

**AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO  
HELPING  
SKILLS**

**COUNSELLING, COACHING AND MENTORING**

**JANE WESTERGAARD**



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

# 1

## HELPING ROLES AND PROFESSIONS

### DEFINING THE TERMS

Chapter objectives: Readers will have the opportunity to ...

- define the term 'helping professions';
- explain the key features of counselling, coaching and mentoring relationships;
- identify the professional contexts in which counselling, coaching and mentoring take place;
- consider the shared elements of each discipline;
- identify the differences and distinctions in approach.

### Introduction

The expression 'helping professions' has become ubiquitous and is used to describe a range of roles identified within a broad spectrum of professional contexts, from psychotherapists to learning mentors, social care support workers to life-coaches, and careers counsellors to paramedics. The concept of a 'helping relationship' has also gained momentum, and terms such as 'therapy', 'counselling', 'coaching', 'mentoring' and 'guidance' are often used interchangeably to describe the nature and features of such a relationship. But what is meant by the term 'helping professions'? And what does a helping relationship look like? What do the

activities of counselling, coaching and mentoring set out to achieve? Are their aims shared – or are there distinctive elements to each approach?

This first chapter sets out to define and demystify some of the key terms which will be used throughout the text. It begins by establishing what is meant by the broad term 'helping professions' and then goes on to focus on the one-to-one helping relationship, by defining and examining the aim, purpose and nature of counselling, coaching and mentoring activities. It is important to note that the meanings of these terms are not universally agreed, but heavily contested. There are practitioners, academics and researchers in each of the three fields presented above who argue vehemently that the activities are distinct; they strive for different outcomes, are based on diverse – sometimes conflicting – theoretical perspectives, and make use of what could be termed 'incompatible' skills and techniques. However, there are also practitioners, academics and researchers who consider that there are shared features, approaches, skills and techniques in these helping fields, and that perhaps these common aspects are greater than the distinctions that set each activity apart. I do not presume to have a definitive answer, but will strive to present a coherent definition of each activity – counselling, coaching and mentoring – and invite you to reach your own conclusions. We do know, though, that the helping professions are a growth field, and a number of new practitioner roles have emerged in recent years: roles such as mentor, care support worker, pastoral manager, life-coach and so on. These job titles are familiar to us now, but have only become so very recently.

A range of case studies, activities and reflection opportunities will be presented throughout the chapter (as in all the chapters in this book). In addition, the real-life practitioner scenarios presented in Part II will contextualise the contents of Part I and enable a greater depth and breadth of understanding about the helping professions, the roles involved, and the ways in which helping skills and processes are applied.

## The helping professions

Egan (2007), in his seminal text *The Skilled Helper*, uses the term 'helping' in a generic sense to describe those who use counselling and helping skills as a central element in their work. This includes counsellors, psychotherapists and so on, but also encapsulates other professionals – mentors, support workers, paramedics, teachers and social workers, for example – who are not necessarily engaged in therapeutic interventions, but are working alongside others (patients, pupils, clients) in a supportive and helping context. Nelson-Jones makes a distinction between counsellors and helpers, citing helpers as 'paraprofessional or quasi-counsellors, those who use counselling skills as part of other primary roles, those

engaged in voluntary counselling and helping, and those who participate in peer helping or support networks' (2012: 6). Cameron suggests something slightly different, going further by offering a more comprehensive insight into what constitutes a 'helping profession':

The helping professions – social work, health and welfare work and community work, to include just a few fields of endeavour – comprise an essential field of practice in most countries. Practitioners interact with clients across the full range of health, family, youth, justice, housing and education service sectors in most societies. (2008: 2)

### Activity

Take a moment to focus on a particular institution that you think might employ 'helpers'. It could be a school, a hospital, a care home, a prison or a social services department – or somewhere else which has the primary concern of working in some capacity with people. Now make a list of all the roles in that institution which you think have 'helping' as their focus.

I am sure that you were able to name a number of roles that included helping as their primary focus. For example, in the case of schools or other education establishments today, you are likely to come across learning mentors, school counsellors, learning support assistants, teaching assistants, pastoral support workers, pastoral managers, educational social workers, and others whose primary task is to support children and young people in their learning and more broadly in managing their young lives. But would you consider that teachers also engage in helping relationships with their pupils? The testimonial below, from Carly, an English teacher in a secondary school, offers an enlightening insight.

