

Life Coaching Comparison Tool

Though there is certainly overlap in the descriptions of all of the following relationships, it is helpful to identify basic distinctions.

	Life Coaching	Counseling or Therapy	Consulting	Spiritual Direction	Mentoring and Discipleship
Typical Relationship	One-on-One or group in a professional context	One-on-One or group in a professional context	One-on-One or organizational in a professional context	One-on-One or group in a professional, ministry or personal context	One-on-One in a business context (mentoring) or ministry or personal context (mentoring or discipleship)
Focus	Future, vision	Past, pain	Project or problem	God's presence and activity in one's life	Teaching by example
Desired Outcome	Action toward and achievement of meaningful personal goals	Healing and restoration of personal and relational issues	Expert opinion and recommendation	Noticing and responding to God's direction	Personal or spiritual growth and maturity
Training	Professional training and certification available and commonly expected	Professional training and licensing typically required; varying state regulations apply	Training specific to consultant's area of expertise is commonly expected	Training and certification available and commonly expected	Not typically expected
Meetings	Often by phone, sometimes in person; a common schedule is three times per month for 30-45 minutes	In person; a common schedule is once per week for 50-60 minutes	Usually in person; schedule is based on project or contract	In person; a common schedule is one meeting per month	Usually in person; schedule is typically informally structured
Role	Coach is a collaborator who provides structure and process to an agenda set by the client	Counselor provides clinical knowledge and expertise and facilitates a healing process	Consultant is an expert who analyzes a problem or project and provides reports and recommendations	Spiritual director is a companion who notices God's presence and prays and listens with the client	Mentor or discipler is a companion who has "gone before" and can lead and advise by example

Certainly all of the above relationships can be experienced in a Christ-centered context.

Pastoral care relationships can reflect aspects of each of the above relationships. The biggest difference in the pastoral care relationship is the spiritual authority of the minister. This aspect of authority – which is often significant in the pastoral relationship - is not typically present in the other relationships.

Often life coaches who are Christians identify themselves as "Christian life coaches" and work with Christian clients who desire an openly acknowledged Christ-centered coaching context. Others work with clients (Christian and non) who may or may not desire an openly acknowledged Christian context.

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