

## Ep #339: Therapy and Coaching



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #339: Therapy and Coaching

**Brooke:** You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode #339.

**Male Announcer:** Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

**Brooke:** Well, hello, my friends. Welcome to the episode today. Today is going to be very exciting. We have a panel of therapists who are also coaches. They are both. I wanted to have them on today so we could talk about the differences between the two.

We get lots of questions about the difference between therapy and coaching and we're going to cover how to know when to hire a coach and how to know when to hire a therapist. When you look at yourself and what you're going through what might be the most appropriate choice for you. Also, we're going to talk to you coaches out there and we're going to let you know when is the time to recommend therapy, when you may have a client that isn't suitable for coaching and when to recommend that they go to therapy and some of your options around how to handle that.

So, this is completely unscripted. I'm putting them on the spot for all of these questions, but first I'm going to let them introduce themselves and tell you a little bit about how they got into therapy and how they got into coaching. Let's start with you, Veronique.

**Veronique:** Well, I was the teenager who was always addicted to the self-help aisle at the bookstore. So, back after I graduated college then I went and got a master's degree in social work and started out doing counseling, this is back in 1995, 1996. I started when I was five years old, just so you know. No, I'm kidding.

**Brooke:** I'm like, "What? What did you read when you were five? How did I miss that?"

**Veronique:** And I love being a therapist and I loved helping people, but I always wanted to improve the tools in my toolkit. So, then in 2012 I went

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and got certified with Martha Beck and then a few years later met you through Master Weight Loss course, before Scholars started. After that I was like, “I need to go back. I want to go back and get a second certification with Brooke,” and did that this past year.

So, I do both. I have a practice where I see clients in psychotherapy two days a week and then I have a practice where I work with life coaches who are stuck in niche drama to get their ideal clients and get their head on straight. I’ve been doing both of these coaching probably since before I became a life coach if I really think about it, but the tools that you teach, to me, are above and beyond anything I’ve ever had in my toolkit. So, I have a little bit of a hope that someday we can get this to all the therapists, not just life coaches, but the therapists could really benefit with your tools.

**Brooke:** So, do you use some of The Life Coach School tools with your psychotherapy patients as well?

**Veronique:** I do. In fact, like today is a therapy session day for me, so just before – two sessions before I had I used the model with one person. It kind of depends. The person has to be open to it. Like, “What? My thoughts create my feelings? I don’t know about that.” But some people just love it and so I think the model is magical and the stuff you’ve created is just above and beyond even a lot of the tools that were given to me as a therapist, so I love bringing the two together.

**Brooke:** Awesome. So, you’re a psychotherapist and you’re a life coach to life coaches it sounds like?

**Veronique:** Yes, who are stuck in niche drama, there’s a lot of that.

**Brooke:** There’s a lot of them. Okay, all right, Shanen, let’s go to you.

**Shanen:** Hello, I am Shanen Sadowski. I’m with Rise Coaching and I’m a licensed professional counselor and a Christian life coach. I help women create the abundant life that they were created for. I realize when I started I’ve had a dream of being a therapist since I was very, very young and I realized once I started as a therapist in private practice that, actually, what I

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really was envisioning all that time was life coaching and I just didn't know it because it wasn't really a thing back then.

So, I do a lot of trauma therapy. That's my specialty. I do have a heart for that and for the people who come to me, but I also really just light up when I get to work with people who are in a good place, they are functioning well in their life, but they really just want to up-level their life and go after something bigger.

I also use a lot of the tools that I've gained through The Life Coach School with all of my therapy clients as well. It just depends, a lot of times it's like you're starting with them in the fetal position so to speak and bringing them out of that and then once they get to that place where now they're able to move up to the thriving level that's when I bring in the tools that I've learned through The Life Coach School and I've seen huge success in people's lives through that.

**Brooke:** That's awesome. Help us understand the difference between – you called yourself a licensed counselor and Veronique called herself a psychotherapist. Let's talk about what the differences are between those two.

**Shanen:** Sure, psychotherapist and therapist, there's so many different names, counselors, they're all kind of interchangeable. There's differences – if you asked five different therapists or psychotherapists what the difference is they'd all give you a different answer so there really is no clear-cut definition of any of them.

A licensed professional counselor or psychotherapist just means that they are legally licensed with the state. There's some differences, you can have counselors that are working with a church or something that don't necessarily have the training and haven't been through the licensure process with their state. So, that's the biggest differentiator is that licensed piece.

**Brooke:** Got it. So, you're both licensed, you're doing similar types of therapy, the two of you just call yourself different things?

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**Shanen:** That's right.

**Veronique:** Yeah. I'm actually a licensed clinical social worker, but it's so much easier to just say psychotherapist. It's sort of like the catch all.

**Brooke:** Got it, okay. Perfect. All right, let's go to you, Sandy.

**Sandy:** Good morning, my name is Sandy Arguello and I found my way into therapy after my own life crisis in my mid-20s and it was such a powerful experience for me. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, this is where I want to go." So, that's how I ended up getting my master's in marriage and family therapy. I always thought I would be in private practice and in the process of doing my internship I ultimately ended up with an agency.

