

Counselor - a counselor is a highly trained professional that uses specialized training to resolve deep, critical issues. A COACH IS NOT A COUNSELOR!

Facilitator - when you assist in bringing about an outcome (activity, productivity, or communication) by providing objective supervision, unobtrusive help, to keep things moving along a desired track of learning. Facilitating a conversation or learning exercise is NOT coaching.

Friendly Advisor - when a friend seeks to give "wise counsel" to help bring about an outcome they think would be best for someone. Typically, this is not a good thing, because friends have a bias towards you, and even blinders to your faults. This prevents them from being objective as they seek to "protect" you. Giving advice and being a friend is NOT coaching.

What a coach does -

A coach assists in bringing forward your awareness of solutions, strengths, and possibilities. You have the answers already. The coach focuses on the gap between what one knows and what one does.

It is a lot just like knowing about Christ and living a Christ-like life and truly making him the center of your life. Giving recognition to the existence of the Holy Spirit is one thing, but being led by the Spirit is quite another. Talking about God, the Father, versus being obedient, loving and serving God shows the gap between knowing and doing. For most, "THE GAP" is where it all goes off the track. Some of you are probably a coach to a new Believer - so let's see HOW coaching works.

According to Christian Simpson, one of John Maxwell's faculty members, "A powerful coach, views a person like an acorn, an entity that has all the potential within it to grow into a beautiful oak tree, as long as the right conditions are provided for that growth." Rather than viewing the one seeking help as an empty vessel to be filled with the Coach's knowledge, wisdom, insights, or strategies, the effective coach has three objectives:

1. Create greater AWARENESS.
2. Increase RESPONSIBILITY.
3. Develop greater ACCOUNTABILITY.

These three things bring greater empowerment and resourcefulness while creating a sustainable change that switches the locus of learning from outside/in to the inside/out. In short, what we have on the inside gets lived, owned and grows. When we coach, I believe it is what Proverbs 27:17 means when it says that: "*as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*" (NIV). A coach assists in sharpening and making what is already there more useful.

To be a coach is all about **CHARACTER**. John Maxwell often says, "You cannot give what you do not have". If your awareness of self and your character is not intact - you will never be able to help others see what is needed within them.

A coach is **CURIOUS**, posing questions that help bring awareness and answers to the surface. Probing the conscious self and the sub-conscious with questions lead to actionable answers.

A coach asks questions, and then **LISTENS**. Andy Kean, an old friend and a leader's leader, defines listening this way: Listening is understanding what you hear, **BEFORE** you make up your mind. Coaching demands that you have unconditional positive regard for the speaker - this means listening actively and not rehearsing or preparing an answer while the other person is speaking. It is not a time to share war stories, one-up the experience shared, or judge their behavior.

Even the best coaches have a coach! We all need to be accountable, continually growing and challenged. When looking for a coach, be careful to choose someone who has a belief system and values that you trust. If you feel called to coach, seek the training and become equipped to serve others in a powerful way that builds individuals, organizations and teams. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance, who knows - you might be the person someone has been waiting for to help make a difference in their life.

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