Association of Integrative Coach-Therapist Professionals
where coaching, counselling and therapy meet

February 2015 issue 11

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A question of coach-therapy

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HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF, WORK-WISE (COACH-THERAPIST? PERSONAL CONSULTANT? SOMETHING ELSE?)?
I am an existential coach, which is a philosophical approach to coaching that can reach far into the therapeutic realm. Although I like the term personal consultant and would also identify as such in a broader sense, the difference to ‘Personal Consultancy’ (as modelled by Nash Popovic and Debra Jinks) is that I see coaching and counselling as overlapping rather than there being a demarcation line between the two professions.

DESCRIBE YOUR COACHING BACKGROUND AND YOUR THERAPEUTIC BACKGROUND
Since 2006, I have been interested in therapy and counselling through my studies at the University of East London (UEL). Through my MSc in Applied Positive Psychology, I became interested in the coaching approach to personal development. However, given the limitations of many coaching approaches with regards to training, depth and sophistication of their methods, I began looking for a training course that would combine aspects of coaching and counselling/therapy and therefore cover the whole spectrum of human experience. In the existential approach to coaching I had found an approach that would not qualify me as a therapist, but which – due to its grounding in existential philosophy – inherently reached far into the therapeutic realm and therefore allowed for integration of various different approaches to personal development. I’ve been practising as an existential coach since 2011, created my own approach of Positive Existential Coaching by embedding positive psychology into the existential framework, and have been lecturing in the coaching, mentoring and counselling departments of UEL and NSPC (New School of Counselling and Psychotherapy).

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO INTEGRATE YOUR WORK?
Since the time I became familiar with both counselling and coaching, I saw the value of a single practitioner covering both parts of the spectrum. The basic skills of a good coach and counsellor are identical, and therefore I reasoned that one should, if possible, work across the spectrum of a client’s ups and downs. All therapists will at times wear their ‘coaching hat’ and vice versa. This made immediate sense to me and I was astonished how little this had been looked into.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU’D KNOWN ABOUT INTEGRATION WHEN YOU WERE STARTING OUT?
I was lucky enough to sit at the source of this exciting development with good access to the leading thinkers in this field, so pretty much all of my questions about integration were eagerly answered. However, I wish I had known where else practitioners had been thinking about this so that a stronger network could have been built much earlier, which might have focused my training even more on integrational aspects.
WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THIS FIELD?
I hope that, in addition to the Post-Graduate Certificate in Integrative Counselling and Coaching at UEL, there will be an ever-increasing number of training programmes available all over the world, so that, in the more distant future, most practitioners will integrate (or openly acknowledge that they integrate) various aspects of coaching and therapy in their work. I could also imagine that each profession will continue to exist in its own right, while the most advanced practitioners will integrate elements of both in full. I would like to think of integrated practitioners (or those with the skills to integrate when necessary and appropriate) as more complete practitioners.

ANY FEARS?
I’m worried that young practitioners will face even more pressure to complete lengthy training programmes. If integrated practice becomes the norm, coaching elements would need to be added to therapy and counselling training, and vice versa. I hope that this will not lead to watering down the quality of training in any of the aspects.

TOP TIPS FOR ETHICAL PRACTICE?
Evaluate and reflect on your role (coach, counsellor, therapist, consultant, teacher, friend etc) on a moment-to-moment basis. Contracting and re-contracting is key, so that the client will be sufficiently informed about the process and make informed choices about the direction of their journey.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS?
I was invited to contribute a chapter to the first book publication in the field of integrated practice, Personal Consultancy by Nash Popovic and Debra Jinks, in which I was given the opportunity to argue for the existential philosophical framework as particularly fertile ground for integrative practice.

CHALLENGES?
Existential integrated practice covers the whole spectrum of human existence based on aspects of human existence that all people share and the resulting challenges that influence all of our day-to-day behaviour and processes. However, in today’s marketing-driven field of personal development, success often seems to follow from focusing on a particular niche. I see a challenge in establishing integrated practice as a valued niche in the eyes of the public, particularly in the business sector.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE?
In the future, I will add official counselling and psychotherapy qualifications to my repertoire in order to extend my reach into, and confidence to deal effectively with, matters located in the therapeutic realm.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO ADD?
I would like to express special thanks to Max O’Neill for sparking my initial interest in the field of counselling and psychotherapy, and to Nash Popovic for being an invaluable and essential part of my development as an integrated practitioner.

WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU?
My website is at www.existentialcoaching.net or you can fine me on Twitter: @Yannick_Jacob or Facebook.com/123.blog