I'm a team player, I love to be on a team and that ultimately turned out to be a great path for me was to work with a team and an agency. So, I gave up the dream of private practice, but I've been licensed for approximately 25 years and with the agency for approximately 25 years.

**Brooke:** What does it mean when you say you're in an agency? You don't see clients one-on-one?

**Sandy:** I do. I'm a clinical supervisor, I'm the Clinical Director of the non-profit agency and I'm also still licensed myself and I see some clients, but mostly I supervisor other MFTs, LCSWs doing their work, the clinical work with the people that we see.

So, in doing the work – we are primarily Medicaid-funded and so, it's a form of insurance and all these years, 25 years of working with the insurance industry is very tiring and we end up doing more paperwork to prove that we're doing the people work, so I have been attracted to coaching all the way back to 2009 and I dreamed about it the entire time.

Sometime in 2016 in the middle of the night – I had never even listened to a podcast before, and I'm like, I pick up my phone, it's like, "I'm going to figure out a podcast." The very first thing I ever typed in to see anything was I put in, "Life coach." Your podcast came up. So, in the middle of the

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night in 2016 I start listening from episode 1 and I'm hearing these amazing – your principles, everything. It was so spot-on. I'm like obsessively listening night after night after night and it was just amazing stuff.

So, I was very attracted to that idea of becoming a life coach and you had activated about that same time, I think, 2009 for you and here you had done the work and I'm still dreaming about the work. Then, at the end of 2016 is when you first introduced Self Coaching Scholars. It started in January of 2017. I immediately joined Self Coaching Scholars and a lot of people have said this where maybe I would just get the tools there and not go through certification.

I joined instantly, within weeks I'm like, "Oh no, I have to do the certification." So, I certified in 2017 and honestly, Brooke, the week that we spent together before we ever got to the practicum or everything we did afterwards in terms of building our businesses or wherever we went, I felt like I got so much just in that one week that I actually wrote on my comment card, "Everything I've already spent was worth that one week in person." Here I am a licensed therapist 25 years and I just walked away with so much stuff. I also use the tools in all of my practices, whether I'm doing my own work as a therapist, if I'm supervising others, even supervising employees, and then absolutely in my coaching practice as well.

**Brooke:** Yeah, love it. Awesome. All right, what about you, Kathleen?

**Kathleen:** Hello, Brooke. Thank you for having me. I am Dr. Kathleen Young. I am a board-certified child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist, so a little bit different than the rest of the people on the panel because I am a physician. And how did I get into psychiatry? I always wanted to be a psychiatrist. I have always been fascinated about why people do what they do. I think I always wanted to know, why is this happening? Why are they doing this?

So, it just sort of made sense, and I went to medical school wanting to be a psychiatrist and along the way we rotate through everything and I liked

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almost everything else I did, but I just came back to psychiatry because I really, really enjoyed it. I also felt like when you could help people in that way with their psychiatric illness that they got better that it was so life-changing for them and they were so grateful that I really liked being able to help people in that way.

Now, I came to coaching – well, I've spent the last almost 15 years in private practice. So, I do medication management and I do psychotherapy, and then in some cases, both. I came to life coaching because I did Katrina Ubell's weight loss program for physicians and the whole way I was like, "I really like the way this is packaged. The model makes so much sense to me."

I'm a math and science person so anything that's a formula makes a lot of sense to me. I actually was an engineering student in college, so anything that's a formula really just makes a lot of sense to me. So, I was actually starting to bring those kinds of tools I was learning from Katrina to my patients. Some of them I would use some of the tools ad-hoc and people really got a lot out of it and I was getting a lot out of it.

I was like, "I just want to certify and bring this to my people." So, here I am. I finished certification in March and I have started coaching parents of kids who have psychiatric issues because that was –

**Brooke:** Oh, interesting.

**Kathleen:** - I see over and over again, I see kids who have more severe problems because a lot of times they come to me for medication. The parents, they need help. They feel alone and they don't feel like therapy is the help they want because they feel their kid has the problem and therapy may not be the help they want. So, I thought this would be another option that might be a good way to reach more people and help more people.

**Brooke:** I love that. So, I think it's important for us to talk about the distinction between a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist. So, a psychiatrist is a doctor, board-certified doctor who can prescribe medication and a psychotherapist does not prescribe any medication and they are not a

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doctor of medicine. They may be a PhD, but they're not going to be prescribing medicine. Do I have that right?

**Kathleen:** Yes, and some psychiatrists don't see people for therapy they only do medication so there is a variety amongst psychiatrists.

**Brooke:** Got it, okay. All right, Aimée, what about you?

**Aimée:** Yes, hi, thank you for having me. I'm Aimée Gianni and I have been a licensed marriage and family therapist in Nevada and Utah for over 20 years. I was the same as some that have spoken as far as I was always interested in psychology. I majored in psychology in my undergrad, and I wanted to go on to train to help people in relationships because I love relationships. That's why I did my master's in marriage and family therapy, and focused on relationships for many years in my private practice.

