

The Roles and Influence of Aggression, Transference, and Resistance in Coaching: A Modern Psychoanalytic Approach

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[Abstract] This article examines the psychoanalytic phenomena of aggression, transference, and resistance as they manifest within professional coaching relationships. Drawing on the foundational work of Sigmund Freud and the modern psychoanalytic contributions of Hyman Spotnitz, Benjamin Margolis, and others, this article explores how these dynamic processes operate in both the coach and the coachee. This article offers that recognizing and constructively managing these phenomena is consequential for coaching efficacy. It locates that work on a continuum of practitioner depth, from recognition to intervention within the coaching frame. By examining foundational psychoanalytic theory and associated practices, this article considers how modern psychoanalytic principles may enhance coaching outcomes by fostering deeper self-awareness, authentic engagement, and sustainable behavioral change.

[Keywords] modern psychoanalysis, aggression, transference, resistance, Freud, Spotnitz, Margolis

1. Introduction

The integration of psychoanalytic principles into coaching practice has garnered increasing attention among practitioners, enabling them to deepen their understanding of the relational dynamics that shape developmental outcomes. While coaching differs from psychotherapy in scope and intent, the underlying psychological principles present in helping relationships are similar. As Kilburg (2004) observed, coaching relationships inevitably activate the same unconscious dynamics that Freud first identified in his practice.

Modern psychoanalysis, as developed by Hyman Spotnitz and others, offers valuable insights for coaching practitioners. This approach emphasizes the constructive use of aggression, careful management of transference, and skilled resolution of resistance. This is accomplished within a framework that prioritizes progressive emotional communication and authentic relationship development, in this case, between coach and coachee (Spotnitz, 1969; Margolis, 1979).

Coaching and modern psychoanalysis share a foundational commitment to fostering growth and productivity in others. As such, this theoretical and applied alignment can provide coaches with opportunities to deepen their coaching practice and enable coachees to advance toward goal achievement. Blum (2010) offered that modern psychoanalysis provides coaches with a theoretical framework uniquely suited to understanding the cognitive structures and emotional conditions associated with professional behavior. In support, Stern (2002) argued that the psychoanalytic tradition provides important insights and methods for recognizing unconscious processes and interpersonal dynamics. Lastly, Ormont (1992) postulated that if coaching can stimulate personal awareness, behavioral change, and professional development within a modern psychoanalytic context, coaches may be positioned as change agents enabling the coaching process.

This article examines aggression, transference, and resistance in coaching relationships, as they manifest in both the coach and the coachee. Understanding these phenomena can enable coaches and coachees to navigate relational complexity, co-create productive environments, and stimulate goal-centric trajectories.

1.1 Purpose and Approach

This is a conceptual article. It develops a theoretical argument and illustrates it with practice examples rather than reporting empirical findings. It does not claim to have tested the propositions advanced here. The dialogue examples throughout are illustrative composites constructed for this article; they reproduce no actual coaching conversation and no coachee's identifying details. The article proceeds in four parts: the scope within which this material can responsibly be applied; the classical and modern psychoanalytic foundations of aggression, transference, and resistance; each construct as it presents in the coachee and in the coach; and an integrative practice framework together with its limits.

2. Scope, Competence, and Ethical Boundaries

Coaching is not psychotherapy, and the coaching relationship is not a clinical setting. The constructs examined in this article originate in clinical practice and carry clinical risk when handled without preparation. A blanket prohibition, however, is of little practical use, because these dynamics arise in coaching relationships whether or not the coach has been trained to notice them. A coachee's devaluation of the coach, a coach's boredom or protectiveness, and a coachee's persistent failure to complete agreed work are ordinary features of coaching engagements. What varies is not whether they occur, but what the coach is equipped to do about them. It is more useful, therefore, to describe a continuum of depth and to locate the practices described in this article along with it.

Level one: recognition. At this level, the coach notices that a pattern may be operating and treats it as information. The coach registers that a coachee's contempt may not be about the coach, that their own irritation may carry data about the relationship rather than about the coachee's character, and that avoidance of a topic may be protective rather than logistical. Recognition involves no intervention and no interpretation. Its function is to slow the coach's response and to inform the questions that follow. It requires reflective practice, foundational training in coaching psychology, and, ideally, a supervisory or peer-consultation relationship in which such observations can be

tested (Peltier, 2010). Most credentialed coaches can work at this level, and the gain in listening quality is substantial even when nothing further is attempted.

