

A Survey of Intentional 1 to 1 Supportive Relationships

The following series of tables outlines the similarities and differences between a range of one to one relationships which offer support, growth and development. Each of these relationships have different connections to practices of Christian leadership formation. The descriptions used here are used primary in the context of Christian growth and development rather than in their generic sense.

Some of these relationships are very similar to one another and overlap considerably. In many cases one type of relationship may adapt use insights, skills and processes from one of the others. For example, it is not uncommon for a mentor to use aspects of spiritual direction when reflecting with someone on their relationships with God.

There are important distinctions however. While a mentor might also be friend the two relationships of mentoring and friendship are quite different and operate on different assumptions. Understanding the differences where they occur is important to avoid role confusion. If one person understands a relationship as a mutual friendship but the other sees it as a mentoring relationship which is strongly (but not exclusively) one way, there can be misunderstanding and even disappointment in the relationship. Similarly supervision and mentoring, while they are both focused on the other person, each have unique elements in the way the relationship works. Again pastoral care is not the same as psychotherapy as the relationships occur within very different environments.

While most are distinct, a couple of the intentional relationships are similar and are defined by groups and practitioners in their own ways. There is ongoing discussion about whether mentoring and life / leadership coaching are really two different types of relationships or whether, in common contemporary usage, they are essentially the same processes just given different names. In this typology they are defined slightly differently based on their developmental history. This is simply how we use the terms in this training, they may not be used quite in this way by other practitioner mentors or life and leadership coaches. Some of the best material on coaching is published in books on mentoring and vice versa.

This resource can be used to reflect on the ways in which you mentor. You might have a stronger focus on coaching, training, skill development and accountability. Others might be more aligned with spiritual mentoring with a greater emphasis on spiritual direction, reflection and soul care.

There is no one way to mentor. Hopefully drawing out some of the unique features will assist you work the combination of skills, practices and approaches which works best for you.

A Survey of Intentional 1 to 1 Relationships

The similarities and differences between a range of one to one relationships which offer support, growth and development.

	Mentoring	Spiritual Direction	Therapy / Counselling
Short Definition	Mentoring is an intentional trust-based relationship in which a more experienced person equips and empowers a mentoree to grow across a wide range of personal and professional life areas including leadership.	Spiritual Direction is the art of discerning with another the movements, challenges and invitations of the Holy Spirit in that individual's life. Spiritual Direction enables another grow in intimate responsiveness to God.	Counselling is an interpersonal process in which a client is enabled by a therapist to move toward healthy resolution of a specific issue through gaining personal insight and power to change.
History	The term originates in Homer's Iliad. Varied ancient forms of the wise guiding others have always existed. In modern usage, mentoring has developed from adults supporting troubled young people and older professionals guiding younger practitioners. Mentoring has been adapted from these models to Christian leadership development but is also informed by biblical examples of one to one leadership development.	Spiritual direction has a long history within Christian spirituality. It was fostered in the medieval monastic movement as a component of spiritual formation. Direction continues today to be a significant aspect of spiritual retreats and Christian formation. There is a rich body of devotional literature around spiritual direction and its associated disciplines. Protestant spirituality has rediscovered it in recent years.	Counselling and psychotherapy are relatively new relational concepts developed out of modern theories of interpersonal psychology. The 'talking therapies pioneered by Freud and Jung as psychoanalysts, and then further developed by behavioural, cognitive, and person centred (humanistic) psychologists like Carl Rogers, have been adapted into modern Christian counselling.
Emphasis and focus of relationship	Setting and moving toward clear mutually agreed objectives that arise from the mentoree's life, leadership and ministry. Empowering for leadership and personal growth toward maturity.	Reflecting together on the spiritual journey of the pilgrim in order to grow in inner maturity, intimacy and companionship with God.	Dealing with, resolving or healing from specific problems and their psychological symptoms – emotions, behaviours, thinking patterns, relationships or lifestyle issues.
Duration and rhythm	Medium to long term (1-4 years, often monthly or bi monthly meetings of 1-2 hours)	Usually medium to long term (3-5 years, monthly meetings, usually an hour)	Usually short term (2 – 6 months, weekly or fortnightly meetings, rarely longer than 50-60 minutes)
Basis of relationship	The person of the mentor is important in the relationship. The mentor needs an understanding of ministry and leadership experience to be effective. Mentors often share honestly and reflectively from their own life and leadership experience.	The person of the director is not emphasised. The director's spiritual maturity, knowledge of God, the inner life, wisdom and presence are vital but not explicit in the relationship. A director does not usually bring their own personal journey into the relationship.	The skills of the therapist in helping the client gain self-understanding and to commit to a pathway forward are critical. Therapists maintain a clear professional boundary on self-disclosure.
Personal & professional knowledge	Knowing and being committed to the whole person of the mentoree and their life and ministry. Knowing the approach and resources which may assist them in personal and leadership formation.	Knowing the pilgrim, knowing the ebbs and flows of spiritual formation and knowing the exercises and disciplines which enable spiritual insight and growth.	Knowing the human mind and soul and how people move from brokenness toward wholeness across a range of conditions and challenges. It is issue based not whole of life focused.
Resources used	Wide variety of diagnostic, personal and professional development and growth resources usually gathered and shared by the mentor.	Much of the content comes from the journalling, reflection and disclosure of the pilgrim. Spiritual literature, scripture, disciplines are often incorporated into reflection.	While a therapist may share some resources, the emphasis in counselling is to draw the resources for change from within and to empower the client to take personal responsibility for change.
Metaphors	Master – Apprentice, Older - Younger	Guide - Pilgrim	Doctor - Patient
Key Ideas	Empowerment, resourcing, training, equipping, using objectives, leadership, ministry, whole of life, supporting, growth	Journalling, discernment, guide, prayer, relationship with God, disciplines, spirituality, reflection	Healing, problem focused, process, growth, therapy, client focused

