

What Kind of Help Do You Actually Need?

Understanding the difference between coaching and other helping professions

Role	What They Do	Sounds Like	You Might Choose This If...
Therapist/ Counselor	You explore what happened in the past and how it still shapes you today. The focus is on understanding, healing, and building healthier patterns.	<i>"What happened then, and how does it affect you now?" "Try this when it comes up..."</i>	...past experiences or emotional patterns are getting in the way and you want support working through them.
Consultant	You bring a problem; they bring expertise. You leave with a recommendation, a model, or a solution someone else designed for you.	<i>"Based on my expertise, I recommend..."</i>	...you need an outside expert to analyze a problem and tell you what to do or how to do it.
Trainer	They teach you a skill. Usually through prepared content, demonstrations, or materials you can reference later.	<i>"Here's how you do this..."</i>	...there's a specific skill or knowledge gap you need to close, and you want structured instruction to close it.
Mentor	A trusted guide who shares their own experience to help you grow. Mentors invest in your development and draw on their own path to offer perspective, advice, and connections.	<i>"Here's what worked for me..." "Have you considered...?" "Let me introduce you to someone who..."</i>	...you want guidance from someone who has walked a similar path and is willing to share what they know.
Coach	The focus is on you — your goals, your thinking, your next steps. A coach believes you already have what you need. They help you find it. The coach works through questions and reflection, not advice. You are the expert on your own work and life.	<i>"What do you want?" "Why does this matter to you?" "What do you already know?" "What might get in your way?"</i>	...you want to think more clearly, lead more effectively, or make progress on something that matters — and you want a partner who helps you get there on your own terms.

Note: *Good coaches often wear more than one hat — but they will always help you think it through yourself before offering advice. Unless they are a licensed therapist, a coach must refer clients seeking that kind of support elsewhere.*