

Exploring Boundaries of Existential Coaching

by

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Abstract

The field of coaching has developed a vast range of diversity, a multitude of definitions exist and coaches may adopt various roles during the coaching process. The boundaries between coaching and other talking professions as well as boundaries between different approaches within coaching have become increasingly blurry with many coaches reporting spending considerable supervision time discussing boundaries. As existential coaching is gaining popularity it is important to explore the boundaries to the approach. This paper reviews and critically engages with the literature on coaching definitions, coaches' roles and boundaries in order to establish the playing field for existential coaches as well as the value of boundaries.

Due to the nature of existential philosophy it is suggested that existential coaching has more flexible boundaries than other approaches to coaching. Their flexibility depend on the contract with client, the practitioner's background, his or her qualifications and an active and ongoing engagement in negotiating professional ethics. Findings lay the foundation for future research..

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Introduction

The field of coaching is a bit "like the Wild West of yesteryear, this frontier is chaotic, largely unexplored, and fraught with risk, yet immensely promising" (Sherman & Freas, 2004, p. 84). A coach may adopt a multitude of different roles, act in various functions and his approach to coaching is likely to be informed by a unique set of personal and professional attitudes and characteristics as well as the coach's background and experience. As a consequence, literally hundreds of working definitions of coaching have emerged and it seems that every newly trained coach entering the market adds a new component. Some would argue that there are as many definitions of coaching as there are coaches. The main aim of such definitions is to highlight what a particular approach to coaching entails. It is to explain what makes this particular approach special and hence to mark potential boundaries to the approach and often (more importantly it seems) to create boundaries to other approaches.

The term boundary in this paper is used not as the border line between coach and client (such as physical contact, start and end times of sessions, location, confidentiality, etc.) but as the border line for the practitioner with regards to his practice (methodology, role/function, philosophical underpinnings, way of relating to the client etc). This is an important distinction. Firstly so as to focus the research question. Secondly, boundaries have been demonstrated to be relevant from personal experience when talking to other existential coaches as well as from emerging research indicating that many coaches and counsellors spend a considerable time in supervision discussing the boundaries of their

practice (e.g. Baker, 2013). Due to the nature of the core existential aspects to coaching (outlined in this paper), existential coaches are likely to engage in an exploration of the boundaries of the existential approach to coaching.

When do existential coaches stop coaching existentially or being existential? When do they stop coaching all together? When is the coach crossing over into areas of coaching that are not considered existential or even into other one-to-one practices and to what extent can and should the practitioner remain existential when crossing these lines? Should there be any boundaries or demarcation lines at all as long as the best interest of the client is the main priority? Who, if anybody, should draw them; where and how?

Popovic & Jinks (2013) define a boundary as “something that demarcates one thing from something else. Its purpose is to bring some clarity about what is expected of us, what is acceptable and what isn’t” (p. 132/33) and they differentiate between explicit boundaries (e.g. the state law, manifested in writing) and implicit boundaries (e.g. a coach’s personal, individual code of ethics, which is invisible).

In order to address implicit and explicit aspects of boundaries this paper will provide an overview of the most commonly accepted working definitions of coaching and compare these to existing definitions of existential coaching. This might shed light on how existential coaching is essentially different to other coaching approaches. Exploring differences to other approaches to coaching are, in my view, an essential part of exploring boundaries for the existential coach and it is hoped that explicit boundaries may emerge in the process. However, since every coach inherits a unique set of characteristics, values,

beliefs, professional experience and ethics, the position at which they draw their personal demarcation lines are likely to differ from each others'. So unless a coach ascribes to a written-down, fixed code of ethics, his or her boundaries will be implicit, always in a process of becoming (flexible), and hence guided by personal ethics.

Yet, a by-product of implicit, personal boundaries is uncertainty. The coach cannot look to a fixed set of rules that guide him or her towards best practice. Due to the nature of existential philosophy (which includes accepting uncertainty as an inevitable and necessary aspect of existence) existential coaches are better accustomed to the anxiety that springs from this uncertainty and usually embrace the concept. In practice this is expressed as avoiding fixed methods of practice and engaging with the coaching process as it unfolds. It is therefore explored whether existential coaches may be more flexible with regards to where they see the boundaries of their approach.

Boundaries to existential coaching (what it is not or rather when the line is crossed) are directly related to what existential coaching is, its definitions and the existential coach's role as practitioner. It is important to explore the existential coaching literature with regards to the coach's roles. By 'role' I mean "the function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation" (OxfordDictionaries.com); here: the function of the coach within the relationship; what an existential coach is and does

when he is with the client¹. Or in Heidegger's words: "Wo, womit bin ich, wenn ich *mit* Ihnen bin?" (Heidegger, 1987, p. 145), translated in simple terms as: "Where and what am I when I am with you?" (Cohn, 2002, p. 36).

Above all, however, stands the question whether we (existential coaches) need clearly defined boundaries when working with clients or whether they could be a hindrance to the coaching process. When I am with clients I often do not think about whether what I am doing would be considered existential. Sometimes I am aware that I am not even coaching (as defined by some popular definitions cited later in this paper). However what I am doing within the relationship always happens with informed consent of the client and in his or her best interest (as defined by the contract with my clients). In the two years that I have been practicing coaching within the framework of existential philosophy I have often adopted different roles during the coaching process (often within single sessions) and some of them might have been outside of what is currently considered coaching or considered existentialist. I have done so when I felt it will be helpful for the client and to our relationship, which I consider the foundation of any successful coaching. I believe that sometimes it is necessary for a good coach to go

¹ A role is defined by the oxford dictionary as either "an actor's part in a play, film, etc." or "the function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation" (OxfordDictionaries.com). In this paper and with regards to existential coaching, both definitions are relevant. The latter (function of the practitioner within the coach-client relationship) is used to explore the relatively new field of existential coaching in more depth in order to get a clearer picture as to what an existentially minded coach does. However, given that 'existential' refers to the philosophy of existence and a considerable part of existential coaching not only is *concerned* with being but *consists* of being, the process of exploring roles in existential also involves what a coach 'is', as compared to 'does'. The coach's role may feel like a part that he or she is 'playing'. In this event, the existential concern for authenticity comes into 'play'. I will say more on this in a later section. I see the role of an existential coach as a combination of being and doing.

beyond the boundaries that may fence one's approach. I would therefore consider clearly defined and fixed boundaries for existential coaching (if they exist) an obstacle to the coach-client relationship and hence want to explore where these boundaries are considered to be.

Out of an exploration of the roles that coaches regularly adopt throughout the process we can learn about what coaching is and is not and draw conclusions as to where the boundaries of coaching lie. By examining what makes existential coaching *existential* the second important set of boundaries may emerge.

Existentially informed coaches, counsellors, therapists, consultants and philosophers tend to live by their own rules and adopt a philosophy of questioning everything on an ongoing basis while rejecting dogma. They do not (and cannot as a matter of fact due to its non-existence) follow a leader or subscribe to a unified school of existentialism to give them meaning. They choose to (and have to) create meaning for themselves, everyday. It is therefore likely that each approach to coaching that is informed by existential philosophy will be different and unique as a result of the practitioner being different and unique. The existential framework seems to provide fertile ground for integration of other roles and practices (Jacob, 2013).

It therefore needs to be stated that my own perspective on existential coaching – as fertile ground for integration of elements of other approaches to coaching or even elements from outside coaching - will inevitably inform the discussion of what existential

coaching is and what it is not. I have outlined my perspective on this in detail in Jacob (2013).

To summarize, this paper will provide a short overview of how coaching has been defined, present how existential coaching has been conceptualized in the literature and explore the roles that find mention in the literature, hence exploring what it means to 'be' an existential coach. Through a comparison with coaching in general and a discussion of the value of boundaries from an existential perspective, I will try to establish where the boundaries of existential coaching are, what boundaries mean in existential terms and whether they are useful with regards to the best interest of the client. Questions will be raised about the existential framework's potential for integrating roles beyond coaching and future research is suggested.

A short history of coaching

Existential coaching is a product of existential philosophy, existential psychotherapy and the emergence and development of the field of coaching. In order to appreciate the huge diversity that practitioners brought into the field of coaching and how it may influence and broaden the boundaries of existential coaching, it is important to outline the development of coaching as a psychological discipline.

Until 1974, the year that Timothy Gallwey published the first version of his approach "the inner game" (Gallwey, 1974), coaching was only used in sports (Gallwey, 2002; Downey, 1999; Whitmore, 2002) and only focused on the external; on movement

and the physical sphere. Since then, coaching was still predominantly used in sports but has been underpinned by psychology (Filippi, 1968). Coaching psychology has roots in humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1968), the human potential movement of the 1960's (Spence, 2006) and most recently in the science of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

According to a study by Grant & Jackson (2004), practitioners come to coaching from a wide variety of professional backgrounds such as consulting, managing, executive positions, teaching and sales. In their study, only 5% of the sample had a background in psychology. Similarly, Pinchot & Pinchot, (2000) report that “coaching draws from a variety of well-established disciplines, including psychology, business management, and the leadership training movement” (Berry et al, 2011, p. 243). This confirms the view that coaching draws on a cross-disciplinary methodology (Grant, 2007).

However, the main recognised approaches to coaching in life and organisational settings are psychological and have been recognised as important interventions, which are increasingly applied as well as subject to scientific debate and research (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2010; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008; Stober & Grant, 2006). The field of coaching psychology has invested much effort into establishing an evidence base of what makes coaching effective.² However there is still a “lack of empirical validation of coaching practices (Kilburg, 2004; Lowman, 2005). Much of the existing literature is anecdotal, based on case studies or field studies completed by doctoral students (Kilburg,

² This may have happened in an attempt to re-unite the field of coaching under the label “evidence-based” or to separate approaches to coaching that are proven to be effective from those approaches that were developed without much underlying theoretical foundation or rigorous appliance.

2004; Weller, & Weller, 2004)” (Berry et al, 2011, p. 243). So while there is research on the effectiveness and impact of coaching in general (examining the skills and impact of coaching), there is still a lack of research as to the process, boundaries and overlap to other professions (Forde et al, 2013). "Like the Wild West of yesteryear, this frontier is chaotic, largely unexplored, and fraught with risk, yet immensely promising" (Sherman & Freas, 2004, p. 84). The Wild West in 16th century America didn't have clear boundaries. It was only defined as to the area that the settlers claimed to be theirs; they shifted the line further west as the years went past and the colonisers explored the lands. A similar development can be seen in the field of coaching³. The boundaries have shifted from the initially exclusively physical sphere of sports coaching to include psychological content (such as motivation, wellbeing, goal achievement), tools and techniques that utilised the mind as well as including non-athlete populations. The boundaries have and seem to continue to shift further as coaches explore how far they can take the profession.

Recent developments have even seen the emergence of models to one-to-one practice that integrate coaching and counselling (Popovic & Boniwell, 2007; Popovic & Jinks, 2013). In 2012, the Association of Integrated Coach-Therapist Professionals (AICTP) was founded, a professional body that responded to the call of many practitioners who were already using both coaching, counselling and therapy elements in their work so as to provide the best possible service to their clients. A survey by Baker (2013) found that many coaches spent a considerable time of their supervision time

³ I make no moral or ethical judgements regarding the movement of American settlers. An interesting thought remains the question as to who could be considered the pendent to a native American population with regards to the expansion of boundaries in the field of coaching. Territory has been claimed.

discussing boundaries and their role as practitioners. According to this survey, 30% of counsellors and coaches think that the counselling and coaching should be integrated (Baker, 2013). One participant writes: “I feel that if I was to follow the absolute letter of the boundaries, the client would get less value”. This seems to indicate that many practitioners question the value of their irrespective boundaries. What is needed is support, exchange of experiences, outcome research, ethical guidelines as well as sophisticated integrative models and training based on solid theoretical and philosophical principles⁴.

In order to discuss the value of the boundaries in coaching (which will inform future research), we need to identify where they are with regards to existentialism as well as coaching in general. The boundaries of existential coaching depend on two aspects: existential and coaching. Therefore we need to explore the boundaries of coaching as well as the boundaries of the existential approach in general.

⁴ The only example of such a sophisticated integrative model is outlined in Popovic and Jinks (2013).

Definitions of coaching

A definition should develop a common language (Chollete, 2007), explain the meaning of a concept (Wanicki Landman, 2006) and improve communications. As Stebbins (1987) put it: “The purpose of definitions should be to make complex situations easier to explain in relatively simple terms. To do this, we must recognize the value of flexible and even multiple definitions”. (Stebbins, 1987). If understood in this sense, coaching is indeed extremely valuable as definitions of coaching vary considerably (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005), many are very flexible and there is a multitude of them. However, “due to the diversity and sheer number of individuals offering coaching services, there is a lack of clarity as to what professional coaching really is and makes for an effective and reputable coach” (Grant, 2007, p.26). There is no unified theory of coaching that is flexible enough to account for most (let alone all) approaches to coaching. Approaches vary considerably and definitions of coaching are still subject to much debate (Killburg, 1996; D’Abate et al., 2003). In my view this pluralism in definitions poses considerable problems for coaches to be clear about where the boundaries to their working practice lie. On the other hand I agree with Stebbins (1987, cited above) that definitions should be flexible enough to account for various different approaches as this helps to unite the field of coaching and promotes unity of the field. However the breadth of available coaching definitions leads to less clarity as many definitions contradict each other (e.g. directional coaching vs. non-directional coaching).

Definitions are inherently problematic. The paradox remains that coaches need definitions to understand and conceptualise their approach. In themselves definitions are

limiting, contradictory and restricting but they do provide important guidelines as to how far the practitioner's approach can go and at what point clients should be referred.

The problem with definitions can be demonstrated using the example of a table. It is almost impossible to provide an accurate definition of a table. Even a seemingly all-encompassing definition such as “an article of furniture consisting of a flat, slablike top supported on one or more legs or other supports” (dictionary.reference.com) could be contested. Some table tops might not be flat, an operating table is generally not considered a piece of furniture (depending on the definition of furniture), in some situations other objects or even people might be used as a table and artistic installations or interpretations of a table might defy every aspect of this definition. Also this definition does not distinguish a table from a desk.

How a table can be defined seems to depend on how it is used, which in turn depends on the interaction between the table and the user. Similarly, coaching is accepted by most to be a relationship between two people focusing on the best interest of the client as defined in the contract between coach and client. Yet again, since there is little regulation in the field of coaching, even people who might disagree that the relationship is of much importance can start a coaching business, call themselves life coaches and consequently define what they understand coaching to be⁵. Function and role of the coach depends on how coaching is defined by each individual coach.

⁵ In Appendix A I have put together a collection of definitions of coaching. In order to take into consideration only definitions that have been discussed in the literature and therefore validated to some degree, the definitions listed resulted from a search in the main coaching and coaching psychology texts

Bluckert (2005) analysed commonalities and overlap between definitions of coaching and identified four main aspects of coaching:

- Absence of serious mental health problems (Bluckert, 2005)
- Client as resourceful and whole (Berg & Szabo, 2005)
- Willing to engage in finding solutions (Hudson, 1999)
- Outcome focused fostering self-directed learning through collaboration (Green & Grant, 2003)

Just as with a table, there are specific definitions that work at/in specific times/situations. Existentially, people and their relations (coaching is in essence two people in relation to each other) are always in the process of becoming, meaning that they always change and develop. Therefore, one can argue that definitions of coaching are likely to change depending on who practices it, their views on coaching and their experiences with clients. This notion will be explored in more detail throughout the paper. Most members of the public, when asked about their understanding of coaching still think about athletic coaches whose main characteristic is to correct the athlete's movements and provide valuable advice and direction. In summary, I argue that trying to find a unified definition for the whole of coaching is likely to be of little use. However, an analysis of coaching definitions informs an exploration of the boundaries to existential coaching insofar that clients outside the common factors of coaching identified by

(a.o. Passmore, 2010; Palmer & Whybrow, 2010; Peltier, 2010), journal articles on coaching found in the EBSCO database as well as Google Scholar searches on the world wide web.

Bluckert (2005) would not qualify as suitable clients for existential coaching. In order to see if this assumption holds true, in the next section, definitions of existential coaching will be examined and compared to definitions of coaching general.

Existential Coaching definitions

Existentialists are usually reluctant to put forward fixed definitions of anything as they are aware that people are always in a process of becoming (e.g. Heidegger, 1962, Husserl, 1925, Spinelli, 1989, Van Deurzen, 1997). Coaches are people, clients are people, and the coaching process and approach relies heavily on the relationship and interaction between the two. Since both are always in the process of becoming, coaching (as a relationship between two people) can, from an existential viewpoint, not be defined outside of this relationship. Existential coaching and its boundaries are therefore subject to change and development as the coaching process evolves. As a result, only a small number of definitions for existential coaching have been formulated. Most of what is being written in this section emerged from an engagement with the literature on existential coaching rather than an extract of various definitions.

