Enhancing Coaching Effectiveness: Counseling Skills and Coaching Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract: From an Aotearoa[1] New Zealand perspective, this article considers the potential contribution of advanced counseling skills and knowledge to the work of coaches. Many coaches recruited to work within organizations are charged with the responsibility of maximizing professionals' performance. In contemporary workplaces, relatively superficial performance concerns may conceal symptoms of stress or of other psychological problems undermining employee effectiveness. Although New Zealand coaches tend to have a strong industry background, they tend to lack training in counseling beyond basic microskills, and may be unable to recognize or address psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression. This discussion of the utility of counseling skills in coaching practice incorporates reference to international literature and to an illustrative case example in which a professional reflects on the effectiveness of coaching that addressed his underlying psychological struggles, facilitated by a coach equipped with advanced counseling skills.

Introduction

Executive or workplace coaching is the term used by organizations for a service provided to help professionals cope more effectively at work. Grant (2014) has identified the purpose of coaching as a "mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving [employees'] leadership skills, professional performance and well-being, and the effectiveness of the organisation" (p. 259). Coaching, like counseling, involves establishing a caring, collaborative, and professional relationship (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011), which requires specific skills and understanding to develop the trust necessary for people to disclose beyond a superficial goal attainment process.

This article provides an overview of coaching in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, addresses the relationship between coaching and counseling, and discusses the contribution that counseling skills and related knowledge can make in enhancing the effectiveness of coaching with corporate employees. Traditionally, definitions of coaching have implied that coaches work with well-functioning employees and reflect a belief that professionals seek coaching to enhance mental wellness, presuming an absence of psychological dysfunction or poor mental health (Jones et al., 2016). However, the nature of workplaces and the increasing demands

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[1] Aotearoa is the Indigenous Māori word for New Zealand. It is used to honour the bicultural nature of New Zealand.

being placed on professionals (Grant, 2014), that potentially lead to stress and other adverse effects, would suggest that may be a simplistic view of coaching.

In fact, in the current, rapidly changing world of work, research indicates that employees are experiencing increasing levels of stress as well as its unhealthy consequences (Harvey et al., 2014). Presenting issues coaches encounter associated with professionals' workplace performance can therefore be symptomatic of deeper, underlying matters that need a greater depth of psychological knowledge and training in counseling, beyond basic microskills. This is illustrated later in this article by a case example from an interview with a professional who was a reluctant coachee, but who nevertheless benefited from a long-term coaching relationship with a coach who incorporated both coaching and counseling skills in working with him. In the interview, which took place as part of a current study of professionals' perspectives on, and experiences of, coaching, he reflected on the nature and benefits of this process.

It needs to be noted that coaching and counseling are distinct professions, as discussed in the following sections. This article is not advocating that coaches need to be counselors; rather, that coachees would benefit from coaches' knowledge and use of counseling skills to draw on and foster their internal, as well as external, coping strategies. To establish the context from which the author examines the nature of the relationship between coaching and counseling skills, the following section describes the position of coaching as a profession in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Coaching in the Context of Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand, executive or workplace coaching is seen as an independent profession from counseling. Coaches work with middle to senior management and focus on enhancing performance, goal setting, and developing strategies and actions for skill development and wellbeing (Grant, 2014). They usually have the added complication of managing a third party relationship with the organization they are employed by. Organizations are generally motivated to see a return on their bottom line through adherence to organizational goals and effective leadership (Grant, 2014). The goals of the organization are often explicit at the beginning of a coaching relationship and can pre-determine the focus of each session.

In workplaces, counselors on the other hand are accessed through a third party such as an employee assistance programme (EAP), which provides an additional layer of confidentiality and is available for employees at all levels of the organization. Counseling can be focused on the personal and/or the professional, with counselors who provide a supportive relationship and a confidential space in which clients may explore issues related to their experiences from the past, present, or future, thus enabling them to develop self-awareness and explore options and strategies that will support positive change (New Zealand Association of Counsellors [NZAC], n.d.).

