

## The Difference between Coaching, Training and Consulting

Many people ask me what is the difference between coaching, training, consulting and even sometimes the difference between coaching and therapy. I read an explanation once, and it was very helpful for me in understanding these differences.

Apply the question to a real life situation: trying to learn how to ride a bike.

### Trainer

The trainer might approach the situation by asking you to attend a half-day or all-day session to “learn” how to ride a bike. He or she might stand at the front of the room facing you and perhaps a group of other people, and show powerpoint slides or flipcharts regarding all the aspects of what bike riding entails. He/she might use pictures of people riding, and also give out handouts with the procedural steps of how to ride a bike. He or she might also prepare a hands-on experience where you and the other participants have the opportunity to get on a bike and help each other try out some of the things you’ve learned. With these basics, you will be sent home to continue trying out on your own that which you learned together.

### Consultant

The consultant would most likely stand by watching you ride your bike (or perhaps watch a video of you riding your bike). After that session, the consultant would sit down with you and give you tips based on the latest research on what you need to change or do better while riding a bike. He or she might also give you written instructions to use at a later date. Then the consultant would leave you to implement on your own the information you’ve received.

### Therapist

The therapist will sit with you and ask about your family history regarding riding bikes and ask how you reacted to bike riding as a child. He or she might spend a lot of time asking about your feelings during bike riding; and he or she will spend time helping you to release any negativity based in past experience you have toward bike-riding in general.

### Coach

The coach will begin by spending time with you exploring the reasons why you want to ride a bike in the first place. He or she will be checking to see if you are truly committed to bike riding and if there are any hidden things which will stand in the way of your future success. The coach will help you develop a picture of what successful bike riding entails and then will go with you a few times while you ride your bike. During each bike riding session, your coach will check in with you to determine how you are getting along with the new process. After each bike riding session, the coach will help you compare your reality in bike riding to the picture you developed and help you determine if there are any discrepancies in the two. The coach will work with you until you have determined that bike riding is definitely for you and that you have everything necessary you need to be a successful bike rider.

Each of the above roles has a positive place in our work environment. It is up to you to choose which would work best for your present needs. *(My personal thanks to one of my first coaching trainers, Michael Stratford, for giving me this insight. The trainer information above was added by me.)*

*To learn more about putting these tips into action, visit my webpage or give me a call anytime. I'm happy to answer your questions.*  
Peggy Stinson