	Friendship	Pastoral Care	Discipleship
Short Definition	Friendship is an informal relationship that is built around a growing history of shared experiences, interests and values. It flows out of a spontaneous sense of mutual connection and commitment to another person.	Pastoral Care is a function of the body of Christ . Brothers and sisters care for one another and seek to provide for each other's growth, support, healing and wholeness. This occurs within a church or organisational context.	Discipleship is a relationship in which one assists another lay the foundations of the Christian life . It includes growth in understanding and practice of Christian values, ideals, disciplines and beliefs.
Emphasis	Sharing life, moments, events, joys and sorrows together with someone you are committed to.	Care through a difficult time by people you know and trust within a community of commitment.	Learning the basic knowledge, attitudes and lifestyle of a Christian disciple often from the Bible.
Focal area of relationship	True friendship has no agenda other than often spontaneously enjoying the company of the other.	Offering presence, prayer and practical assistance to brothers and sisters in need within community.	Often working systematically through a set of principles, skills, or a program of discipleship .
Duration	Often lifelong with periods of intensity and distance.	Usually long term but with intense short term periods usually around crises.	Usually short to medium term (6 months - year, weekly or fortnightly meetings)
Basis of relationship	Shared experiences, values, events and personal commitment.	Sense of commitment that comes with the family / community of God.	Growth through intentional study, application and the support of an older discipler.
Personal & professional knowledge	Not relevant	Willingness to be there, trust, some basic pastoral skills in listening, practical assistance.	Maturity in Christian faith and lifestyle, discipline and commitment.
Resources used	Friends often share reflections, books, experiences, ideas, dreams and thoughts.	Skills and training of the carer, ability to mobilise other members' resources.	Discipleship course, book or program of study, Bible studies.
Metaphors	Companions,	Brother – Sister, Shepherd,	Master – disciple

	Life / Leadership Coaching	Supervision	Spiritual / Soul / Sacred Companions
Short Definition	Coaching is a personalised process focussed on building a leader's capacity to achieve personal and organisational goals primarily through the acquisition and application of skills.	Supervision provides an opportunity for a practitioner to reflect critically on their work with more experienced senior practitioner. It usually occurs within an organisational context and may be a professional requirement.	Sacred companions are intentionally committed to each other's spiritual growth within the context of a natural friendship.
Emphasis	Imparting and intentionally shaping specific leadership and life skills in order to respond to challenges or achieve outcomes.	Overseeing a practitioner's professional functioning. In particular the impact a person is having on others.	Intentionally extending a natural friendship to incorporate mutual spiritual nurture and accountability.
Focal area of relationship	Coaching is usually goals and skills focused with an emphasis on learning, practice, improvement and specific application.	Supervision looks beyond the person and asks about the effectiveness of their leadership & ministry for those they serve.	Sacred companions see their relationship as mutual but also formal in the sense that it is usually structured through an agreed process.
Duration	Can be shorter time frame (~ 3 - 9 months) bound by the complexity of skills needing to be acquired but also a longer term relationship.	Usually determined by the system requiring the supervision. Supervisions is often medium - long term.	Mutual relationships are usually long term, in many cases going for 5 or more years.
Basis of relationship	High level of confidence and trust in the coach is required.	Supervision is commonly a systemic requirement. Trust needs to be created but cannot be assumed particularly if the relationship is structural.	Genuine personal commitment to growth and to the other person.
Personal & professional knowledge	Knowledge, skills and expertise of the coach is essential. The ability to effectively impart skills and train is critical.	Knowing the leadership environment of the practitioner. Knowing the indicators of effectiveness.	Openness to growth and sharing with the other. The long term nature of these relationships gives value.
Resources used	Coaching uses specific training and skill development techniques usually developed by the coach.	Supervision often uses formal and informal reporting, measures, critical incidents and situations for reflection.	Varied sources, journals, books, videos, spiritual exercises etc form the basis of shared experiences which are reflected upon.
Metaphors	Coach - player	Senior - junior	Soul friends
Key Ideas	Skill, practice, monitoring, leadership.	Systemic, oversight, professional, critical.	Mutual, intentional, spiritual, personal.