

Coaching in Medical Education

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We have all had a coach at some point in our lives. If you were lucky, you had one that had a positive impact on your performance and growth either on the ball field, in the work setting, or as a personal life coach. You may even remember a coach whose influence was not helpful for you. I'm sure we have all had a mixture of both.

The role of a coach is to help an individual optimize their performance, achieve their personal best and improve their wellbeing.¹ A good coach can do this, and coaching is just as important in the area of medical education. Coaching effectively in the medical education space, starts with meeting the learner where they are at. Allowing them at some level to drive their learning experiences and expected achievements. In medical education a coach can support the developmental process whereby an individual learner meets regularly over time with a faculty coach to create goals; identify strategies to manage existing and potential challenges, improve academic performance, and further professional identity development toward reaching the learner's highest potential.³

How is coaching different from being a mentor or an advisor.

Understanding the differences between coaching, mentoring and advising is important. The guidance given to a coachee (or learner) will be given in a different manner depending on the role. The bullet points and table below will give you a basic framework about the differences:

- *A Mentor*, is someone who builds a relationship with an individual over a period of time and often uses their personal experience to help an individual's overall development.
- *An Advisor*, is typically an expert in the field. One who can give an individual specific advice to achieve his/her objective or goal. This relationship is more focused, and limited in scope.
- *A Coach*, in contrast, recognizes the learner as an expert that drives their own agenda, and the role of the coach is to ask questions, listen and probe to help the learner set goals, consider options and identify next steps.¹

TABLE
Comparing and Contrasting 4 Forms of Guidance

Item	Advisor	Coach	Coach With Wisdom	Mentor
Focus	Specific event	Task/skill	Task/skill with long-term view in the field	Career; focus on character development, socialization into field
Expert	In target area	Global/not specific	In specific performance target	In same field, "been there" and shares
Control	Advisor directed	Learner directed	Mostly learner directed	Mentor directed with repeated interchanges
Strategy	Give advice or answer	Help learner find a strategy through asking clarifying questions	Combines coaching and mentoring on specific topic; when mentor, explicitly states he/she is doing so	After discussion with learner, mentor transmits information intentionally based on his/her own experience and expertise; networks learner with others in field
Benefits	None for advisor	No direct benefit for coach	No direct benefit for coach	Mutual benefit with mentor often involved in learner products
Time	Single session	Time limited, current	Time limited, current	Long-term, future oriented

Marcadante K, Simpson D. Choosing When to Advise, Coach, or Mentor. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2018 Apr;10(2):227-228

Tips on Coaching

Coaching can be easy and rewarding for both parties, if you adhere to the following three fundamental rules of coaching:

- *Be a good listener:* One of the most important roles of a coach is to be an active listener. The majority of the conversation should come from the coachee (or learner). A good rule of thumb is using the 80/20 rule with coaching. Eighty percent of the time is spent listening and twenty percent of the time talking.
- *Let the Learner Drive the Discussion:* From the start, let the learner explain his/her goal and the expected outcome for the coaching sessions. Active inquiry plays an important role in getting the learner to their expected outcome. Use "What" and "How" questions to help guide them and avoid using leading questions. A question that pushes the learner to answer in a specific manner.
- *Close strong:* Another important part of coaching is to end by reinforcing growth and by "closing strong". Ask the learner what was valuable from the session. Was the expected outcome accomplished? Finally, what are the next steps moving forward?

Additional Resource

The American Medical Association has recognized the importance and benefits of coaching in Medical Education. The AMA site referenced below describes how learners benefit from coaching in medical education. Multiple modules are used to demonstrate how coaching can be used effectively by educators.

[Academic coaching in medical education | American Medical Association \(ama-assn.org\)](https://www.ama-assn.org/academic-coaching-in-medical-education)

References

1. Hoang K, Rassbach CE. Leadership & professional development: Coaching to develop clinicians, teachers, and leaders. *J Hosp Med.* 2023;18:622-623. doi.org/10.1002/jhm.13150
2. Marcdante K, Simpson D. Choosing When to Advise, Coach, or Mentor. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2018 Apr;10(2):227-228
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3. Deiorio NM, Carney PA, Kahl LE, Bonura EM, Juve AM. Coaching: a new model for academic and career achievement. *Med Educ Online.* 2016 Dec 1;21:33480. doi: 10.3402/meo.v21.33480. PMID: 27914193; PMCID: PMC5136126.