



Mentor or Coach to Achieve Your Goals: Which One Do You Need?

Many people consider mentors and coaches as being synonymous. The words are often used interchangeably by the workforce. Even those that serve as mentors or coaches tend to have overlapping activities when it comes to helping an individual with his or her career.

There are subtle differences which may steer a person to seek out one versus the other. Typically, a mentor plays more of a teacher role, providing a person with valuable lessons and strategic information to advance. A coach, on the other hand, is akin to a trainer that observes and studies the individual's performance and provides guidance as well as direction in how the activity or behavior should change, improve, or be corrected so that when properly done, it produces maximum results. Both mentors and coaches strive to achieve positive and beneficial outcomes.

Bear in mind when working with mentors or coaches, these professionals should not be viewed as or mistaken for a therapist. That is not their role, and an individual should not ask them to play that role.

Regardless of whether you are seeking a teacher (mentor) or a trainer (coach), it is important to have the following components for productive discussions:

- An honest exchange with established ground-rules for engagement
- Concise, clear, and realistic goals and expectations
- Structured agendas and specific discussion topics
- A projected time-frame to achieve the desired outcome
- Active listening and communication skills
- A focus on the subject and not on emotions

A mentor or a coach offers unbiased observations, different perspectives, and insights. A mentor or a coach is not to solve problems but rather to help you navigate through challenges and chart a course to achieve certain goals by giving you practical tools to succeed.

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