### Case study: Carly (secondary-school teacher)

I work as an English teacher, which means that I undertake all the tasks that you would expect. I engage with students through a range of learning activities: I set them work tasks, mark their course work, help to prepare them for their exams, and generally support their learning in relation to my subject, English.

I also have responsibility for a tutor group – students who I have worked with since they first joined the school and will stay with until they (or I!) leave.

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We meet every day for tutorial time and during these sessions, over the years, I have been approached by students wishing to disclose a range of challenging issues: from describing their experiences of domestic violence to disclosing news of an unplanned pregnancy. In a number of cases, I know that I have been the first adult that these young people have spoken to about quite intimate and private aspects of their lives. I think that is probably because over the years we have built a relationship of trust, and they feel safe enough to share their problems with me. Of course, there was nothing in my teacher training that prepared me for this aspect of my job. I feel honoured that pupils feel able to confide in me, but I'm not always sure where I can go with these problems, or what to do about them. I'm certainly not a trained counsellor!

Carly highlights the tension that many professionals face – doctors, social workers, health workers, care workers, even small employers supporting a staff team, for example – whereby the role of counsellor, coach or mentor is not the central element of their function, but nevertheless they often find themselves engaging with clients or colleagues to offer emotional support as well as practical help. Usually they have had very little training in the use of helping skills and approaches, and simply do the best they can in each individual case. Kelly, a senior paramedic, highlights this issue in her testimony below.

### **Case study: Kelly (senior paramedic)**

I was prepared for the clinical elements of the role of paramedic and feel confident in my medical practice. What I was less prepared for – and I know that many paramedics share this concern – is the emotional and psychological aspects of the work, where we are often dealing with anxious and distraught patients and relatives; elderly, frail people who may be frightened and confused; and friends and family members of patients who may have gone through a very traumatic experience. In many cases, it is the paramedic who deals directly with these issues, as they are the first person at the scene. Of course, our work is to care for the health of our patients first and foremost, but that doesn't take away from the fact that we are also working in relationships that require elements of broader help and support.

Kelly's testimony, like Carly's, demonstrates that many professionals in roles that are not identified primarily as counsellors, coaches or mentors nevertheless engage in some kind of supportive relationship where

they use helping skills to assist their clients, patients, pupils or employees to manage challenging issues in their lives.

So, in order to define the term 'helping professions', we may have to look further than naming a role in an organisation that is defined solely as 'therapeutic', and think more broadly about practitioners who use the skills of helping as an element of their function, which would not necessarily be assumed from their job title.

### Reflection point

Take a moment to think about your own work role – or the role that you would like to undertake in the future. How far would you describe this as belonging primarily to a counselling, coaching or mentoring profession, or rather an organisation where you use helping skills as a key element of your work? How far would you define yourself (or like to define yourself in the future) as a counsellor, coach or mentor first and foremost – or as something else? Try to establish how many of your working hours are taken up in engaging in helping relationships (or how much of your time you would like to devote to this in the future).

Even if you do not necessarily see yourself in a helping profession or role, the use of helping skills as an aspect of everyday life can be invaluable. Culley and Bond ask:

How can we help someone when the obvious ways do not seem to work? How can we help others solve problems better? How can we assist someone to communicate their point of view better? These are common challenges for us in work, especially in health and social care and education. They are also everyday challenges with friends, colleagues and sometimes in chance encounters with strangers. (2011: ix)

They go on to suggest that knowledge of counselling and helping skills can assist us all to engage more actively in a range of different contexts, be it in work or in our private lives. If, then, we can identify a range of different helping roles, how do we know whether these can be termed 'counsellor', 'coach' or 'mentor'? Are these activities interchangeable? Do they effectively mean the same thing? Do they require a different skill-set? And what about the knowledge needed to be effective counsellors, coaches and mentors? The introduction to this book examined the key features of helping relationships (the skills and qualities needed to be an effective helper) and these will be explored in greater depth in

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. But we will take some time now to focus on the most commonly known helping roles – counsellor, coach and mentor – to attempt to reach a shared definition of each.

### Activity

Before we explore, define and attempt to demystify the terms, take a moment to write down your own definitions of ‘counsellor’, ‘coach’ and ‘mentor’.

You will have the opportunity to return to your definitions after reading this section, which sets out to describe each activity clearly.