Level two: working within the relationship. At this level, the coach acts on what has been recognized while remaining inside the frame of the coaching contract. Joining a resistance rather than challenging it, naming a pattern the coachee has just enacted in the session, and inviting a coachee to consider how they respond to others' limitations are interventions of this kind. They address the present relationship and its bearing on the coachee's stated goals; they do not reach for developmental history. Most of the techniques described in this article reside here, and it requires more than recognition does: formal instruction in psychodynamic theory, supervised practice, and an ongoing rather than occasional supervisory relationship. Coaches without that preparation should confine themselves to level one.

Level three: interpretive work. Linking a coachee's present relational pattern to their developmental origins is clinical work. It falls outside the coaching contract regardless of the coach's training because the contract does not carry the safeguards that such work presupposes—diagnostic assessment, continuity of care, clinical supervision, and a professional framework for managing deterioration. A coach who is also a licensed clinician does not resolve this by holding both qualifications. The two roles carry different contracts, different confidentiality provisions, and different obligations, and combining them within a single relationship compromise both. Certain signals indicate that material has moved beyond the coaching frame and that referral should be discussed with the coachee:

- Symptom-level rather than goal-level material: persistent, depressed mood, panic, disordered eating, substance misuse, or any expression of intent to harm self or others.
- Trauma content that surfaces spontaneously and does not settle when the conversation returns to the coaching agenda.
- Distress escalates between sessions rather than within them.
- The coaching relationship is becoming the coachee's principal source of emotional support.
- The coach is thinking about the coachee between sessions in a manner closer to worry than to preparation.
- Repeated contracting failure: sessions consumed by material the coaching agreement does not cover.

Referral is not a failure of the coaching relationship, and it need not end it. Coaching and psychotherapy can proceed in parallel where both practitioners and the client agree on a clear delineation of what each address. What is not defensible is a coach continuing alone with material the coaching contract cannot hold. Where intent to harm self or others is expressed, the coach's obligation is immediate. It takes precedence over the coaching agreement and over the coach's own uncertainty about scope.

3. Theoretical Foundations

3.1 Classical Psychoanalytic Origins

Transference

Sigmund Freud's discovery of transference emerged from his clinical observations. He discovered that clients projected their feelings associated with significant figures in their past onto the analyst

(Freud, 1912/1958). He recognized that these transferred feelings, which initially appeared to be potential obstacles to treatment, provided access to clients' unconscious relational patterns. Freud (1912/1958) wrote, "transference, which seems ordained to be the greatest obstacle to psychoanalysis, becomes its most powerful ally" (p. 108).

Resistance

To Freud, resistance represented unconscious forces that opposed clinical progress. Freud (1926/1959) identified multiple forms of resistance, including, but not limited to, repression, transference, and secondary gain resistance. He understood resistance as emotional communication about internal conflicts and defensive structures, rather than as an obstruction to progress. In his later writing (1937/1964), Freud acknowledged that some resistances were unresponsive, even impervious to interpretive approaches, especially for those psychological challenges that occurred in the early stages of maturational development.

Aggression

Freud's exploration of aggression evolved throughout his career. He theorized a death drive opposed to a life drive, or Eros; the term Thanatos was introduced by later commentators rather than by Freud himself. Together these opposing forces formed his dual-drive theory. Freud posited that aggression was an integral component of the death drive—destructive and life-diminishing. He indicated that, when directed inward toward the self, aggression would fuel a return to an inorganic state (Freud, 1920/1955). Also, Freud indicated that aggressive drives needed to be discharged externally. If they remained unexpressed, aggressive tension would build and potentially manifest in pathological forms, including symptom formation and aggression turned against the self.

Lastly, with Freud's (1937/1964) acknowledgment that some resistances were unresponsive to interpretive approaches, opportunities emerged for modern psychoanalytic theories and practices to develop. For coaching practitioners, Freud's foundational insights concerning these relational dynamics and behavioral patterns remain foundational.

3.2 Modern Psychoanalytic Developments

Spotnitz developed modern psychoanalysis for populations considered untreatable by classical Freudian approaches. Spotnitz (1985) maintained that modern psychoanalysis represented "an expansion of Freud's therapeutic techniques" (p. 11). However, where Freud identified the death instinct as a source of self-destructive impulses, Spotnitz developed approaches that focused on redirecting self-directed aggression externally. In doing so, he sought to help clients achieve greater emotional maturity through the free expression of feelings, including anger, in ways that could strengthen and preserve relationships.