Then, it was 2014 when I found you and I thought, "Oh, I'll do this life coach training, that sounds cute. That sounds fun."

**Brooke:** It's adorable. Yeah.

**Aimée:** Adorable, I'll get some fun, little, cute tools to put in my toolbox for my therapy practice and as I did it at the time I was very sick, physically, I was not doing well physically. I started applying your tools to myself and it was very life-changing for me. I was like, "Wow, this is much more than cute. This is amazing."

So, I started using them in my therapy practice. I used them on myself. I did master coach training the next year. I was sold on coaching and all of these. So, I did master coach training and now I'm a master coach instructor at the school and I work in many different places in the school. I also run The Coaching Collective with Molly Claire which is a group program for coaches who are building their businesses. In my private practice, I focus on love and health and the connection between the two.

**Brooke:** Love it. Okay. So, let's talk a little bit about some of the main difference between therapy and life coaching practices. I think it's important

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to note that the life coaching industry is not regulated and the therapy industry is very regulated and there's good reasons for both. Even though the life coaching industry isn't regulated, we really have that internal regulation. Anyone that goes through The Life Coach School we have our standards and ethics of practice that we do.

But one of the benefits, and maybe I'll just kind of go back around a little bit – actually, let's just start with you on this, Aimée. One of the benefits to life coaching is you, as a life coach, can coach anyone in any state or country with no regulation on that. As a therapist you have to be licensed in the state that you're practicing in or multiple states. Do you want to speak to that at all? Does that affect you at all? I think a lot of therapists are actually becoming life coaches because of that. And the other question is do you have to be really clear about whether you're doing therapy or doing life coaching if you're in a different state?

**Aimée:** Yes, so good. I'm so glad you brought this up. You have to be very clear. So, I have a very clear contract that when I'm offering coaching versus therapy. I'm not actually offering therapy right now, I do all coaching, but you have to be very, very clear about that, what you are offering. I love the coaching model because you're able to serve so many more people.

I serve people all over the country, all over the world. I've had international clients. So, it does open up – you can have such a greater impact, I think. I do believe that a lot of therapists are opening up to coaching, but you do have to just keep your lines very clear about what you're offering and not crossing over.

**Brooke:** Yeah, Kathleen, do you want to speak to that as well? How do you divide that in your practice?

**Kathleen:** Yeah, so I have created a separate business for my coaching practice to keep it even cleaner. I also am marketing to parents of kids with psychiatric illness so it's even clearer that they're not my patient. I'm licensed in a bunch of different states, but I think that that was one of the reasons why I wanted to do coaching because I thought it would give me a

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broader reach and help me be able to do more and [inaudible] people, but yeah that's how I keep it clear. I have a contract that says I am a doctor, but not your doctor, essentially.

Anything I can do. I called my malpractice insurance and they said, "Don't double dip. Don't try to take people on that you see in your psychiatric practice. Just anything you can do to keep the lines clear."

**Brooke:** Yeah, that's really important. We have a lot of therapists who are becoming life coaches because of the freedom that that allows, but you do have to be careful if you are a therapist becoming a life coach that you keep those very separate unless you're practicing in your state with a patient you can bring as much life coaching into that with no restriction. Anyone else want to speak to that? You want to speak to it, Sandy?

**Sandy:** Yeah, again, the contract, my contract is very clear with my coaching clients that I am a therapist and that we are not going to do therapy. I've even had some of my life coaching clients ask me if I would switch over. Someone I've had for a couple of years, "Oh, I really want to go deeper. Can I be your client in therapy?" It was like absolutely not. I absolutely have to set that limit and for a minute she kind of wondered about that and we were able to work through that and just say, "This coaching model is so powerful and if you need to see a therapist, I'll help you get to a therapist. I will suggest some ideas for you to find someone in your local community, but it's not going to be me."

**Brooke:** Okay, good. Veronique?

**Veronique:** The way I've handled it is I've got my psychotherapy practice and I use psychotherapy and life coaching tools, but the umbrella is I'm a psychotherapist and then I picked a niche as a life coach where I really felt that there wasn't going to be a whole lot of need for me even bringing that I was a therapist and kept them very separate.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that was smart. Let's talk about that just a little bit. Let's touch on it, how important it is when you are just a life coach or when you're just practicing life coaching how important it is to pick a niche that is

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appropriate for life coaching. There are some niches that are going to attract clients that are better suited for therapy.

So, I want you to speak to this, Veronique because you are our niche drama expert, when somebody is picking a niche and they are maybe switching from therapy to life coaching and they're just life coaching what are some of the niches you might recommend people stay away from?

**Veronique:** I think keeping in mind that as a life coach you have to have the tools in your toolkit to help your clients is a good place to start. So, if you want to serve somebody say – Shanen was talking about she specializes in trauma as a therapist, if you want to be a life coach that specializes in trauma, you need to make sure that you have those tools in your toolkit to be able to help your clients.

Generally speaking and the way I kind of – you haven't asked this, but I'll speak to it, to me, the difference between therapy and life coaching is therapy is when you are having a problem and you're sub-functioning and you want to get back to a baseline. Life coaching really is useful when you are at baseline and functioning and you want to optimize how you're doing.

