

COACHING vs. TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Both coaching and traditional psychological services (i.e., psychological evaluations, therapy, counseling, or psychotherapy) ultimately aim to improve an individual's well-being and quality of life by utilizing strategies and techniques founded on knowledge of human behavior, motivation, and interaction. However, there are differences between the two that have significant professional implications. Below is a summary of the key differences. (Note. This list is meant to be a concise overview and not an exhaustive list.)

Regulation

Traditional psychological services are heavily regulated and, therefore, can only be provided by licensed mental health professionals who have had advanced degrees and training and have valid and current licenses. Being licensed means that mental health professionals are legally bound by certain professional and ethical guidelines determined by licensing agencies.

Coaching is an unregulated industry, meaning that any unlicensed or uncertified individual can be a coach; however, it is possible to obtain a coaching certification. It is also possible for licensed mental health professionals to provide coaching services.

Focus

Traditional psychological services focus on evaluating, diagnosing, and/or treating mental disorders. The emphasis of treatment is generally on understanding the past, processing emotions, and gaining coping skills in order to alleviate symptoms.

Coaching focuses on helping individuals achieve personal or professional goals with an emphasis on examining the present and planning for the future. While it is possible for individuals with a mental health diagnosis to seek coaching, coaching itself is not directly targeted toward treating symptoms.

Assessments Used

Traditional psychological services, particularly those aimed at diagnosing, typically utilize standardized assessments that can only be administered and interpreted by a licensed psychologist. Such assessments can include personality/behavioral/social-emotional rating scales, cognitive (IQ) testing, structured clinical interviews, etc. Other informal assessment measures can also be used, such as unstructured interviews, observations, checklists, screeners, etc.

Coaching services can only involve the use of *informal* assessments, unless the coach is a licensed psychologist qualified to administer standardized assessments. Assessments used during coaching are primarily for information gathering and progress monitoring, not for diagnosing.

Insurance Coverage

Traditional psychological services are often covered by insurance, especially when they relate to a diagnosed mental disorder.

Coaching services are not covered by insurance.