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Coaching or Psychotherapy



A practical guide for coaches
in the demarcation to therapeutic care.

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Preliminary statement and Acknowledgements

Preliminary statement

Any professional working with NLP in a coaching frame will be challenged every once in a while to distinguish his/her action in regards to (psycho-)therapy. It is also part of the professional tools of a coach to recognize the indications at which a psychotherapeutic approach should be recommended.

In most countries psychotherapy is a reserved act regulated by law and/or a professional code. Most coaches are aware of the importance of complying with the law.

This guide highlights the boundary between NLP coaching and psychotherapy. It may also be useful for people wondering which support approach to pursue: "Should I consult a coach or a psychotherapist?"

Important Note: We explicitly point out that the considerations made in this document are of a general nature in an attempt to shed some light on this complex area. Note that local legislation on psychotherapy may conflict with the considerations made in this paper.

Acknowledgements

This text is based and inspired by a paper from the

SICPNL societe internationale des coachs pnl
"Practical Guide to Discover the Professional NLP Coach's Territory
or how to define the boundary between NLP coaching and psychotherapy"
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<http://sicpnl.org/>

Coaching or Psychotherapy?

Both coaching and psychotherapy aim to achieve the client's well-being. There is, however, a distinction between these two approaches. As to not impede on a psychotherapist's territory, it is of obvious importance for the coach to know when he should refer his client to a psychologist or psychotherapist.

Three key elements may be identified to define the distinction between coaching and psychotherapy: No. 1, The client; No. 2, The mandate; No. 3, Legal framework.

Key No 1: The Client

Generally speaking the coach's practise has a greater scope than the coaching activity defined in psychotherapeutic guidelines and regulations. It goes without saying that a professional coach may have the tools to support and guide a client who is suffering or in psychological distress. However it is recommended that NLP coaches work with autonomous and functional clients, as defined by the following indicators:

1. INTENSITY AND CHRONICITY of the suffering/psychological distress.

The boundary between a coaching approach and a psychotherapeutic one is assessed according to the intensity and frequency of the suffering or psychological distress expressed by the individual. The following questions must be evaluated: • To what extent is this suffering regular and repeated? • How long do the episodes last? • How well is the individual functioning?

- ⇒ Coaching: A coaching client has a "normal" level of functioning as well as a "normal" level of intensity and chronicity with respect to suffering or psychological distress.
- ⇒ Psychotherapy: A client describing suffering or distress with an intensity and frequency involving dysfunctional chronicity will be directed to engage in a psychotherapeutic process.

2. WELL-FORMED OUTCOME

A client engaged in coaching must be able to formulate a defined objective according to the well-formed outcome structure of NLP (context-oriented, specific, sensory-based, brain-friendly (stated in the positive), measurable, self-determined, ecological).

3. TAKING THE INITIATIVE

The coach must see that his/her client is taking the initiative, own steps toward reaching her/his goal. That he/she is able to report back in specific words on her/his actions and the results achieved. If no sign of change is apparent at the end of three meetings, the client shall be recommended to work with another health professional (psychologist, psychotherapist, attending physician, etc.).

4. PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

Let us add a word of caution: If the client is taking psychotropic medication this might strongly influence his/her ability to act according to Key No. 1, items 1 to 3 (above) consistently.

Key No. 2: The Mandate

Coaching mandate can focus on any problem stemming from daily life.

However, a client who presents a problem related to a diagnosis of mental disorder or referencing a traumatic event will be asked to specify the reason for his consultation:

- (A) The coach is able to support and guide a client who presents such problems on the condition that:
1. the mandate does not involve work that targets a diagnosed mental disorder, and
 2. the above-mentioned autonomy criteria (Key 1, item 1 to 3) are respected, and
 3. the mandate involves work based on a defined objective according to the well-formed outcome structure of NLP (context-oriented, specific, sensory-based, brain-friendly (stated in the positive), measurable, self-determined, ecological).
- (B) If the reason for the consultation involves work targeting
1. the treatment of a diagnosed mental disorder, or
 2. the (suspected) source of the diagnosed mental disorder,
- the client shall be recommended to work with another health professional (psychologist, psychotherapist, attending physician, etc.).

Key No. 3: Legal Framework

As mentioned in the preliminary statement in most countries psychotherapy is a reserved act regulated by law and/or a professional code. If you do work with clients it is recommended to get acquainted with the legal framework of your geographical region (State, Country) that do apply.

Such framework might regulate questions as

- Which interventions are strictly reserved to registered Psychotherapist?
The IANLP knows of countries where only registered Psychotherapist are allowed to touch clients (kinesthetic anchors). In other countries working on source of traumas is restricted to psychotherapeutic interventions.
- Which interventions by coach are financed by insurance?
- Is a coach entitled to make a diagnosis?
(In some countries it is considered to 'make a diagnosis' if the coach tells the client that the 'nlp phobia cure' intervention would be appropriate to work with the issue on hand.)