In my own view, existential coaching is a combination of being and doing with the client. Existential philosophy is a philosophy of human experience of existence (of being in the world with others). Existential therapists and counsellors focus on *being* with their clients providing the environment and relational circumstances for them to develop and take charge of their lives. This is an important part of *existential* coaching. *Coaching*

often takes a more practical approach focusing on ‘doing’ with the client, being solution focused, actively supporting the client on his personal development journey, deriving strategies, brainstorming (some might work with tools and interventions). In my opinion this aspect of coaching should not be absent in existential coaching. For the sake of exploring boundaries to existential coaching that all existential coaches could agree on we need to explore what existential coaches have in common with regards to their way of working.

A common factor is that existential coaching is based on philosophical principles rooted in or shaped by the philosophies of existential thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Buber, Merleau-Ponty and Tillich. While existential philosophers are almost famous for their disagreement with each other on various subject areas, almost all existential thinkers agree that the themes outlined in Box 1 are central to human existence and relevant to every person who is in the world with others:

- Emotions – including existential guilt and existential anxiety (Solomon, 1993; Sartre, 1962; Strasser, 1999)
- Values and Meaning (Frankl, 2006 [1946]; Van Deurzen, 2002)
- Freedom, Responsibility, Facticity and Choice (Sartre, 1958 [1943]; Heidegger, 1962 [1927])
- Uncertainty (Kierkegaard, 1992 [1846])
- Sedimented Beliefs, action patterns and values (Spinelli, 1997a)
- Time and Mortality (Heidegger, 1962 [1927])

Box 1: Six existential concerns (LeBon & Arnaud, 2012, p. 49)

Out of these existential concerns, some key principles have emerged whose relevance has been accepted by most practitioners. They have long informed existential approaches to counselling and psychotherapy and also lie at the core of existential coaching. Box 2 lists some of these key concerns held by existential counsellors and psychotherapists.

- A focus on the concrete, unique and verb-like nature of existence
- Recognition of the place of anxiety as an essential aspect of existence
- Acknowledgement of the finite nature of life and the way in which we are all aware of our own mortality
- An understanding of the freedom to make choices
- Recognition of the limits (facticity) to existence but our capacity to determine its meaning ourselves
- The fundamentally relational nature of life
- Recognition of the way that lived experience is always embodied

Box2: Key concerns of existential counsellors and psychotherapists (Langdridge, 2012, p. 84)

Langdridge's (2012) list is incomplete as it does not include working with the client's worldview, a component of existential practice frequently mentioned in the literature. Personally I have found this aspect most helpful and regard it as a major distinguishable feature of existential practice. Through an exploration of the client's worldview, the person as a whole is taken into account. This important feature follows from the existential assumption that people's issues, problems or goals cannot be viewed in isolation to the whole. Through an exploration of the client's beliefs, values and the experience within his or her four dimensions of being in the world - physical, personal,

social, spiritual (Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011) - the existential practitioner broadens the client's awareness, perspective and possibilities. Spinelli (2005), one of the first practitioners practicing and writing about existential coaching put this in clear language and emphasised this as the first of four key ideas of the approach. He writes: "The whole of the person's worldview, or general stance to life, needs to be properly examined. Worldview includes a wide range of beliefs, needs, values and aspirations. Issues arising from a divided worldview are properly addressed. all interventions that are focused only upon current concerns or felt disturbance will provide, at best, merely a brief and inadequate resolution." (Spinelli, 2005, p. 1)

Another aspect that has been left out by Langdridge is the use and focus on the here and now of the relationship between client and practitioner. Through reflecting back on how the practitioner relates to the client (and vice versa) in the here and now of the session, the client is often able to identify how they are in the world with others. The client tends to be able to identify parallels between his relating to the coach and his relating to people in the world outside of the coaching.

What Langdridge (2012) emphasises clearly and rightly in these seven key aspects of existential practice is the approach's grounding in philosophy and the acceptance of anxiety as an integral part of human existence. This is also reflected in most other attempts to define existential coaching, as the following examples demonstrate. Identifying the key aspects of existential coaching (what existential

coaching is) is important in order to draw conclusions as to the boundaries of existential coaching (what it is not).

“Existential Coaching is a philosophical method of coaching that enables people to get clarity about their lives and make decisions about the practical ways in which they may want to change their actions, beliefs and values.” (NSPC, 2011)

“[Existential coaching is] practically focused and highly accessible. [...It has been] developed from a set of interconnected principles designed to assist clients to more effectively respond to the dilemmas of living and act in greater harmony with their chosen goals and aspirations. [...]

Drawn from contemporary applied psychology and philosophy, these principles provide a straightforward means with which to address those areas of conflict and tension that restrict our potential for personal achievement and diminish our ability to engage in fulfilling relationships with others.” (Spinelli, 2005)

“The existential approach is a philosophical method of dealing with challenges in living. It is rooted in the ideas of several European philosophers [...] concerned at a fundamental level with what it meant to be human and how we could understand human existence. [Existential coaching is a] specific philosophical method of enquiry involving

description, understanding and exploration of the client's reality, known as phenomenology.” (Swift, 2013)

“We define existential coaching as: Coaching informed by existential themes and ideas, the purpose of which is to help the client, who is in a situation where a choice between two or more options has a major impact on their life, and may be unable to make such a choice, becomes more aware of the human condition as it relates to their situation and more able to make an authentic response.” (LeBon & Arnaud, 2012, p. 48)

Langdridge emphasises that these key principles of existential practice go together with the coach’s “understanding of the way in which people are free to choose what to make of their existence within the limits of their being-in-the-world” (Langdridge, 2012, p. 85). In summary, the three core aspects of existential coaching are:

- The use of the phenomenological method
- The application of existential theory (to inform practise)
- A commitment to being goal and solution focussed

The third aspect is particularly important as it sets existential coaching apart from existential therapy (as well as most other forms of therapy). Spinelli (2005) again sums this point up well by writing:

“Existential Coaching stresses that the value and expertise of coaches is not that of supplying the solutions to clients' problems. Instead, the best

coaches offer the necessary mental "space" that will assist their clients in finding their own means to live a good and responsible life. Sometimes, clients discover that creative and liberating results will occur through self-directed changes in behaviour and lifestyle." (p. 1)

While the main writers and practitioners seem to agree on the main themes and elements of existential coaching, its method and process still makes for much debate. This indicates that while many practitioners agree on the key aspects of the approach, its definitions and hence its the boundaries are subject to diversity, change.

Langdrige (2012) and LeBon & Arnaud (2012) for example advocate a rather clearly outlined methodology more in line with the usually very goal-focused and solution oriented agenda that is found in many other coaching approaches, whereas Van Deurzen (2012) and Spinelli (2010), while also emphasising that existential coaching is solution oriented, draw a much more blurry line between coaching and counselling or psychotherapy. Langdrige (2012) writes: "[Spinelli and Van Deurzen] fail to provide a model of coaching practice that reflects the very different mode of client engagement and specified outcomes entailed in coaching" (Langdrige, 2012, p. 85). In my view, every existential practitioner needs to take into account his or her personal professional background, engage with existential philosophy and work out their own personal ethics. The result is likely to be a unique way of coaching existentially that are likely to share its common assumptions.

To what extent elements of psychotherapy and counselling are or should be part of existential coaching is a subject of future research and debate. Exploring boundaries in existential coaching lays the theoretical foundation for future research.

Existential coaching in comparison with coaching in general

Table 1 compares existential coaching to the four aspects of coaching in general that were identified by Bluckert (2005, see above). The only point on which existential coaching differs is that existential philosophy rejects the medical model of mental illness, which tends to explore ‘abnormal conditions’ in human beings in isolation (looking at observable or easily reportable symptoms). An existential view on mental illness includes the person as a whole, always situated and in relation to the world and others. Many cases of depression are therefore a result of being in the world with others, which causes anxiety and can lead to episodes of being that may qualify as clinical depression (Bishop, 2013). No research or literature has been conducted on existential coaches’ willingness to engage with clients suffering from mental health problems. What we know is that existential psychotherapists regard their clients as resourceful and able to engage in finding solutions even though they might qualify for conditions classified by the DSM-5 as mental illness. Coaching coaches share the same view and therefore the boundary with regards to which clients they can work with may be more flexible than in other approaches to coaching.

Coaching in general	Existential Coaching
Absence of serious mental health problems	An existential view on mental illness includes the person as a whole, always situated and in relation to the world and others.
Client as resourceful and whole	Client as resourceful and whole
Willing to engage in finding solutions	Willing to engage in finding solutions
Outcome focused fostering self-directed learning through collaboration	Outcome focused fostering self-directed learning through collaboration

Table 1: Common aspects of coaching (as defined by Bluckert, 2005) in comparison to existential coaching.

If we look a bit closer at some of the definitions that Bluckert (2005) has looked at, a few other aspects of coaching emerge that seem to be mentioned frequently in the coaching literature: Results, maximised potential, performance and achievement, all of which run under a common heading.

- “Unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.” (Whitmore, 2009)
- “A collaborative, solution focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and person growth of the coachee” (Grant, 1999)

- “A professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that support the achievement of extra-ordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team “(ICF, 2005)
- ”The art of facilitating the unleashing of people’s potential to reach meaningful, important objects.” (Rosinski, 2003)
- “Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches.” (Grant & Palmer, 2002)

Hence, the existential approach seems to differ in that it “enables people to gain clarity” (NSPC, 2011) instead of achieving tangible results, so they can choose their way forward on their own. It “assists clients to more effectively respond to the dilemmas of living and act in greater harmony towards their goals” (Spinelli, 2005, p.1) rather than reaching important objects or achieve extra-ordinary results .

A good definition of coaching must highlight how the approach qualifies as coaching (as compared to other talking practices) and how it is different to other coaching approaches. Each of the definitions of existential coaching cited above includes the second aspect through highlighting the application of existential philosophy (an emphasis on the client being able to make choices and its application to greater concern about living). However, they fail to provide a clear understanding of what they understand

coaching to be (as compared to therapy or counselling approaches). It seems therefore that the available formulations of what existential coaching is depend on the available definitions of what coaching in general is (which as we have seen are varied). What remains is a clear distinction to other approaches to coaching with regards to the use of existential philosophy:

- Philosophical method of coaching that enables people to get clarity about their lives and make decisions (NSPC, 2011)
- Developed from a set of interconnected principles designed to assist clients to more effectively respond to the dilemmas of living and act in greater harmony (Spinelli, 2005)
- Coaching informed by existential themes and ideas. major impact on their life (LeBon & Arnaud, 2012)
- Philosophical method of dealing with challenges in living, rooted in the ideas of several European philosophers (Swift, 2013)

What is missing in these definitions (as is in Langdridge's description of the approach) is a clear mentioning of working with the client's worldview, seeing the client as a whole rather than assessing compartments. The importance of working with the client's worldview is usually mentioned when describing the approach, yet missing from attempts to define it or describe it in short, respectively.

We now have a clearer picture as to what the existential approach entails. However, what differentiates existential coaching from other existential practices is less clear. In order to explore boundaries to existential coaching, we need to go one step further and examine what an existential coach is supposed to do and be (the existential coach's role in the coaching process).

Roles within coaching

A role is defined by the oxford dictionary as either “an actor’s part in a play, film, etc.” or “the function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation” (OxfordDictionaries.com). In this paper concerning the boundaries of coaching I mainly focus on the latter. However, with regards to existential coaching, both definitions are relevant. Role as the function of the practitioner within the coach-client relationship is used to explore the relatively new field of existential coaching in more depth in order to get a clearer picture as to what an existentially informed coach does. However, given that ‘existential’ refers to the philosophy of existence and a considerable part of existential coaching not only is *concerned* with being (alive and in the world with others) but *consists* of being (with the client providing the mental space to reflect), the process of exploring roles in existential coaching also involves what a coach ‘is’, as compared to what he or she ‘does’. Furthermore and with regards to the former definition as an actor’s part, the coach’s role may feel like a part that he or she is ‘playing’. This definition has important implications in connection with the existential concern for authenticity. Existential practice is direct, honest and straight forward. Trying to be someone that one is not contradicts existential philosophy and therefore the coach is expected to abide by his own ethics and only adopt roles that are not in conflict with who he or she is as a person (including values, beliefs, competences etc).

What roles are mentioned/described in the literature?

Roles have very little mention in the literature explicitly. Mentions of the function of existential coaches are even less available due to the scarce literature on the topic. Since the last section has demonstrated that existential coaching relies on definitions of coaching in general, this section first explores the roles of coaches in the general coaching literature before comparing the findings to what can be extracted about the *existential coach's* role particularly from the existential coaching literature.

Hardingham (2004) dedicated a whole chapter on the role of the coach and emphasises that "'Coach' is not a single role. [...] a coach might need to fulfil many roles." (Hardingham, 2004, p.79) because every client is different, has different agendas, different needs, different worldviews and relates to the coach in different ways. The same coach will likely be quite different in their practice and way of being with each client and often with the same client in different sessions or even times within the same session. Other authors agree that "[t]he coach should have the ability to move easily among the roles [...]. The ultimate skill of the coach, then, is to assess the moment-to-moment reality that will enable him to be in the appropriate role."(Edgar Schein, 2000, p.3-4).

These roles are the ones that go beyond the basic skills of a coach such as active listening, summarizing, paraphrasing, mirroring, or reframing.

The demarcation line between basic skills (e.g. listening, reflecting back, summarizing etc) and specific roles of coaches (e.g. sounding board, mirror, friend) can be quite blurry and might be subject to debate. For example, as an existential coach I would regard exploring a key part of the basic process of coaching (whether it is exploring the client's view of the world, a specific problem or how he or she experiences being in the world or in a specific environment). Yet the role of 'explorer' is often specifically mentioned in the literature as a role that the coach adopts rather than part of the basic process of coaching. My point is that roles are under-researched and deserve more mention due to their significance in helping to define boundaries to coaching work. A lack of published and available rigorous qualitative and quantitative analysis on this, prevents this paper from drawing conclusions as to whether or not these roles are merely elements of coaching or whether coaches draw distinct lines between these roles. The field of coaching will benefit from a series of interviews with coaches from all major approaches exploring their perceived role as a coach. Findings should be compared with qualitative (text analysis) and quantitative (factor analysis) research findings extracting roles from case studies, preferably from the interviewed coaches. The present basic examination of the literature aims to provide a critical overview of the literature on roles in coaching, which may act as a starting point for future research. Table 2 provides an overview of the various roles that have been mentioned in the general peer reviewed coaching literature and leading textbooks in the field.

