

The coach trip



The coaching profession attracts not only therapists who have developed through various routes into coaching, but also coaches who have journeyed in the other direction.

Carolyn Mumby talks to seven practitioners who, like her, journey through both territories

*'Let's have no more argument. I have chosen Mr Baggins and that ought to be enough for all of you. If I say he is a Burglar, a Burglar he is, or will be when the time comes. There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself. You may (possibly) all live to thank me yet.'*¹

Rather like Bilbo Baggins (though not with regard to the same profession!), I suspect that I engaged in aspects of coaching long before I trained and qualified in it. I began as a detached youth worker seeking creative ways to engage young people. Having completed an in-service diploma in youth and community work, I later had a placement in a therapeutic community working with people in recovery from addiction. The spaces couldn't be more different: from standing on street corners with young people wandering in and out of contact to sitting in the smoky intensity of a therapeutic community with restrictive boundaries designed to contain and work with some of the internal pain and chaos arising from abuse and trauma. At times, in both situations, I felt out of my depth and wondered, like Bilbo, if I should ever have set out on the journey.

Hearing stories of painful past situations was distressing and compelling. I undertook an advanced counselling diploma in Gestalt and Contribution Training (a modality focused on what we do as well as what we talk about) and then worked therapeutically in the 're-entry' stage of an 18-month drug rehabilitation programme. As well as continuing to offer one-to-one counselling, we worked with aspirations and ambitions. These clients needed to build a new life, almost literally, so having aspirations and ambitions was an essential component not only in surviving but

also thriving. I went on to manage a counselling service for young people, and learning how to work proactively with this client group would later be invaluable in my coaching practice.

Then, as a quality manager with Youth Access, I supported agencies to develop good practice in services offering counselling, information, advice, and other practical support. I felt I had spent enough time on the therapeutic 'frontline' and was raising young children. I wanted to bring my other skills (training, supervision, organisational consultancy) to bear in both one-to-one and team settings, and I trained as an executive coach and leadership mentor to develop my ability and credibility to coach in the business context. I wrote more about this experience in *BACP Counselling Children & Young People*² and was surprised to find how many transferable skills I brought with me into coaching.

I had been at a coaching seminar where the presenter talked about the importance of 'finding your tribe'. My experience of attending the first London networking group of the then newly formed BACP Coaching division was exactly that. The BACP Coaching Executive has embraced the idea that we 'connect, collaborate and create'.³ As part of the group generating these words, I feel they equally describe what can happen in the coaching process: the client locates their strengths and values and develops their vision for change in an empathic space where the coach listens deeply, providing acceptance and, if needed, challenge to enable limiting assumptions to be replaced. Tools and frameworks can be useful to work proactively to conceive of and experiment with making concrete changes and identify and establish more nourishing and productive habits.

I have organised the London network group for BACP Coaching members for the last two years,

and have recently been asked to deliver a Professional Development Day (PDD) for BACP entitled 'An introduction to building a coaching approach'. There are interesting questions to consider about how far we can make any kind of absolute distinction between counselling and coaching. It can be thought of as a continuum with our modality, influencing how far our counselling approach travels into what could be described as the coaching territory. The PDD aims to enable counsellors to find out more about coaching, identify their own transferable skills, and work out their next steps if they wish to include coaching as part of their practice.

We are not usually in possession of a magic ring (without which Bilbo's attempts at 'burglarising', given his lack of previous relevant experience, might have ended with less success) and, depending on our own prior training and expertise, reputable and thorough conversion courses into coaching may be a better option, but the potential is most certainly there, should we choose to undertake the journey. I have been privileged to meet and learn from all the people featured here through various networks and I wanted to highlight aspects of their fascinating journeys.

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Michèle Down

What drew you into working as a coach?

I missed counselling. I had moved to running corporate training and came into coaching by accident when I offered a participant the opportunity for a one-to-one session and they said, 'I didn't know you were an executive coach.' I was just doing what seemed needed. The training in presentation skills that I was running offered skills, tools and techniques, but also, probably because of my therapeutic background, explored fears and anxieties, so it was not a big leap. I was working with people in organisations senior enough to say 'Yes please' and to recommend me to others. People commented that traditional coaching had meant that they left the session with a 'to do' list, whereas with a more therapeutic approach the shift has already happened within the session and they just need to go and live it. It's been lovely to move back into working one to one.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I have a business background, having run a successful business for 15 years prior to training as a therapist, so I speak from experience. My clients feel I 'get' their issues, not only from a psychological perspective but because I've been there, done that. It allows me to talk within their frame of reference and is invaluable. In terms of reflective practice, I changed my psychodynamic supervisor, who had been so helpful in the one-to-one counselling; working in the corporate world was out of her frame of reference. My new supervisor had this experience, which made such



a difference to my practice and helped me to develop as a coach.

Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

I tell people that I have a psychotherapeutic background and that I take a multi-layered approach. I will share concrete practical tools with them and will also help them understand themselves and their patterns of behaviour, linking the two together to make lasting change. There is always a personal element of development in the work. It's useful to keep the description sufficiently vague to allow us to do what is needed. My sense of the difference between pure coaching and coaching with someone who is also trained therapeutically is that the latter provides a richness, depth and quality of presence that, in themselves, are hugely therapeutic. It is also a more self-reflective and nuanced approach. Being a therapist is central to my work as a coach. It informs everything I do.

www.micheledowndynamics.co.uk

Clare Myatt

What drew you into working as a coach?

Three main things. Belief in the possibility that people could change faster than most therapeutic processes provide for. Awareness that some people craved personal development and wouldn't see themselves as candidates for therapy, but would identify as coaching clients with greater ease.



Seeing that clients' insight alone didn't necessarily lead to change, and that other approaches benefited many of the higher functioning clients I was working with.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

Being fortunate enough to live in California, I trained as a somatic coach with the Strozzi Institute for a number of years until I certified as a Master Somatic Coach.

Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

This is the most difficult question to answer. When I'm coaching, my therapeutic training informs what I do; when I'm counselling, my coaching training informs what I do. I find the skill-set to be complimentary and hard to separate. Having said that, I don't yet feel confident that I have a robust theoretical framework for integration, so I continue to contract with clients for what outcomes they want to achieve – some are more obviously therapeutic in nature, some more coaching oriented. Either way, I am enormously grateful to have both skill sets and to be able to access such a range for my clients.

www.claremyatt.co.uk

Debra Jinks

What drew you into working as a coach?

I was drawn towards coaching after doing a lot of work in frontline-type services with client groups such as young people and people affected by substance misuse. At the time,



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I explain at the outset that I merge the disciplines of coaching and therapy. It really is impossible and unrealistic to keep the two disciplines entirely separate so I prefer to be open about that – Debra Jinks ”

I realised that I actually enjoyed working at the assertive, proactive end of the spectrum more than the deeper kind of restorative work. On reflection, though, that may have been due to the high volume of trauma that I had become used to managing on a daily basis. Back then, it was something of a joy – and a relief – to be working with clients who were ‘out of the woods’ and looking forward. Instead of coming home drained, I came out of sessions enthused and inspired.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I was fortunate in that my integrative counselling training had included approaches such as CBT, solution-focused and other creative and dynamic ways of working that could easily be adapted to a coaching context. When I knew I was serious about coaching I studied a Masters at Hull University.

Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

I use an integrative model and market myself as an integrative coach-therapist or personal consultant⁴ (the type of coach-therapy integration that I favour). These days I get clients who come to me because that is what they are looking for. I also get clients who come for counselling or coaching initially, and that’s fine too. But I explain at the outset that I merge the disciplines of coaching and therapy (and how I do that) and that if it becomes apparent during the course of the work that they might benefit from more than just the one discipline then we can re-contract. It really is impossible and unrealistic to keep the two disciplines entirely separate so I prefer to be open about that. It’s probably important to add that, since training as a coach and then combining both approaches, I find I appreciate and enjoy the restorative element of the work that I do. I think that’s probably because working at both ends of the coach–therapy spectrum provides a healthy balance for my clients and also to me as the practitioner. The Association of Integrative Coach-Therapist

Professionals (AICTP) was set up to support practitioners in this process of integration, so it’s a privilege to act as their chair.

www.debrajinksconsulting.co.uk

Linda Aspey

What drew you into working as a coach?

It happened naturally. I was an independent counsellor, management trainer, facilitator and HR consultant and was asked one day (around 14 years ago) to do some one-to-one ‘training’ with a stressed executive. They wouldn’t support the idea of counselling. We worked together productively for some time. I later found out it was probably coaching we were doing. Coaching seemed to pull together all the training I’d done in a way that felt very natural, and also seemed to have a different energy from counselling at the time, and I was drawn to that.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I had worked in organisational contexts as a consultant for some years before so I already had a network and a potential pool of coaching clients. I let those HR people and senior managers know that I was available for coaching too, and began to get a steady stream of clients from their organisations – mostly line managers. I joined the newly formed Association for Coaching and I completed the accreditation process with both coach-specific experience and training and also that of the various related trainings and roles I’d had. It was a great experience to have gone through and it certainly helped my confidence, which probably in turn helped my credibility as I felt I could truly call myself a coach. I went on to read and



do everything I could on coaching, in my case specifically aimed at workplace coaching. Networking and close involvement in professional bodies have always been important aspects of my development, including seven years on the board of BACP, then founding chair of the BACP Coaching division and now as president of AICTP.

Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

I work integratively using the 10 components of the thinking environment⁵ to inform everything I do. Sometimes it feels more like coaching and sometimes like therapy. I don’t call myself a coach-therapist in most organisational settings as I work with senior people who generally don’t understand it and may have concerns. However, I know some clients do select me because of my combined coaching and therapy trainings and experience.

www.coachingforleaders.co.uk

Mary Pelham

What drew you into working as a coach?

I had been working as an integrative psychotherapist for many years and found the work to be stimulating and rewarding, but there was often a sense, particularly towards the end of therapy, that clients required a more solid sense of direction and a need to take control, armed with therapeutic insight, towards bringing about positive change for themselves. They looked to me to help them do this. My guess is that, because I had been drawn towards an integrative training, I was more open and flexible to doing what was required to meet the unique needs of each individual. As I began to learn something about coaching, it seems that I was already doing a considerable amount of it with my clients. I have not yet found a coaching training that integrates the disciplines, as I would wish, although this is something I hope to do in the future.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I have read quite extensively, networked, joined coaching organisations, been to talks by well-known coaches and joined an integrative coaching/therapy supervision group.



Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

I practice using the integrated model of personal consultancy.

www.marypelham.co.uk

Cathy Warren

What drew you into working as a coach?

I was drawn into working as a coach when I changed career from primarily commercial work to primarily people-oriented work. Career coaching was immensely helpful to me at that time and I thought I'd like to do it. I moved into organisational development consultancy roles, working one-to-one with people experiencing change at work. I undertook some brief coaching trainings and trained as an NLP master practitioner.



How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I trained as a counsellor because I liked the rigour and depth of counselling training and, in the one-to-one work I had done in organisations, I saw that many were facing deeper questions about their lives. I guess you would say I have travelled a complete circle from coaching to counselling and back again.

Do you practice using an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

I use an integrated model. My counselling orientation, psychosynthesis, allows and includes a lot of approaches that many would regard as coaching. Psychosynthesis counsellors generally hold someone's potential in mind at all times – crises may often signal the shedding of a layer to enable the next level of growth – so working with the crisis (past) can often go hand in hand with building a vision of the future and taking practical steps to move towards it.

www.life-review.net

Dr Trish Turner

What drew you into working as a coach?

I was a director in a large public sector organisation and had received 360-degree feedback that highlighted that,



I don't call myself a coach-therapist in most organisational settings as I work with senior people who generally don't understand it and may have concerns
—Linda Aspey

although I had grown in new areas, there were some key skills of empowering others that I had begun to lose due to the culture of the work environment. I had been coaching in a previous role, but the opportunity arose to have formal coaching training and I jumped at the chance to 'fill the gap' highlighted in my report. It was one of the best decisions I ever made, as it brings me so much joy.

How did you build your knowledge, experience and credibility as a coach?

I was a qualified coach and coach supervisor before embarking on my counselling training. I wanted to know what more there was to learn. Having worked in a large organisation at board level and in the private and voluntary sector at senior level, I am perceived as having credibility by the purchasers of coaching. Networking is key – building up a reputation and offering something for nothing, sharing good practice and ideas. From that comes referrals, recommendations and opportunities.

Do you use an integrated model, or do you keep the two approaches separate?

My approaches often merge, as I bring all my learning and who I am to each encounter, but mostly I keep the two very separate when I'm contracting with a client. I have used an integrative model and found it offers a lot of freedom both to the client and to me, as a practitioner but, as I am relatively new to counselling, I feel more comfortable keeping them separate at the moment, until my experience has grown.

www.trishturner.co.uk

References

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2. Mumby C. Working at the boundary. *Counselling Children and Young People* 2011; December: 14–19.
3. Birch J. Message from the chair. *Coaching Today* 2013; (6): 4.
4. Jinks D, Popovic N. Personal consultancy: a model for integrating counselling and coaching. London: Routledge; under contract.
5. Kline N. Time to think: listening to ignite the human mind. London: Cassell Illustrated; 1999.

Find out more

An introduction to building a coaching approach

Carolyn Mumby is running a BACP Professional Development Day on 'An introduction to building a coaching approach'. Forthcoming dates include 16 September 2013 and 3 March 2014 in London. For further information visit www.bacp.co.uk/pdd or call 01455 883300.

Association of Integrative Coach-Therapist Professionals

Promotes the professional practice of integrating coaching and therapy and provides support for coach-therapist practitioners. <https://sites.google.com/site/aictpsite>

Your thoughts please

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