

Do I Need a Career Coach or a Career Therapist?



Marcy Fletchall | June 2023 | Canva Photo

Many individuals seek guidance and support from professionals specializing in job search strategy, career development, and career transition activities when navigating career choices and transitions. Two standard terms often used interchangeably are "career therapist" and "career coach." However, it's essential to understand that these roles differ in approach, training, and focus. This article will delve into the dissimilarities between a career therapist and a career coach, shedding light on their unique roles and how they can assist individuals differently.

1. Purpose and Focus:

Career Coach

On the other hand, a career coach primarily focuses on assisting individuals in achieving their professional goals. They help clients assess their skills, interests, and values and guide them in making informed career decisions. Career coaches typically provide practical tools, resources, and strategies to enhance job search skills, improve interview performance, and develop effective networking techniques. They emphasize action-oriented steps to enhance career success and fulfillment.

Career Therapist

A career therapist, also known as a vocational counselor or career counselor, is a licensed mental health professional who specializes in helping individuals explore their career-related concerns within the context of their overall psychological well-being. They work with clients to identify how personal, emotional, and mental factors influence their career choices and satisfaction. Career therapists often employ various therapeutic techniques to address underlying issues that may impact career decisions and provide guidance on managing stress, anxiety, and self-doubt.

2. Training and Credentials

Career Coach

While there is no standardized path to becoming a career coach, individuals in this role often possess diverse professional backgrounds. Many career coaches have accumulated extensive industry experience deeply understanding the job market and career trends. While certifications are available for career coaching, they are not universally required. However, reputable career coaches often seek training through recognized coaching programs to refine their skills and stay current with industry best practices.

Career Therapist

Becoming a career therapist typically requires a degree in counseling, psychology, or a related field at a master's level. Additionally, career therapists often pursue specialized training or certifications in career counseling to develop expertise in helping individuals explore and address career-related concerns. They may be licensed by state boards and adhere to ethical guidelines and professional standards.

3. Approach and Methodology

Career Coach

Career coaches primarily focus on practical steps and strategies to help clients achieve their career objectives. They guide resume building, job search techniques, networking skills, interview preparation, and negotiation tactics. Coaches may use goal-setting frameworks, action plans, accountability structures, and skill-building exercises to support clients in achieving their desired outcomes. The emphasis is on taking action, building professional skills, and maintaining momentum throughout career development.

Career Therapist

Career therapists adopt a holistic approach to career counseling, considering the client's psychological and emotional well-being alongside their career aspirations. They may utilize career assessments, counseling sessions, exploration of values and interests, and therapeutic interventions to address emotional barriers or personal challenges that impact career decision-making. The focus is on self-exploration, self-awareness, and developing coping strategies to overcome obstacles and improve overall career satisfaction.

While career therapists and career coaches play crucial roles in supporting individuals in their career journeys, their approaches, training, and focuses differ significantly. Career coaches, on the other hand, offer practical guidance

and tools to navigate career transitions and achieve professional goals. Understanding these distinctions can help individuals choose the right professional based on their specific needs and preferences, ensuring a tailored and practical approach to career development. Career therapists bring expertise in psychology and mental health, helping clients address emotional and psychological factors that may affect career decisions.