Many workplace or executive coaches bring a corporate background to their work, and are employed on the basis of their undertanding of how organizations function. They are generally over 40 years of age and although they have some form of qualification, usually a university degree, they have little or no specific training in coaching (Brooks & Wright, 2007). Kilburg (2000) argued that the ideal combination of skills and strengths for a coach is to have an understanding of organizations and management, and knowledge of the unconscious processes that influence behavioral change and self-awareness.

While the International Federation of Coaches (ICF) is represented in New Zealand, and other international coaching organizations have branches in New Zealand and provide some training in the form of short courses, there

is no national regulatory coaching body. The current lack of a professional organization with a code of ethics that would establish training requirements for coaches means that there is no consistency in their skills training in New Zealand, and no guarantee that coaches possess the requisite knowledge to fully understand the potential implications of the issues presented by their clients. Therefore at present, unless coaches have a specific qualification in counseling or psychology, they are unlikely to have this understanding or the skills to maximize their effectiveness in meeting clients' needs.

The Career Development Association of New Zealand (CDANZ) requires its members to have a career-specific qualification which can include coaching (The Career Development Association of New Zealand [CDANZ], n.d.). Some coaches align with CDANZ as a professional body in the absence of a national coaching body, but this alignment, and coaching training in New Zealand, are totally reliant on individual choice (Brooks & Wright, 2007).

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) is the largest professional body of counselors and requires its members to have a bachelor's or master's degree in counseling from a program that has been accredited by NZAC (NZAC "Counsellor education standards," n.d.). Counselors can become coaches by adding a short course to their existing qualification and joining an international coaching body, but coaches cannot become counselors unless they meet the NZAC criteria.

Coaching psychology is an alternative branch of coaching that has gained momentum over the past 10 years in New Zealand. Conducted by psychologists, this has the added advantage of a background education in psychological theory and has provided an additional form of professional rigor to coaching (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005). However, not all trained psychologists have the practical

counseling skills to support effective coaching practice. Passmore (2016) sees the difference between experienced coaches and coaching psychologists as the latters' engagement in research, and their understanding of the science of human behavior, cognition, and emotion which is integrated into their practice.

Perspectives on the Relationship Between Coaching and Counseling

Research indicates that coaching is both similar to and different from counseling (Passmore, 2016). Key factors that are identified as important, if not essential, in a counseling relationship include client readiness, the behaviors and skills of the therapist, particularly empathy (Passmore, 2016), and confidentiality.

The key factors for effective coaching are the credibilty and previous experience of the coach, balanced with relational skills and the ability to provide an independent, safe space where clients can explore and reflect on issues, but can also be challenged (Passmore, 2016). Thus coaching, like counseling, involves establishing a caring, collaborative, and professional relationship (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011) which requires specific counseling-related qualities and skills such as empathy, excellent microskills, open questioning providing a space to reflect, and the ability to challenge without judgment (Passmore, 2016). These enable the development of trust so that clients disclose at a level beyond that of a superficial goal-attainment process. Motivation to change is an important factor in the success of both coaching and counseling (Grant, 2014; Passmore, 2016).

Despite the elements common to counseling and coaching, some research suggests that even if the skills of a counselor may be needed, professionals' would prefer to see a coach rather than a counselor (Gyllesten et al., 2005). Although the stigma associated with attending counseling has lessened, seeking this form of support can still be seen as a weakenss or an

indication that the professional may be mentally unwell. The authors current PhD study indicates that some human resource practitioners in New Zealand organizations are reluctant to suggest that senior executives need counseling and are more comfortable sourcing a coach who has worked at a similar executive level in an organization, with the belief that mutual respect for their respective roles will facilitate a good working relationship and engender trust.

Building trust in a coaching relationship enables a coachee to be able to talk freely and in confidence with a coach, but this can be compromised in third party relationships if the boundaries around confidentiality are not clearly specified, as in the illustrative case example later in this article. Ethical principles and practices about confidentiality are essential in counseling (NZAC "Code of ethics," n.d.).The International Coaching Federation (ICF) specify in their code of ethics that coaches need to explain the "the nature and limits of confidentiality" to each party involved in the relationship (International Coach Federation Australasia [ICF], n.d.).