Role	What the role entails	References
Sounding Board Objective Outsider & Talking Partner	“Someone to listen and respond as they talk through different ideas and possible courses of action. “a trusted ally with whom you can blow off steam” (Reeves, 2007, p. 89)	Hardingham, 2004 Sperry, 2008 Reeves, 2007
Safe Container	Coaching as a safe place to vent emotions and intense feelings. Giving the client the feeling that they have been heard, understood and taken seriously with the confidence that confidentiality is being upheld and they will not be judged as a lesser person as a result.	Hardingham, 2004
Conscience	Coach to remind the client of things, make sure he doesn’t forget, check up on progress etc without taking responsibility for the client’s actions or non-actions.	Hardingham, 2004
Teacher Educator Mentor	Passing on knowledge. Introducing relevant theories or models. Use sparingly but “it is certainly ridiculous to avoid it, out of some purist commitment to non-directive coaching.” (Hardingham, 2010, p.85) Mentoring combines teaching and other coaching roles such as explorer, challenger and professional friend.	Hardingham, 2004 Hanaway, 2012 Forde et al, 2013 Barner, 2011
Challenger	Honest challenge of client’s view or action. Helping to identify sedimented beliefs and behaviours. “Tuning out” in order to address conflicts in client’s worldview.	Hardingham, 2004 Spinelli, 2005 Hanaway, 2012
Professional Friend Fellow Traveller	Coach as an equal that is trusted, interested, caring. Sharing experiences, keeping company, empathising and being a fellow traveller on their journey. Yet the focus is always on the client’s best interest.	Hardingham, 2004 Yalom, 2004? Therapy
Process Consultant Performance-Consultant	Coaching for the executive agenda: Offer insight, perspective and feedback on ideas (Sperry, 2004) Brand advisor (Barner, 2011)	Schein, 2000 Stern, 2004 Fitzgerald, 2013, Whitherspoon & White, 1996 Sperry, 2004 Barner, 2011

Content Expert	The Coach “must be versed in the business and the skills the leader needs in order to succeed. Requires “essential knowledge and expertise in business” (Stern, 2004, p.156) organizational translator (Barner, 2011)	Schein, 2000 Grant, 2007 Stern, 2004 Barner, 2011
Diagnostician Assessor		Schein, 2000 Forde et al, 2013, Barner, 2011
Prescriber Instructor	Transactional approach. Coach is directive and suggests new perspectives or courses of action. Can be seen as directly related to the role of challenger (Hardingham, 2010, p. 84)→ Spotting areas that need changing and confronting the client on them. Can both liberate or paralyse, so needs to be used with caution.	Schein, 2000 Goldsmith, 2000 Mundy, 2012 Hardingham, 2010
Explorer Phenomenological Inquirer Clarifier	An ontological perspective: Explorer without judgement in the here&now. Role as trying to explore phenomenologically HOW someone is being in the world (being with vs. being for (Doing with a purpose) (Spinelli, 1997, p. 8)	Whitmore, 1992 Grant, 2012 Spinelli, 1997 Hardingham, 2004
Therapist Counsellor	Reeves (2007): “The focus of this coaching role is on the short-term emotional needs of the leader rather than the performance needs” (p. 89)	Reeves, 2007 MA Existential Coaching course description Linley & Joseph, 2004 West & Milan, 2001 Langdridge, 2012 Bluckert, 2005 Bresser & Wilson, 2010 Carrol, 2003 Summerfield, 2002 Williams & Irving 2001
Facilitator	help them achieve their personal aspirations (Grant, 2012, p. 146)	Forde et al, 2013 Grant, 2012
Supporter Carrier	“carry him or her through the needed changes to implement organizational strategy or transform the people or the business to a place more capable of achieving career and business objectives.” (Stern, 2004)	Mundy, 2012 Stern, 2004

Performance Booster	This role finds frequent mentioning in the literature, however it may incorporate many different roles under this heading. It and it is hence not clear what exactly it entails and can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. “includes experimentation with new leadership strategies, feedback on effectiveness, and a relentless comparison of the present to the ideal state (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).” (Reeves, 2007, p. 89)	Sperry, 2004 Reeves, 2007 Barner, 2011 Whitherspoon & White, 1996 Stern, 2004 Grant, 2012
Mirror	Reflecting back what has been said or done by the client as to gain more clarity and awareness	Bresser & Wilson, 2010 Hardingham, 2004
Celebrator	Highlighting achievements and taking stock of successes	Hardingham, 2004
Guru	“saying simple things that strike a chord and suddenly clarify something important” (Hardingham, 2004, p. 87)	Hardingham, 2004

Table 2: Roles of a coach mentioned in the literature as part of definitions or descriptions as to the function of the coach within the coach-client relationship

The main roles that emerge from the literature and the main coaching definitions seem to be that of facilitator, performance booster, consultant and therapist or counsellor.

Other roles that were found outside peer-reviewed journals and textbooks depict the coach as:

- Sponsor
- Awakener (existential - spiritual dimension of worldview)
- Cheerleader (Positive reframing)
- Business partner
- Detective (Explorer)
- Guru (Mentor)
- Healer
- Role model
- Drill sergeant (Instructor)
- Accountability partner (conscience; existential – responsibility)

For the sake of exploration in this paper I will not fully critically evaluate the roles that have been found in my review of the literature. The value of this section lies in laying a stepping stone for future research by pointing out which roles find mention and may therefore be relevant (to coaching in general and existential coaching in particular). When a coach adopts roles outside of what has been mentioned in Table 2, then it may be that the coach is practicing outside the boundaries of coaching.

The role of counsellor/therapist in coaching – boundary issues

The most frequently mentioned role that was found in the literature is the role of counsellor or therapist. Therefore, using counselling or therapy skills and methods seems to be an essential part of many different approaches to coaching. Existential coaching training, as will be demonstrated later, includes various elements of therapy and counselling. Whether there is a grey area or a demarcation line remains the most debated issue regarding boundaries and roles in coaching.

While some authors state that coaching merely includes elements of e.g. therapy and counselling (the coach *temporarily* adopts the role of therapist/counsellor), this does not mean that they advocate the coach permanently takes on the role of therapist or counsellor. As Langdrige (2012) noted:

“I argue that it is not good enough to simply take ideas from existential counselling and psychotherapy and then call this existential coaching when applied within a different context. [...Coaching entails a] very different mode of client engagement and specified outcomes. [..It] must be

a distinct form of practise to psychotherapy and therefore develop modes of practise that reflect the key distinctions between coaching and psychotherapy.” (Langdrige, 2012, p. 84-85)

In contrast, Jopling (2008) argues that there is a fuzzy space between coaching and counselling and that the key distinctions are not that clear. Particularly with regards to executive coaching (an environment where one would expect little involvement from counsellors) she highlights a main concern of executives to deal with anxiety and other hidden organisational challenges. She writes with regards to the existential coach’s role:

“I have often, as a coach and counsellor experienced the client needing the expert to be brought into the space – often due to their anxiety at not-knowing or their lack of confidence in them self to find the answer. I believe it is the coach’s job to help them understand this anxiety and find ways to refine the questions they are asking until the answer presents itself to them.” (Joplin, 2008, p. 3)

Spinelli and Horner (2008) argue that roles vary as a result of our inter-relation and that counselling and therapy skills therefore are a natural role of existential coaches:

“Unlike many other coaching programmes that only focus upon broadly positive, self-actualising qualities and possibilities for each client, Existential Coaching’s approach also recognises and gives equal emphasis to the divided stances, aims and aspirations that may well exist as

competing values and beliefs held by each client.” (Spinelli & Horner, 2008, p. 1)

Direct vs. Directive – Expert advice or collaboration?

Mundy (2012) describes the differences between coaching approaches (comprised of different sets of roles) and found that “the most noticeable difference in coaches’ practice was in their approach to professional development, which ranged from expert-driven to collaborative.” (Mundy, 2012, abstract). Whitmore’s (1992) *Ask not Tell* approach comes to mind, which first delineated the difference between the coach as instructor and explorer. It is not clearly mentioned whether coaches at the extremes of Mundy’s (2012) sample were without exception directional throughout (or collaborative respectively) or if they adopted these roles predominantly while being open to switch roles as the situation or contract demands. As Popovic and Jinks write: “In between being completely directive and being completely client-led, there is a whole range of ways of working with the client” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p.140). Again, the boundaries between roles are not clear.

However, Popovic and Jinks (2013) advocate to always let the role of the practitioner be the result of a collaborative effort with the client. It is hence emphasised that the working alliance between practitioner and client is one of the most important building blocks of any effective coaching relationship (Murphy, 2005). In support of this argument, they refer to Bordin (1979) being the first to put the relationship at the centre

of a successful helping process in therapy. This has been found to yield positive outcomes in therapy (Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Martin, Garske & Davis, 2000) and has been generally considered to be transtheoretical, meaning applicable to coaching also (Horvath & Luborsky, 1993; Stiles et al., 2002). Other authors, theorists and researchers (writing about the working alliance with regards to coaching) have supported the notion that the relationship is the most important factor to successful one-to-one practices (Lowman, 2005, Popovic & Jinks, 2013; Dryden, 2006).

These findings support the argument that the specific role the practitioner adopts may be secondary when compared to maintaining a healthy working alliance. In my opinion, the coach should be encouraged (if appropriate) to shift roles and go beyond traditional boundaries in order to uphold an effective working alliance. In order to maintain a constructive working alliance the coach may need to move between roles. Which roles these may be depends on the client's agenda and the contract that emerged out of a collaborative effort between coach and client.

Some questions that future research should be concerned about are:

- Which roles are essential for coaches?
- Some roles might be mentioned frequently but adopted for very little time during the coaching process. How much time do practitioners from different approaches spend in particular roles?
- What controversies exist around the key roles that have been identified?
- How can these roles inform boundaries, ethical considerations and definitions of coaching in general and existential coaching in particular?

Boundaries between roles

Roles in coaching are not well defined. Boundaries between different roles that a coach may adopt during sessions are often fuzzy. For example, when Hardingham (2010) describes the coach's role as sounding board, she includes the coach as 'explorer', 'mirror' and 'clarifier'. These are described as separate roles by other authors. Considering another example, Sperry (2008) describes the coach as someone who "questions and engages the client on major issues" (p. 35). He puts this role under the heading 'Objective Outsider and Talking Partner'. When comparing this role with other roles, the heading corresponds to the role of sounding board. However, looking at the *description* of the role, Sperry delineates a 'Challenger', 'Professional Friend' and 'Explorer'. I cite this example to demonstrate how unclear the language still is with regards to roles in coaching.

There is currently no research on range, categories, frequency, amount of time spent in certain roles etc. As mentioned earlier, rigorous research methods should be applied to investigate further. An exploration of boundaries in existential coaching is dependent on an exploration of the various roles that the coach adopts in comparison to the practice of other coaching approaches as well as other helping-by-talking practices.

Fairley (2004) has produced a graphical illustration of the boundaries across various one-to-one professions (see figure 1). In his conception, very little overlap exists between coach, facilitator, friend, mentor, therapist or counsellor, trainer, and consultant.

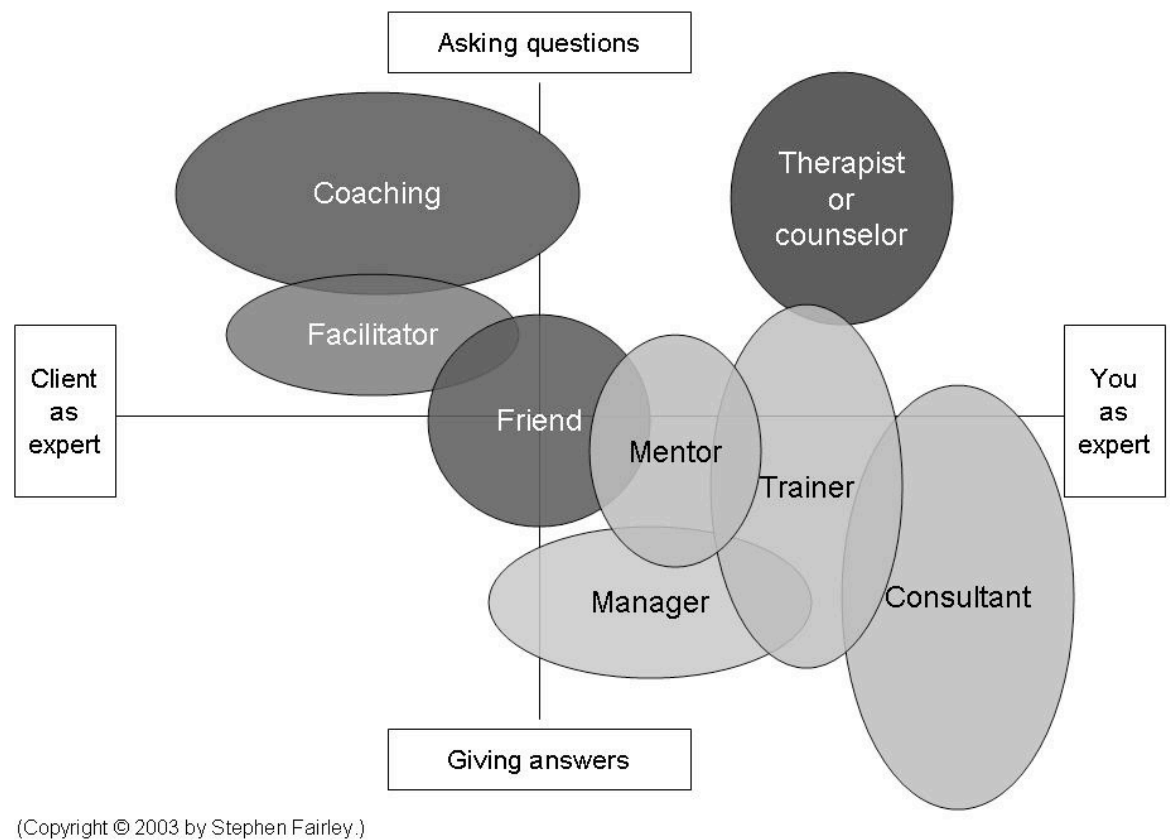


Figure 1: Roles in one-to-one practices (Fairley, 2004)

In contrast, my review of the literature regarding roles in coaching produced a picture in which all of these roles were mentioned to be part of coaching at certain times (see figure 2).

Grant (2007) sums up this integrative view of coaching by writing:

“The issue is not which of these approaches is right and which is wrong, but rather which best helps the client reach their goals, and which is most

apt at particular points in any specific coaching conversation. [...] The skilful and experienced coach knows when to move.” (Grant, 2007, p.34)

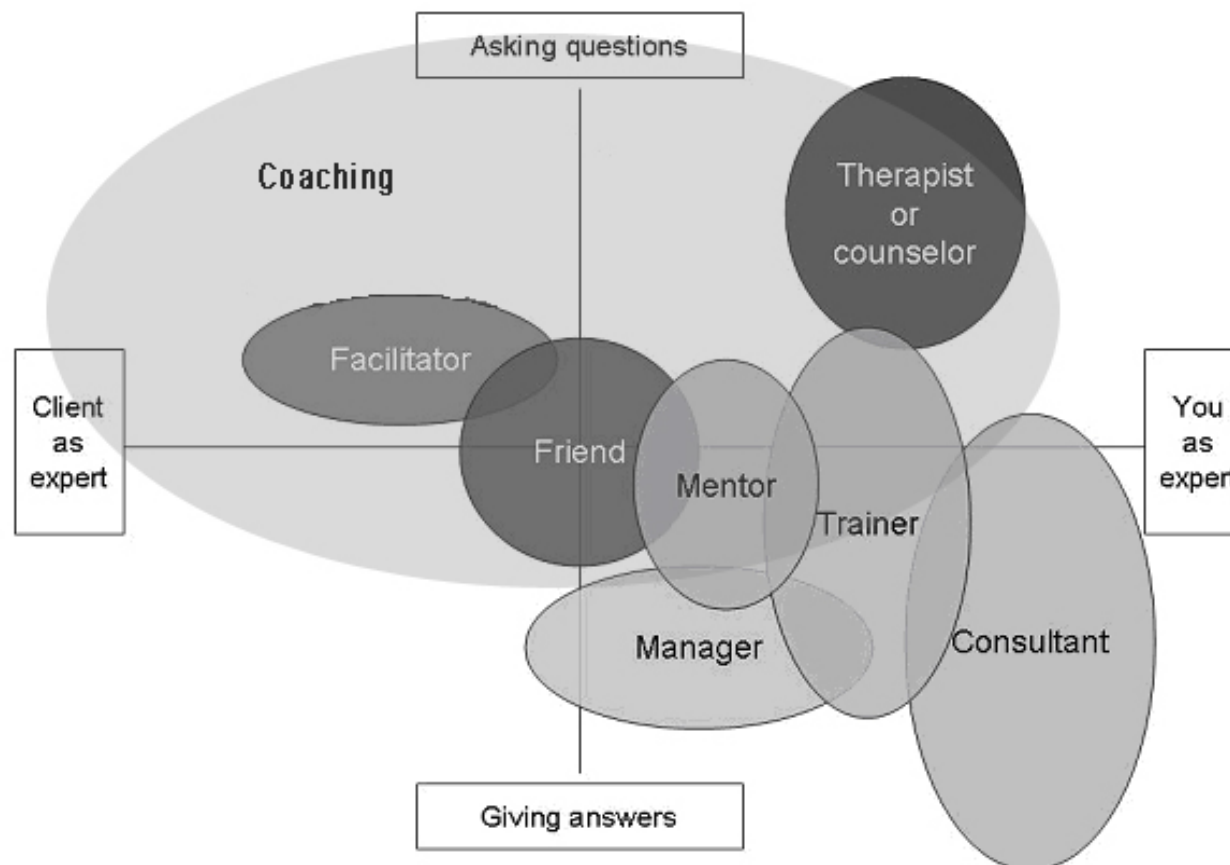


Figure 2: Roles within coaching mentioned in the coaching literature in comparison to Fairley (2004).

Hardingham similarly concludes in line with other authors that “a good coach will move freely between these roles” (Schein, 2000, p. 3-4; Bluckert, 2005, p. 3-4) and is “limited only by the underlying ethic of coaching and the imagination of coach and

coachee.” (Hardingham, 2004, p. 87). Ethical considerations are therefore of utmost importance and will be discussed in the next section.