So, when I go through helping clients choose a niche, we spend a lot of time talking about who is your ideal client? What would be fun for you in terms of what would be joy and fun and you'd do for free in coaching that you have so much fun doing? But do you have the skill and the tools that you need to help that person? And is your population going to be somebody who may need help? If you're dealing with depressed, suicidal – I don't recommend this as a niche, suicidal adolescents, that's a population that probably will need psychotherapy support and you need to be aware of that and have all of your resources ready.

**Brooke:** Yeah, I mean, that would be a completely inappropriate niche for life coaching and some of the things that I've steered my students away from are depression, high anxiety, trauma work, especially with clients that have never had therapy before that have a lot of unprocessed trauma. That is above our pay grade. That is not what we're trained to do.

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Some of the signs of that will be pretty obvious. Kathleen, do you want to speak to some of the signs? Like, if you start coaching someone and you recognize that they're non-functioning, how might you recognize something like that?

**Kathleen:** Well, I think you want to look at how they're functioning. So, are they able to maintain their daily life? Are they getting out of bed? Are they getting dressed? If they have a job, are they going to their job? Are they going every day? So, you want to look for signs that people are functioning in their lives like they normally would and then go from there. That's how I would look at it.

When people aren't doing that, like if they can't keep a job or they don't seem to be showing up when they're supposed to be showing up then I ask more questions about what's going on just to find out what's happening and whether or not that type of diagnosis if they're depressed is really kind of getting in the way of them functioning and then getting in the way of them being an ideal coaching client.

**Brooke:** Yeah, what about you, Shanen? Do you want to speak to that as well?

**Shanen:** Yeah, I think that it can also be helpful – when we do our niche work, when we're first deciding on a niche, part of that work is really getting good at describing your ideal client. What are the things that you expect them to need help with? If the things that they are describing that they're battling with are symptoms of a mental illness that is a sign to you that you're crossing over into that therapy world.

I think Krista St-Germain is such a good example of this because her niche is helping widowed moms and so she's dealing within the field of grief, but yet she's very careful in her description of who she is and what she does that she's not describing her ideal client as people who are deep in the throes of grief, they can't get out of bed in the morning, they don't know if they want to go on, all those things.

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She starts after that work is already done. She starts when the person has re-entered their life, they're regaining their hope, they want to start envisioning the next step, and so I think that can be a really helpful thing is just to ask yourself like, "Why am I choosing this niche? What is it that I want to be working with day-to-day and what would that work actually look like in process with them?"

**Brooke:** Yeah. One of the best questions is, is it appropriate for life coaching? Is it future-focused? Is the person already doing well already? Doing the main things in life, being able to function. One of the things that I've noticed, too, is when I first started out I was a coach in weight loss and there's a distinction that I made between eating disorders, right? Disordered eating and non-functioning as it applied to eating, and then normal weight loss. I always erred on the side of being really conservative in that decision.

If I felt like we were dealing at all with any kind of disordered eating, I would recommend that they work with a therapist and they could still work with me. We could work together if they're working with a therapist and with me, but those are the things that I just think you can't be too careful with those. Being really appropriate with a client and explaining to them honestly and showing them the difference, I think, is important. Sandy, did you have something you want to add?

**Sandy:** I do. So, when I'm helping clients decide between life coaching or if they need a therapist this circles back to how you would also choose the niche. So, when I found my way to therapy, certainly I was flat as a pancake. I got to the point that I felt like I was the crepe in the pan, you know the pan is hot, I'm flat as a pancake. I'm barely functioning. If you're trying to pick a niche where someone is literally flat as a pancake, you're on the wrong track.

**Brooke:** Yes, agreed. Yeah, that's really good. Aimée, did you have anything?

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**Aimée:** Yeah, I think also when you're talking about some of these if somebody is going to work with people that have depression or anxiety, like lighter levels of that, they can benefit from that, right? Because we talk about there is crossover, but if it becomes extreme that's when you then may become more the support as the coach and the therapy becomes the primary treatment. So, there's that distinction to be made, too.

**Brooke:** Yeah, and I've been at this a long time, I'm a life coach, I'm not a therapist. Some of the people that I have recommended go into therapy are clients that kept coming back to me with a very flat affect. They couldn't get beyond. Every time was the same story, the same thing. It didn't seem like they were happy, it didn't even seem like they were that sad, they were just really flat.

I am a huge believer in medication helping us get to the point where we can at least function enough to help ourselves and so I recommended a lot of my clients go and at least inquire about that and it's amazing some of the stories of people going and getting medicated and really kind of pulling themselves out of that and then coming back to life coaching. Another client I had literally just could not stop crying. Every session cried the whole session, wasn't able to come out of that. That wasn't appropriate for ongoing life coaching. We weren't moving forward at all.

So, those are some of the examples for me. The third one is they kept missing appointments, showing up late, being super distracted during the session, not being able to focus. I have some pretty stringent requirements for what it takes. Like, you have to be high functioning. You have to come on time, you have to stay the whole time, you have to be in a quiet environment. You can't be picking up your phone or distracted which is, when you're not functioning, really incredibly difficult to do.