This reconceptualization of aggression as potentially constructive was a milestone insight, theorizing that fully expressing aggression verbally enabled clients to "get the insulation off their aggression" (Spotnitz, 1985, p. 89) and direct it toward genuine contact. Shepherd (2008) observes that throughout his work, Spotnitz emphasized enabling clients to say everything, including what they did not yet know and what felt unthinkable to say, without being harmed in the process. For coaching professionals, this orientation toward aggression in the coaching relationship is a key insight toward enabling coachee growth and goal achievement.

Importantly, in contrast to Freud's interpretive approach, Spotnitz developed an operationally different approach that focused on "joining the resistance." Where Freud analyzed resistance through interpretation, Spotnitz determined that aligning with it could resolve it more efficiently. Spotnitz nonetheless retained the Freudian aim of rendering unconscious material available to the client, while prioritizing the verbal discharge of feeling over interpretation (Meadow, 1991). The theoretical and applied evolution from classical interpretation to modern psychoanalytic joining techniques offers coaches opportunities to consider how these psychoanalytic traditions can help them to define and refine their professional practice.

3.3 Aggression in the Coaching Relationship

Aggression in Dual Drive and Developmental Context

Dual-drive theory posits that motivation emanates from libido (Eros) and aggression (the death drive, to which later commentators applied the term Thanatos). These opposing forces create dynamic emotional and maturational tensions (Freud, 1920/1955). Kernberg (1992) argued that integrating both drives constitutes psychological maturity. Developmentally, Winnicott (1950, 1971) theorized that healthy aggression emerges when a "good-enough" environment survives the individual's destructive impulses without retaliating or withdrawing.

Aggression in the coaching relationship presents in different ways. Following Spotnitz (1985), aggression encompasses assertive, competitive, and self-protective strivings propelling individuals toward goals. Relatedly, Kernberg (1992) theorized that object-directed aggression drives goal attainment, boundary setting, and self-advocacy. Alternatively, Margolis (1994) indicated that self-directed aggression can manifest as destructive self-criticism, self-sabotage, and damaged relationships. Lastly, McWilliams (2011) posited that passive aggression preserves surface harmony while undermining collaboration. Each of these presentations is a complex psychological construct, and the preparation required to collaborate with it differs in depth, as set out above. At minimum, a coach should be able to recognize aggression when it appears and to receive it without retaliating.

Aggression in the Coachee

In the coaching relationship, coachees may direct aggression toward coaches through criticism, skepticism, or devaluation. Margolis (1994) indicates that modern psychoanalysis views this behavior as essentially a healthy form of communication. Frequently, this aggression indicates unmet maturational needs. For coaches, the presence of aggression can be viewed as an opportunity to cultivate progressive emotional communication with coachees focused on reducing resistance or other inhibitors to growth. Receiving aggression without retaliation offers the coachee an emotional experience that can support development (Mahler et al., 1975).

Dialogue Example - Coachee Aggression

- **Coachee:** "Last year, a friend recommended that I see her coach concerning position advancement issues I am experiencing. A waste! I knew everything the coach was going to say before he said it. Are you any different?"
- **Coach:** "From your account, it appears that your experience has you doubting the benefits of coaching. How could this coaching experience be different?"

- **Coachee:** "Well, I guess if you could help me understand and overcome these nagging position advancement issues, instead of just talking about stuff I do not understand and will never use, it could be different, even helpful."

The coach acknowledges skepticism without defensiveness, creating opportunities for genuine engagement and progressive emotional communication.

Aggression in the Coach

Coaches must recognize their own aggression. Lowman (2002) identifies characteristics, including, but not limited to, impatience, competitiveness, and apathy toward helping the coachee. Coaches must also be aware of their own maturational needs, such as minimal recognition for coaching effectiveness or a lack of growth in coaching practice. When frustrated, coaches could ask themselves, "What psychodynamics in the coaching relationship are stimulating my maturation needs?"

Dialogue Example - Coach Aggression Acknowledged

- **Coach (internal reflection):** "I want to tell him [coachee] that his authoritative approach to managing others is a key issue in his managerial ineffectiveness. I am frustrated and bored. He keeps rationalizing, avoiding the real issue."
- **Coach (to coachee):** "Together, we have examined your management styles from different perspectives on several occasions. I wonder what your assessment is of continually returning to the same topic?"
- **Coachee:** "I am not sure. I guess I am frustrated that they [staff] do not understand me and what I want for them."