## Counselling

Counsellors are employed in a range of contexts: health, education, the voluntary and community sectors, and private practice. They often develop specialisms in terms of the issues they deal with, for example bereavement, addiction, working with young people, relationships and so on. Feltham offers a broad definition of the purpose of counselling, which he describes as

mainly, though not exclusively, listening-and-talking-based methods of addressing psychological and psychosomatic problems and change, including deep and prolonged human suffering, situational dilemmas, crises and developmental needs, and aspirations towards the realisation of human potential. In contrast to bio-medical approaches, the psychological therapies operate largely without medication or other physical interventions and may be concerned not only with mental health but with spiritual, philosophical, social and other aspects of living. Professional forms of counselling and psychotherapy are based on formal training which encompasses attention to pertinent theory, clinical and/or micro-skills development, the personal development/theory of the trainee, and supervised practice. (2012: 3)

The point is made here that counselling attends to psychological and psychosomatic disturbances. Its primary concern is the emotional lives of clients, helping them to understand their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. But counselling aims for more than simply exploring and reaching an enhanced understanding of clients’ lives. It not only focuses on exploring these ‘disturbances’ – although the exploration is a very important aspect – but also attends equally to working towards change, if and when clients feel able to make adaptations in their lives. Counselling is therefore

a purposeful relationship that aims for some kind of positive change. Feltham also draws our attention to the need for an appropriately trained and effectively supervised counselling workforce. All counsellors undertake rigorous training which helps them to develop knowledge and skills in a range of important areas, depending on the particular theoretical orientation in which they practise. The concept of 'theoretical orientation' will be explained later in this book but, for now, it can be defined as the particular counselling approach that is adopted, for example person-centred, cognitive behavioural or psychodynamic. An integrative approach draws on a range of orientations and adopts a particular model within which different approaches can be integrated as appropriate. As well as undergoing thorough and in-depth professional training, all counsellors who are registered members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and who also practise counselling are required to engage in their own professional supervision. This means that counsellors have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice and ensure that they are keeping themselves and their clients safe in the counselling process.

There is an on-going debate about the distinctions between counselling and psychotherapy, and although space does not allow an in-depth exploration of these perceived differences here, Claringbull provides a useful and pragmatic response to the question of the differences between counselling and psychotherapy:

The answer to the 'what's in a name' puzzle is simple: there are NO differences. If you are a professional – and that includes all the personal therapists – who is trying to help somebody with emotional, personal or mental health problems, then you are a psychological therapist and practising what today are often called the talking therapies. (2010: 4)

The purpose of counselling can be summarised as follows. Counsellors focus on:

- building a relationship of trust – by engaging actively with each and every client, and providing a safe and confidential space in which to listen to their stories;
- enabling clients to express their feelings freely and openly without judgement – offering a cathartic experience;
- working therapeutically with clients – encouraging their clients to focus on and understand better the tensions, conflicts and challenges in their lives in relation to thoughts, feelings and behaviour;
- taking an empathic and non-judgemental approach – working hard to understand each client's circumstances from their frame of reference, and accepting each client unconditionally, without judgement;
- being 'real' in their relationships with clients – the counsellor develops an in-depth understanding of 'self' within each counselling

relationship, knowing what issues may trigger a particular response in the counsellor and where this response resides; put simply, developing as a reflexive and reflective practitioner;

- assisting clients to work towards developing a fuller understanding of themselves – enabling clients to focus on and explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and gain a greater depth of understanding about their motivations and the underlying causes of their issues;
- enabling clients to work towards change – working with clients to begin to look forward and consider options and strategies for making positive changes in their lives, in relation to thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Rajesh, a relationship counsellor, summarises his role and reflects on what he is setting out to achieve in his work with clients.

### **Case study: Rajesh (relationship counsellor)**

I've been working as a relationship counsellor for ten years now. It's funny, but I wouldn't describe myself as an experienced counsellor. Each client and each piece of work feels so new and so different. If you're asking me what counselling is all about and what I do ... hmm ... that's a tricky one. I suppose that I'd say that first and foremost I'm offering a safe space to my clients – whether I'm seeing a couple or just one person – I'm offering them an opportunity to be listened to, without judgement, and to say things that may have been previously unspoken, and to feel things that may challenge or even frighten them in some way. When people say to me 'Oh, all you counsellors do is sit and listen and nod!' I have to smile to myself. If only! Sitting with someone's pain is exhausting. And finding the right words to help them to explore that pain is a fine art – and I'm sure that I don't always get it right. But the most difficult thing for me is knowing that I can't solve their problems. I'm not there to advise or recommend, but I am there to help clients to find their own solutions. And sometimes the solutions can be just as challenging as the original problem.