If you have some rules like that it will really help you to know, "Okay, this person isn't able to show up on time and stay focused the whole session. Probably more appropriate for therapy." So, let's kind of look at it through the lens of a client. So, I'm a client and I'm trying to decide – I'm having a

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tough time and I'm trying to decide whether I should get a life coach or whether I should get a therapist.

Let's actually start with you, Shanen. Do you have some suggestions of some questions I could ask myself to be able to determine that or how I should go about it?

**Shanen:** Sure, I would start out by asking what is it that I'm dealing with and that I'm struggling with? If I have unhealed trauma, if I've had a recent crisis or a traumatic incident in my life that I'm reliving or feeling stuck in those are really great pointers that that's a counseling field that we're looking for not someone within the coaching.

I think, too, if we're frequently triggered by things we're not able to manage our emotions and we don't really understand the why and I mean like to the severe extent where we feel like, "Wow, where did that come from?" Or just really being stuck in it. Those are also really good signs. The functioning also, if you're struggling with just day-to-day life, you're not able to get your kids to school on time and get up and keep a job and all those basics that's a great tip that you're leaning more towards therapy than the coaching.

Whereas the coaching if you're really looking at more the functioning while in your life up-leveling is how I look at it. Just really going after a dream or hopes or getting excited about different things for your future those are all great avenues to take up with a life coach. I think there's such a huge variety of niches and coaches that are out there, too. Both there and with therapy, I would say, that I would just really someone to really take the time to do their homework and find someone that feels like a really good fit for them, too.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that's a good point, actually. If you're going to go into therapy and do life coaching at the same time which a lot of our clients do I think it's very important that your therapist and your life coach know about each other and support the collaborative work. So, you can open about it. I think sometimes people are like, "I don't want to tell my therapist I'm seeing a life coach. My therapist doesn't like life coaches." Or the other way

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around. I think that you're creating drama that doesn't need to be there. It can be a very supportive environment. Kathleen, you want to add to that?

**Kathleen:** I mean, just as an example of that there's a more intensive outpatient program here in New York that I refer to a lot and all of the people in the program they have a coach and a therapist. It could be the therapist that they already had before they went to the program or a new one, but they always assign a coach and a therapist. I think that's a really beautiful example of how they work together.

**Brooke:** Yeah, and I think sometimes it's important to remember that if you have experiences in your past that you haven't acknowledged or processed there can be a huge benefit to getting a therapist and going back and doing that work. One of the ways that you'll recognize it, there will be patterns in your life that you'll just keep repeating that you can't quite understand the cause of. I think therapy, even short-term therapy, going in and understanding that is incredibly powerful.

I had a therapist. She was a Freudian therapist, so she didn't really speak to me. So, I just would go in there and just keep telling the story over and over and over and over again each session and I didn't feel like I was making any progress there. I think that's another thing. I think – I'll be curious what you think about this, Aimée. The difference between therapy and life coaching, when you go into therapy and you process unprocessed trauma you feel an incredible sense of growth and breakthrough and release and relief if you're doing it with a therapist that it's the first time you've ever talked about it or ever admitted it out loud.

Then, at some point that becomes less useful and switching into life coaching becomes more effective. So, have you seen that as well with your clients?

**Aimée:** Yes, absolutely. That's one of the things I was going to say. If you're somebody that has not resolved that trauma and you go into therapy, but then at some point yes, it's time – once you processed it, it's time to move forward and that's where life coaching really can help you.

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So, it's not that life coaches don't work with people that have had trauma in the past, but it's helping them move forward from that.

Another thing I was going to say is I also think it's a lot of just personal preference if you're trying to decide if you want to do therapy or coaching. Maybe you have stuff in your past, even if it's not trauma, that you really are more past-focused and you want to do that work, hire a therapist. If you want to do more future focus you could hire a coach.

Now, there's also plenty of therapists that do future-focused work. It's not that black and white, but that's just something to consider because I think as maybe Kathleen had mentioned sometimes clients are just better suited to something or they really like thought work, they like using a model that really resonates for them. Whereas others maybe want to do more work on their past.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that's a really good point. I do think sometimes – I've had a session with someone one time where they brought up some things from their past that they had never told anyone before and I recommended – I said, "I think it's really important for you to go see a therapist and process that." And they're like, "Why can't I do that with you? I would like to do that with you. I trust you. I've never told this to anyone before."

I think it's important for us to acknowledge that that is not our expertise and that's not what we're trained in and that we're not abandoning the client. We're not saying, "No, you're too messed up. Go to a therapist." That's not what we're saying at all. It's just like, I think they can better serve you in this area and then we can move forward.

There may be a stigma for some people associated with therapy feeling like, "Oh, if I go to therapy then I'm really admitting that there's really something wrong with me and that I'm non-functioning." I just want to encourage you that that is not the case and in looking for a therapist to help you through something in your past, I think, can require some time, too and multiple interviews with multiple therapists to make sure that you get someone that you feel the same way – this is what I told my client, that you

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feel the same way that you do with me. Just because you trust me doesn't mean that I'm the right person to process this through. Veronique, do you want to speak to that?