Coaches with the training and skills to help coachees transform aggressive impulses into productive inquiry and model positive emotional responses can create opportunities for coachee growth and enhance the effectiveness of the coaching relationship.

3.4 Transference in the Coaching Relationship

Recognizing Transference

Transference involves the unconscious displacement of feelings from past relationships onto the coach, producing reactions that exceed current relational circumstances (Lee, 2014). These transferred feelings can influence how coaches perceive coachees, provide feedback, and develop the coaching relationship. Spotnitz (1985) indicated that transference was a window into an individual's relational patterns, not a distortion of them that required correction. Moreover, transference can represent unconscious attempts to address unmet maturational needs. Kohut (1971) wrote that individuals seeking "self-object [other person]" experiences may seek mirroring that confirms self-worth, idealized figures from whom strength can be drawn, and twinship that assuages aloneness.

Activation of maturational needs generates both transference and accompanying aggression. For example, coachees who idealize coaches or other significant figures may be seeking to meet unmet needs with those they admire. In this context, the inevitable failure of others to match the idealized representation often leads to aggression, which may manifest as disappointment or withdrawal. Diamond (2013) noted that common patterns associated with transference can include idealization

(attributing unrealistic capabilities), devaluation (experiencing the coach or other as inadequate), and ambivalence (alternating between engagement and withdrawal), and that each reflects learned relational templates.

Dialogue Example - Idealizing Transference

- **Coachee:** "You know a lot about making progress in business. I wish I knew as much as you do."
- **Coach:** "Thank you for sharing your appreciation. I wonder what it is like when you discover others have limitations?"
- **Coachee:** "Disappointed, I do not like it."

The coach explores transference rather than accepting idealization, developing awareness of relational tendency without damaging the coaching relationship.

Countertransference in the Coach

Countertransference refers to the coach's emotional responses and reactions, grounded in personal history, that the coachee's transferences can activate. Margolis (1994) viewed countertransference as an essential relational experience offering valuable information rather than interference. As such, coaches must recognize when coachees transfer strong feelings toward them, which can trigger unmet maturational needs, such as protective impulses, irritation, and defensiveness.

Particularly challenging is the condition in which the coachee needs to activate the coach's unmet needs. This creates a state of unconscious shared need alignment between the coach and coachee that can impede growth and goal achievement. For example, coaches who need to be idealized can foster an admiration-based relationship. Conditions of this kind are the clearest argument for ongoing supervision since they are close to invisible from inside the engagement. A coach-supervisor is positioned to ensure that the coach's unmet maturational needs neither supersede coachee development nor hinder relational progress (Meadow, 2003).

Dialogue Example - Countertransference Awareness

- **Coach (internal reflection):** "I notice that I feel protective of her and want to reassure her that she is doing well. This is unusual for me. I wonder why I am feeling this way?"
- **Coach:** "I am curious, when you share difficulties with others, how do they respond?"
- **Coachee:** "They usually try to fix things for me or tell me not to worry. It is wonderful, and I count on their responses, so I do not get anxious. However, at times, I would rather that they assist me in assessing things so I can make my own decisions."

Countertransference awareness reveals relational patterns. In this instance, the coachee wants caretaking by the coach, which can undermine her ability to assess difficulties and make independent decisions. Coaches can explore transference with coachees, assisting them to develop awareness of their relational tendencies without interrupting or damaging the coaching relationship.

3.5 Resistance in the Coaching Relationship

Reconceptualizing Resistance

Freud conceptualized resistance as a phenomenon in which patients unconsciously cling to their illness through "tenacious and critical objections," thereby repressing distressing thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Freud, 1926/1959). Interestingly, Spotnitz (1985) notes that in 1897, Freud briefly characterized resistance as "nothing but the child's character" (p. 226). Resistances manifest as defenses. They are embedded in the individual's characterological structures and are self-developed to defend the self against painful experiences.

The coaching relationship frames the integration of psychodynamic constructs and coaching practices. The mind's defensive structures are ever vigilant, protecting the Ego from real or perceived dangers that could destabilize an individual's psychological equilibrium—in turn, rendering them susceptible to anxiety and psychosocial discomfort. Surveying coaches on the relevance of unconscious dynamics to executive coaching, Turner (2010) found that most regarded unconscious processes as relevant to, and as occurring within, the majority of coaching conversations. This is where the interplay between psychoanalytic theory and coaching practice intersects, enabling the emergence of unconscious material that informs the coaching relationship.

