**MENTORING AND COACHING – SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT**

Mentors and coaches help others in their personal and professional development. Effective mentors and coaches are both adept at establishing trusting relationships, thereby creating a safe space for meaningful conversation. These roles have many similarities, yet there are significant distinguishing characteristics.

The [International Mentoring Group (IMG)](https://mentoringgroup.com/) defines mentoring as, “A process of direct transfer of experience and knowledge from one person to another.”

The [International Coach Federation (ICF)](https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies) defines coaching as “Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”

Mentors are sought out for their expertise and experience, and give advice and guidance. Coaches do not give advice or guidance, but rather help the client discover and apply their own expertise. Mentors generally answer questions, while coaches generally ask questions.

Mentoring often occurs face-to-face, and sometimes virtually. Coaching often occurs virtually, and sometimes face-to-face. Mentoring is usually uncompensated, while coaching is usually compensated.

A mentoring relationship is often not confined to a specific timeframe, as the mentee is becoming more like the mentor, both professionally and personally. A coaching engagement is focused on the achievement of specific goals or the development of specific behaviors, and is generally more limited in scope and time.

Mentors possess expertise and experience that qualifies them as mentors, but there is oftentimes no additional training specifically designed to enhance the mentoring process.

Professional coaches complete a training pathway to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience of coaching, and must demonstrate competence in order to secure a credential from the International Coach Federation.

Some mentors who have acquired coaching skills report a more enjoyable and effective mentoring experience, as they learn to improve their listening skills and ask questions that help the mentee discover new insights that contribute to their personal and professional growth.

Mentors and coaches both play a crucial role in the development of others. Wisdom is required in choosing the modality that best fits the need of the specific person at that time. Sometimes a hybrid role, the mentor with coaching skills, can be most effective.