To build a collegial relationship is a good beginning but not an end in itself, and additional knowledge and skills may be required to identify symptoms of stress and achieve behavioral change or a psychological shift. Like coaching, as identified above, effective counseling that facilitates change is also based on a trusting, supportive relationship. The difference in counseling processes is one of greater emotional depth and disclosure, supported by a knowledge of effective modalities and a deeper understanding of behavior, cognition, and emotion (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011).

Not all professionals seeking coaching want, or need, to engage with psychological issues, stress, or pressure. Hawkins and Smith (2006) have cited other external drivers such as career planning, productivity, or dealing with staff performance which might be seen as more appropriate for coaching rather than counseling. For many of these issues, skill development, education, and task-focused coaching models are entirely relevant. However, some research shows that professionals referred to coaching for performance issues, career development, or other skill development may disguise issues related to stress or its more significant effects (Grant, 2014; Wellness in the Workplace Survey, 2013).

As indicated above, in order to facilitate effective learning and change to enable their clients to cope in contemporary workplaces, coaches need to be aware of their behavior, cognition, and emotions (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011). However, if stress or any other psychological issues are affecting professionals performance at work, coaches also need to be aware of the symptoms and have models, tools, and techniques to draw on, not just to provide a bandaid to the outward effects of stress, but also to explore and alleviate its sources, or to recognize when referral to counselling, or another form of mental health support, is warranted.

Professionals and Workplace Challenges

The workplace today is one of organizational turbulence, consisting of restructurings, downsizings, and continuous technological change. Constant change, combined with new and different ways of working, are creating an unpredictible and uncertain work environment that places increasing demands on professionals (Grant, 2014).

While there is still debate about the definition of a professional, Evetts (2013) has suggested that professionals today are those that have an established body of knowledge not held by the general population which is usually gained through advanced education. To be a professional requires a considerable investment in time and money to gain the qualifications and training necessary to develop a particular specialization, and professional standing is

usually enhanced by further experience in the field and proof of skills (Dent & Whitehead, 2013). Some professionals acquire confidential knowledge, engendering a level of trust from the general population who expect a high level of professionalism, which involves putting clients first, knowing the limits of confidentiality, and not using information for fraudulent purposes (Evetts, 2013). A professional body with a code of ethics holds its members to a standard of accountability and becomes important in upholding the values of a profession as well as providing a sense of professional identity. Coaches need to be as accountable as the professionals they are working with in order to retain credibility.

The professionals referred to in this article are described as those who have leadership, managerial or supervisory authority, and responsibility in an organization (Grant, 2014). Providing effective leadership, building well-functioning teams, and retaining a positive professional identity in workplaces are challenges in the world of work today, and it is not surprising that an increasing number of managers and employees in professional roles are struggling to cope (Grant, 2014). Stressors affecting them in the workplace environment are considered in the next section.

Workplace Challenges That Evoke Stress: Implications for Coaching

The changing work environment means professionals will continually be challenged to meet existing and future skills gaps and will need to redefine themselves regularly throughout their careers to remain employed (Feller & Chapman, 2018). Those working with professionals need to have the skills to support them in this re-definition process in a considerable way, taking into account the holistic consequences of constant change. A job skills training and career development survey completed by the American Psychological Association (APA) (2017) found 85-89% of employees were concerned about the changing

world of work, and although they currently had the technical skills to do their jobs well, 40% were concerned about employers providing future-oriented training in technical skills. Approximately 35% of men and 44% of women felt that their employers where not providing them with the leadership and soft skills—the interpersonal qualities, people skills, and personal attributes—needed for the future. Only 50% of those surveyed said their employer provided opportunities for career development or advancement (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017). Stress and anxiety are often present when professionals become aware of a growing skills gap, and these psychological states can contribute to a fear of failure. Career planning and goal setting are no longer straightforward processes, and coaches need to have the skills to create an environment where these fears can be disclosed and addressed.

