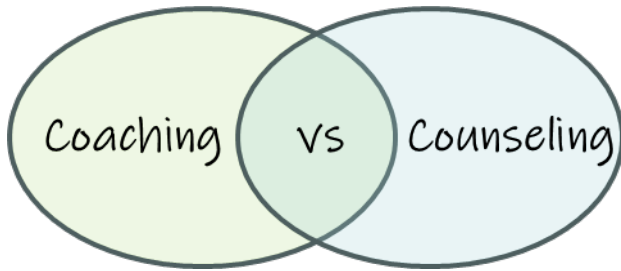


Do You Need a Counselor, a Coach, or AI?

by [Mike Hawkins](#)



If you've lived more than a few weeks, you've experienced adversity. Hopefully, it wasn't too adverse or too early in your life, but if you are reading this, you've experienced it. You've also experienced the stress associated with it. Statistics find that most people not only experience adversity, but also a deeply distressing and life-changing event referred to as [trauma](#).

Psychologists refer to traumatic adversity in two different forms: [Type A or Type B](#). Type A trauma refers to a single, unexpected, and overwhelming event that causes significant distress and leaves lasting psychological wounds such as overwhelming fear. Examples include car accidents, medical crises, natural disasters, sexual assaults, or sudden losses. Type B trauma refers to prolonged chronic exposure to distressing situations. Examples include abuse, neglect, and violent environments. These frequently occur during childhood. Unlike single-incident Type A traumas, Type Bs overwhelm people's emotional capacity which can lead to deep-seated mental health struggles and even survival-mode behaviors.

While statistics find that 70% to 90% of people will experience at least one, if not multiple, traumas in their lifetime, less overwhelming events impact everyone. Studies find that about 50 percent of Americans experience significant daily stress with three-quarters of people feeling so stressed in the last year they have been unable to cope with it.

The obvious question is—how do people effectively deal with their adversity and stress in all its various forms? Where do people go for support and help? Or for encouragement? Or even when circumstances are going well, but want a healthy challenge to be better in some way?

A common answer is family and friends. But what if family and friends don't provide the depth of experience or competence someone needs to fully process, cope with, or overcome their circumstances? Or simply to make progress toward becoming their best self?

The answer for much of the twentieth century was to see a counselor for competent help. However, since the start of the twenty-first century, there has been a popular new option. People are now selecting coaches. Coaches can help people in many areas – both personally and professionally.

Coaches come with a variety of titles like fitness, skills, performance, team, sales, parent, life, career, legacy, nutritional, health, financial, mindset, spiritual, executive, and business coach to name some of the most common ones. There are other options too like hiring a consultant or engaging a mentor. Now, with artificial intelligence, people are also going online. What is the best? Most appropriate? Most effective?

The generally accepted role of both coaches and counselors is to help people become the best versions of themselves. Both can help people personally or professionally. Both help in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive areas. Both can utilize specialized tools and structured approaches. Both challenge assumptions, facilitate self-discovery, identify obstacles, and help people make decisions. Both can bring extensive experience and credentials. But there are also significant differences.

Counselors, including [psychologists](#) and [psychiatrists](#), often help people look backwards to properly process and deal with past events. This includes traumas, crises, and any associated grief. They also help people overcome addictions, phobias, mental disorders, and more complex conditions. Their qualifications are typically based on their education. Additionally, psychiatrists are medical doctors who can prescribe medication.

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Coaches can also help people learn from the past, but typically turn their attention to looking forward. They help people develop and leverage their strengths. They facilitate goal setting, planning, ongoing individual development, overcoming obstacles, and fulfillment of people's dreams. They help unlock people's potential emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Their qualifications are typically based on their experience and past results more than their education.

Many people now utilize both as well as other resources. Elite athletes hire fitness coaches in combination with mental coaches. Professionals hire executive as well as business coaches. Individuals often engage individual therapists as well as family therapists. With the increasing power of artificial intelligence (AI), many people are now using it to augment their other resources.

AI is a very credible helper. It is humanity's greatest technological advancement ever. It is so advanced it has become more powerful than humans. It has and will continue to enable incredible improvements. It has displaced many jobs, especially white-collar and administrative jobs. Soon, it will displace jobs requiring physical effort too.

However, AI doesn't do everything. It can't replace human touch, human empathy, human accountability, and human interaction. It doesn't provide genuine relational connection or add to your personal network of connections and the resources that come with those connections. It doesn't have real experience. It omits subtle details that can be significant. It doesn't have human character, values, or morals. So, when seeking human interaction, humans still hire humans.

By the way, if you are planning your career and don't want to be displaced by AI, develop your human skills, aka soft skills. Develop your emotional intelligence. Leverage AI, but don't expect it to do what only humans can do—be human.

There is no universal correct answer on who or which resource to engage. The only universal agreement is that everyone can use help and that all can benefit from others to become the best versions of themselves, achieve their definitions of success, and experience as much joy and peace in life as possible.

Because parts of the past can be so adverse and traumatic for so many people, here are a few thoughts to consider if you find yourself, or someone in your circle of influence, in need of letting go of the past and moving forward:

- Accept your past. It may have been painful, and may still be, but it happened.
- Process your past. Understand why, what, and how it happened. Engage the help of others.
- Make the choice to not only overcome your past, but benefit from it. Maybe even be glad for it.
- Record the lessons learned for the purpose of using them in the future, for yourself and others.
- Forgive others if needed and even thank them if appropriate.
- Apply the lessons learned to yourself—emotionally, mentally, behaviorally, and relationally.
- After self-application, apply the lessons learned to whatever circumstances need to be changed.
- Enjoy the confidence that comes with overcoming what you've been through and learning what you learned.
- Be continually reassured you are a better version of yourself and will finish better than how you started.

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