Rajesh reminds us that counselling is not the same as advising. The role of the counsellor is not to dictate, recommend or even advise clients on what is best, but rather to enable clients to share their stories in a safe and non-judgemental space and identify the options and evaluate the actions that are best for them, in their circumstances, in their lives.

## Activity

Look at the list of statements below. What are your thoughts? Do you agree that these responses in a counselling context could be unhelpful? What is your reasoning?

Counselling is *not*:

- Giving advice – ‘In your situation you should probably ...’
- Telling someone what to do – ‘You must make sure you ...’
- Telling someone what you would do – ‘If I were you I’d ...’
- Telling someone that the same thing has happened to you – ‘I know just what you’re going through. The same thing happened to me, and this is what I did ...’
- Reassuring someone that everything will be OK – ‘Don’t worry. I’m sure it will all be fine ...It’ll all work out in the end.’
- Interpreting someone’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours – ‘I think that you do this because ...’
- Showing sympathy – ‘You poor old thing ...’

Of course, the reason that people choose a career in the helping professions is because they want to help! But helping (and counselling) doesn’t mean telling people what to do. If we reflect on our own lives, we will probably come to the realisation that most of the significant decisions we have made have been made by us – not by someone else telling us what to do. Rajesh stresses the difficulty of sitting with someone’s pain rather than trying to offer a quick fix or tell them that everything will be fine. We cannot possibly know if all will be well in the future for our clients, and therefore counsellors must maintain their integrity and not attempt the unachievable – ‘solving’ the problems of others.

Geldard and Geldard summarise the purpose of counselling elegantly:

A major goal of the counselling process therefore needs to be to help clients change. Clients need to be able to make changes in the way they think and/or the things they do, so that they are less likely to repeat patterns of thinking and behaving which lead to negative consequences for them. *Effective counselling helps people change.* (2005: 9, emphasis in original)

## Activity

Take a moment to read Case Study 7 in Part II. This contributor works as a counsellor and coach therapist. How far does her work fit within the definition of counselling set out here?

So, counselling is about the emotional and psychological well-being of clients. It is focused on exploring the presenting problem and working towards greater understanding and, ultimately, positive change. What about coaching and mentoring – do these activities work towards the same goals, or is there a different focus and purpose?

## Coaching

Coaching is a relatively new and rapidly expanding sector. We have probably all heard the term 'life-coach', and this may bring to mind images of a wealthy, middle-class individual experiencing a mid-life crisis and going to someone for help in finding a new direction in their lives. This is an unhelpful and stereotypical view of life-coaching, but nevertheless resonates to a degree. The purpose of coaching is goal orientated and tends to focus on aspects of our personal and professional lives and the balance between them. Unlike counselling, where people often present in distress, with a deep-rooted, complex issue or 'problem', coaching is based on the premise of 'enabling' or 'maximising' potential in our lives. Van Nieuwerburgh (2014) suggests that the following definitions provide a useful insight. Downey (2003: 21) offers a simple explanation of coaching as 'the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another'. Whitmore (2009: 11) agrees that coaching is all about 'unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.' De Haan (2008: 19) concurs, explaining that 'coaching is a method of work-related learning that relies primarily on one-to-one conversations.' Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014: 1) go further, suggesting that coaching is 'a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders'. There are clues here in the terminology used to define coaching. Terms like 'performance', 'work-related', 'development' and 'learning' suggest a particular focus to these coaching interventions that is, perhaps, different to the counselling relationship. Van Nieuwerburgh (2014) goes on to suggest that coaching is all about empowerment, particularly in relation to learning, growth and personal and professional development.

Unlike counselling, the coaching profession has, until recently, been largely unregulated. Coaching training programmes and courses have been relatively scarce and the rigorous codes of ethics and principles which underpin counselling work have not been so prominent in coaching practice, although that is set to change. A gradual awareness of the importance of coaching and its relevance as a core activity within

the helping professions has been recognised. The BACP, for example, has a coaching division and includes information about courses and programmes with a coaching focus in their list of accredited training routes. Furthermore, it is planned that coaches will have access to the BACP revised *Ethical Framework* (2015), which will include practice guidance for coaching. So let us try to define coaching in a little more detail.

