

Comparing Spiritual Direction with other Helping Relationships that Nurture Wellbeing¹

 If you prefer a summary, go directly to the end of this chart

One-to-One Helping Modalities	People Involved Who comes? Why?	Focus What to talk about?	Relational Process What happens?
Spiritual Direction	A mature believer desiring to deepen relationship with God; to discover, attend to, & savor the presence of God in daily life	Focuses on a person’s current experiences of God in daily life. Things touched on would be the directee’s deeper desires, struggles, prayer, second half of life issues, & discerning his/her responses to God’s presence through growing self-awareness.	The Spiritual Director is a co-discerner with directee, helping directee notice and respond to the active presence and work of God. Silence, listening, and asking questions, all in a prayerful context, give space for directee to listen to the HS. Giving advice is not the SD’s responsibility. The SD guards the most vital relationship of this process: the one between God and directee. Meetings are usually every month. They are initiated and terminated by the directee. Interaction between director and directee outside of these sessions is rare. Fees by way of donations are often, but not always, involved.
Pastoral Care Pastoral Counseling	A stable church member in need of specific pastoral services, or with areas of dysfunction who seeks a faith perspective. The member’s spiritual life is recognized and valued.	Focuses on a church member’s involvement with a local church. If faith perspective is sought, the pastor offers biblical insights from the church’s faith tradition. The pastor also offers practical means by which a church member can integrate spiritual health with emotional and psychological health (at times referring the member to psychological counseling and psychotherapy).	The Pastor offers advice, counsel and services (sick visit, funeral/wedding, prayer, etc). The Pastor is seen as the voice of authority on matters of faith and practice, and is rightly invested in the quality of the church member’s ongoing involvement with the church through invitations to serve and through disciplinary actions if necessary. Interaction between pastor and member outside of these sessions is encouraged and cultivated. No fees are involved.
Counseling	A person with a specific problem seeking help in finding a solution. The	Focus is on resolving personal problems. Resolving problems in relationships and life experiences related to areas of pain, shame,	The Counselor is trained to give guidance on personal, social, or psychological problems, adhering to strict ethical guidelines and

¹ I have used and liberally adapted materials from Christine Luna Munger, Spiritual Direction Certificate Coordinator, Saint Catherine University, St. Paul, MN. And from Sue Pickering’s *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (Canterbury Press, 2008), pages 14-17.

	person's spiritual life is not necessarily brought into the counseling session.	and guilt, and discovering places for healing. Primarily analytical and diagnostic, the counselor offers analysis of underlying issues and models and teaches techniques of problem solving.	professional standards. The counselee comes to depend on a counselor's analysis and assessment of his/her problem and ways forward. The relationship is terminated when either the counselor or counselee see measureable psychological growth or when a specific problem is solved. Interaction between counselor and counselee outside of sessions is rare, if not discouraged. Fees are involved.
Discipleship	A new(er) believer and community member seeking to be formed in a particular faith tradition	Focus is on growth in the beliefs and practice of faith. The purpose of discipleship is to pass on knowledge of scripture, doctrines and faith tradition, and to train a disciple in practices of faithful service in the church and faithful witness outside the church.	Initially the relationship is one of teacher/student or parent/child. The discipler is looked up to as someone whose faith is strong and would be a good example to follow. Meetings are frequent and regular, sometimes one-on-one, sometimes in group classroom settings. Community leaders determine the eligibility of the disciple to serve in the congregation / faith tradition. No fees are involved.
Coaching	A stable apprentice, often a "junior" seeking to model an admired "senior;" to set and attain specific goals in professional development; to increase one's capacity, to learn a trade or skill set.	Focus is on professional development. Coaching is task oriented, focused on short term goals and performance driven. Assessing progress in specific goal achievement is vital to the coaching process.	The one being coached initiates the relationship. His/Her responsibilities are to set the goals and to work with the coach to implement the agreed upon steps to achieve the goals. The relationship is terminated by the one being coached upon completion of goals and acquisition of new skill sets. A fee is often involved.
Mentoring	A younger person seeking someone willing to invest his/her life into the mentee's personal development	Focus is on personal development. Mentoring is relationship oriented, long term, and is development driven. Building a climate of trust is vital to the mentoring process.	To be successful, a mentor and mentee spend significant time getting to know one another. The mentor imparts his / her life to the mentee. Both do ministry together, from the "I do it, you watch" to the "We do it together," and finally to the "You do it, I watch" process. Fees are not involved.

A Summary: All helping relationships are vital, valuable and meant to serve people at different stages of their lives. God desires shalom – wholeness and peace – for each of his children, and all helping relationships play a part in that.

Other Helping Relationships working in complementary roles with Spiritual Direction	
Counseling / Pastoral Care	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Resolution of personal problems through problem solving and advice giving ■ Pastor is seen as an authority in a person’s life, and uses teaching and preaching as primary vehicles to help church members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The focus turns to the questions of faith, of prayer, of wondering where God might be in the midst of the directee’s experience ■ Spiritual director, through questions and a few observations, facilitates a prayerful, reflective space where a directee hears directly from the Holy Spirit
Discipling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Follows a curriculum of instruction whereby the disciple wants to become like the discipler in beliefs and practices ■ Targets new(er) believers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No curriculum or pattern is followed, instead a directee chooses to bring up a current experience that highlights what’s happening in his/her relationship with God ■ Most often sought out by a mature believer
Coaching / Mentoring	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A master/apprentice feel to this relationship, learning from an experienced practitioner ■ Help in goal setting for specific tasks and accountability for achievement provided by the coach or mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A form of soul-care that leads us to see and obey the real Director – the Holy Spirit hidden in the depths of our soul ■ Helps a directee add contemplative practices (i.e., listening prayer, silence, solitude, Sabbath, self-reflection) into an active life