate the epistemological conundrum of head and heart, known and unknown, that Conley and Jung both mention. These incompatible yet complementary ways to know may be at the foundation of the questions of how coaching and therapy mix, blend, clash, and stay distinct, or need to.

| Process Category  | Process Specifics  | Notes: The coaches mention how unique and customized their work is with each client   |
|---|--|---|
| Narrative technique and story   | Recalling past times of effectiveness and agency, the back story, the future ideal chapter and story                                     | Get ready for the next chapter by knowing the full story being lived, as consciously as possible, now   |
| Somatic energy/feelings   | Creating a strong emotional connection. Non-judgment. Asking clients what they feel? Where in their bodies is a sensation registering?   | Feelings in psycho-therapy are the inner data trails of the unconscious. “What are your tears telling you?” is example of a question in the survey. |
| Questions to by-pass shallow thinking, evoke/provoke thoughts behind thoughts                         | Intervene with questions before the defenses are engaged. Deep questions taking real thought.  | Reflective, interpretive and decisional questions, not facts and problem definition only  |
| Reflective Practices  | Journaling, homework for pondering deep implications   | Multiple processes cited here   |
| Teaching at the right time, sparingly, from psychological or other fields like leadership development | Wisdom Traditions might show up: quotations, thoughts from Buddha and Christianity, great psychologists, even pop culture if appropriate | Models of life’s ups and downs introduced so the clients sits consciously outside their life, as observer   |
| Symbols/archetypes/metaphors and myths  | Hero’s journey, animal metaphors, analogies  | Images that evoke, channel and name the energy and inner experience and possibility   |

Others better equipped than I will continue to be study and analyze what has been raised here. This paper was an attempt to shed light on the questions that arose when an older more established field was contrasted to an emerging field with which it shares some similarities. More needs to be studied of course. Top candidates for such study in the therapy/coaching worlds include: should depth coaching be more regulated and demand more training than CBT-similar coaching, which avoids psycho-dynamic dimensions? What language dimensions should be shared and kept distinct between the two fields? Should the two fields be kept more or less distinct like they are today, even as the blending increases? Should the mindfulness/Eastern-influenced coaching approaches and the Western psychodynamic/therapeutically informed approaches, and the cognitive behavioral approaches all be more explicit about their roots and what they borrow from each other? And I have one personal favorite candidate for study--the history of coaching and its roots; especially, how did Jung's views on psychology pave the way for coaching and blur the lines between coaching and therapy.

Many more potential angles for study could also be studied. In the meantime, coaches and therapists will continue the work of being intimate thought partners with people wanting to live better lives and do better work. May all of us calling ourselves coaches, counselors and therapists do the required work on ourselves, professionally and personally, to be worthy of these clients' trust.

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## List of Interviewees:

Dr. Pat Adson, psychologist and coach, author of *Depth Coaching*.

Mr. Chip Conley, entrepreneur and Executive in Residence at Saybrook University.

Dr. Mark Horney, psychologist and coach, Columbia University's School of Business;

Dr. Pat Raskin, therapist, retired from Teacher's College, Columbia Univ., faculty for the Columbia University Coach Certification Program.