Van Nieuwerburgh (2014) suggests that coaching involves three key elements:

- A 'managed' conversation that takes place between two people (a coach and a coachee) and focuses on the issues brought by the coachee in a safe and supportive environment.
- A process that aims to encourage, enable and support changes in behaviours or ways of thinking that are achievable and, importantly, sustainable for the coachee.
- A process that focuses on learning and development; this could be in relation to work practices, professional training, work-life balance, or career development.

There appear to be 'shared' factors here between counselling and coaching. Both stress the need for a safe and supportive relationship, and both work towards change. The key differences here are the focus of the work (as already established, the work of a coach is primarily concerned with personal and professional development, often in a professional, career-related context) and, perhaps, the depth in which any emotional and psychological issues are explored. In the case study below, Carl talks about his practice as a coach in a large organisation.

### **Case study: Carl (coach in an organisation)**

I've been working for a large multinational organisation for three years. I was the first person to be appointed to this post in the UK, and I think it came about initially because the organisation was concerned about staff retention and progression. I'm actually based in the HR department, but my job is different to what we would normally think of as human resources work. I've coached a whole range of different people within the organisation. The senior and middle managers have regular, programmed coaching sessions, as does anyone who is approaching retirement. Anyone in the organisation can request a coaching session and often individuals are referred to me following their appraisals with

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managers, where they have indicated a desire to progress further within the organisation or look for a new professional direction. My coaching practice focuses very much on work-related issues – be it thinking about changes in work, developing better work practices, moving into different professional areas, or moving out of the workplace altogether. I'm often faced with clients who are struggling to get their work–life balance right. That's probably the issue I deal with most, to be honest. I help people to think about what they want, and how they can get it, but I will always refer people on if I feel that they need more in-depth psychological or therapeutic support, which is not my role.

Carl is very clear here about the boundaries of his role – where he 'stops' and a counsellor might take over. This is important and is an on-going challenge for Carl in his work as a coach. Unlike a counsellor, Carl is not required to have regular supervision, and therefore has to make important decisions about his practice (referrals, for example) using his own skills of reflexivity and reflection.

### **Activity**

Look at the list of statements below. What are your thoughts? Do you agree that these responses in a coaching context could be unhelpful? What is your reasoning?

- 'I think you need to leave the job you're working in. You're obviously unhappy there!'
- 'Why don't you go for promotion? You've been stuck in that same old job for years.'
- 'When I was working under pressure like you, I made the decision to stop checking my e-mails at home. That's something I'd advise you to do too.'
- 'Have you thought about trying something else? What about training as a nurse, or a banker, or a florist?'

It should not be assumed that coaching is any more about 'telling people what to do' than counselling. The coach is skilled in active listening and questioning techniques, and knows that it is their clients who are the experts in their own lives and who must find the solutions that work for them – just as with their counselling colleagues. That said, the

work is goal focused and a coach will often work at a faster pace than a counsellor, with perhaps a more explicitly defined goal-orientated focus and, possibly, fewer one-to-one sessions.

### Activity

Take a moment to read Case Study 2, in Part II. How does this example of a coach's work fit with your understanding of coaching practice?

To summarise our understanding so far, Garvey, Stokes and Megginson suggest that the term 'coaching' is

used extensively in business environments. This is either in the form of internal line manager coaches or with the use of external and paid coaches. These are often positioned as 'executive coaches'. Life-coaching is almost exclusively linked to paid practice. Coaching is still associated with performance improvement of a specific kind related to a job role, but it is also increasingly linked to leadership development, transition and change and generally developing a focus for the future. (2014: 27)

It should not be assumed, however, that coaches operate only in 'business' or private-practice settings. Education and health are both professions where the practice of coaching is recognised as being helpful.

Where counselling and coaching are considered to be relatively 'formal' activities – with clearly established agreements around appointment times, for example, and a bounded nature in the relationship between counsellors, coaches and their clients – the activity of mentoring suggests a slightly different focus in the nature of the relationship.

## Mentoring

The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers an interesting definition of a mentor, given the context of this book. It suggests that a mentor is 'an experienced and trusted counsellor'. Although use of the term 'counsellor' is interesting, it serves to muddy the water a little, but it is the emphasis on 'experience' and 'trust' that is the clue to what is at the heart of a mentoring relationship. Pask and Joy (2007) describe the role of a mentor in clear terms as someone who simply helps someone else to think things through, and this is certainly true. A mentoring relationship,

like coaching (and unlike counselling) is often related to the workplace or to education. Learning mentors can be found in almost all schools, colleges, universities and other educational establishments, whilst mentors are also employed in many workplaces.