A common phrase used in coaching to promote healthier choices is *work-life balance*. Unfortunately, the boundaries between work and leisure have become increasingly blurred (Albertsen et al., 2008; Moen et al., 2013). Neault (2019) suggests this phrase is now outdated and a healthier phrase is *work sustainability*. This implies that professionals have the option of a healthy choice to determine what they need from work, family, and leisure, rather than subscribing to a fixed, linear view of a mundane working week followed by a weekend. Neault offers an alternative picture of intensive periods of interesting work and travel, followed by longer breaks in between.

Challenges associated with this flexible approach to work include balancing work and other committments, which has to be carefully managed alongside the pressure to perform. Not everyone has the skills or opportunity to manage their time effectively, prioritize efficiently, or be able to say "no" to others more senior in the organization or to members of their family or social group. Sometimes contract, or flexible work, is not a choice, but has been

imposed on professionals because they are unable to retain a permanent or fulltime role in an organization. For those whom workplaces provide a sense of belonging or an anchor for their identity (Simpson & Carroll, 2008), working in this way can be very destabilizing. Coaches need to recognize and help professionals to identify and address challenges to role identity, feelings of exclusion, lack of belonging to a workplace, or unsuccessful attempts at managing multiple pressures the professionals face that lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Success at work is often measured by performance and outcomes in environments where economic efficiency is highly valued. In a global economy with unprecedented levels of change and competition, requirements for efficiency and financial success can become the main drivers in workplaces. However, when accountibility and measurement are based only on financial and numeric assessment, this can undermine a professional's identity and any autonomy or influence in their role. Feelings of insecurity arise in a work environment where a professional's value and worth are constantly being rated against financial performance; systems and processes, and the value of people and relationships, is undermined (Dent & Whithead, 2002). A coach's skills in building a core professional identity and confidence that extends beyond the workplace role are going to be signifcant for professionals who may have to redefine their careers several times, and need the resilience to cope in environments where they are required to account for performance every day.

The pressure to perform in this way can disrupt the balance of productive and effective social relationships within an organization (Kostera, 2003). In an effort to meet workplace demands, professionals not only may sacrifice their own health and wellbeing but also contribute to competitive, negative cultures by working longer hours, having unhealthy and unclear boundaries and unrealistic expectations

of team members, and engendering a culture where fear of failure is dominant (Knights & Clarke, 2013). Individual responses to dominant negative cultures vary, but research suggests that while people appear to be coping, they may be hiding their own negative emotions, insecurities, or fear. They may also be employing negative coping strategies, self-medicating using alcohol or drugs, or adopting other unhealthy or unhelpful behaviors (Dent & Whithead, 2013; Knights & Clarke, 2013; Mortensen 2014; Tracy, 2000). Unhelpful behaviors can be so well hidden that coaches without an understanding of what the behavioral responses to negative coping stategies can look like could miss the cues for anxiety, depression, and other serious consequences. If so, an opportunity would be missed to refer a professional to appropriate help or actively address pychological or behavioral change that could save a life, as in the case study below.

In small doses, anxiety can motivate us to perform, but if it goes unchecked it can change behaviors, attitudes, and performance at work (Mortensen, 2014), leading to more serious conditions such as chronic stress and emotional exhaustion that can result in burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). As in the case study below, the journey to burnout can adversely affect the quality of work performance, motivation, and working relationships. If not addressed, these negative effects can lead to more serious, longer-term, mental and physical health problems (Palmer et al., 2003). Coaches with counseling skills can play an important role in addressing issues at the very early stages, and help professionals work through the three stage-process of identifying and appraising a stressful situaton, assessing the coping strategies used, and identifying appropriate, positive actions, thereby avoiding the more serious mental or physical health consequences (King & Gardner, 2006).

Illustrative Case Example

The following case provides an example of highly effective work by a coach that incorporated both coaching and counseling-related knowledge and skills. In a research interview, this experience was described by a professional who was referred to a coach by the organization for which he worked, and who subsequently became a participant in the author's current study of counseling and coaching in the Aotearoa New Zealand workplace.

A focus of this phenomenological study is professional exployees' experiences of receiving coaching. In this article, material from an interview with "Mick" (a chosen pseudonym) was selected to illustrate how the efficacy of coaching practice can be enhanced by the incorporation of advanced counseling-related knowledge and skills. As a methodology, interpretive phenomenology values and investigates individuals' views of the world and experiences. In the interview, Mick discussed his perceptions and understandings of his experience of coaching, and this case study shows how his world view changed through his interaction with his coach (Creswell, et al., 2007).