**Veronique:** Yeah, I think a lot of that has to do with the same issues that come up with choosing a life coach is you really want to have a connection with the person you're working with and what they call in therapy, the therapeutic relationship, but it exists in life coaching, too. There's some people you'll have as a coach and you'll be like, "It doesn't quite feel right," but then you meet somebody else and you click. That click is just so important.

So, I know sometimes that there's folks that say, "I went to see a therapist. It was not successful." Or, "I've done life coaching and it didn't work for me." There's so much of it that just has to do with the person and how you connect with them as an individual that's important and sometimes it's not even if they're a life coach or a therapist. If you're right on the border, like if the issues you're dealing with are right on the border it just has to do more with the person that you – finding someone you really feel comfortable with if the issues aren't severe.

**Brooke:** Yeah. That's so good. One last thing I want to talk about, maybe Sandy you can speak to this is how important it is to kind of maintain our own agency no matter who we're seeing. So, if we go to a life coach or go to a therapist I think it's really important to always remember that you know what's best for you always and you are always the one making your decision. You go in and talk to a therapist or talk to a life coach as life coaches, if you're trained through The Life Coach School we know as coaches that we don't know what's right for our clients.

We can help them look at their mind, we can help them explore options, we can help them look at their patterns, but really ultimately all the decisions you make as a client are your own to make. I think sometimes it's easy, and I've seen this with some of my clients, to get into the role of, "You're my therapist, you're the authority on me." Or, "You're my life coach, you're the authority on me." Sandy, I'd love for you to speak to how do we make

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sure that we always maintain that sense of our own empowerment no matter who we hire?

**Sandy:** Absolutely. I think you're spot on there because that's the beauty of the coaching model is it can be uncomfortable because we're always circling back to their thoughts. Everything comes down to them and where they want to go. So, most of my clients who find me have not done very well in therapy and they need something that maybe is more directive in terms of being willing to confront - not as gentle perhaps and hopefully I'm [inaudible] all the time, but it's not like we're trying to be in that place when they're in that crisis and so you have to be very careful with a fragile being. But that we can really have these frank, candid conversations. That's what really keeps us in the coaching lane.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that's really good. Okay, let's switch gears a little bit and talk to our coaches. So, if you are a coach and you are having clients that you're kind of questioning. Maybe this client is a better fit for therapy, let's talk first about the absolute, most obvious concerns that we need to look at initially and make sure that we handle immediately, Veronique.

**Veronique:** If they are suicidal, so if they are wanting to harm themselves, if they are homicidal and they are –

**Brooke:** Okay, let's just start one at a time. So, if they're suicidal, if they're talking about suicide, they're talking about having any kind of ideation about that at all as a coach it is our responsibility to do what?

**Veronique:** It is our responsibility to make sure that they are safe. This is where it's interesting because as a therapist your licensure is on the line, as a life coach I think it becomes more of an ethical question like you don't want to have one of your clients commit suicide and they told you and you missed it. So, from an ethical standpoint you have to talk to them about it.

There's actually a Self Coaching Scholars call that you did a while back where you handled that beautifully. There was someone on the phone who was so clearly – they were suicidal. The woman was in tears and you said, "Listen, I think we need to get you some extra help because – " and the

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way you had said it was something along the lines of, “- because there are times when you really need therapy and there’s times where you really need life coaching and this is beyond what life coaching can offer.”

Coming up with a plan with that client to keep them safe and make sure that they get the help that they need. That is where we go with that.

**Brooke:** Yeah, does anyone else want to add to that? Yes, Shanen.

**Shanen:** I think that’s also why it’s so important to have a good, I want to say intake process, because that’s what we call it in therapy. But having a form that they fill out, especially if you are working with a niche where this could come up frequently, it’s so important that you have their full name, a physical address to send help to if needed, a phone number, and an emergency name and contact would add one additional line of support.

But it’s so important that you don’t feel trapped where you’re on a call with someone and feeling helpless, like you have no way to get help to them or you finish a call and you can’t sleep at night because you’re really worried about that client.

**Brooke:** Yeah, and we highly want every single coach who goes through The Life Coach School, but any – I know that we have a lot of coaches that listen to this podcast that aren’t necessarily trained through us and I just really want to make sure that each and every one of you have taken a suicide prevention course. There’s lots of free ones, you don’t even have to pay for them, to understand the signs, to know what to do, and to have a plan so if that were to happen with one of your clients what would be the steps that you would take to make sure that they’re okay as much as you can.

Obviously, we can’t control all of our clients, but we definitely do want to have a plan and be aware of it. Anyone else want to add anything new?  
Kathleen.

**Kathleen:** I mean, I just would add don’t be afraid to ask for help if you don’t know, if you’re not sure because sometimes people make very vague

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passive comments like, “Oh, it would just be easier if I could just go to sleep and never get up,” or something like that. If you’re not sure, just ask for help or refer – tell them why you’re concerned. That this is really serious and you really want them to go on and live the happy [inaudible] that they have, that they’re dreaming about, and that you want them to get help.