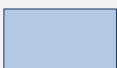

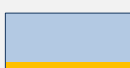

The tool on the following page stems from a generative collaboration among Professional Certified NLP coaches of the SICPNL societe internationale des coachs pnl. (see Annex) - Link to the original document: <http://sicpnl.org/manchette.asp?i=108>



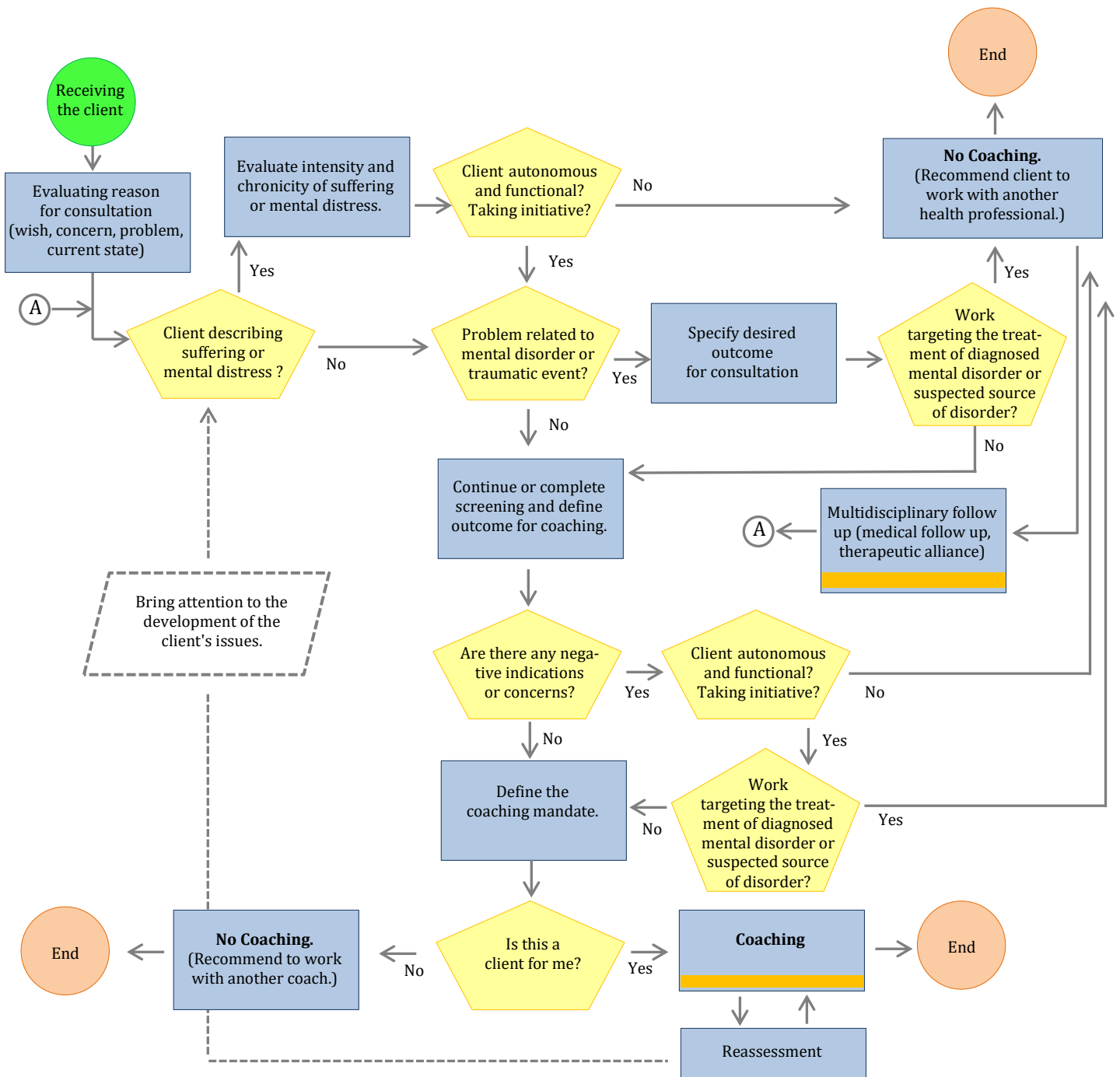
“Coaching or psychotherapy” decision-making tool

To guide the professional with respect to the boundary between coaching and psychotherapy, SICPNL has designed a decision-making tool. Beyond the techniques used in NPL coaching, this tool illustrates the decisions to be made with respect to the client (key element no. 1), the mandate (key element no. 2) and the legal framework (key element no. 3) in order to respect the guidelines that delimit the coach's territory.

Legend: Decision-making process (next page)

	Beginning of process
	End of process
	Action
	Choice
	Complex process
	Data

“Coaching or psychotherapy” decision-making tool



Annex

Special Collaboration

The following personalities have contributed to this document.

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