Resistance to Change and the Coachee

Resistance to coaching stems from resistance to change. Coaches anticipate that change stimulates resistance, which, in turn, destabilizes or disrupts established psychological, emotional, and behavioral patterns. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920/1955) theorized that change disrupts an individual's equilibrium, promoting anxiety and stimulating materials residing in the unconscious to emerge into conscious experience. Eagle (1999) located the difficulty in the same place, arguing that people do not change easily because, at some level, they take change to be dangerous. Similarly, Spotnitz (1985) observed that resistance, regardless of its manifest form, invariably denotes opposition—conscious or unconscious—to the process of relation-building (p. 144). This theoretical and practical continuity between Freud and Spotnitz underscores a central principle: resistance signals psychological activity that warrants attention rather than dismissal.

In the coaching relationship, resistance often arises when sensitive material surfaces. In these situations, Spotnitz (1985) recommended not challenging or interpreting the resistance, but instead "joining the resistance." In doing so, the coach acknowledges resistance as a self-protective action while remaining present for the coachee. Recognizing that aggression may be present and fueling resistance suggests that maturational needs have not been fully met. From a modern psychoanalytic perspective, recognizing and "joining the resistance" in the coaching relationship may enable coachees to reduce their resistance incrementally, in turn increasing their ability to achieve desired goals.

Dialogue Example - Joining Resistance

- **Coachee:** "I have been busy this week and have not made the time to consider the marketing project we discussed. It is crazy right now!"
- **Coach:** "Well, it sounds busy. Perhaps now is not the best time to address the marketing project."
- **Coachee:** "Well, I do not want the project to get lost or not make progress. It is crucial to launch my new business. Well, honestly, while it is critically important, I am not sure that

I have the knowledge and skills necessary to develop it myself. I continue to reprioritize it downward on my 'to-do' list."

Joining the resistance can create psychological safety. Schein (2013) wrote, "Psychological safety emerges through relational dynamics: What we choose to ask, when we ask, what our underlying attitude is as we ask—all of these will determine relationship building, communication, and task performance" (p. 14).

Resistance in Coach and Psychoanalytic Applications

Coaches are not immune to resistance. Resistance manifests as topic avoidance, confusion in conversations, and termination of the coaching relationship to avoid activating sensitive material. Supervision provides essential examination of resistances (Peltier, 2010). Coach resistance reflects activated maturational needs. For example, in the coaching relationship, coachees can awaken coaches' unresolved issues, stimulate aggressive feelings, and promote relational distance. A coach's ability to contain activated vulnerabilities determines their availability and effectiveness with coachees (Meadow, 2003). Relationships both resist and project their emotions and expectations onto the coach; the coaching relationship can become increasingly complex or untenable. Spotnitz (1985) described the contact function—the client's own initiations of contact—as the signal that guides how and when the practitioner responds. Working within it allows the practitioner to remain emotionally engaged while maintaining appropriate psychological boundaries. It provides coaches with a framework for managing client engagement and remaining present, while creating opportunities for relational and goal-achievement progress.

Dialogue Example - Coach Resistance Recognized

- **Coach (internal reflection):** "I am uncomfortable with this topic of having to downsize employees. I wonder how it might be related to my experiences in organizations?"
- **Coach's Coach (If the coach has a coach):** "How would you feel if you continued exploring this topic with the coachee?"
- **Coach:** "I do not know. I need to think about it and explore this topic myself before I engage with the coachee."

4. Integration and Application

Sustainable coaching outcomes depend on conditions enabling authentic emotional engagement. This requires coaches and coachees to tolerate aggressive feelings without acting on them, to develop awareness of transference dynamics, and to recognize and respect the protective role of resistance. Spotnitz (1985) described the optimal stance as "emotional insulation," the capacity to experience intense feelings without impulsive action, serving as a container for affects that individuals cannot yet manage. The coaching process may access complex, unresolved feelings and unmet developmental needs; through recognizing them, coaches and coachees may develop their ability and capacity for greater emotional regulation. So understood, emotional insulation provides a platform for continual awareness, dialogue, and discussion as relationships evolve.