The coaching process involves a constant integration of a multitude of roles. Practitioners that try to stick to one or a few roles only are likely to limit themselves in their practice and do the client a disservice.

Existential practice seems to be naturally integrative as most existential coaches integrate other approaches. Shared aspects of their work are the underlying framework of existential philosophy and working with the earlier mentioned components of existential coaching (such as the use of the phenomenological method, an awareness of existential themes and working with worldviews). In the following I list some examples.

Existential coaching and integration

Langdrige (2006, 2012) describes his own integrative model of existential coaching with solution a focused aspect, Jacob (2012) embeds positive psychology within an existential framework, Reed (2012) wrote “Existential first, NLP second”; and the only full length publication offering *Perspectives on Existential Coaching* (Van Deurzen & Hanaway, 2012) consists largely of a collection of chapters in which different authors outline their own unique integrative approaches of existential philosophy with different forms of coaching such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Mirea, 2012), Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Reed, 2012), Mindfulness (Nanda, 2012), Transactional Analysis (Lewis, 2012), Embodiment and Focusing (Madison, 2012), Attachment Theory (Fraser, 2012)

and even in conjunction with psychometric assessment tools such as the Myers-Briggs type indicator of personality or FIRO-B (Pringle, 2012).

Every coach needs to discuss what his or her roles are individually. “Discuss your views of what coaching is and is not, what it can and cannot accomplish, as well as a preview of its methods, *as you see them.*” (Peltier, 2001, p. 15, italics added). It is important to be clear about boundaries. These may be general boundaries for the profession, boundaries prescribed by a code of ethics that one ascribes to or individual boundaries that need to be assessed and reflected upon on an ongoing basis.

Existential considerations with regards to roles

How do the identified roles fit into the existential framework? Many of the roles mentioned in Table 2 are directly connected to existential coaching as outlined in the previous section on definitions of existential practice; some are not compatible with existential practice. Examining roles that are part of coaching in general but stand in conflict with existential guidelines indicate clear boundaries to existential coaching.

For example, an existential attitude towards coaching stands in contrast to a coach’s role as:

- Performance booster (which happens naturally as a result of the process of exploration or is initiated by the client. However, this depends much on the coach’s approach. Some of the existential coaches mentioned in this paper already highlighted a solution and goal focus, even using fairly systematic

methods. These practitioners might feel more comfortable in a performance boosting role)

- Instructor (An existential coach is direct, not directive and instructing the client on how to go about their issues)
- Consultant (An existential coach is direct and directional [Van Deurzen, 2012]. So, rather than giving the client advice and solutions, they are indeed being consulted with regards to philosophical issues such as what it means to be alive and in the world with others, what some thinkers have to say about it or which theory might correspond well with the dilemma they are facing at the moment. Without merely being given solutions, the client is being consulted in a way that enables him or her to find solutions to their problems)
- Diagnostician (although the coach does explore the client's worldview, which may be regarded as an assessment, this does not happen in a diagnostic way but through phenomenological exploration and mirroring. This is a process that the client owns instead of the coach assessing and then telling the client how he is in the world).

In comparison, roles that correspond well with existential practice are:

- Phenomenological Inquirer (“the attempt to remain as open as possible to what presents itself to our relational experience.” [Spinelli, 1997: 8])

- Fellow Traveller (Yalom [2002] describes the relationship between existential therapist and client as fellow travellers. This fits well into an existential coaching framework)
- Challenger (An existential coach will take the whole person into account listening particularly for underlying dilemmas and conflicts in the client's worldview. Challenging contradictions and discrepancies in the client's belief system, his or her assumptions about reality and their balance across the four existential dimensions (four worlds) is an important role for the existentially minded coach.
- Mirror (While mirroring is one of the most basic coaching techniques, existential coaches particularly use feedback and mirroring the client as a means for exploration and to raise awareness in the client as to how they relate to people in general. By mirroring I do not mean here the technique of mirroring body language as an indicator of sympathy and connection, but feeding back a client's narratives in one's own words.)
- Guru (in several case studies of existential therapy the practitioner introduced a slice of philosophy into the conversation which was then taken up by the client in sometimes profound ways. What was initially nothing more than a mere connection made by the practitioner between the client's current dilemma and a particular thinker, book, concept or theory, was taken up by the client as profound guidance. I believe that existential coaching is prone to this

kind of effect as a result of the approach's direct connection to and roots in philosophy)

As can be seen, many roles that coaches adopt during the process correspond well with an existential approach to coaching. However, when existential coaches find themselves in the role of performance booster, instructor, consultant or diagnostician then (subject to the definition of the role) they are in danger of breaching a boundary to the existential approach (not to coaching in general). My take on this is that when at these cross roads, existential practitioners need to evaluate their role and why they have adopted it. Adopting the role of consultant might be a powerful role to adopt and might be the best service for a client in a specific situation. While some roles do not correspond with an existential attitude towards coaching (as suggested by its underlying philosophy), existential coaches acknowledge that people are always situated. The role of the coach therefore is evaluated in the context of the specific situation. Encountering a boundary in existential coaching is an invitation to evaluate the practice rather than a no-go area. So there might be a time the practitioner needs to let go of their role as *existential* coach in order to be of best service to the client as defined by the collaboratively established contract.

Existential guidelines as a role model for existential coaches

Peltier (2001) was the first to explicitly formulate guidelines for existential coaches (see Table 4)⁶. From these, we can infer roles for the existential coach in particular. The ten guidelines can be taken as a role model for coaches that want to practice informed by existential philosophy.

Table 4. Peltier's (2001) Ten Existential Guidelines

1. Honor individuality	6. Value responsibility taking
2. Encourage choice	7. Conflict and confrontation
3. Get going	8. Create and sustain authentic relationships
4. Anticipate anxiety and defensiveness	9. Welcome and appreciate the absurd
5. Commit to something	10. Clients must figure things out their own way

The following paragraph in my opinion highlights one of the most crucial aspects of existential coaching that Peltier mentions, the use of the phenomenological method (bracketing assumptions about the client and experiencing them freshly):

“Avoid typing people. Don’t put too much stock in what others say about your clients. Experience them freshly for yourself. It is likely, of course, that you will have similar impressions and come to similar conclusions, but you must do this for yourself. Look for the truth about your clients inside of yourself.” (Peltier, 2001, p. 164)

⁶ With regards to the more common sense definition of a role with regards to acting, Peltier writes: “We are actors, not spectators in life’s adventures” (Peltier, 2001, p.164).

The use of the phenomenological method is significant because it is the only 'method' that existential coaches use and find mentioned by all authors outlining existential coaching.

More on roles is written by Van Deurzen, the founder of the world's first MA in Existential Coaching in London and author of the first full length publication on Perspectives on Existential Coaching (Van Deurzen & Hanaway, 2012). In her solo chapter on the framework of existential coaching, Van Deurzen (2012) outlines eleven cornerstones of existential practice and in the following describes further her vision of what existential coaching is about. In Box 3 I have summarized and extracted the role of the existential coach with regards to her cornerstones of practice:

Cornerstones of existential coaching – The role of the existential coach

- Direct and directional, in search for clear direction, purposeful
- Clear and steady, help people progress and explore what they want. Focus conversation, demonstrate clarity of mind and courage of spirit, enable people to rebalance themselves
- Engage with client's issue. Let ourselves be touched by client's preoccupations. Operate from heart & mind
- Don't get lost in details. Bring perspective and depth back into the emerging picture. Philosopher. Use resources of overview, global understanding and wisdom, reconnect client with the bigger picture
- Use tools and instruments (such as four worlds)
- Keep clarity about the paradoxes and conflicting demands on each world. Tuning into sensations, feelings, thoughts, intuitions
- Move backwards and forwards between talking about things, others, self being self or being. Change will follow naturally
- Observe, draw attention, describe, juxtapose, contrast, focus, understand, make connections, using dialectics as a basic principle
- quest for blind spots and bad faith
- Help clients to choose productive narratives. Explode useless illusions, respect necessary ones. Be guided by a search for truth
- Enable the client to balance forward through contradictions

And a few more:

- Encourage person to quench own thirst for understanding and truth (p.16)
- Make it possible for clients to begin and think about themselves in a different way
- Encourage client to play around with new ideas in safe coaching environment before taking them outside (p.17)
- Self-evaluate and reflect! Face challenges and anxiety oneself, adopt existential attitude (Van Deurzen, 2002, 2009, 2010, 2012)

Box 3: The role of the existential coach based on 11 cornerstones of existential coaching (Van Deurzen, 2012, p.11-13)

Why do we switch roles?

From an existential perspective, roles vary as a result of our inter-relation (Spinelli and Horner, 2008). Human beings are free to choose and therefore flexible in who they are at any given moment. We are not boxed into one style of coaching, one

identity or role. Coaches are able to adapt to any situation and change their attitude, role, style, technique or the tools they are using depending on the client's needs, the contract or how they relate to the client. Outside the coaching, people adapt different roles and identities at different times, especially as leaders and the coach will inevitably do the same. I don't see this as a negative at all. In contrast I think it's not only normal, but very useful. As Peltier says: "This is not simply phoniness [to switch between different roles and functions]; it is a function of 'background,' of role and relationship." (Peltier, 2010, p. 165).

In summary, many roles that most coaches adopt on a regular basis across many different approaches are also shared by existential coaches. Some stand in contrast to the existential approach. Becoming aware of the roles that one adopts as an existential coach in combination with a critical engagement as to whether these roles are in harmony with one's own style of practice and personal definitions of what existential coaching is, illuminate when certain boundaries are met. However, roles and definitions may not provide a full account as to where the boundaries of existential coaching lie (when the practitioner is not coaching anymore or not coaching existentially anymore). In the next section, I'll engage with what has been written about boundaries in particular.

Boundaries

A boundary can be defined as “something that demarcates one thing from something else. Its purpose is to bring some clarity about what is expected of us, what is acceptable and what isn’t” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p132/33). This comes close to the purpose of a definition and indeed fulfils a very similar purpose (to bring more clarity). Both inform the role of the coach and vice versa.

It is important to note that boundaries explored in this paper are the coach’s boundaries in relation to his or her practice rather those between coach and client. When boundaries are defined as between coach and client, other roles emerge such as timekeeping (Bresser & Wilson, 2010) and respecting the boundaries with regards to the frequency of sessions, location, confidentiality and contracting (Popovic & Jinks, 2013). Each of these boundaries ensures that client and coach preserve a working relationship (the working alliance) which is focused on the client’s goals while factors outside of this relationship do not impact negatively on the process by confusing the coach with other rules. For example, when the client demands sessions more than once a week (frequency), wants to meet in an inappropriate location (location), frequently expects to go overtime (timekeeping) or the coach breaks confidentiality or works outside the agreed contract without informed consent, then the collaborative aspect of the working alliance is violated, the relationship is likely to break down and the coaching prone to failure. These boundaries need to be respected as they

“create a framework within which the relationship can develop and thrive and which the client and practitioner can both refer back to. [...] From a professional perspective boundaries are about the practitioner being clear with themselves and their clients about what might be expected from each other and therefore communicating that they are reliable and trustworthy, which helps to establish rapport.” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p. 132)

Some boundaries were already implied by the definitions and roles mentioned in earlier sections. For example, Bresser and Wilson (2010) describe the role of the coach as one of managing process rather than content. Therefore a boundary is reached when the coach is directive and inquiring about content without a clear link to the client’s agenda. They write: “If coaches allow themselves to drift over the line into content, for instance by giving advice or asking questions out of curiosity, they are no longer coaching” (Bresser & Wilson, 2010, p. 16). While they do see value in giving advice sometimes, they emphasise asking permission from the client. This so called informed consent is one of the most important aspects and will surface again in the course of this section.

I argue that the issue of boundaries lies at the heart of existential practice because fixed boundaries are very often used to avoid anxiety (not only in coaching). Some anxiety is inevitable when faced with uncertainty caused by leaving the known grounds of where the coach feels comfortable and safe. When following a scheme, questionnaire, method or even a few loose guidelines, a coach has a framework to fall back on in case

coach or client feel stuck in the process of coaching. To work without boundaries requires a great deal from the practitioner as they cannot prepare for a session. Being phenomenologically open to whatever might happen next is a prime example of uncertainty and I argue that existential coaches, as a result of their training and involvement with existential philosophy, are better suited to embrace and work with this anxiety and hence with looser boundaries. Since existential coaches work with the here-and-now, phenomenologically minded and self-reflective on an ongoing basis, they are well able to deal with boundary issues as they arise and do not necessarily need to restrict their approach before they start coaching.

However, working with clients without any boundaries to the used approach (boundaries between client and coach are vital) might impact negatively on the focus of the relationship. It is important for both practitioner and client to be clear about the framework in which they are working *together* to be able to refer to their mutually agreed goals. Boundaries between coach and client ground both client and practitioner and their relationship together. However, when it comes to the boundaries of the coach's approach to coaching, they can be much more flexible and hence offer the practitioner a greater, less restricted way of working with the client. Popovic & Jinks, 2013 suggest that "it is fine to be flexible with the boundaries in the way that we describe as long as:

1. The client knows where they are at the outset and at any given time during the course of the work
2. They understand the purpose and rationale behind any change in boundaries
3. You have their informed consent”

(Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p. 144)

I want to add a fourth aspect as a condition for working flexible boundaries:

4. The practitioner invests effort on an ongoing basis to be aware of his personal skills and competences and act in the client’s best interest at all times (the practitioner’s work ethics), e.g. through engagement in supervision.

I believe that existential coaches can be more flexible with boundaries than other approaches to coaching. While those approaches to coaching that utilize systematic models and fairly fixed routines, methods or processes such as Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) can often draw clear boundaries to other coaching approaches and other one-to-one approaches, existential practice (as mentioned before) is not a method but an approach (DeLuca, 2008⁷) and therefore cannot benefit from the safety of a methodology that provides clear guidelines as to what to do when and in which order. Even when this schema is very open, it does provide a great deal of safety for the practitioner. Existential coaches are ‘out in the open’, *being with* the client (as compared to *doing with*) and having nothing to fall back on but their own existential ethical framework. The coach’s own flexible but coherent ethical framework is probably the most important aspect of existential practice and therefore included as a fourth condition for approaching the coaching relationship with flexible boundaries. By existential ethics I mean a constant

⁷ “The existential orientation to coaching is not a method. Method implies a step-by-step systematic process, something very much planned and linear, with a definite proven procedure (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>).“ (DeLuca, 2008, p. 26)

phenomenological engagement in self-reflection, the challenging of one's own assumptions and an openness to change. Ethics are being taught on the only MA programme in Existential Coaching - not as a fixed set of guidelines, but - as a set of questions that urge coaches to reflect on their practice, their own values and their understanding of who they are as a coach and what coaching entails for them personally. This is challenging as it is difficult, if not impossible, to formulate clearly. Herein lies its limitation as well. Personal ethics cannot be shared and are difficult to communicate.

Ethics

The topic of ethics is a complex subject area and can be written about at great length. For the purpose of simplicity and in order to make a clear argument, only the aspects of ethics will be mentioned here that are directly related to the subject of boundaries.

To refer or not to refer?

At the heart of the matter concerning boundaries, roles and definitions lies the question whether or not to refer, and if yes, when and where to refer a client to. This is one of the most important ethical questions that a coach can ask themselves (and ask the client) because it is known that coaches may cause harm to clients with unidentified mental health issues (Berglas, 2002; Naughton, 2002; Cavanagh, 2005). Most coaches are either not qualified or not willing to work with clients that suffer from clinically

diagnosed mental illness. This has been identified earlier as one of the main differences between coaching and psychotherapy or counselling.

While mental and psychological disturbance requires careful clinical consideration, in my opinion coaches can still work with the mentally ill as long as they are willing and able to engage in the process of coaching; meaning that they are able to reflect on themselves and the world around them, willing to engage in finding solutions. I argue that existential coaches can be a bit more flexible with this boundary than other coaches because existential philosophy rejects the medical framework for conceptualising human suffering and hence many clients that other coaches would reject due to their diagnosis as mentally ill might be suitable for existential work. The coach obviously needs to be extremely careful and well supervised when working with clients that may qualify for mental illness. In appendix D I have collected a more complete list of existential assumptions underlying existential coaching practice.

An interesting question for future research is whether existential coaches (or coaches in general) refer⁸ clients when what they do is not regarded as *coaching* anymore (by external definition) or when the coach does not feel *capable or willing* of working with that client anymore for reasons guided by personal reflection on ethics and good practice.

