

Do you have a 'nail' or a 'screw' mentality?

The term 'Therapist' doesn't automatically mean *expert* and the term 'Life Coach' equally doesn't mean *novice*. There are degrees of competency in almost all of the things that we do in life and the theories around novice to expert practitioner and the like, support this view. So, is what we call ourselves as professionals important? Yes, I think it is but I don't think it's as important as what we do under the title of what we call ourselves.

Let me try to explain myself by using the example of hanging a picture on a wall at home. Of course you can simply and fairly randomly just tap a nail into the wall to hang a picture and be done. Hanging the picture this way could be criticised for neither taking into consideration any of the skills you need, the knowledge & practical experience you have and, disregards any form of assessment of the wall. Importantly, this method of delivery could also be criticised for not assessing how well the wall will receive the nail in terms of doing no harm. On the other hand, you could, spend time finding out information, assessing the situation before implementing any action; taking care to measure your distances and use a screw with a raw plug which will hold a lot more weight and remain securer over time! Superficially, and simply looking at the picture, who would know whether there is a nail or a screw holding the picture in place at first glance? Very few people if anyone at all and this is exactly where the problem is.

The *nail* and the *screw* mentalities can be compared to two individuals wanting to practice in a helping profession whether that person is calling themselves a counsellor, a specific type of 'therapist' or a specific type of coach. One practitioner might have little to no qualifications and/or experience, randomly pulling a title out of the air to pin to their chest. They don't see the importance of consulting any codes or guidance and fail to have any form of ethical barometer whether internal or external. I call this, the person with the *nail* mentality. Another practitioner could take the time to look at their chosen profession in more detail. In doing so they might gather information that will assist them to both effectively and efficiently practice in the longer term, connecting what they have learnt in their field to practice and then to individual application. They might identify the significant investment necessary for tools to do the best job in the right way and at the right time as well as be proactive in initiating a back-up-plan in terms of finding the right person (s) to undertake parts of the helping process if it turns out not to be them. I call this, the person with the *screw* mentality.

What I am essentially saying is yes, that *both* the nail and the screw *will* do the job of hanging the picture, of course they will and so shouldn't be criticised un-necessarily. They both have their uses. The nail, could be seen as the short term fix in any situation; working for some of our clients for specific issues and not for others and this doesn't necessarily make it a bad thing. If the client believes the intervention has helped then it's a good thing, right! Equally, we shouldn't feel the need to go around running down other disciplines or professionals because the problem doesn't necessarily rest with the discipline or profession being practiced per se, and there is always a danger in grouping people together with the *one-size-fits-all* assumption! Often, and in my experience, it rests with the individual persons' attitude and aptitude to administer that discipline appropriately. So, instead of sitting around wasting time and energy running other professions down, be authentic to your helping status and encourage the 'seeker' (our potential clients), to dig a little deeper to ensure they have found the right *screw* at the right time and in the right place to take care of their needs, *if* that is what they are indeed looking for!

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