



Who's Driving? The Difference between Therapy and Coaching





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I am often asked, what is the difference between therapy and coaching? I like to use a car metaphor to explain.

In a therapeutic relationship, the therapist is driving and the client sits in the passenger seat. As they drive forward the therapist assists the client in identifying the direction in which they're heading. The therapist often looks in the rear view mirror and guides the client in identifying how the past is impacting the present and future.

In a coaching model, the client is driving and the coach is the passenger. The coach partners with the client as they drive ahead, assisting the client in identifying where they would like to go (their outcomes). When they approach a crossroad or road block, they get out of the car together and explore what is the best way to get around it. The coach empowers the client with learning tools, strategies, and techniques to use in the future should similar roadblocks present themselves.

When the destination is reached, the coach jumps out of the car as the client drives off into the sunset and will hopefully receive postcards from the remainder of the client's journey.