### Activity

Imagine that you are currently employed (it really does not matter what type of work you are doing; let's use a fast-food customer assistant as an example). Your manager asks you to act as a mentor to a new member of staff. What do you imagine your job will involve? Jot down your thoughts.

It is likely that you identified activities which would enable your new colleague to understand better what their job involves and the processes and procedures involved therein. You probably established that this would be a fairly 'informal' relationship and that your new colleague would be able to talk to you and question you about issues in the workplace as they arose, rather than wait for a formal 'mentoring appointment'. The informal nature of the mentoring relationship is one of the key differences between mentors, counsellors and coaches, and perhaps goes some way to explain the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition as a 'friend'. Clutterbuck and Megginson (1999) also make the link between 'mentor' and 'friend', a term which is almost certainly deemed irrelevant or even inappropriate in a coaching relationship and would be viewed as unethical in counselling. That is not to say that a mentor has also to be a friend, but rather that the nature of the mentoring relationship is more akin to that of friendship – with easy and direct contact, short and often-unplanned meetings, and a relaxed sharing of stories and experiences. That said, the concept of goal-setting remains central (Grant, 2006), and it is through the mentoring relationship that goals are identified. For it is the experience of the mentor that is informing and enabling the mentee's learning and development. However, it is important to sound a note of caution here. In some contexts (schools for example) it may be that the mentor is employed by the organisation in a trusted adult role, the purpose of which is to enable pupils to remain 'on track'. This role can often be structured or, worse, authoritarian in nature, going against the principles of a mentoring relationship as introduced here (David *et al.*, 2013). Hassan is a student mentor in a university. He describes what this relationship involves.

### Case study: Hassan (university mentor)

I think I'm what's called a 'peer mentor'. This means that I'm a student in my second year at uni and I'm mentoring Elise, a new student on the first year of her course. I used to be a 'learning buddy' when I was at school and I realise now that this was also all about mentoring, although I hadn't heard the word 'mentor' then. I'm studying geography and Elise is doing music, but it doesn't really matter that we're not actually doing the same course. I'm just there as someone to talk to when Elise needs me. For example, she's doing her first written assignment now, and she was getting in a right panic about plagiarism and referencing. She texted me and asked if we could meet up. We met in the student union and talked about her anxieties. I wasn't much help as I'm a bit hazy about referencing myself, but I was able to tell her to go to see the learning support staff in the library, who are great. She was a bit nervous about doing this, so I suggested that she come along with me, as I was going to the library anyway later that day, and I could introduce her. It's that sort of thing really. No big deal!

Hassan describes the role of peer mentor clearly. He says that it is 'no big deal' but, actually, mentors (like counsellors and coaches) need to have knowledge and understanding about effective one-to-one engagement with others and to work within the boundaries of a safe and trusting relationship. Mentoring focuses on:

- helping others to achieve their goals – usually in relation to education, health or employment, for example developing learning strategies, managing and giving up an addiction, or taking on a new employment role;
- building a professional but often relatively informal relationship – not a friendship exactly, but sharing some of the features of friendship in terms of arranging meetings as and when they are helpful, and not being authoritarian in nature (being in the relationship together, sharing experiences and so on);
- adhering to less rigorous boundaries – confidentiality and the keeping of client records are core elements of the work of a coach and a counsellor. The mentor will also be aware of the confidential aspect of the mentoring relationship, but records are often not required to be completed after every intervention. Like a coach, a mentor will know when it may be appropriate to refer their mentee for counselling, when issues are raised that fall outside the remit of the mentoring relationship;
- building a relationship of trust – the mentee will feel confident and comfortable to share their issues and concerns with their mentor.

- working towards positive change in learning and development – the aim of mentoring is to enable the mentee to feel more confident in relation to the issues for which they initially had a mentor. This may be related to education and learning, or training and development in the workplace, or help with health issues.

Take a moment to read Case Study 1 in Part II, which has been provided by a learning support assistant (mentor) working in a school. This offers a powerful example of the potential depth of a mentoring relationship.

### Activity

Now that you have read my definitions of counselling, coaching and mentoring, go back to the earlier activity in this chapter, where I asked you to try to define each role. How far do your definitions agree with mine? What are the differences? Has engaging with the reading changed your view in any way?