As an example, a client might present a difficult decision that he has to make about whether to leave a current job. After two productive sessions the client might reveal that he has been diagnosed with clinical depression but that the coaching sessions

⁸ I use the term referral in the context of coaching as a suggestion to the client. Referring a client, for a coach, means proposing that therapy or counselling is an option that the client might want to consider.

really help to make decisions. It was brought up after the third session had been cancelled and postponed several times and the coach inquired. The client expresses a wish to work together but needs to be in the right frame of mind for coaching. In a collaborative effort coach and client establish ground rules for their work together so that the depression would not interfere with their work and ensure that the coaching remains within the boundaries of the approach.⁹

German existential philosopher Heidegger (1987) proposed that practitioners¹⁰ working with clients one-to-one need to reflect constantly on who they are with client in the current relationship (usually in the here and now). I understand this as being aware as to the role that the coach adopts with each client and throughout the course of the sessions. Jopling (2008) writes:

“Heidegger in his Zollikon seminars (where, interestingly, he was teaching psychiatrists what to do from an existential phenomenological perspective) highlighted a key question we should ask in exploring our being-with and relating to others when he says that we need to ask ourselves “Wo, womit bin ich, wenn ich mit Ihnen bin?” (Heidegger, 1987: 145) This literally translates as 'Where, with what am I, when I am with you?' Cohn

⁹ Some boundaries, such as working with a client that self-harms, may be subject to state law or part of ethical codes by official bodies such as the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In these cases the range of freedom and personal negotiation of boundaries by the coach is limited.

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that while Heidegger was writing about this topic with regards to psychiatry, it is equally valid for existential coaches.

simplifies this slightly by interpreting it as ‘where and what am I when I am with you?’ (2002: 36).“ (Joplin, 2008, p. 4)

Once the coach is at a cross roads with the client (when e.g. a complex deeper issue has been uncovered or the client has asked for direct, consultant-like advice), the most important thing with regards to ethics is to collaboratively work out a way to proceed together. Options such as referral, adopting a different role on the part of the coach or any other course of action needs to be chosen with informed consent from the client.

“[F]or the sake of clients and practitioners alike, an open and clear formulation of one’s way of working is required.” (Popovic and Jinks, 2013, p. 2)

This formulation does not only apply to the initial session with the client or an explanation of one’s way of working on the coach’s website or via an explanation during an initial phone conversation, but it needs to be an ongoing process. The dynamics of the relationship are always in a process of becoming; always changing and developing. The coach needs to be aware of these dynamics, use them and reflect them back so as to provide awareness to the client of how he or she is experienced in the micro-world of the coaching relationship which will be informative of how possibly others experience the client in the macro world. Working openly, honestly and collaboratively with the client

also enables the coach to create informed consent in terms of which roles he or she is to adopt throughout the course of the relationship.

I once met a client for the first time who then told me that she has been depressed for the past 10 years but that she had a specific issue that she wanted to deal with. She also told me that she might start crying during the session. Faced with this information, I then informed her about my approach, my personally defined limitations as to how much emotional content I can hold and how much I am willing to work with the client's past. Together we set some ground rules as to what extent and under which circumstances we will be able to work together and at what point or for which particular issues I might need to refer her to somebody else. Whenever the dynamics of the relationship changed during the next few hours, it was addressed. In this process the client made important connections to times when the dynamics of relationships with people outside the coaching had changed but hadn't been addressed. She discovered a pattern in how she related to people around her. Her depressive attitudes were insignificant to the coaching process during these two hours.

Similarly, Popovic & Jinks (2013) recommend negotiating the unexpected as and when it occurs and engage with thinking about boundaries on an ongoing basis. They write:

“We might ask what we should be thinking about so that our boundaries with clients will be safe, ethical, and meaningful, and managed with purpose and intentionality.” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p. 135)

Prioritise the working alliance!

As mentioned above, the relationship between client and coach is often called the working alliance (Bordin, 1979) and includes empathy, working with goals, tasks and taking into consideration the client’s views. Changing states of these factors may require the coach to change roles in order to keep the working alliance healthy, which is likely the single most important factor of the coaching process. For example, the coach might be in the function of explorer with a client for some time. At a certain point the client might seem bored or might voice a wish to now actively derive some strategies or to try a tool he had heard of. Exploring the client’s wishes, demands or suggestions can be very useful. However, the working alliance might be damaged when the client perceives the coach as someone who does not respect his wishes. The contract would not be respected by the coach. The coach might stay in the role of explorer only if the reasons for this are explained and the client consents. Otherwise the working alliance is damaged. Therefore a boundary to successful existential coaching is reached when the working alliance breaks down. In this event, in my view it is not existential coaching anymore since existential coaching requires a healthy working alliance.

Again, Popovic & Jinks (2013) describe the matter of boundaries well through describing a different example:

“It is possible and even likely that the client will have behavioural or performance type goals as well as therapeutic goals and that successful attainment of one goal may impact or depend upon achieving or addressing the other. For example, a client may want to achieve promotion at work yet be insecure due to childhood abuse and the beliefs they hold about themselves as a result. They may need to unpack their feelings around the abuse and explore and address any negative self beliefs before they are free to move on to work on the more proactive goals associated with their career. On the other hand, a certain amount of work towards career goals may help to empower them to work on the difficult and painful issue of abuse. It may also be possible to work on both issues concurrently depending on the client’s preferences and what seems most appropriate at the time.” (Popovic & Jinks, 2013, p. 137/8)

Coaching beyond coaching?

In the fortunate situation that the coach also possesses counselling or psychotherapy qualifications, it is possible (and in my opinion should be encouraged if the necessary skills are present) to switch into a different role temporarily after having

considered the consequences, having discussed all options with the client, having been given informed consent by the client and therefore having re-contracted.

Authenticity

Another ethical consideration that the coach needs to take into account is the notion of authenticity. Authenticity relates to the first definition of roles, mentioned earlier: “playing a part in a movie or play”. The coach needs to be self-aware, reflective and in line with his or her values and beliefs to realise and be aware of encountering implicit or explicit boundaries. This might happen when the coach adopts a role that he or she does not feel comfortable in or qualified for or when the role that is being adopted is merely played. Just as in the example of Sartre’s waiter (1943) an existential coach needs to fully engage in his role and embracing it fully in order to authentically coach. If the coach is merely playing at being an explorer, a counsellor or a challenger, then the working alliance is in danger with the coach trying to be someone he is not and cannot fully embrace. This usually happens when the necessary competencies, skills or attitudes are not present in the coach and he or she therefore needs to ‘fake it’. In an existential sense, “authentic living is to explore the limits of human existence whilst prepared to face the abyss.” (Van Deurzen, 2012, p. 6). Authentic coaching is therefore to explore the limits of one’s existence as a coach - how and who can you be as a coach? -whilst prepared to face the abyss and uncertainty of what might happen within the coaching space.

Questions that need to be considered are:

- How can the coach decide which roles he or she feels comfortable with?
- To what extent is the coach able to renegotiate his or her boundaries as the process unfolds? To what extent is the coach comfortable with going beyond their previously understood boundaries in order to keep the working alliance healthy or respect the client's goals and interests respectively?
- How can the coach stay reflective and at the same time attend fully to the client?
- Are there other codes of ethics that the coach already abides to? Are they in conflict?

In summary, more flexible boundaries may result in ethical problems or considerations with regards to the contract with the client, the coach's competencies and training and the boundaries of the practice. Furthermore, they might affect the coach's sense of authenticity and will cause anxiety due to the uncertainty of not knowing where to go prior to a session and not having a clear model to fall back on in case of getting stuck. Existential coaching is very much concerned with being with the client and providing the space for exploration. This approach inevitably comes with these concerns and they need to be attended to on a regular basis. Regular supervision is therefore of utmost importance for all existential coaches.

Grey area to counselling

As mentioned before, it is not clear where coaching ends and counselling starts. The boundary between existential coaching and existential counselling is therefore subject to individual negotiation. This negotiation depends on the practitioner's training, professional ethics and the working alliance with the client as well as the contract to be able to make a decision whether or not to recommend that perhaps counselling, or psychotherapy may be something they wish to explore. Many authors argue that little demarcation is possible between the two professions¹¹.

- “A good coach may be constantly switching between coaching and counselling during a single session.’ (Summerfield, 2002, p. 37)
- “Coaching looks like counselling in disguise. Without the stigma but also without the ethics” (Williams & Irving 2001, p. 3-7)
- “Coaching is just a different brand name for counselling work” (Carrol, 2003, p. 30)
- “Coaching psychology sits at the intersection of sports, counselling, clinical and health psychology.” (Grant, 2007, p. 23)
- In existential executive coaching there is a fuzzy space between Existential Executive Coaching and counselling. (Jopling, 2009)

¹¹ However, it may depend largely on how each of these authors define counselling, as it can also (as coaching is) be a very loose term.

In my view it is simplistic to argue that counselling equals coaching since both terms have a multitude of different definitions. However, coaches often do adopt a counselling role (rely on counselling skills) to create a healthy working alliance and create the conditions of working with each other effectively. Again, a good coach will know when to switch and to what extent he or she can authentically adopt this role.

Grey area between coaching and other talking disciplines

In exploring if or to what extent coaching and other talking practices (such as counselling, therapy, mentoring, teaching or consulting) overlap we can directly explore the boundaries to the coaching aspect of existential coaching. Even outside the existential realm it is recognised that “contemporary professional coaching is a cross-disciplinary methodology” (Grant, 2007, p. 25) and that coaches come from diverse backgrounds (Grant & Jackson, 2004). Bresser & Wilson (2010) write: “Coaching draws its influences from, and stands on the shoulders of, a wide range of disciplines, including counselling, management consultancy, personal development and psychology.” (p.21). Hence it can be very useful and possibly even inevitable for coaches to integrate to some extent their training and experience of other one-to-one practices. An active ongoing engagement in supervision and a clear understanding of one’s approach to coaching and its boundaries is necessary.

Differences and boundaries have been put forward between existential coaching and other approaches to coaching. Also, it has been tried to formulate clear demarcation

between coaching and other talking disciplines. However, most of these boundaries are not very clear and often not applicable to the context of coaching (depending on the situation), the contract and the relationship between practitioner and client. For example (as seen to an extent in the roles section of this paper), the role of consultant seems to stand in stark contrast with an existential approach as it is direct, not directive, and a consultant by definition consults and provides clear and direct advice. To illustrate this example further consider the comparison of coaching and consulting by DeLuca (2008). The three models outlined in Table 3 are very similar and little demarcation between consulting and coaching can be found judging from these three approaches.

Block (1981) Consulting Model	Wilkinsy Coaching Model	Hargrove (2003) Coaching Model
1. Entry and contracting between client and consultant	1. Introductions / coach and client get to know each other	1. Enroll leaders in extraordinary coaching relationship
2. Discovery and dialogue – better understand the problem and where to gather data	2. Agreement / Coaching Goal – coach and client enter into contract and establish goal(s)	2. Coach the executive to design an Impossible Future for themselves and their organization
3. Feedback and the decision to act – gathering data, analyzing and presenting recommendations	3. Data Gathering and Analyzing – identify type data / method; analyze	3. Gather and provide 360-degree feedback
4. Engagement and implementation of the action plan	4. Feedback – hear and accept feedback	4. Engage in Strategic Planning in Action with the executive and the team
5. Extension, recycle, or termination – assessment and evaluation of the engagement	5. Action planning – create development plan for action	5. Coach executive effectiveness through monthly follow-up on goals, priorities, and high-leverage actions
	6. Support and follow-up through the implementation of the action plans	
	7. Closure / Evaluation – close out engagement with evaluations and lessons learned	

Table 3: Coaching / Consulting Model Comparison by DeLuca (2008, p. 21-22)

Bresser & Wilson (2010) go further and summarize the main differences between coaching, counselling, therapy, consultancy and mentoring in the following car metaphor (originated by Timothy Gallwey):

- A therapist will explore what is stopping you driving your car.
- A counsellor will listen to your anxieties about the car.
- A consultant will advise you on how to drive the car.
- A coach will encourage and support you in driving the car.
- A mentor will share tips from the experience of driving cars.

I argue that an existential coach, who has a lot of experience driving cars, might choose to, would be capable of and possibly should even be encouraged to adopt any of these roles at the appropriate time, depending on the client's and coach's needs, wants, values, beliefs, emotional states and situational context and considering the ethical conditions outlined above. The coach might adopt all of the above roles at some point during the process to some extent. Definitions of each role in isolation seem of little importance. When putting them into the context of the helping process as a whole, each of them could be a valuable part of the existential coaching process. Future research will be able to explore if and to what extent each of these disciplines (or elements thereof) are part of the coaching process. In the context of practical application the boundaries to each role, definition, approach or discipline may become clearer. Until then, grey areas to other disciplines will be a common phenomenon in the field of coaching, especially to the field of therapy and counselling (one of the most frequently mentioned role of a coach).

Existential coaches, trained in the UK, seem to be expected to integrate counselling and therapy elements into their practice. The course description of the MA in

Existential Coaching at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC, 2011)

reads as follows:

“In order to encourage the integration of a variety of counselling and therapeutic approaches with the practice of coaching, the programme will include elements of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic training and also of cognitive-behavioural training, culminating in the study of integrative aspects of coaching interventions. We aim to prepare students and trainees to become well rounded professional coaches, capable of work within diverse settings and able to critically evaluate their own work.”

(NSPC, 2011, p. 1)

Do we need boundaries in existential coaching? Theory vs. Practice

Distinctions in theoretical boundaries and approaches have been suggested in the literature (Bluckert, 2005; Grant, 2003). Yet, in practice, these are often disputed (Bachkirova, 2007) and recent research has demonstrated concerns about applying rigid boundaries in practice: For example Maxwell (2009) suggested that, rather than committing to theoretical boundaries, many coaches rely on professional experience and personal knowledge to define their own boundaries. Consequentially, border lines of these boundaries are inconsistent and fuzzy (Jopling, 2007; Price, 2009). Furthermore, existential coaches are supposed to be flexible in their approach, especially with regards to the role they are taking on. Therefore rigid theoretical boundaries may be toxic to the relationship and the helping abilities of the coach. However, there are valid ethical

considerations about boundaryless coaching that need to be addressed and somehow accounted for if existential coaching is to be accepted as legitimate and helpful coaching practice that deserves to exist among the main approaches to coaching.

In practice, I propose that coaches rarely think about whether what they do at any given moment during a session with a client is still considered existential or not. And even more rarely, I propose, will they stop doing what seems right only because it would not be considered existential by some or most or even according to their own boundaries. A good coach, in my opinion, will not refrain from doing the right thing for the client even if what is required might not be coaching anymore (as long as they are aware of their role and the ethical considerations involved). I believe that existentialism provides a great framework that grounds the practitioner in a philosophy of existence while being open enough to leave the role of coach (or any role within coaching if considered so) and do whatever is necessary, required, asked for, contracted, offered or otherwise as long as it is in the best interest of the client and in line with professional ethics.

Discussion and Conclusion:

There are likely to be as many views on existential coaching as there are existential coaches. Existential philosophers, similarly, do not belong to a unified school or respond to a single leader or figurehead. John Macquarrie (1972) describes existentialism as a diversity of ideas whereas conclusions can be found among a group of diverse thinkers who nevertheless have enough in common to justify naming them together. Existentialism for Macquarrie is a “style of philosophising” (p. 2) rather than *a* (as in *one*) philosophy. Apart from the basic ideas about the nature of existence, the existential themes, givens or concerns, a lot of disagreement exists among existential thinkers. To highlight that existential approaches to coaching might differ from one another and that its boundaries therefore may vary greatly from practitioner to practitioner (except for its common factors outlined above and below), consider the following examples:

Philosopher Nietzsche (1844/1908) famously argued that “God is dead” (sections 108, 125 & 343), meaning that the concept of god has lost its value, while the proclaimed first existential philosopher Kierkegaard stated that a connection with God is what confines us to a true moral code (Kierkegaard, 1843/1985). TA Andrew Irvine (1998), in a lecture states that the topic of atheism and religion is “one of the greatest disagreements among existentialists, testifying perhaps to the inescapable vagueness of the field of life within which human beings must make decisions that create meaning.” (Irvine, 1998, Section 8). Kierkegaard proposed that it is always necessary to take a “leap of faith” into uncertainty (while this faith does not necessarily need to be religious). He writes that it is

impossible to 'go beyond' faith. Hegel (1910) argues that faith is not the only thing that is necessary and that philosophical understanding and phenomenological inquiry can add to faith.

