



# Comparing Mentoring with Other Relationships

A perspective from *mch*

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Increasing the positive impact of individuals and  
third sector organisations through staff  
development.

## Definitions and Descriptions of Mentoring

While *mch* is not 'tied' to any one definition of mentoring, it is mindful of and agrees with the following definitions;

*"Mentoring supports a plan. It requires a relationship built upon trust. Through the relationship, the mentor supports the mentee through interventions designed to help achieve a sense of belonging."*

*The former charity, Believe*

*"Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee."*

*The US organisation Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership*

*"Mentoring is 'off-line' help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking."*

*Mentoring Executives and Directors, Clutterbuck & Megginson*

## Definitions of Other Relationships

Mentoring is one of many relationships that can be found in a working environment. Other relationships include:

### **Buddying**

Buddying is an informal, friendly 'confessional' process in which experiences and insights are shared. It offers low-level support with little sense of progression and is generally only short-term, assisting a transition to a new job or new role.

### **Shadowing**

A job role can be shadowed by an individual with an interest in learning about the role, without necessarily aspiring to do that particular job. The reasons for wishing to gain experience through shadowing and observation need to be clear and understood prior to the activity taking place. Shadowing might take the form of peer-to-peer conversation about their shared observation of practice. This could develop into a continuing professional peer relationship – i.e., peer mentoring.

### **Advising**

Advising constitutes a conversation about professional issues that arise in a specific context (e.g., career orientation; possible new directions for the future; professional development opportunities; new networks and partnerships; marketing; budgeting).

### **Tutoring**

Tutoring is an intentional, goal-oriented activity aimed at fostering understanding and knowledge.

### **Instructing**

Instructing comprises a didactic form of imparting and passing on specialist knowledge and skills.

### **Facilitating**

Facilitating is a dynamic, non-directive way of generating a conversation aimed at enabling or empowering a person(s) to take responsibility for their own learning and practice.

### **Coaching**

Coaching is an enabling process aimed at enhancing learning and development with the intention of improving performance in a specific aspect of practice. It has a short-term focus with an emphasis on immediate issues. (e.g. How can I improve my performance in this particular area? What are the most appropriate ways of making my team work together more effectively?)

## **How Mentoring Compares with and can Incorporate these Relationships**

At times, mentoring can incorporate many of the above relationships including coaching, facilitating and advising. The extent to which these other relationships are incorporated into mentoring is often determined by:

- (i) The individual circumstances of the mentee
- (ii) The ground rules that are mutually set at the beginning of the relationship
- (iii) The skill and experience of the mentor

Mentoring often has a longer-term focus than other relationships and one that is designed to help an individual place their creative, personal and professional development in context. Consequently, some of the most fundamental of questions can be addressed:

- Why am I doing what I do?
- How do I perceive my identity? In what ways does this impact on my professional life and work?
- Where am I going?
- What determines my long-term goals?

## Focussing on the Differences between Coaching and Mentoring

In mch's experience there is often most confusion around the differences between coaching and mentoring.

The International Mentoring Association summaries the difference as follows;

*“Coaching is technical support focused on the development of techniques [that are deemed necessary for someone] to know and be able to do, while mentoring is the larger process for learning of technique and all of the other professional and personal skills and understandings needed for success.”*

Furthermore, in 1998 The Center for Coaching and Mentoring conducted an on-line survey to define the difference between a mentor and coach. The results are summarised below:

	Differences between Mentoring and Coaching	
	<b><u>Mentor</u></b>	<b><u>Coach</u></b>
<b>Focus</b>	The individual	Performance
<b>Role</b>	Facilitator with no agenda	Specific agenda
<b>Relationship</b>	Self selecting	Comes with the job
<b>Source of influence</b>	Power free relationship – mentor's influence proportionate to perceived value they bring	While interpersonal skills will determine the effectiveness of the coach, there is often an implied or actual authority
<b>Personal returns</b>	Affirmation/learning	Teamwork/performance
<b>Arena</b>	Life	Task related

Source: <http://coachingandmentoring.com/mentsurvey.htm> Accessed 18th April 2007