The three constructs are not independent and treating them separately is an expository convenience rather than a claim about how they present. In practice, resistance is frequently fueled by aggression the coachee cannot yet express directly, and a transference commonly organizes both that the coachee has not recognized. A coachee who arrives unprepared for three consecutive

sessions may be resisting the work, expressing aggression toward a coach experienced as another demanding authority, and reproducing a relational pattern established long before the engagement began. These are not competing explanations to be adjudicated; they are three descriptions of one event.

Table 1 summarizes how each construct tends to present, what response is indicated, and what level of preparation that response requires. It is offered as an orienting aid rather than as a decision procedure.

Table 1

Aggression, Transference, and Resistance in the Coaching Relationship: Presentation, Response, and Preparation

Construct	Presentation of the Coachee	Presentation on the Coach	Indicated Response	Level Required
Aggression	Criticism, skepticism, devaluation, competitive comparison; alternatively self-attack, self-sabotage, or passive withdrawal.	Impatience, boredom, the urge to correct or instruct, defensiveness, apathy.	Receive without retaliation or capitulation; treat it as communication, not an obstacle; explore what it addresses.	One to two
Transference	Idealization, devaluation, ambivalence; reactions disproportionate to the present relationship; expectations imported from prior figures.	Protectiveness, the wish to be needed or admired, irritation, drift toward the coach's agenda.	Notice and hold; where the goal warrants, invite curiosity about the pattern elsewhere.	Two
Resistance	Missed preparation, topic avoidance, abstraction, agenda substitution, sudden agreement without change.	Topic avoidance, loss of clarity in the conversation, relief at cancellations, drift toward terminating.	Join rather than challenge; accept the protective function; return to their priority.	Two

Notes. Categories and their presentations are drawn from the sources developed in the preceding sections: aggression (Spotnitz, 1985; Kernberg, 1992; Margolis, 1994; McWilliams, 2011); transference (Kohut, 1971; Diamond, 2013; Lee, 2014); resistance (Freud, 1926/1959; Spotnitz, 1985; Meadow, 2003). Levels in the final column refer to the continuum of practitioner depth described in the Scope, Competence, and Ethical Boundaries section, and state a minimum rather than a ceiling. The presentations listed are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Two cautions apply to the table. First, none of these presentations are diagnostic on their own. A coachee who arrives unprepared may be resisting, or may be overextended, and a coach who assumes the former will be wrong often enough to damage the relationship. Each reading is a hypothesis to be held lightly and revised. Second, the final column states a floor rather than a

ceiling; where a coach is uncertain, the appropriate course is to work at the level below the one they believe is indicated.

5. Limitations and Future Research

This article is conceptual, and its propositions are untested. First, the idea that working with aggression, transference, and resistance improves coaching outcomes is plausible and consistent with the psychodynamic literature but is not established here. Second, modern psychoanalytic technique was developed in extended work with severely disturbed populations, and its extension to a non-clinical, goal-directed, time-limited relationship is an analogy whose edges this article has not mapped. Third, the framework reflects a Western clinical tradition. Norms of aggression, deference, and disclosure vary across cultures, and what reads as resistance may elsewhere be ordinary courtesy. This misreading falls hardest on coachees least like the coach. Fourth, the analysis treats coaching as a dyad. In contrast, most executive coaching is triadic: a sponsoring organization commissions the work and shapes both what the coach is told and what the coachee is willing to say. That context lies outside the scope of this article.

Three lines of inquiry follow. A qualitative study of rupture and repair in coaching dyads would show whether these sequences are recognizable to practitioners and coachees. Comparative work could evaluate whether psychodynamically prepared coaches differ in retention, goal attainment, or working alliance. And the reflective capacity treated here as a competence threshold has no standardized measure, which much of this work would require.

6. Conclusion

Aggression, transference, and resistance—identified by Freud and developed by Spontitz, Margolis, and others—offer coaches a psychologically oriented framework for working in the coaching relationship. Recognizing the roles and influences of aggression, transference, and resistance can create avenues for dialogue, discussion, and new behaviors that are both innovative and transformative.

Also, it must be recognized and emphasized that coaching is neither therapy nor the coaching relationship a clinical setting. The preparation these constructs require differs in depth, as set out earlier: recognition is within reach of most credentialed coaches; working within the coaching frame requires formal instruction and ongoing supervision; and interpretive work falls outside the coaching contract regardless of the coach's training. Applied beyond a coach's preparation, or without supervision, these concepts can be detrimental to both parties and exceed professional boundaries.

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