



## THE SUPER COACHES ARE COMING

The integration of counselling and coaching is changing the face of the wellbeing industry, says **Frances Masters**.

The ICF's 2023 study has reported that the coaching profession has 'continued to expand at a robust pace' and that, 'globally, active coach practitioners generated an estimated annual revenue/income from coaching of US\$ 4.564 billion'.

This is in contrast to 2007, when the same study estimated the annual revenue generated by the coaching industry globally was US\$ 1.5 billion.

There's no doubt the coaching industry is expanding and, in doing so, is now moving significantly into territory previously occupied by the counselling professions.

Why is that?

Our understanding of what we need for emotional wellness has grown through the new brain sciences. We can now look inside

a living human brain and see how we learn, how we consolidate memories, how we process emotion and even observe the brain areas where motivation and insight occur.

As our understanding continues to expand, we are developing more and more effective tools and skills for managing our minds, our emotions and consequently our lives. The coaching industry has been quick to respond by embracing new niches such as 'wellbeing coach,' 'holistic coach' and 'mindset coach'.

Meanwhile those of us with a psychotherapeutic training have also noticed our clients are demanding more of us and that counselling has begun to cross the bridge into coaching territory where strategies, goals and outcomes begin to inform our practice.

One of the UK's largest counselling bodies, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), has noted the shift and has created a coaching division; it is now fully embracing coaching techniques as a valid extension of core counselling skills.

Recently, I was part of the expert research group that brought together the new integrated coach-counsellor competencies framework.<sup>1</sup> It felt to me like a real leap forward and a commitment to expanding the reach of the counselling industry.

Having focused for years on what separated counselling from coaching, the two professions are now looking for common ground and staking a claim on that territory. I think it is our clients that will truly benefit. The nub of what Charles Darwin said in *On The Origin of Species* is that it's not the strongest nor the most intelligent that does the best, but those most adaptable to change.

Professional change is certainly in the air, and those who respond to it the most comprehensively are the ones likely to find themselves at the leading edge of a new wave of dual-trained practitioners: the super coaches.

In reality, most counsellors have, for some time, been integrating some coaching techniques into their therapeutic toolbox and most coaches often stray into therapeutic territory, whether or not they intend to.

Why?

Because our clients are all human beings who have a range of innate biological, psychological and sociological needs and a brain that responds to the environment in which it finds itself by producing emotional responses designed to drive us to get our needs met.

So whether you have a coaching client or a counselling client in front of you, depending on their current life circumstances, they are going to be at a certain point on a continuum of wellbeing. They will either be in the 'ok' zone (traditional coaching territory) or closer to the 'not ok' zone (traditional counselling territory) and, because life circumstances change, their position on the continuum may move from one week to the next.

Take, for example, my client John.

I had been working with John for some time. He was a highly productive marketing executive. We worked on motivation, mindset, goals and work/life balance and met monthly.

John was securely in the ok zone... until his wife received a life-threatening medical diagnosis.

After that, John moved from a high-functioning executive to a man who could not sleep, eat or meet deadlines. The focus of our work shifted to emotional regulation, trauma resolution and how to put a fence around the worry.

Rather than coaching, this was now much more therapeutic and continued so, quite rightly, until John's equilibrium returned and he had the spare capacity to refocus on his work role.

## WORKING ON THE CONTINUUM OF WELLBEING

I was able to safely continue to support my client until he was back on an even keel. With a trusting and supportive relationship firmly in place, how sad would it have been to suggest he go elsewhere in his time of crisis?

The reason I was able to do this is because I trained therapeutically and also in coaching. Many years ago, while working through a four-year counselling course, I recognised early on that many of my clients wanted more from me than the core conditions and reflective skills, and so I sought out further training – in CBT, NLP and a Human Givens diploma, all running alongside each other! At times it felt like a hothouse experience.

I'm glad I did it.

Once working and building a private practice, I drew on those trainings to bring together a methodology that felt safe and ethical for me. It happened organically and in response to my clients' needs, but I soon found I could seamlessly move from counsellor to coach all in the same session, if doing so was right for my client.

