

Coaching Psychology: An Emergent Evidence-Based Bridge Between Counselling and Life / Performance Coaching

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SUMMARY

Coaching Psychology provides a structured yet relational way of supporting people through change, equally suited to those pursuing growth and those recovering from mild emotional difficulty.

It is evidence-based, ethically contained, and professionally recognised by the British Psychological Society, bridging the gap between wellbeing and therapy while promoting sustainable personal and professional development.

ORIGINS & RECOGNITION

The field emerged in the early 2000s through pioneers such as Anthony Grant and Stephen Palmer, who integrated cognitive-behavioural, humanistic, and solution-focused traditions (Grant, 2001; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008).

In 2019, the British Psychological Society (BPS) formally recognised Coaching Psychology as a distinct professional division, confirming its ethical codes, supervision requirements, and qualification routes alongside other applied psychological specialisms (BPS, 2022).

CORE APPROACHES

Coaching Psychology flexibly integrates a number of well-validated models, including:

Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching (CBC) – reframing limiting beliefs and building self-efficacy (Neenan & Dryden, 2011).

Acceptance and Commitment Coaching (ACT-based) – fostering psychological flexibility and values-driven action (Hayes, 2019).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) – enhancing intrinsic motivation and wellbeing through autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Positive Psychology Coaching (PERMA) – cultivating meaning, engagement, and resilience (Seligman, 2011).

Integrative and Relational Approaches – emphasising empathy, presence, and ethical reflexivity (Lawton-Smith, 2021).

Research consistently shows improved goal attainment, wellbeing, resilience, and self-regulation (de Haan et al., 2013; Donaldson et al., 2022)).

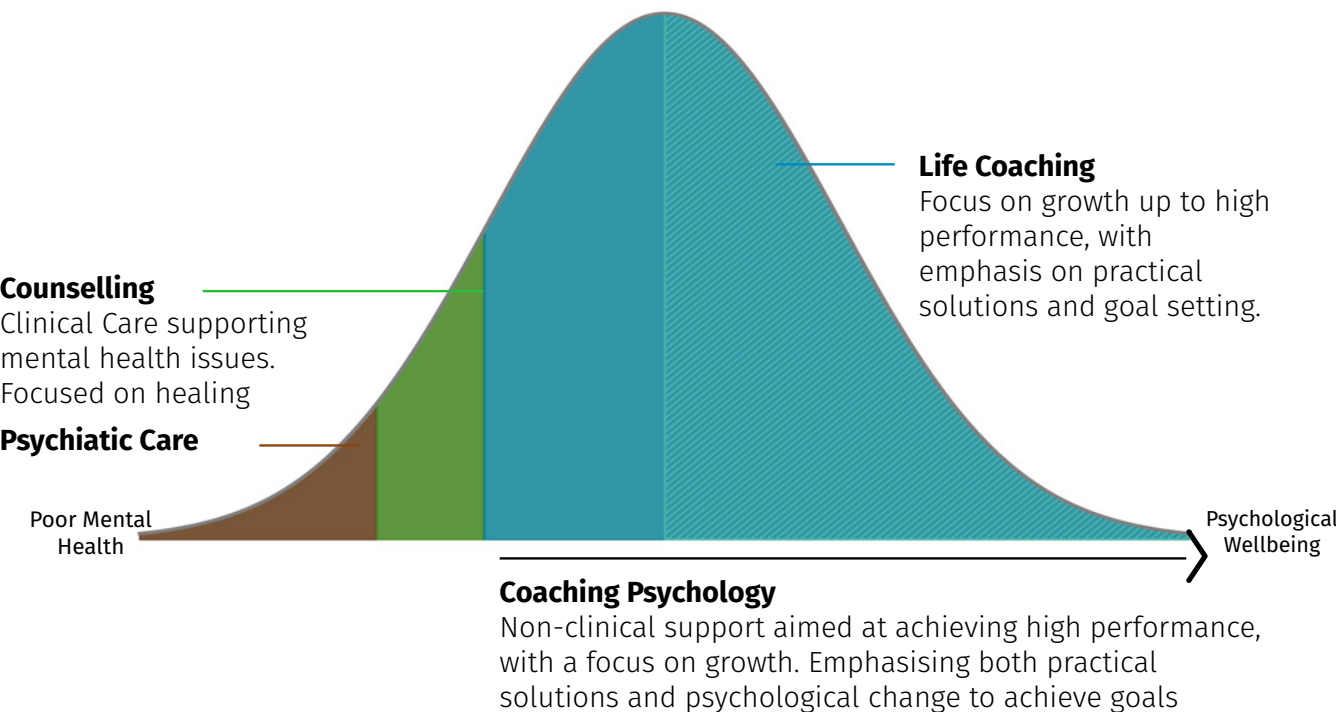
WHAT IS COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

Coaching Psychology applies psychological science to enhance wellbeing, performance, and personal growth within non-clinical contexts. It integrates evidence-based methods, ethical awareness, and reflective supervision to facilitate meaningful and sustainable change (Grant, 2006; Palmer & Whybrow, 2018).

Distinct from general life coaching, it is underpinned by robust research and professional governance, enabling practitioners to work safely and effectively with clients experiencing mild distress, low mood, or transitional challenges—without pathologising their experience. While sharing a humanistic foundation with counselling, Coaching Psychology adopts a more structured, goal-focused, and at times directive stance to support forward movement and psychological flexibility..

WHERE DOES IT FIT WITH OTHER MODALITIES

The bell curve illustrates the psychological-support continuum: from clinical intervention psychiatric care → counselling → coaching psychology → life coaching at the wellbeing and growth end.



EXAMPLE PRACTICE AREAS

- Emotional wellbeing and low mood – addressing sub-threshold depression, anxiety, and adjustment issues (Dias et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2021).
- Career and leadership transitions – navigating promotions, redundancy, or return-to-work (Passmore & Lai, 2019).
- Resilience and stress management – strengthening coping, self-efficacy, and recovery from burnout (Grant, 2014; Green et al., 2006).
- Behavioural change and habit formation – overcoming procrastination and low self-esteem (Rimes et al., 2023).
- Personal meaning and life transitions – exploring identity, purpose, and direction in midlife or after loss (Neimeyer, 2000).
- Emotional regulation and self-compassion – helping clients manage critical self-talk and cultivate psychological flexibility (Hayes, 2019; Gilbert, 2010).