Note: the words in speech marks are the interviewee's exact words.

The Client

Mick held a senior technical position in a medium-sized (approximately 300 employees) international organization with a highly specialized research and technical focus. The culture of the organization values technical expertise, has a high number of international employees and visitors, and prides itself on its ethical environmental stance and how it values its people.

Mick was mature, educated to master's level, and had a strong sense of professional ethics, responsibility, and professional integrity. In addition to the responsiblities associated with his specific position, he also held another role within the organization, supporting and advocating for others. This involved interacting with senior management and, at times, challenging them about decisions that affected employees.

Referral to Coaching

In an annual review, Mick was told that, while he was excellent in his specific role, the organization recommended he have coaching to work on his interpersonal skills. He became very defensive and believed this was a control mechanism by management who wanted to blame him for previous conflicts and were unwilling to take responsibility for their part in these events.

The Coach, Relationship Building, and Assessment

Mick's coach had gained a coaching qualification following completion of a degree in counseling and was engaged by the organization Mick worked for as a coach to work with middle to senior management. Her counseling-related knowledge and skills enabled her to identify a disconnect between the apparent efficiency he applied to his work role and his personal functioning. She suggested a psychological assessment, which quickly identified the symptoms of burnout.

In Mick's words, within a couple of sessions, the coach he was referred to saw that he was "fairly broken." He had been adapting to the perceived requirements of the work environment and, in the process, felt he had to sacrifice aspects of his personality. He described himself as continually being in a fight-or-flight response and had become a "hollow person." On a day-to-day basis Mick was acting like a "machine," being very efficient but only able to respond to people in a very superficial way. He had no significant relationships, felt limited emotion, had no hope, no optimistism, and experienced no joy in life.

The Coaching Process

Mick had developed enough trust in the coaching relationship to be able to disclose more about his thoughts and his life, confirming the initial assessment. The coach told Mick that they were unlikely to make progress in

coaching without looking at the underlying emotions, cognitions, and behaviors he was experiencing. Mick and the coach re-contracted and Mick agreed to engage in a helping process that included both coaching and counseling techniques.Specific counseling modalities required more advanced skills, as well as goal setting, tasks, and developing coping strategies.

In the following sessions, Mick was encouraged to learn about himself and his responses to events, and the coach helped him build the confidence and resources to be able to engage in a process that would enhance his professional performance at work. She used counseling tools and techniques from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to delve deeper into Mick's thoughts and behavioral responses. This process highlighted significant anxiety and depression that Mick had no previous frame of reference for and had been unable to name. The sessions continued over a 16-month period.

Mick progressed from being a resistant and reluctant client to believing that the "helping" process was personally life changing, enabling him to reframe his work environment and to re-engage with work in a positive way. The broader, deeper, and longer-term approach using counseling skills in this helping process enabled Mick to develop self awareness and gave him the skills to make significant changes in himself and at work.

Outcomes and Implications

Mick said he would never have sought counseling because he did not realize he was "damaged." To meet with a coach was less threatening to him, however he was a reluctant client without motivation and was not change ready. Motivation and readiness elements are cited as important for successful coaching (Grant, 2014; Passmore, 2016). Mick experienced his coach as empathetic yet professional.

Research into the effectiveness of counseling and coaching has identified the importance of the quality of the relationship between client and counselor (see, e.g., Collins et al., 2012; Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011, McLeod, 2010; Tannen et al., 2017). Showing empathy, being fully present, and listening attentively appear to be important contributing factors in an effective working relationship, as Mick experienced. To develop these skills, coaches require a considerable amount of self-awareness, which is difficult to achieve without training, observation, feedback, and self-reflection.

Important skills and attributes for coaches include: attentive listening, including reflecting skills (Tannen et.al., 2017); the ability to challenge and provide effective feedback; understanding what a professional relationship means; and being able to assess readiness for coaching and motivation to change (Grant, 2014). Without these skills, important disclosures of sensitive personal information are unlikely, difficult subjects are avoided, and coaching could be ineffective or could unintentionally cause harm.