The safest connecting bridge between modalities for me was the underlying theory of human motivation first outlined by Abraham Maslow and later refined by the Human Givens approach, which holds that humans have innate needs (such as those outlined by Maslow) and innate resources that help us get those needs met. If your needs are met in balance, the theory goes, it is impossible to feel emotionally distressed.

Viewing emotional health through this lens meant there was a clear explanation for the feelings of depression, anxiety, anger or frustration my clients often expressed when they arrived at my office. With the presenting problem often reframed and resolved in the first session, further sessions could focus on creating a future in the absence of the problem.

I integrated the coaching wheel of life as a useful passport into this holistic landscape – one where I would encourage my client to consider their dream life as though there was no possibility of failure, before returning to practicalities with strategic SMART goals that would take them in the direction they wanted to go.

Guided imagery, neural retraining, timeline and therapeutic use of language were now part of my professional toolkit.

## MASTERING A SKILL

They say you become a master of your skill when you have practised it for 10,000 hours. I stopped counting at 30,000 and started training others to do what I was doing.

The Fusion Model, as I later called it, was created by replicating my own working documents, which included scripts, questionnaires,

## OUTLINE OF THE FUSION MODEL

### FREE TALK AND RAPPORT BUILDING

Problem free talk establishes rapport, settles anxiety and creates a sweet spot for therapeutic change.

### UNDERSTAND THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

Asking the client to summarise the problem 'in a nutshell' is a useful starting point and connects the client with their observing self.

### SOLUTIONS AND LONG-TERM GOAL

A shift from problem-focus to solution-focus triggers the brain's reticular activating system (RAS) to search for answers.

### INFORMATION-GIVING

A clear psychologically based explanation, plus a plan for resolution, restores hope and motivation.

### OUTCOME FOR THE SESSION

An achievable goal raises confidence and begins the forward momentum.

### NEURAL RETRAINING AND POSITIVE MENTAL REHEARSAL

Old patterns are broken and new patterns established with advanced guided visualisation techniques.

checklists, work sheets, clinical feedback and homework tasks. As I brought it together I realised I had created a fully integrated therapeutic coaching system that moved from counselling to coaching without any bumps in the middle and without the need to re-contract with my client.

In reality, my clients weren't actually bothered whether I was either counselling or coaching. They were just happy they had found something that worked fast to get them from where they were to where they wanted to be.

A local GP colleague noticed what I was doing and started sending her depressed patients along. When her drugs bill dramatically reduced we took the decision to launch a mental health charity and train up volunteers to use my five-session format. Before long, I was able to create graphs of the clinical feedback, which showed consistent positive results in subjective mental wellbeing even though the volunteers did not have my training or experience.

It turned out it was a practical example of 'modelling', which is an NLP concept where you find something that works... then replicate it as closely as possible. This was now a replicable system for coach-counsellor integration. The training was accredited by NCFE in 2011.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The roots of the model are in the person-centred, cognitive behavioural (CBT) and Human Givens (HG) paradigms; HG is already an integrated model that embraces solution-focus, NLP and visualisation techniques.

The Fusion Model is underpinned by the following theories:

- Human beings are born into this world with physical, emotional and sociological needs.<sup>2</sup>
- When our emotional needs are met in balance, we feel whole, fulfilled and at peace.<sup>3</sup>
- We are born with an innate guidance system that drives us towards getting our needs met – known as the actualising tendency.<sup>4</sup>
- Human beings are wired to be goal oriented.
- We are able to take a psychological step back into our observing self.<sup>5</sup>
- We have a unique human ability to shift perception and shift perspective, allowing us to act with emotional intelligence.<sup>6</sup>

## PACING, TURNING AND LEADING THE CLIENT

From red zone to green, the traffic lights in the diagram of the model reflect the stillness of respectful listening in the counselling phase; a sense of 'getting ready' in the interactive, solution-focused phase; and finally the focus on plans and goals and in the green phase.

Each phase has its own skill set, but the session moves comfortably and easily from listening to problems and challenges to visualising the future after resolution.

## SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

### Pacing

Critical skills and competencies of the first phase of the model are firmly rooted in the counselling paradigm, which develops rapport between client and practitioner. With a trusting therapeutic alliance firmly in place, the client can afford to be open and honest, let down their defences and be 'real' in the presence of someone who listens, treats them with respect, tries to understand how they are feeling, and does not judge, label or condemn.

The quality of the relationship has been shown to be one of the most important factors responsible for the positive impact of any talking therapy, whatever the paradigm.

In his 1998 research, William Henry concluded: 'as a general trend across studies, the largest chunk of outcomes variants not attributable to pre-existing patient characteristics involved individual therapist differences and the emergent therapeutic relationship between patient and therapist, regardless of technique or school of therapy.'<sup>7</sup>

American psychologist John C Norcross developed this research further, identifying alliance, empathy, client consensus and collaboration as being key ingredients to the therapeutic dyad. His findings suggested the nature of any therapeutic interaction should be 'bespoke and customized to the presenting issue'.<sup>8</sup>

### Turning

Skills in the interactive turning phase involve focusing on solutions and raising emotional intelligence by providing psychological education. Peter Salovey and John D Mayer have led much of the research on this subject. They identified four different factors of emotional intelligence:

- Accurately perceiving emotions in oneself and others.
- Using emotions to facilitate thinking.
- Understanding emotional meanings.
- Managing emotions.

Practitioners working at this stage need to have the ability to move back from the direct experience of the client, as the client temporarily accesses the rational perspective of the practitioner.

### Leading

This last phase of the model utilises advanced coaching skills. The primary skill is in judging when this phase is most appropriate. This is the time for positive mental rehearsal, guided visualisation and affirmations. The coaching wheel of life becomes a useful passport to communication, pulling the process together within a visual, holistic framework.

### BACK TO JOHN

For John, there was a two-month period when he needed so much more emotional support from me than when we were coaching his goals and motivation.

I helped him understand how he had, quite naturally, been traumatised by his wife's diagnosis, how his sense of safety and autonomy had been impacted, how his sleep pattern had been disturbed by his daytime anxiety, and what he could do to put a fence around the worry so that he could focus on work when he needed to, while also staying strong to support his wife.

We identified his cognitive distortions (catastrophising, black and white thinking, mind reading) and how that was affecting his physiology and his behaviours, how his misuse of imagination had him playing horror films in his head.

John came to understand and identify when he was being emotionally hijacked and, more importantly, what he could do to regain control.

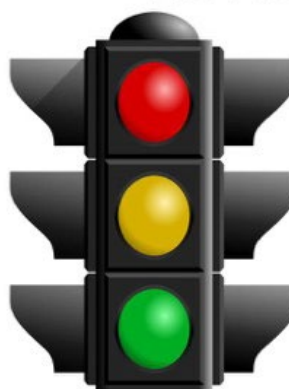
Our deepest fear is that something will happen to us that we will not be able to cope with. John had met and overcome many difficulties in the past and had clear evidence he could be strong and tenacious when faced with a big challenge.

John moved for a while from the ok zone to the not ok zone but, wherever he was on the continuum of wellbeing, John was still John – with all his innate human needs and all the inner resources he needed to get through a difficult time.

With therapeutic support he got through his wife's treatment and was back in the driver's seat of his life before too long...

And I was back coaching him to be the best version of himself.

## The Fusion® Model



**Free talk**  
**Understand**

**Solutions**  
**Information giving**

**Outcome**  
**Neural retraining**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Frances Masters is a BACP-accredited psychotherapist, therapeutic coach and founding principal of the Integrated Coaching Academy. Frances offers training and supervision for coaches, counsellors and integrated practitioners. In 2008 she co-founded the therapeutic coaching charity Reclaim Life and trained volunteer coaches in her integrated FUSION Model. Frances's training programmes include: the NCFE Fusion Therapeutic Coaching Skills Certificate, the Fusion Therapeutic Coaching Diploma, the Mindfulness Based Mind Management Skills Certificate and online stress reduction programme Breathe Stress Away.

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