## Counselling, coaching and mentoring – shared features and distinctions

So far, we have examined each activity (counselling, coaching and mentoring) individually. Clearly there are differences, to some extent, in each approach. But we have seen that there are similarities too. Table 1.1 aims to set out the shared features and broad distinctions in counselling, coaching and mentoring roles.

It is clear that the shared features focus on the effective building of the relationship between the counsellor, coach or mentor and their client. In each case, the relationship requires the 'helper' to demonstrate empathy, to be genuine and real, and to accept their clients unconditionally. Furthermore, each accesses a shared range of helping skills and techniques in order to enable their client to move towards positive change in their lives.

The distinctions are to do with two important elements: first, the nature of the issues presented and the depth to which they are explored; and, second, the differences in theoretical orientation, which are a dominant feature in counselling but less so in coaching and mentoring.

With the growth of the helping professions comes the emergence of new roles. Many people engaged in helping relationships would not necessarily identify as counsellors, coaches or mentors, but, we would argue, these people are often building relationships of trust with clients and working towards change. So, the shared features in the table opposite are present in many helping-relationship roles.

**Table 1.1** Counselling, coaching and mentoring – shared features and distinctions

	<b>Counselling</b>	<b>Coaching</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
<i>Shared features</i>	<p>Building an open, confidential, safe and trusting relationship with clients. Using effective helping skills in order to engage with clients' issues. Using a range of helping skills to work towards positive change. Demonstrating a non-judgemental approach to clients. Being empathic and genuine in the relationship.</p>	<p>Building an open, confidential, safe and trusting relationship with clients. Using effective helping skills in order to engage with clients' issues. Using a range of helping skills to work towards positive change. Demonstrating a non-judgemental approach to clients. Being empathic and genuine in the relationship.</p>	<p>Building an open, confidential, safe and trusting relationship with clients. Using effective helping skills in order to engage with clients' issues. Using a range of helping skills to work towards positive change. Demonstrating a non-judgemental and non-authoritarian approach to clients. Being empathic and genuine in the relationship.</p>
<i>Distinctions</i>	<p>Dealing with emotional, psychological and behavioural disturbance. Exploring issues at a deep level, working from a particular theoretical orientation (person-centred, CBT, integrative and so on). Can be long-term work – more than six sessions. Counsellors should be accredited and registered and receive regular supervision as a requirement to practise.</p>	<p>Dealing with personal and professional issues, often related to career and life development. Exploring issues in a goal-focused, positive manner. Using strategies and techniques to work towards change. Often using a coaching model or structure in their work. Often short-term work – fewer than six sessions.</p>	<p>Dealing with issues related to learning, health, work development. Meetings are often irregular and unplanned. It is usually the responsibility of the mentee to seek help from the mentor when required. The mentor will draw on and share their own experiences and knowledge as a way to assist mentees to consider strategies for change.</p>

### Activity

Take a look at Case Studies 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 in Part II. None of these helping professionals are employed specifically as counsellors, coaches or mentors, but each identifies the importance of the relationships they build and the helping skills that they access in order to work towards change with their clients.

The following chapters will examine the notion of a helping relationship in more depth. And from now on, the book will focus on the *shared* elements of helping rather than the *distinctions* in roles and approaches. The terminology adopted will be that of 'helper' rather than counsellor, coach or mentor, apart from where examples of practice and specific case studies from these professions are used as illustrations.

### Summary

This chapter began with defining the term 'helping professions' by establishing the key features of counselling, coaching and mentoring relationships and identifying the professional contexts in which these roles take place. The chapter ends by considering the shared elements of each discipline and identifying the differences and distinctions in approach. The reading suggested below will help to develop your knowledge and understanding of counselling, coaching and mentoring and the broader helping role.

### Further reading suggestions

- Claringbull, N. (2010) *What is Counselling and Psychotherapy?* Exeter: Learning Matters – Clearly written, this text engages the reader and offers a sound insight into what counselling is all about.
- van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2014) *An Introduction to Coaching Skills: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage – A very accessible read that clearly explores the key features of coaching practice.
- Garvey, B., Stokes, P. and Megginson, G. (2014) *Coaching and Mentoring: Theory and Practice* (2nd edn). London: Sage – Part I of this book provides a helpful introduction to both coaching and mentoring and their development.