Practical counseling microskills such as reflection, expressing empathy, reframing, and clarifying facilitate the exploration of the emotions and thinking behind goal setting and decision making, and teach coaches how to ask curious, open questions about a professional's social context and organizational culture which could influence the direction of a coaching session (Anthanasopoulou & Dobson, 2018). Uncovering information about power dynamics and organizational structures and routines could help establish mutual understanding of certain emotions and behaviours of the professional in context, revealing the link between the internal impact of stress and possible external perceived sources, and thereby providing valuable information to assist with building resilience, self efficacy, and effective coping.

With her counseling training and experience, Mick's coach had highly developed skills that enabled her to engage Mick in a process that went much deeper than superficial goal setting. Not recognizing his reactions to stress as anxiety and panic attacks, he thought there was

something physically wrong with him and was even hospitalized on one occasion. Guided by her understanding of current psychological theory and research regarding stress and anxiety, and recognizing the symptoms of burnout, she was able to use her knowledge, counseling modalities, and skills to pace the sessions and assist with Mick's understanding of anxiety. She was also able to provide him with tools and techniques to manage the symptoms and begin to deal with some of the underlying causes. This helping process went far deeper, over a longer period of time, than the traditional 6 to 10 sessions of coaching.

With his new understanding of his anxiety, and the tools and techniques to manage it, Mick was keen to encourage others to seek appropriate help. Aided by his increased self-awareness through coaching, Mick found he was a much more open person and would talk to others at work about workplace stress, anxiety, and panic attacks, having found many others who had experienced similar symptoms and their physical manifestations. This common experience enabled Mick to connect with others positively at a deeper and more meaningful level at work.

Mick's coach understood the three phases of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In the first phase, he began to feel depleted of physical and emotional resources. Like many people, he attempted to cope by withdrawing from others to protect himself from more overload. As the stress continued without positive change, this led to the second phase when he felt increasingly detached from his job and developed feelings of cynicism. Relationships at home can begin to suffer in this phase of burnout.

In the third phase of burnout described by Maslach et al. (2001), ineffectiveness and a form of paralysis can occur at work, and feelings of incompetence, a sense of failure, and lack of self-worth can result. In this phase of burnout, many people are unaware of what they can do to change their circumstances and it may

take others at work or home to point out they need help and a trained professional to facilitate a process of change. Mick was recommended to coaching by his employer but was unaware he needed help. Professional help for these issues requires careful handling and the understanding of the symptoms of stress, anxiety, and burnout, but practitioners also need practical counseling skills and experience to be able to work with professionals to effect change in a climate of blame and distrust (Grant, 2014).

For Mick, the helping process was a successful one because his coach had advanced counseling skills. He said it was important for him to know the process was confidential, and that the coach had good qualifications and experience, but most importantly, her listening skills and her experience were essential in enabling them to work together. The coach listened without interrupting him, but also structured and paced the sessions to enable deeper reflection and a fuller analysis of thoughts and behaviours. Advanced skills enabled Mick's coach to form a clear assessment and case conceptulization in the early stages of coaching and identify which modalities, tools, and techniques were needed.

Mick had participated in mentoring and coaching with others before, but these processes were based around technical goals. If his sessions with his recent coach had only been around specific, pre-set goals, Mick stated he would not have engaged in the coaching process, would no longer have that job, and may not even be alive. Suicidal thoughts were in Mick's mind and, although he had no firm plans to end his life at that stage, he felt no hope for the future.

Mick's coach had the knowledge, experience, and insight to be able to distinguish that more than a traditional form of coaching was needed, which in this case possibly saved Mick's life. Mick, like many others, was very adept at masking his emotions and hiding behind a brisk efficiency. With only basic microskills training, many coaches would not have been able to see

through the façade and overcome his considerable resistance at all. However, basic microskills would allow a coach to see that more than coaching was required, and to refer him to another appropriate professional, like a counselor.