I would also add self-harm is a very nuanced topic and it’s slightly different than suicide, but there is some overlap and a lot of the people who self-harm do have suicidal thoughts at times intermittently. So, I think that if you’re not trained in mental health or suicide or self-harm then you probably really need a second eye on it if it’s coming up

**Brooke:** Yes, absolutely.

**Kathleen:** Because that stuff can really deteriorate quickly and you don’t want to be caught out there trying to manage it on your own.

**Brooke:** Right, definitely, Aimée.

**Aimée:** Yeah, a couple of things. So, you don’t want to run away from it, too. When your client brings it up, as a coach if you don’t want to freak out and think, “Oh no, I can’t do this. I’m going to have to end this call.” You want to [inaudible] it, and be with the client and ask questions about it because sometimes people think, “Oh, if I ask them about it it’s going to plant the seed in their head.” It’s not. Go ahead and move toward it, ask the questions, and always follow your gut.

So, if you’re just not quite sure about something, you always want to err on the side of safety by contacting somebody, by making a referral, staying with them and helping them with that.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that’s good. Sandy, did you want to add?

**Sandy:** So, the content that usually comes before all of that is depression and I think that that’s an idea that we see most often in terms of life coaching because it’s such an idea in our society and culture people use that word pretty loosely.

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**Brooke:** Yes.

**Sandy:** So, I always want to assess, is that their self-description or have they been diagnosed by a physician or a psychiatrist or someone? Are they already on medication? Then, I really want to flesh that out for them. Again, it doesn't mean they can't coach with me, but as people move towards these other – it's like there's a continuum of referral. So, you might be referred to a therapist and part of why you might need a therapist in your own community, eyes and ears on the ground in your own community is because in case things do escalate for you that someone can help refer you locally, and that's where I want to make sure if someone's got that depression diagnosis that they have some sort of a local touchpoint even if it's just their general practitioner.

**Brooke:** Yeah, that's really good. I do want to add this because I think it's really important is you can have a client that is non-functioning and you could be coaching them and the coaching can be helping them and you can be under the impression that that is enough. So, I think it's really important just because the work you're doing might be helping your client if they're non-functioning, if you can tell that they're not growing, they're not changing, they're just making incremental mood changes on the call with you because of the model I think any time you have that feeling or you sense that or that you see those signs always asking a therapist, running it by them, I always prefer that we err on the side of caution.

Like you said, Aimée, talking to the client about your concerns and opening up that discussion I think is really important than pretending like you're not having those concerns. Now, the other thing that I want to say is most of the clients that you get, especially if your niche is appropriate, you will not have any of these problems with because most people who are non-functioning are not looking for life coaches. They're not in the position to be hiring life coaches.

So, it's like I don't want to scare all of our life coaches into thinking that this is a regular occurrence, but it is definitely worth if you're coaching someone

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and this may be appropriate for therapy to always get a second opinion, bring someone else in.

Okay, so how do we want to end it? Do you have any last tips? Let's go through and everyone can maybe give one last tip, therapy and life coaching, the differences, anything else you want to end with. Let's start with you, Sandy.

**Sandy:** So, as you're speaking about that it reminds me of my own niche where I work with highly conflictual relationships, highly contentious, and so, often that's the kind of thing that lands in a marriage and family therapist's office, but it's very interesting to add the coaching model on top of it. Whether that's in a marriage, family, at work, a professional relationship, and again that's a great example where being on the ground, being very pragmatic with people I've been fascinated at how effective the model is in helping in that kind of contention.

**Brooke:** That's great. I know that we have a lot of therapists that listen. I do want to add to this because of something that you had said earlier, Sandy, too, is I think a lot of therapists that go through Self Coaching Scholars or listen to my podcast or read a book of mine take that information and apply it to their practice. I just want to encourage you that if it's something that's feasible for you, going through the certification process, going through the entire process at the school is like night and day.

It's like the podcast is step 1, Self Coaching Scholars is step 2, and certification is step 10. It takes it all to the next level. So, if you are a therapist and you want to utilize these tools I highly recommend that you don't just use them kind of as a side dish but that you actually get certified.

**Sandy:** Brooke, may I just speak to that for a minute?

**Brooke:** Yeah, sure.

**Sandy:** Let me just say, just the practicum to get through I mean, honestly, the criteria is so rigorous through LCS that even after 25 years in the field I can have all of these skills over here, but I had to master LCS tools and it

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wasn't that easy to do. And I just value that so much. I agree 100%. It's like get through all three steps if you want to do it.

**Brooke:** Yeah, it's kind of like a different sport. It's like just because you're super amazing at this sport doesn't mean you're just going to be able to crossover and be super amazing. You're using different muscles and different approaches.

**Sandy:** Exactly.

**Brooke:** What do you got, Aimée?

**Aimée:** One thing we haven't really talked about that I just want to highlight is abuse. If there's active abuse going on that is definitely a therapy issue. Not to say that coaches can't help people that are in situations like that, but that definitely becomes the support, so if you have a client that's talking about if they are being abused or if you hear of any kind of child abuse or abuse to the elderly that is a therapy issue because it's a safety issue. So, I guess that's what I would say. Always be scanning for safety whether it's suicidal, homicidal, abuse, even like you mentioned eating disorders because that becomes a safety issue, right?

