

Lesson Two Core Competency Follow-up Notes

Core Competencies

There are 8 ICF core competencies. These are broad areas of competence that define:

- A) How the coach should be (e.g., ethical, present)
- B) What the coach should do (e.g., partner to evoke awareness in the client)

To help myself better understand these competencies, I created keywords that serve as summaries of each. For example, what is “coaching presence?” My instinct tells me it is about being focused and not distracted. Is that all there is to it? A closer inspection reveals that it is, indeed, more than that. Here is what I wrote (and I will include further explanation in parentheses for your benefit):

- *Focused* (here, the ICF suggests paying attention to client emotion, posture, shifts, language, etc.)
- *Flexible* (here, the ICF points out that we are “in the moment.” Our questions are not pre-loaded or thought of before the session. They are improvised and tagged to what the client is speaking about. We are willing to change course when one line of inquiry leads nowhere).
- *Curious* (here, the ICF suggests that presence is a way of being every bit as much as it is something we do. By retaining curiosity, we can avoid the fallacy of thinking we know better than the client).

You might consider repeating this activity with the other seven core competencies, using the descriptors of each to guide your thinking.

Boundaries of Competence

Coaching is a distinct professional relationship and differs—in some ways-- from managing, mentoring, counseling, teaching, and other conversational and relationship-based approaches. Here, I have created a few thoughts about the similarities and distinctions between coaching and psychotherapy. Please also refer to the ICF whitepaper we discussed in class. Please note that there is no official distinction; these are just thoughts to help you consider the boundaries.

	Coach	Therapist
Training	Certificate level training, or none	Years of post-college training, State oversight
Focus	<i>Heavily non-clinical:</i> Planning, goal setting, decision making, skill-building, growth	<i>Heavily clinical:</i> Amelioration of clinical symptoms, basic emotion and social skill-building, self-acceptance, and harm reduction
Process	Inquiry-based conversational technology, Empathy, and relationships are important	Education and Inquiry-based conversational technology, Empathy/relationship are important
Expertise	Coach is an expert in facilitation and knowledge of frameworks (e.g. “leadership”) that might help guide questions	Expert in the etiology of mental illness, diagnosis, assessment, treatment planning, clinical intervention, psychology frameworks, and research literacy

Ethical Decision Making

My goal with this portion of the lesson was to A) encourage you to see ethics as a decision-making process for dealing with ambiguous issues, B) introduce you to the ICF code of ethics, and C) provide some guidance for how to go about the process of responsible decision-making. Here is a recap of the main points:

- Ethics is not a list of rules, it is a set of guiding principles to help you think through gray area issues
- The most conservative route is to treat “yellow flags” as if they are “red flags”
- Personal feelings can be used as a “rule out” (if it feels wrong, don’t do it) but not as a “rule in” (if it feels right, it still could be wrong)
- Do not make all decisions in isolation: consult experienced colleagues and be open to their input