Over the coaching period, Mick experienced other benefits. He was unable to change his environment but he developed a different approach to people in senior positions, became more curious, and was also able to offer support to others who were struggling. Coaching also benefited his general health and wellbeing. Mick stopped smoking, quit drinking, and lost 30 kilos. For Mick, working with a coach who was also a qualified counselor was a significant, life-changing experience.

Conclusion

The contemporary workplace is fraught with stressful events but optimistic, hopeful and, resilient professionals are better able to cope (Avery et.al., 2009; Bandura, 2007; Feller & Chapman, 2018; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Positive, proactive coping strategies can be taught. Personal control over emotions, understanding of the situation, the ability to act, personal agency, taking direct action, enhancing social relationships, and seeking wider social support can be enhanced (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Tools and strategies needed to work with professionals and build confidence, resilience, and effective coping in contemporary workplaces can be provided by helping professionals such as coaches who have the appropriate education and training. Knowledge of a therapeutic modality, and tools and techniques to address stress, anxiety, and depression could not only help overcome barriers to performance, but also create long term behavioral change, significantly enhance professionals' wellbeing, and potentially save lives (Palmer et al., 2003).

Considering the unpredictibility of the present issues in coaching, coaches need to be well prepared and have the skills to work with a range of performance or behavioral issues if they fit within their brief and level of competency. Understanding relevant psychological theories and developing practical counseling skills will assist with facilitating a process of positive behavioral and psychological change. The professionalism associated with this understanding will also help coaches to know where the boundaries of their competence lie, and when it is appropriate to refer a professional on to more appropriate therapeutic, psychological, or psychiatric help (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011).

The case of Mick highlights the complexity of the struggles that may be experienced by a professional. Significant personal challenges underlay, and could have remained concealed by, a more superficial goal about developing people skills. When stress, anxiety, or burnout are factors influencing effective relationships, goal setting, or performance skills alone will not be effective until these underlying causes are dealt with.

As indicated above, executive or workplace coaches in Aotearoa New Zealand do not necessarily have the education or tools to facilitate effective, supportive processes for professionals needing to strengthen their ability to cope in an unpredictable and unstable world of work. Indications are that, for organizations, industry experience and personal recommendations are more important than qualifications in the recruitment of coaches. Many employers assume that past experience, ethical practice, and reputation occur in concert. This can be a dangerous assumption.

To maintain and enhance their credibility, it is essential that coaches in New Zealand are as accountible to professional standards as the professionals they are working with. Understanding the contemporary workplace and its associated demands in order to respond effectively is important, but coaches also need to position themselves to support professionals to meet existing and anticipated skill gaps in a world of constant change in a professional way. Coaches can no longer rely on industry

experience alone. They also need good self-awareness, appropriate training in psychological theory, and well developed counseling skills to access the complexities beneath the presentation of sometimes relatively superficial performance concerns.

The purpose of this article is not to recommend that all coaches become counselors, but to explore the value of coaching practitioners accessing training in more advanced skills and knowledge in counseling modalities, tools, and techniques in order to address increasingly complex issues. Significant challenges with potentially long-term negative consequences, as in the case of Mick, are at risk of being ignored, avoided, or simply not noticed by practitioners who lack the appropriate skills and knowledge base.

Counselling and coaching are separate but related professions and more research needs to be undertaken about the boundaries between them. Coaching focuses on the practical, but workplaces today require an additional dimension when workplace pressures are leading to anxiety, stress, depression, and suicidality. The development in New Zealand of a professional coaching organization would be a valuable first step in the process of clarifying this distinction locally, while also drawing on international practice and research. The definition of standards for professional education in coaching in New Zealand, and the assessment and registration of training programs, could ensure not only their consistency but also their content and quality in equipping coaches to work as effectively as possible with their clients.

In the case study provided, Mick was fortunate that his coach had the counseling training and skills to identify and work with his deeper issues. Most coaches in New Zealand do not have these skills. Mick was mandated by the organization to receive coaching, was unaware of how unwell he was, and did not believe that either counseling or coaching would be helpful. He was fortunate that the coach recognized the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and burnout and was able to build a trusting relationship that enabled them to work collaboratively, using counseling tools and techniques. The experience, knowledge, and skills of the coach, in Mick's own words, saved his life.

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