**Brooke:** Yes.

**Aimée:** An extreme eating disorder or even alcohol at an extreme level that can be a safety issue. So, I guess that's my tip for all of the coaches. Just always really have a feel for assessing safety in all of those areas and if you think that the client is at risk that's definitely when you want to consult with somebody and possibly make a referral.

**Brooke:** Yeah, so good. All right, Kathleen.

**Kathleen:** I just want to add two quick things. First is that it's important that if a person has a diagnosis that they have a diagnosis and impairment. There are lots of people who have diagnoses who are living very functional lives and doing okay and can be great coaching clients. So, don't get

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scared and write people off just because they had a diagnosis. Ask further and see if it's well-treated.

The second thing I really want to emphasize is that it doesn't always have to be one or the other and it can be both. I experience this a lot because I often get referrals from therapists for their clients to have medication and there doesn't have to be a competition or territories. You can engage a therapist in the process with your clients and it doesn't mean you're going to lose the client. I think when I was first practicing medicine, I did operate a little bit from a place of scarcity in that way. I wanted to treat everything that came through the door even though I didn't thoroughly have the expertise or the skills to manage it and it was scary to me to refer on and I think I just want coaches to realize that even if you do engage a therapist or a psychiatrist or consider asking whether medication could be helpful that that doesn't mean you'll lose the client. If you do, that doesn't mean more won't come through the door.

**Brooke:** Exactly. Yeah, really good point.

**Kathleen:** Abundance.

**Brooke:** Really good point. All right, Shanen?

**Shanen:** Yeah, I would say we talked a little bit about the fact that therapy is a regulated industry and coaching is not and I think a really good rule of thumb for coaches to act is act as if it is. Act as if it already were a regulated industry because doing that protects us on three levels. It protects our clients so that they're not harmed. It protects us against any liability. In a lot of states, you can be charged with counseling without a license if what the state thinks you're doing looks like you're counseling and calling it coaching, so it protects us. It also protects the coaching industry which I feel so strongly about because I am passionate about coaching, about what we're doing as coaches.

I love the fact that it's not regulated because it does allow us for more freedom and creativity and it gives our clients more autonomy in making their own decisions and things for themselves. So, I just think being able to

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act as if – running things by other people, other coaches if you're not quite sure how to act in a certain situation. But take the time to just get a little bit familiar with what are some of the regulations in your state just so that you have a sense of guiding principles for you as well.

**Brooke:** Love that. You know, I've been in this industry so long now and when we first started there was so much contention between therapists and life coaches because I think therapists were like, "What the heck? I went through all this school. I had to earn all of this and someone else can just come in and say that they're a life coach with a weekend training program." I think there was a lot of this back and forth therapy or life coaching and I feel like we've come a long way. I think our industry as life coaches has some amazing progress that we've made and there's still people out there that call themselves life coaches that I don't think should, personally, but I feel like as we've grown as an industry there's a lot more mutual respect.

I know that I feel that way and so, I feel like it's important and especially, there's so many therapists that are also life coaches now and we recognize the differences and the crossover and I think that's super important. All right, Veronique, what else do you have?

**Veronique:** Just to springboard off of that I think if we can create a world where life coaching and psychotherapy work together as opposed to against each other there are so many people who need help. There are so many people who want to improve their lives and I think, for me, having both of these tools and having really one foot in each of these industries I see the importance of more collaboration, more working together, less us and them and more we're all on the same team just wanting to – because the one thing that I think therapists and life coaches do have in common is they want to help people feel better.

**Brooke:** Yes.

**Veronique:** So, if you think about it, a sports team, for example, the coach of the sports team is as important as the doctor on the sports team. The difference is that the doctor will help you when you break your leg and the

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coach is going to be on the sideline giving you tactical strategy to win the game. I love thinking about that as what the difference between life coaching and therapy is. There's plenty of room for everybody. We all serve a role.

**Brooke:** Absolutely. And I think supporting each other in the collaborations that we can have for the extreme issues that we're dealing with in this country with mental health I think is so important. Any way we can, as a group, reduce the stigma for asking for help I think is the other most important thing. Whether it's more appropriate for therapy or more appropriate for life coaching and not diminishing one over the other or thinking, "I'm strong enough, I don't need those things." And really recognizing that. I think everyone can benefit from both, really, depending on what it is we want to work on.

So, thank you guys so much for coming and talking about this. I think this is such an important topic for us to take to a more sophisticated discussion than I ever have on the podcast before. If you are a student at The Life Coach School and you have gone through certification this team that's on this podcast right now has created an entire course on the difference between therapy and coaching and what to look for and what to pay attention to when you are life coaching and picking your niche, so you can find that on the certified site. So, if you're already certified and you didn't know about that make sure you go and watch that course. It is really fantastic.

That's it. That's all we have for now. Thank you everyone for coming and I look forward to talking to you all next week.

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