Within coaching, there is also much debate as to how existential coaching should be practiced. For example, Langdridge (2012) criticised Reed (2012) and Mirea (2012) for being too superficial and praises LeBon and Arnaud (2012) for generating a clear structure to their existential decision making approach. Langdridge promotes a clear demarcation line and warns not to simply take the existential therapy model and apply it to coaching. Van Deurzen (2012), in contrast, states that "the existential [psychotherapy] framework is fully compatible with coaching practice" (p.3). I expect much further debate on boundaries to existential coaching with the expansion of the profession. At this early stage of the existential approach to coaching, most practitioners have a background in existential psychotherapy. As more and more coaches adopt existential ideas and integrate them into their practice, many versions of existential coaching will emerge. If existential coaching aims to be an approach in its own right, then boundaries will become an important issue in the future in order to distinguish itself from 'coaching informed by existential ideas'.

What most existential thinkers agree on and which ultimately forms the framework for existential coaching is the relevance of the following to all human beings who are in the world with others: anxiety, meaning, choice, freedom, uncertainty, authenticity and interrelatedness.

Each existential coach is likely to have a different understanding of boundaries and roles and needs to be guided by an ethical framework, that is coherent, flexible and – as human beings- always in a process of becoming. The coach’s ethics need to grow along with his or her competence, understanding and experience.

Existential practice seems to be naturally integrative as most existential approaches to coaching described in the literature integrate other approaches to coaching and may contain elements of counselling, therapy, consulting, mentoring or teaching. However, future research is necessary to investigate this notion further and examine to what extent these elements are part of the existential coaching process. I have suggested specific methods and areas of exploration above.

Nonetheless, existential practitioners seem to utilize philosophy as their grounding framework, acknowledge the universal relevance of existential givens and mostly share certain components of the existential approach to coaching (such as the use of the phenomenological method, an awareness of existential themes and working with worldviews).

Good coaches also seem to adopt a multitude of different roles during the coaching process, possibly a result of this natural tendency towards integration. Boundaries between these roles are often not clear, and some roles may be adopted across different professions. Hence, boundaries between professions are also often not clear depending on the practitioner’s individual approach. The difference between coaching and counselling, for example, is still subject to much debate, coaching reportedly draws

elements of consulting, mentoring and teaching, and an exploration of the definitions of coaching indicates a multitude of roles across many professions. I have argued that coaches that try to stick to one fixed role will be easier to market but are prone to limit themselves in their practice and hence do the client a disservice. The practitioners that argue for strict boundaries may simply be against integration in order to protect discrete professions for marketing purposes. On the other hand, narrow boundaries provide the opportunity to deliver excellent work in the specific frame without extensive training. As long as it is clearly communicated where that specific approach ends and the client is able to give informed consent, I cannot see any problems.

Existential coaches arguably have broader boundaries since they work with the person as a whole, their values and beliefs on all existential dimensions (their worldview) and due to the integrative nature of the existential framework. They arguably need more training in order to work ethically. I argue that existential coaches are only limited by their professional competences and skills, their personal ethics and the need to keep the working alliance healthy (including boundaries between coach and client). The foundation for this is awareness: “The more aware both coach and coachee can be of the roles that are possible, and the roles that are actually in play at any time, and the more they can cultivate flexibility in roles, the more they will both get from the coaching relationship” (Hardingham, 2010, p. 87) and the more the practitioner will be able to negotiate his or her own boundaries and clearly communicate this to the client, at which point the working alliance can re-negotiate the contract if necessary. One may even argue

that boundaries are not essential at all as long as a working alliance is upheld. However, ethical considerations become proportionally more important as flexibility in boundaries increases. Therefore, in practice, there is likely a different boundary for each practitioner.

The practitioner should be very aware of what he or she is capable of, what implications the current behaviour is likely to have for the client and that every course of action or function is worked out collaboratively with the client. The coach needs to keep the contract in mind at all times in order to be clear about boundaries and what roles the coach may adopt. Informed consent and a healthy working alliance are the boundary for the existential coach in conjunction with the his or her personal ethics. Consequently I put forward that supervision is a vital part to help the coach reflect on personal boundaries of existential practice; more so than for most other approaches to or models of coaches. Van Deurzen (2012) writes:

“Existential Coaches often are in love with truth and intrepid in their search for it, but hopefully also ready to admit that truth is often unknowable and unknown. They need to remember that only in daring to tackle their own anxiety can they emerge with confidence and that it is only to the extent that they take on board failure that can succeed. People often call this existential attitude ‘authenticity’” (p. 6).

However, as Heidegger (1962/1927) argues, the best possible result is in fact a constant falling in and out of authenticity. I quote this to highlight the constant need for

existential coaches to engage in their awareness of their own practice, the roles they adopt, the boundaries they may discover and how these roles and boundaries relate to themselves as people with certain skills, competencies and ethical considerations.

“Placed in-between the extremes of these stances, Pollyanna or pathological, existential coaching tries to incorporate both the potentials and the limits of human existence”, writes Madison (2012, p. 119). Consequently, existential coaches, likewise, need to constantly explore the potentials and limits of their approach to coaching, their competencies and boundaries, the need of the client and the roles that that are necessary to fulfil them mediated by personal ethics and thorough supervision. I argue that boundaries in existential coaching are needed but that they are much more flexible than those of other approaches to coaching. The importance of personal ethics and supervision indicate that an existential approach to coaching requires more skill and training from the practitioner. However, it is likely to have a broader scope than other approaches and models, yet the existential approach seems to work best in conjunction with other models. While these assumptions follow from this review of the literature, whether they hold true, only rigorous research may confirm.

Existential coaching will, as their practitioners, always be in a process of becoming. Coaches that practice existentially might come from a diverse range of backgrounds and training. Having formulated boundaries that are aimed to fit all existential coaches therefore seems a futile exercise and I believe that boundaries to

existential coaching can merely reach the status of guidelines for existential practice.

Each coach will need to keep putting the work in negotiating his or her own professional boundaries.

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Appendix A: A collection of coaching definitions

Definitions of Coaching vary considerable (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005)
Subject to much debate (Killburg, 1996; D'Abate et al., 2003)

Common aspects:

Bluckert, 2005: **Absence of serious mental health problems**
Client as resourceful and whole (Berg & Szabo, 2005)
Willing to engage in finding solutions (Hudson, 1999)
Outcome focused fostering self-directed learning through
collaboration (Green & Grant, 2003)

Bresser & Wilson (in Passmore, 2010)

“Although different definitions abound, they mostly describe the same phenomenon.”
(p.9)

- “Unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.” (Whitmore, 2009)
- “A collaborative, solution focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and person growth of the coachee” (Grant, 1999)
- “A professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that support the achievement of extra-ordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team “(ICF, 2005)
- “”The art of facilitating the unleashing of people’s potential to reach meaningful, important objects.” (Rosinski, 2003)

Non-clinical and performance enhancing

Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches. **Grant & Palmer, 2002 cited in Palmer & Whybrow, 2008: 2):**

Goals and performance: focusing on achieving goals and improving performance
(Baker 2013b)

No relationship and personal life issues (better addressed in therapy →Bluckert, 2005).
BUT: research has shown that the idea that coaching only addresses professional issues is unsubstantiated (Baker 2013b)

Contracting: the edge of coaching was defined according to client and coaches' expectations of what would be appropriate to discuss within the working relationship (Maxwell, 2009)

Whole human being: Coaches often need to work with 'the whole messy human' including their emotions, past history and performance goals (Maxwell, 2009).

Healthy and whole clients: "Within the coaching literature there appears to be an assumption that all coaching clients are mentally healthy, fully functioning and not inhibited by underlying psychological issues. Whilst coaching clients may appear to be robust and able to manage their emotions, in reality they could be just as vulnerable as counselling clients, but attempt to conceal their psychological problems (Maxwell, 2009)." (Baker, 2013b (in Popovic & Jinks, 2013))

coaching and counselling draw on **similar skill sets** when working with clients (Backhirova, 2007; Backhirova & Cox, 2005).

Coaching can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and wellbeing for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress. (Grant, 2007)

"the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective." (Peltier 2001, p. xx)

Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them. (Whitmore, 1992, based on Gallwey)

Outcome focused activity which seeks to foster self-directed learning through collaborative goal-setting, brain storming and action planning. (Greene & Grant, 2003)

Coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another. (Downey, 1999)

Coaching is directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills by a form of tutoring or instruction. (Parsloe, 1995)

Coaching Psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches. (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005, p.7)

Collaborative, individualised, solution focused, results-orientated, systematic and stretching (Grant, 2007)

Cross disciplinary methodology (naturally integrative)

In 2004 only 4.8% of 2529 coaches had a psychology background (Grant & Zackon)

“Many definitions for coaching and counselling are indeed very similar.” (Bachkirova & Cox, p.5).

“Coaching looks like counselling in disguise. Without the stigma but also without the ethics” (Williams & Irving 2001, p.3-7)

“Coaching is just a different brand name for counselling work” (Carrol, 2003)

“We see coaching as an ally for counselling in the process of improving wellbeing of individuals” (Bachkirova & Cox, 2005, p.5)

“A good coach may be constantly switching between coaching and counselling during a single session.’ (Summerfield, 2002, p.37)

Goldsmith and Lyons (2006): an independent person, not the supervisor of the person receiving coaching.

Vs.

The Harvard Business School model (Luecke, 2004): managers should use coaching strategies to improve the performance of their direct reports

2008 Executive Coaching – no consensus on definition (Sperry, 2008)

“Currently, there is little consensus on its definition and how it [executive coaching] differs from executive consultation and executive psychotherapy.” (Sperry, 2008, p.33)

Executive coaching: A form of executive consultation in which a trained professional, mindful of organizational dynamics, functions as a facilitator who forms a collaborative relationship with an executive to improve his or her skills and effectiveness in communicating the corporate vision and goals, and to foster better team performance, organizational productivity, and professional personal development; there are three types of such coaching: skill-based, performance-based, and developmental executive coaching.

(Sperry, 2008, Table 1, p. 36)

Sperry, L. (2008). Executive coaching: An intervention, role function, or profession? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice And Research*, 60(1), 33-37.

2004 Executive Coaching - A basic definition

Executive coaching is an experiential, individualized, leadership development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short and long-term organizational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect. The organization, an executive, and the executive coach work in partnership to achieve maximum learning and impact. (Ennis et al.,2003, p. 20)

Stern, L. R. (2004). Executive Coaching: A Working Definition. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice And Research*, 56(3), 154-162.

“three functions of the consulting psychologist are the proper domain of executive coaching: skill, performance, and development coaching (Sperry, 2004).” (Sperry, 2008, p. 35)

1996 Executive Coaching - A Working Definition

executive coaching is defined as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement.

Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice And Research*, 48(2), 134-144

Definitions of Executive Coaching

(<http://www.executivecoachacademy.com/definitions.html>)

Different experts weigh in

“Executive Coaching is a facilitative one-to-one, mutually designed relationship between a professional coach and a key contributor who has a powerful position in the organization. . . The coaching is contracted for the benefit of a client who is accountable for highly complex decisions with wide scope of impact on the organization and industry as a whole. The focus of the coaching is usually focused on organizational performance or development, but it may also serve a personal component as well.”

Summary findings from the International Executive Coaching Summit, October 1999, compiled by Lee Smith and Jeannine Sandstrom, and including information produced by 36 coaches, page

“There are four methodological factors that distinguish the coaching of super-keepers from that of other employees... These factors are: 1) holistic approach, 2) deep behavioral insight, 3) the active involvement of top corporate executives and 4) sustained relationships with the coach and/or trusted internal collaborator ‘usually a senior human resource professional.’ ”

Karol Wasylyshyn in “Coaching The Super-Keepers” a chapter from the book “The Talent Management Handbook: Creating Organizational Excellence By Identifying, Developing and Promoting Your Best People” (publication date September, 2003).

Wasylyshyn’s approach to coaching senior executives is a collaborative and pragmatic one integrating depth psychology and strategic business priorities:

“Executive Coaching is a company-sponsored perk for top high potential employees. It is a customized and holistic development process that provides deep behavioral insights intended to accelerate an executive’s business results and effectiveness as a leader. This coaching is based on a collaborative relationship among the executive, his/her boss, his/her human resources manager, and an executive coach.”

Karol Wasylyshyn can be contacted at kwasylyshyn@erols.com

“Executive coaching is defined as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to assist the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organization within a formally defined coaching agreement.”

Richard R Kilburg in Executive Coaching: Developing Managerial Wisdom in a World of Chaos, pages 65 and 67.

Kilburg can be summarized as having a psychodynamic and a systems perspective.

“The essence of executive coaching is helping leaders get unstuck from their dilemmas and assisting them to transfer their learning into results for the organization.”

Mary Beth O’Neill “Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart” page 5.

O’Neill also writes about how it is vital to be “managing your own challenges” and helping the client transfer learning. Hers seems to be an Organizational Development perspective.

“Coaching is a one-on-one development process formally contracted between a professional coach and a management-level client to increase the client’s managerial and/or leadership performance, often using action learning.”

Robert J. Lee syllabus for “Change At the Executive Level” Fall, 2002 Syllabus, Milano Graduate School, New School University.

Lee’s perspective might be summarized as an organizational consulting approach including action learning.

“Action coaching is a process that fosters self-awareness and that results in the motivation to change, as well as the guidance needed if change is to take place in ways that meet organizational needs.”

David L. Dotlich and Peter C. Cairo in “Action Coaching”, page 18.

Dotlich and Cairo also write about self-awareness linked to business results and an action plan put in place. Dotlich and Cairo seem to have an organizational consulting business results, action learning perspective.

“A masterful coach is a vision builder and value shaper...who enters into the learning system of a person, business, or social institution with the intent of improving it so as to impact people’s ability to perform.”
Robert Hargrove in “Masterful Coaching” page 17.

Hargrove has also stated “Coaching is intervening in the drift. [And] “You don’t need a coach to turn out the lights” in interview on “Top Coaches in the USA” videotape. Hargrove rejects the idea of calling himself an executive coach or even a coach, preferring to see himself as a “conversation partner”.
Hargrove calls his approach to coaching transformational.

“Coaching is not telling people what to do; it’s giving them a chance to examine what they are doing in light of their intentions.”
James Flaherty “Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others”, page xii.

Flaherty’s approach has been described as one of personal construction.

“Executive Coaching is aimed at inspiring executive leaders to make behavioral changes which transform themselves and the people around them thereby increasing business results and performance.”

Jeremy Robinson, working definition of executive coaching.

“Coaching is about providing inspiration. Consulting is about providing information. Information plus inspiration equals performance acceleration”.

Jeremy Robinson, motto for email newsletter, Corporate Coach Direct.

Robinson’s approach is results-oriented and motivational.

10 Definitions of Coaching (<http://karenwise.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/what-is-coaching-10-definitions/>)

1. “Unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” (Whitmore 2003)
2. “A collaborative, solution focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and person growth of the coachee” (Grant 1999, basic definition also referred to by the Association for Coaching, 2005).

3. “A professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that support the achievement of extra-ordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team “(ICF, 2005)
4. “The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another” (Downey, 2003)
5. “Coaching is directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills by a form of tutoring or instruction” (Parsloe, 1995).
6. “Coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult and child learning or psychological approaches” (Special Group of Coaching Psychologists, part of the British Psychological Society)
7. “Coaching is about developing a person’s skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organisational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual’s private life. It usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals.” (CIPD 2009)
8. “Psychological skills and methods are employed in a one-on-one relationship to help someone become a more effective manager or leader. These skills are typically applied to a specific present-moment work-related issues....in a way that enable this client to incorporate them into his or her permanent management or leadership repertoire” (Peltier 2010)
9. [Co-active] coaching is “a powerful alliance designed to forward and enhance a life-long process of human learning, effectiveness and fulfilment” Whitworth et al (2007)
10. “Coaching is about enabling individuals to make conscious decisions and empowering them to become leaders in their own lives” (Wise 2010 – sorry couldn’t help sneaking one in myself!).

Interestingly, whilst searching for definitions I came across the following from Bruce Peltier

“A coach must be able to provide a good working definition of coaching and articulate the difference between coaching and psychotherapy”.

Web:

Your Role as a Coach

As a manager, you should also be a coach for your employees. When you act as a coach, you are giving your employees your time and attention and, more importantly, you are helping them master their work and grow their own knowledge and skills. You are also showing respect for their individual capabilities and providing what I consider the most important motivation a person can have -- the opportunity for self-development.

