

## Role Comparisons Based on Most Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Mentors, Coaches, and Therapists\*

CRITERIA	MENTOR	COACH	THERAPIST
General Purpose and Goal	Most often oriented towards an exchange of wisdom, support, learning, or guidance for the purpose of personal, spiritual, career or life growth; sometimes used to achieve strategic business goals; content can be wide-ranging	Typically result, performance, success or goal directed with emphasis on taking action and sustaining changes over time; often used to improve performance in specific area; more practice than theory driven; relies strongly on interpersonal skills	Usually problem or crisis centered with emphasis on diagnosis, analysis, or healing; might include testing, prescribed drugs, a focus on early life experience, involvement of other family members; typically grounded in extensive theory or philosophy
Term for "Other" Person	Protege, mentoree, mentee, partner or peer learner, learning group member	Employee, co-worker or client	Patient or client
Basis and Duration of Contact	Can occur naturally, informally or formally; can last a lifetime or be part of a formal program with a mutually agreed upon contract detailing meetings and other arrangements	Often on an as-needed basis as identified by the client; when provided within a business, employee may receive coaching as part of normal work role	Can range from short-term to long-term; client is typically free to discontinue at any time. Mandatory referrals can occur as part of court or employer requirements
Form and Nature of Contact	Historically one-on-one; increasing use of one-to-group, peer group, e-mail, telephone, and video	Typically one-on-one; often provided by telephone and e-mail; peer to peer coaching used in education systems	Typically one-on-one or one-to-group; recent experimentation with internet for one-on-one
Life Skills and Experience	Typically more extensive than, but may be similar to or diverse from partner background; life stories of mentor often shared and influential	Often involved in or previously associated with the same career area as client or employee; life stories of coach are for inspiration or education	May influence client choice, but often unrelated to outcome; typically only professional experience revealed; life story sharing depends on approach
Training Necessary for Role	Ranges from no formal training to limited hours in workshop format	Often self-taught, increasing number of in-person and telecourses available	Typically has graduate degree with academic and clinical coursework
Certification or Licensing	Not required, but certificates and other forms of recognition typically provided in formal programs	Not required, but professional associations and some training organizations provide certification systems	Often required by legislation; practitioners belong to professional groups with code of ethics, insurance, and peer review
Compensation or Fees	Strictly voluntary; published guidelines warn against any financial connections	Most often coaching is part or all of workplace role; private coaches often paid by client on retainer basis	Typically paid by client or insurance on an hourly basis
Role Value and Consensus	Research basis moderate; anecdotal reports and personal experience are highly supportive and most frequent; high agreement on program principles	Highly practitioner-driven; research basis minimal; testimonial of clients most frequent way to determine value; high agreement on principles/practices	Most researched role; often contradictory or controversial results; often difficult to determine value; wide variety of approaches and theories
Learning and Feedback	Relies on development of relationship; learning exchange increases over time, but can be minimized by hierarchy; all parties usually benefit from feedback	Typically client-oriented with primary focus on client learning; coaches often solicit feedback to improve practice	Low level of mutuality; focus is exclusively on client; low possibility of therapist requesting feedback

\*Developed and compiled by Rey Carr for Peer Resources and based, in part, on questions submitted to the Peer Resources website at [www.mentors.ca](http://www.mentors.ca)