Coaching is not telling your employees what to do or providing simple answers to their questions. Coaching is helping your employees discover the answers themselves. It is unlocking an employee's potential to maximize their own performance, helping them to learn rather than teaching them. Coaching is much more time-consuming than giving orders, but is also much more satisfying to both the employee and the manager.

When you hold a coaching session with an employee, you guide them through a thinking process, helping them to discover the answers to their own questions, rather than imposing a solution. The questions below are designed to guide you through this process. Corporate Learning Strategies, Daniel R. Tobin, Ph.D., Mentoring and Coaching, ©1998

Eric Parsloe, *The Manager as Coach and Mentor* (1999) page 8.

"Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."

ICF

Coaching is... "a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be a successful a Coach requires a knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place"

The International Institute of Coaching's Definition

Fundamentally coaching is simply an interactive, results-orientated, enlightening process that brings about change. Coaching provides each person with the opportunity to live a happier, healthier, and peaceful, while maximising their personal and professional potential.

Professional coaches (qualified and accredited) work with their clients in all areas of their lives. They build an on-going relationship using effective coaching skills to produce fulfilling results in all areas of the client's life in which the client wishes to make improvements.

Coaches believe that their clients are resourceful and the coach's role is to provide support to allow the client to enhance their own skills, resources and natural creativity. Coaches, using effective coaching skills, work in partnership with their clients on a voyage of self-discovery of strategies and solutions to achieving their dreams, aspirations and goals

http://internationalinstituteofcoaching.org/coaching_definitions.php

Coaching is about performing at your best through the individual and private assistance of someone who will challenge, stimulate and guide you to keep growing."

Gerard O'Donovan

"Coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be a successful a Coach requires a knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place"

Eric Parsloe

"Coaching can provide empowerment and support in a wide variety of ways. Whether we are seeking a change, or simply want to proceed in our lives with more focus and vigour, a good coach can make all the difference."

www.flccenter.com

"Life Coaching encourages the deletion of "want to be", and helps you replace it with "am

Michael Duffy

"Life coaching is a practice of assisting clients to determine and achieve personal goals. A trained coach will use a variety of methods, tailored to the client, to move through the process of setting and reaching goals.

Anon

"Coaching in its truest sense is giving the responsibility to the learner to help them come up with their own answers."

Vinci Lombardi

"Academic coaching is a designed alliance between a coach and student for the purpose of fostering success skills in an educational environment. It is an individualized process that facilitates goal clarification and achievement. The purpose of academic coaching is to stimulate and motivate students toward their scholastic goals by providing structure, support and feedback."

Sandy Maynard

"A coach is someone who tells you: what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be."

Tom Landry

"Coaching enables you to focus your thoughts, actions and time so that you will be able to increase the quality of your life."

Edward Fisher

"Coaching is a powerful relationship for people who are making important changes in their lives

With thanks to: Co-Active Coaching

"Coaching will help you to discover how to unlock the many inner resources that lie dormant and unused in you because you fail to recognize that they are there."

Carmel Wynne

"Facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful, measurable goals."

Anon

"Coaching can provide empowerment and support in a wide variety of ways. Whether we are seeking a change, or simply want to proceed in our lives with more focus and vigour, a good coach can make all the difference."

With thanks to: www.flccenter.com

"Coaching is about making changes happen....one person at a time."

Anon

"The word coaching originated in the world of sport, but now coaching is a distinct profession, clearly different from counselling, training, mentoring, therapy, or consultancy. What is remarkable is its sheer power and versatility. Coaching will help you perform a new task, improve your performance in your chosen profession, develop a new skill or solve a problem. In more general terms, many people are turning to coaches to find direction and balance."

Joseph O'Connor and Andrea Lages

"Life Coaching is the art of assisting, challenging, stimulating and supporting an individual to live a balanced life style and achieve ultimate performance and potential."

Curly Martin

"Coaching is a professional service that uses proven methods of working with an individual to effectively achieve the results they want in any aspect of their professional

or personal life. The purpose of coaching is to remove the obstacles that prevent individuals from achieving their objectives.”

Veronica Cooper

"Coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another."

Myles Downey

"Coaching is a professional service that uses proven methods of working with an individual to effectively achieve the results they want in any aspect of their professional or personal life. The purpose of coaching is to remove the obstacles that prevent individuals from achieving their objectives."

Veronica Cooper

"Facilitating an individual's search within themselves for the answers and resources they require to be limitless."

Michael Duffy

"Life Coaching is the art of assisting, challenging, stimulating and supporting an individual to live a balanced life style and achieve ultimate performance and potential."

Curly Martin

"Coaching is about performing at your best through the individual and private assistance of someone who will challenge, stimulate and guide you to keep growing."

Gerard O'Donovan

"You may be surprised at the title being simply `a definition'. I make no apology for this. There is, to put it simply, no common definition of what coaching is. Yet it must be attractive because hundreds of people train every year. Be it a Life Coach or a Business Coach.....they aspire to be `Coaches'.

A typical definition of coaching is, `The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another'. Because I coach people who are all very different, I find that I use different styles for different people.

It is the same with all `art'. What one person sees as `art' another sees in a completely different light. Coaching, however, is not for the spectator: it is a discussion; a stirring, provoking, stimulating exercise; a means of getting at the heart of the matter. That is what is at stake.

We know that we only use a fraction of our brain power at any given time; coaching is about helping the Client to think of things from a different perspective. It is helping a

person achieve more from the depths of their being than they would otherwise have been able.

Non-directive coaching can help Clients really dig into the depths of what really is stopping them.....and I never cease to be amazed at the ingenious solutions they find.

Coaching is always about what the Client wants.... their hopes and aspirations.

Some people frown on `directive' coaching.....but if the Client has already given permission for you to help them in this way, I see nothing wrong in it. Many Clients have come to me terrified of public speaking - if we were to `play in their world', it would remain a problem. By approaching the subject matter from a completely different angle, all those Clients are now brilliant public speakers.

It is this aspect of being able completely to change a person's view of themselves and of the world which attracts me in the wonderful world of coaching.

A definition of Coaching? Unlocking Amazing Potential! Each and every one of us has it....and what a joy to help people access theirs!"

Shirley Caldwell

Association for Coaching

<http://www.associationforcoaching.com/pages/about/coaching-defined>

Personal/Life Coaching

"A collaborative solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee." (Anthony Grant, University of Sydney, 2000)

Executive Coaching

"As for personal coaching, but it is specifically focused at senior management level where there is an expectation for the coach to feel as comfortable exploring business related topics, as personal development topics with the client in order to improve their personal performance."

Corporate/Business Coaching

"As for personal coaching, but the specific remit of a corporate coach is to focus on supporting an employee, either as an individual, as part of a team and/or organization to achieve improved business performance and operational effectiveness"

Speciality/Niche Coaching

"As for personal coaching, but the coach is expert in addressing one particular aspect of a person's life e.g. stress, career, or the coach is focused on enhancing a particular section of the population e.g. doctors, youths."

Group Coaching

“As for personal coaching, but the coach is working with a number of individuals either to achieve a common goal within the group, or create an environment where individuals can co-coach each other.”

Appendix B: Additional roles in coaching

(An overview of roles mentioned outside textbooks and peer-reviewed journals)

6 managerial coaching roles (Suzanna Prout)

1. help that person to overcome internal resistances and interferences, give feedback on behaviour and give tips and guidance.
2. Guide
3. Teacher
4. Mentor
5. Sponsor
6. Awakener.

<http://www.xenonex.co.uk/executive-coaching-blog/the-six-roles-of-an-executive-coach-leeds-leadership-development>

12 coaching roles (Life Coach FAQ)

1. Consultant
2. cheerleader
3. mentor
4. friend
5. therapist
6. business partner
7. detective
8. guru
9. healer
10. role model
11. drill sergeant
12. accountability partner

<http://www.lifecoachfaq.com/coach-role.html>

5 managerial coaching roles (Barner, 2011)

critical to the success of developmental coaching

1. organizational translator,
2. performance consultant,
3. developmental assessor,
4. cognitive mentor,
5. brand advisor.

Instructional Coach (Duval County Florida district)

1. classroom supporter
2. instructional specialist
3. curriculum specialist
4. data coach
5. learning facilitator
6. learner.

<http://coachingchronicles.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/what-is-role-of-instructional-coach.html>

Appendix C: Core competencies of a coach.

Adapted from DeLuca, 2008

Table 3: Coaching Core Competencies

Competency	Description
Compassion	Genuinely cares about people; is concerned about their work and non-work problems; is available and ready to help; is sympathetic to the plight of others not as fortunate; demonstrates real empathy with the joys and pains of others.
Composure	Is cool under pressure; does not become defensive or irritated when times are tough; is considered mature; can be counted on to hold things together during tough times; can handle stress; is not knocked off balance by the unexpected; doesn't show frustration when resisted or blocked; is a settling influence in a crisis.
Self Knowledge	Knows personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limits; seeks feedback; gains insights from mistakes; is open to criticism; isn't defensive; is receptive to talking about shortcomings; looks forward to balanced (+s and -s) performance reviews and career discussions.
Sizing up People	Is a good judge of talent; after reasonable exposure, can articulate the strengths and limitations of people inside or outside the organization; can accurately project what people are likely to do across a variety of situations.

Conflict Management	Steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities; reads situations quickly; good at focused listening; can hammer out tough agreements and settle disputes equitably; can find common ground and get cooperation with minimum noise.
Ethics and Values	Adheres to an appropriate (for the setting) and effective set of core values and beliefs during both good and bad times; acts in line with those values; rewards the right values and disapproves of others; practices what he/she preaches.
Integrity and Trust	Is widely trusted; is seen as a direct, truthful individual; can present the unvarnished truth in an appropriate and helpful manner; keeps confidences; admits mistakes; doesn't misrepresent him/herself for personal gain.
Interpersonal Savvy	Relates well to all kinds of people, up, down, and sideways, inside and outside the organization; builds appropriate rapport; builds constructive and effective relationships; uses diplomacy and tact; can diffuse even high-tension situations comfortably.
Listening	Practices attentive and active listening; has the patience to hear people out; can accurately restate the opinions of others even when he/she disagrees.
Motivating Others	Creates a climate in which people want to do their best; can motivate many kinds of direct reports and team or project members; can assess each person's hot button and use it to get the best out of him/her; pushes tasks and decisions down; empowers others; invites input from each person and shares ownership and visibility; makes each individual feel his/her work is important; is someone people like working for and with.
Patience	Is tolerant with people and processes; listens and checks before acting; tries to understand the people and the data before making judgments and acting; waits for others to catch up before acting; sensitive to due process and proper pacing; follows established process.

Appendix D: Definitions, roles and assumptions in existential coaching

Definitions

Van Deurzen & Hanaway, 2012:

“Existential Coaching is a philosophical method of coaching that enables people to get clarity about their lives and make decisions about the practical ways in which they may want to change their actions, beliefs and values.” (Existential Academy MA Brochure)

practical method for the direct discussion of the trials and tribulations of human existence. It encourages people to ask new questions, recognize hidden problems and find answers and solutions to them. (Van Deurzen & Hanaway, 2012, p. xviii)

Spinelli - <http://www.plexworld.com/coach02.html>

Practically focused and highly accessible

Developed from a set of interconnected principles designed to assist clients to more effectively respond to the dilemmas of living and act in greater harmony with their chosen goals and aspirations.

Drawn from contemporary applied psychology and philosophy, these principles provide a straightforward means with which to address those areas of conflict and tension that restrict our potential for personal achievement and diminish our ability to engage in fulfilling relationships with others

Four key ideas (Spinelli, 2005):

1. The whole of the person's worldview, or general stance to life, needs to be properly examined. Worldview includes a wide range of beliefs, needs, values and aspirations. Issues arising from a divided worldview are properly addressed. all interventions that are focused only upon current concerns or felt disturbance will provide, at best, merely a brief and inadequate resolution
2. Existential Coaching rejects the common view that conflict is itself the source of our problems and should be eradicated from our lives.
3. Third, Existential Coaching argues that worldviews do not develop from within individuals. Rather, our worldview emerges from, and is an expression of, relations between persons.
4. Fourth, Existential Coaching stresses that the value and expertise of coaches is not that of supplying the solutions to clients' problems. Instead, the best coaches offer the

necessary mental "space" that will assist their clients in finding their own means to live a good and responsible life. Sometimes, clients discover that creative and liberating results will occur through self-directed changes in behaviour and lifestyle.

Langdrige, 2012:

“[Spinelli and Van Deurzen] fail to provide a model of coaching practise that reflects the very different mode of client engagement and specified outcomes entailed in coaching.” (Langdrige, 2012, p. 85) → they integrate too man aspects

“The key elements of existential coaching, as I understand it”:

- (1) Use of the phenomenological method
 - (2) Application of existential theory (to inform practise)
 - (3) A commitment to being goal and solution focussed
- understanding of the way in which people are free to choose what to make of their existence within the limits of their being-in-the-world (p. 85)

LeBon & Arnaud (2012) – Existential Decision Coaching

Coaching informed by existential themes and ideas, the purpose of which is to help the client, who is in a situation where a choice between two or more options has a major impact on their life, and may be unable to make such a choice, becomes more aware of the human condition as it relates to their situation and more able to make an authentic response.

Paul Swift Website <http://www.paulswiftcoaching.com/24.html>

The existential approach is a philosophical method of dealing with challenges in living. It is rooted in the ideas of several European philosophers [...] concerned at a fundamental level with what it meant to be human and how we could understand human existence.

Specific philosophical method of enquiry involving description, understanding and exploration of the client's reality, known as phenomenology

Roles

“We are actors, not spectators in life’s adventures” (Peltier, 2001, p.164).

Table 4. Peltier's (2001) Ten Existential Guidelines

1. Honor individuality	6. Value responsibility taking
2. Encourage choice	7. Conflict and confrontation
3. Get going	8. Create and sustain authentic relationships
4. Anticipate anxiety and defensiveness	9. Welcome and appreciate the absurd
5. Commit to something	10. Clients must figure things out their own way

Peltier (2001) on existential guidelines

Avoid typing people. Don't put too much stock in what others say about your clients. Experience them freshly for yourself. It is likely, of course, that you will have similar impressions and come to similar conclusions, but you must do this for yourself. Look for the truth about your clients inside of yourself (p. 164).

DeLuca (2008, following Peltier)

- Self-aware (to recognize how own worldview influences the relationship)
- Encouraging choice
- “Helps the client to understand the concept of freedom of choice and the client’s responsibility of making choices for her own life.”
- Encourages the client to start now and take action so the client moves the changes from thought to the physical world of action and experience
- Coach keeps the client accountable for commitments to action.
- Each action should be taken with the client’s priorities and values in mind.
- Encourage the client to take action in order to find meaning. (following Frankl, 1984, p.133)
- “Guide the client through the coaching process enabling increased self knowledge; encouraging action with purpose; and facilitating the client toward becoming and realizing her potential.” (DeLuca, 2008, p. 38)

Coach’s use of tools and methods:

“There are many tools to assist a coach in facilitating the client’s journey through the coaching process. The following are recommended because they are appropriate to the coach who uses an existential orientation:” TORI (Gibb, 1978), LIFO® (Atkins (2002), Role-Stakeholder Matrix (DeLuca, 2007), for more see DeLuca, 2008, Appendix B)

Spinelli (2005):

- Existential Coaching helps clients to become much more aware of their unique and underlying worldview so that they may be more able to challenge the ambiguities, tensions and limitations that impact upon their stated goals and aspirations.
- Facilitate the means by which clients become much more explicitly aware of their unique and underlying worldview in order that they may be more able to "own" and challenge the ambiguities, contradictions and paradoxes that both structure and maintain it. Through this focused investigation, the lived and felt concerns which unnecessarily influence and impact upon a client's stated goals and aspirations can be highlighted and, in turn, their influence minimised or defused. (Coach3)
- Extremely straightforward, practically-minded and attractive approach not concerned with unseen or unknown mental agencies. Client has all the answers.
- Focuses upon the various stances we adopt in order to find meaningful and secure relations with ourselves, others, and the world in general. In doing so, it examines and exposes how these very same relational strategies may be provoking the current uncertainties and dilemmas that have arisen in our lives.
- Clarify and reconsider the meanings and values given to the various inter-relations that make up their personal and professional lives. Through this exploration, clients can be empowered to assess more honestly and accurately how the relational stances that they adopt are impacting upon the quality and enjoyment of their lives.

Madison:

- “The existential therapist assists the client to actively explore their assumptions, their orientation to life, and to live in greater awareness of the vast range of possibilities open to them. A basic question in existential therapy is ‘why are we not more open to all the experiences life has to offer?’”
- Together the therapist and client try to see the big picture, the context within which we act daily. Existential therapy and coaching sessions can take the form of lively dialogue and deep insight.
- Existential therapists must also, like any human, grapple with how to create meaning in their own lives.

(Madison, [the return of existentialism](#))

- Incorporate both the potentials and the limits of human existence. (Madison, 2012, p.119)
- Use directive techniques only when “consistent with the coaches’ philosophical underpinning, and don’t betray the wider perspective of the client’s experience.” (Madison, 2012, p.119)

Langdrige 2012 – Elements (not stages) in the process of existential coaching

- (1) The primary tool is the phenomenological method and a desire to understand the lifeworld of the client. → Phenomenological explorer
 Examination of the reasons for the client seeking coaching
 How this connects with other relevant aspects of their lifeworld
 Focussed exploration rather than the more free floating approach often seen with open-ended existential therapy
 Engage in active exploration of the goal/s that the client presents but not remain Exclusively focussed on such goals.
 Sharpening up the goal/s
 understanding how these might relate to other aspects of the clients lifeworld
- (2) Step outside the phenomenological attitude and facilitate the production of clear, achievable and measurable goal/s.
- (3) Be alert to broader existential concerns that may allow or facilitate the successful achievement of the goal/s. begin to formulate their interventions in the light of this understanding, which will later be communicated directly to the client.
- (4) Become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the client and how strengths in particular may be marshalled to achieve the stated goal/s.
- (5) Conversational stance, work with client to identify existential blocks to achieving the goal/s.
- (6) Encourage clients to engage in change activity in pursuit of their goal/s (rather than extensive reflective activity).
- (7) Practical ways of achieving the goal/s are discussed. keep a clear and measurable focus on the achievement of the goal/s.

Van Deurzen (2012)

- Proved people with the time and space to doubt, ponder, reflect and understand, but this is never done in haphazard or casual manner (p.11)
- Crucial, that both feel at ease
- Challenge and reassurance
- Provide a stimulating and safe environment for understanding and change
- Requires the ability to work with paradox, contradiction and conflict in a constructive way (p.7)
- Ample practice of dialectical dialogue: exploration, gentle prodding, firm and clear process (direct, non-directive) (p.7)
- Help learn to recognize paradoxes through feedback, mirroring, being honest
- Phenomenological explorer: “systematically describing a phenomenon from different angles until we can intuitively grasp its essence in quite a new way.

- “The actual methods of existential coaching are in many ways congruent with those of existential practice in therapy and counselling (Deurzen and Adams, 2011, Deurzen, 2010, Deurzen, 2002) and also particularly with the practice of existential supervision (Deurzen and Young, 2009)” (Van Deurzen, 2012, p.11)

Cornerstones of existential coaching – The role of the existential coach

(Van Deurzen, 2012, p.11-13)

- Direct and directional, in search for clear direction, purposeful
- Clear and steady, help people progress and explore what they want. Focus conversation, demonstrate clarity of mind and courage of spirit, enable people to rebalance themselves
- Engage with client’s issue. Let ourselves be touched by client’s preoccupations. Operate from heart & mind
- Don’t get lost in details. Bring perspective and depth back into the emerging picture. Philosopher. Use resources of overview, global understanding and wisdom, reconnect client with the bigger picture
- Use tools and instruments (such as four worlds)
- Keep clarity about the paradoxes and conflicting demands on each world. Tuning into sensations, feelings, thoughts, intuitions
- Move backwards and forwards between talking about things, others, self being self or being. Change will follow naturally
- Observe, draw attention, describe, juxtapose, contrast, focus, understand, make connections, using dialectics as a basic principle
- quest for blind spots and bad faith
- Help clients to choose productive narratives. Explode useless illusions, respect necessary ones. Be guided by a search for truth
- Enable the client to balance forward through contradictions
- Encourage person to quench own thirst for understanding and truth (p.16)
- Make it possible for clients to begin and think about themselves in a different way
- Encourage client to play around with new ideas in safe coaching environment before taking them outside (p.17)
- Self-evaluate and reflect! Face challenges and anxiety oneself, adopt existential attitude ([Van Deurzen, all over the place](#))

Van Deurzen and Hanaway (2012, p. xviii)

- Encourage clients to ask new questions recognize hidden problems and find answers and solutions to them.
- Provide a platform for clear thinking and problem solving within a non-medical setting.

- Professional support for people who want to understand their quandaries and conundrums and remove necessary obstacles.
- Highlight particular values and meanings in a person's life and teasing out how to enable a person to tackle life's dilemmas and paradoxes.
- "When working with conflict, an existentially informed coach will focus on developing an understanding of the client's worldview using existential dimensions to clarify the client's response to being-in-the-world, and his coping behaviours. They will seek to help the client to use the same existential framework and skills to develop better understanding of the Noema and Noesis content of what is being said, identifying commonalities, sedimentations and potential areas of flexibility whilst caring for the self-esteem of all involved. Once understanding and trust is established the coach can 'challenge' the client to look at behaviour, which has become sedimented, which, though working in the past, is causing difficulties in the current situation. It is at this stage that the coach may introduce theories, which could be helpful to the client." (Hanaway, 2012, p.99-100)
- "Empower the client to become more aware of his current chosen way of being and more open to his possibilities." (Pringle, 2012, p.165)
- Work with one's personal models and techniques but always keeping existential themes in mind.
- Firstly exploring client's world view as all behaviour is guided by values and beliefs.
- "A mentor in the art of living" (Van Deurzen, 2002)
- The existential coach both models and fosters authenticity (Mandic, 2012)
- Existential coaching is particularly well suited to working with the ultimate paradox between freedom and responsibility, which is perhaps especially marked in modern society. (Hanaway, 2012, p.33)
- Working with worldview to embrace uncertainty (Le Bon & Arnaud, 2012)
- "Helps clients to see things as they are; helping client to see, understand and comprehend reality in a new, more engaged and critical manner. Out of this understanding, changes will flow naturally, without having to be prescribed or suggested." (Le Bon & Arnaud, 2012, p. 16).

Paul Swift Website

<http://www.paulswiftcoaching.com/24.html>:

- Challenges are confronted and perceived possibilities and limitations are explored. Through dialogue, a client's "world view" is revealed, and their coping mechanisms and assumptions about their dilemmas re-examined.

- Encourages us to be realistic about our limitations which in turn help us to identify our possibilities.
- Re-examining our assumptions about ourselves, others and the world we live in, we create the possibility of seeing new opportunities for meaningful living which may well have been obscured, denied or not envisaged.
- Encourages us to engage with anxiety with courage and compassion.

The good coach website

<http://thegoodcoach.squarespace.com/glossary/general-definitions/existential-coaching.html>

Existential theory suggests that the coach's principal task is to assist clients in focusing upon their present concerns in ways that contextualize them more adequately within their worldview - which is to say, the whole range of beliefs, values, attitudes, assumptions, affects and behaviours that make up, maintain and identify their 'way of being'.

Beijing Coaching Blog

<http://beijingcoaching.wordpress.com/coaching/existential-coaching/>

The value and expertise of coaches is not that of supplying the solutions to clients' problems but in creating a space for the clients to explore, challenge and better understand their worldview and its expression outside the coaching relationship, in the "real world".

Assumptions

Van Deurzen (2012)

„Existential Coaches often are in love with truth and intrepid in their search for it, but hopefully also ready to admit that truth is often unknowable and unknown. They need to remember that only in daring to tackle their own anxiety can they emerge with confidence and that it is only to the extent that they take on board failure that can succeed. People often call this existential attitude 'authenticity'" (p.6). but it is actually a constant falling in and out of it (Heidegger (1962/1927)

recognizing that both sides of the equation are necessary and that a new synthesis can be created by taking a bit of each into account (p.7)

Van Deurzen and Hanaway (2012)

- Existential coaching "assumes that people often crave a sense of purpose and meaning" (p xvi) and may help clients to take stock of ways they make things more difficult and less satisfactory for themselves and reconsider how they want to live

- their lives. It “has an entirely pragmatic objective – to help people live their lives with greater deliberation, liberty understanding and passion” (p. xvi).
- “Too much theory is anathema to existential coaching” (p. 14)!
 - Existential coaching is not a “you can be anything” philosophy (Pringle, 2012, p162)
 - “We can trust the client to join the dots, when they are ready.” Jane (Pringle, 2012, p.164)
 - Contradictions, which are irresolvable, are constantly with us (Hanaway, 2012, p.37)

Worldviews

Working with the whole person. With worldview (Jaspers, 1971)

What do we mean by worldview? → Values, beliefs, “a person’s interpreted framework of making sense of the world, of others and of oneself.” (Mandic, 2012, p.28)

4 worlds (physical, social, personal, spiritual) (for a short description see Van Deurzen, 2012, p.12)

“It is our value systems, which govern our spiritual world or Uberwelt” (Hanaway, 2012, p. 95)

“The existential orientation to coaching is not a method. Method implies a step-by-step systematic process, something very much planned and linear, with a definite proven procedure (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>). The existential orientation to coaching, then, is more of an approach. An approach implies a frame of mind, but not a formula of proven rules to be followed.” (DeLuca, 2008, p.26)

Spinelli - <http://www.plexworld.com/coach01.html>

- Central assumption that life is an uncertain enterprise
- We will be confronted with the unpredictable at any point throughout our journey.
- Anxiety is not necessarily "a bad thing" or a problematic presence that must be reduced or removed.
- "plodding along" through life in the hope that the anxiety will eventually fade away is not the a good approach to living
- Anxiety is a "given" of being human
- Just what specific occurrences will provoke the highest degree of intolerable anxiety in each of us and how we will respond to it is determined by our unique "way of being in the world" - our worldview.
- It is not terribly useful to apply general techniques to specific and uniquely experienced life-issues. Instead, the creation of a secure and trustworthy "life-space" encourages clients to get to know more accurately and to experience more honestly just what their worldview is, what it is like to experience oneself and others through

- that worldview, and how the current dilemmas, concerns and uncertainties that are presenting themselves may be challenges to, or outcomes of, that very same worldview.
- Anxiety is freedom's possibility (Soren Kierkegaard)
 - Existential Coaching rejects the common view that conflict is itself the source of our problems and should be eradicated from our lives.
 - Unlike many other coaching programmes that only focus upon broadly positive, self-actualising qualities and possibilities for each client, Existential Coaching's approach also recognises and gives equal emphasis to the divided stances, aims and aspirations that may well exist as competing values and beliefs held by each client.
 - Inadequately examined worldview is the source of that form of conflict which acts negatively upon our personal and professional satisfaction as well as our sense of purpose and self-esteem.
 - Existential Coaching argues that unless the issues and sources of dividedness are properly addressed, all interventions are doomed to provide, at best, merely a brief and inadequate resolution. Worse, they may well serve to provoke greater levels of felt powerlessness, uncertainty and anger directed either towards oneself, others (including, of course, one's organisation), or both. It is our view that long-term, meaningful and worthwhile outcomes from focused coaching interventions only emerge when the whole of the person's worldview, or stance to life, is considered - conflicting and divided needs, wishes and desires and all!
 - Existential anxiety can only be "worked with" rather than "worked against".
 - Existential Coaching works within a context that emphasises an organisationally-aware, socially-conscious and responsible way of considering human beings - which is to say, as beings in relation to and with one another rather than the more self-isolationist biases of many other forms of coaching
 - Existential Coaching aims to be an extremely straightforward, practically-minded and attractive approach whose ideas require very little in the way of "meta-analyses" nor rest upon numerous questionable and unnecessary assumptions regarding unseen and unknown mental agencies that influence, if not control, our thoughts and behaviours.
 - Exploration of stances towards the world in general will expose how the current issues at hand have arisen and how they can be dealt with

Peltier (2001) states that “existential coaching does not treat clients as if they fit into a pre-established model and allows them to take charge of their own exploration.” (p. 14)

“Once they establish a pattern of different choices and different behaviors, others will eventually begin to look at them differently, and they will establish a new reputation and a new identity” (Peltier, 2001, p.164).

Paul Swift Website

<http://www.paulswiftcoaching.com/24.html>

life and work involves pleasure and pain, sadness and joy, success and failure, good and bad. We all live in the tension of these paradoxes everyday but our response is often like a magnetic pull towards one end of those polarities and where we seek to eradicate or deny any value or influence of the other. Recognising that both ends of these life magnets have something to offer us in our challenges of life is the goal of this approach, to find a way through our dilemmas by accepting both our limitations and our possibilities, by working with the stuff in our lives we like and the stuff in our lives that we hate.

Spinelli, 2010

<http://thegoodcoach.squarespace.com/glossary/general-definitions/existential-coaching.html>

clients' concerns are not to be seen as obstacles to the maintenance of the current worldview, but rather as a consequential expressions of it. From this perspective, therefore, the issues brought to coaching cannot be dealt with as separate from the whole being who presents them." ([spinelli, 2010](#))

Main principles of interpersonal/existential coaching Based on Spinelli and Van Deurzen) <http://beijingcoaching.wordpress.com/coaching/existential-coaching/>

Regardless the type challenge that a client might be facing Interpersonal/Existential Coaching addresses the whole worldview of the person; needs, beliefs, relationships, etc... Only by exploring deeply the implications and consequences of our behavior, the ambiguities and contradiction of competing desires, a person can reach self-acceptance and responsibility of any chosen course of action.

Interpersonal/Existential Coaching does not only focus on positive qualities of the client persona and context. It does not see conflict as a problem, but as a partial successful attempt of expression our individual worldview, and therefore a source for greater understanding and development.

The worldview of each of us is not developed within us but the emergent result of our relationship with others, and it is in relationship with others that it takes shape and it is enact.

Linda DeLuca:

<http://lindadeluca.wordpress.com/2009/01/19/what-is-existential-coaching/>

- Each individual is unique and this individuality is honoured.
- Our choices define us; we can choose to be different.
- Changes happen with action, so get going!
- With change comes anxiety and defensiveness – this is good!
- Committing to the right goal is the drive to get beyond the anxiety.
- Take responsibility for the choices you make, and learn!
- Conflict & confrontation are opportunities from which to learn.
- The above create self knowledge to enable authentic relationships.

- The world is uncertain, embrace and appreciate the absurdity, and learn!
- The client must figure things out their own way, the coach is the guide (DeLuca, 2012)
- Client “can make choices differently to become a different person in the world – it is her choice.”
- a client experiences anxiety because they recognize the need to make choices and take action, but do not yet have a clear meaning or purpose.

Madison

“This so-called ‘British School’ of Existential Therapy bases its psychology on the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and other continental philosophers. Though each of these philosophers has something unique to say, they all stress individual responsibility, the freedom to choose our lives, and living in full awareness of the unavoidable limits to life, including of course mortality. What we decide to value and believe in life governs our conduct, allowing us to succeed and feel safe in certain ways while also creating difficulties in other areas of life. Therefore our problems in living originate from conflicts within our outlook on life. [...M]any psychological problems arise from our deeper assumptions about life or attempts to ignore the limits of life.”

Existential therapy accepts that there are no experts on life and that we each must find our own answers to the paradoxes we encounter day to day

([Madison, the return of existentialism](#))

“Placed in-between the extremes of these stances, Pollyanna or pathological, existential coaching tries to incorporate both the potentials and the limits of human existence. There seems to be a growing niche for this less technical, less ‘superficial’ approach to coaching.” (Madison, 2012, p.119)

Langdridge, 2012:

Key to the existential approach is an understanding of the way in which people are free to choose what to make of their existence. That is, whilst their choices are bounded by the limits of their being-in-the-world, they are not determined (by biology or early childhood experiences) but freely chosen. People therefore have the capacity to make their lives meaningful and through this constitute their identities. The world in these terms is not inherently meaningful but subject to the meaning-making activities of those engaged with it. Action is fuelled by the anxiety that comes from recognition of our being-towards-death, our finite existence, and our capacity to utilise this to find authentic ways of living. This is always within the context of a shared social world in which we always act in relation with those around us.

Wikipedia

[Existentialism](#) is a [philosophy](#) and a mindset that emphasizes [human freedom](#) and responsibility. Existentialists posit that life has no predetermined meaning, and it's up to individuals to create their [own meaning](#).

TA Andrew Irvine

“Though the nature of that field of life and its ground are dramatically contested, all existentialists hold that a decision in relation to it is the key issue for human beings.”
(lecture delivered by **TA Andrew Irvine** in 1998.)