

The Right Moment: When Coaching Isn't Right for You—And When It Is

Introduction

So, you're thinking about coaching. Maybe you've heard great things. Maybe a friend or colleague raved about how it changed their life. Maybe you're just curious. Either way, you're here because you're strong enough, open enough, and aware enough to consider that you can maybe do much more with someone else, than if you were trying on your own. And that alone is valuable – and the necessary starting point for something even more.

Choosing a coach is an important decision. Coaching means putting yourself, your goals, and your questions on the table. That can be exciting. It can also be daunting. In a world bursting with self-improvement advice and productivity hacks, it's hard to know where to begin.

It can be fantastic having someone on your side, giving you the space to strategise, to think, to explore the impossible and unthinkable. Or even to come to conclusions and decisions on what's genuinely best for you - and not the voice in your head (if you have one!). Having someone who listens less, or who lays their values over what you put on the table... that can be less so..

At Sherborne, we believe coaching should always begin with honesty. Not just from you, but from us too. This isn't a pitch. It's a conversation starter. Because sometimes, coaching is exactly what you need. Sometimes it's mentoring. And sometimes, it's neither of the above. This guide is here to help you tell the difference.

Below are 6 common scenarios around whether to start coaching or not:

1. "I like this coach, but I don't know what I'd ask them to work on with me."
2. "I'm in therapy and not sure coaching will work well alongside it."
3. "I'd benefit from talking to someone objective, but my situation is incredibly sensitive. I can't trust anyone."
4. "I'm still finding myself and I'm not sure what I want long-term."
5. "I can see clear benefits, and I like the coach, but gives the cost feels too high."
- 6: "I'm a high-achiever. I should be able to figure this out on my own."

Read on to find out more.

Scenario 1: "I like this coach, but I don't know what I'd ask them to work on with me."

Our Perspective: You're not alone. In fact, this is where many great coaching journeys start. You don't need a bullet-pointed agenda or a five-year plan. If you're feeling restless, stuck, or just quietly wondering, "Is there more?", that's enough. The early stage of coaching is all about discovery—getting from that vague itch or unease to something you can actually name and work with. A good coach won't hand you a to-do list. They'll help you discover your own.

What we've seen: This is quite a common question in our clients. We have techniques that can help. Interestingly, we often find that potential clients most want to work on has been on their mind for so long, it's become part of their everyday 'normal'. Hard to describe, because it no longer stands out, but easy to sense, because its effects are still present.

If you're feeling this, you're in good company. In fact, the session we recall most vividly, which had the most dramatic impact on two people's lives, began at this point.

Scenario 2: "I'm in therapy and not sure coaching will work well alongside it."

Our Perspective: That's a thoughtful question. Therapy and coaching serve different purposes, but they can absolutely complement each other. Therapy often focuses on healing from the past. Coaching is more like a GPS for the future—taking where you are now and helping you plot a course ahead. Think of therapy as helping you understand your inner wiring, and coaching as helping you build the life you want with that wiring. A great coach will always respect your therapeutic journey and make sure their work enhances, not disrupts, it.

What we've seen: Typically, clients who ask this take one of three paths.

Some clients continue therapy and take coaching at the same time. After a few weeks they often decide on just one to continue with - we see an even split between those who stop therapy and continue coaching and vice versa.

Then there are those who continue therapy and not undertake coaching at the moment. Sometimes they come to use months - or in one case a year - later, other times they never return.

Finally, there are those who take up coaching and don't continue with therapy. These clients have often been dissatisfied with the progress they've been making with their therapist, or feel they want to try a different form of support for accelerated progress.

Scenario 3: "I'd benefit from talking to someone objective, but my situation is incredibly sensitive. I can't trust anyone."

Our Perspective: This isn't just a concern—it's a crucial one. Trust is everything in coaching. Without it, there is no progress. That's why we take it seriously. Professional coaching is grounded in strict confidentiality and ethics. NDAs? Standard. Discretion? Non-negotiable. Your first conversation with a coach is your chance to feel out not just their style, but their integrity. A good coach knows that trust isn't a given—it's earned.

What we've seen: Clients who feel this often come to us and start with a different topic - or no particular topic - and then, when they've understood the coaching space and how we work, they take the decision to trust us and open their topic up to explore. We get that - trust has to be earned. We invite you to open the door, to come in to your coaching space, and see how it works for you.

Scenario 4: "I'm still finding myself and I'm not sure what I want long-term."

Our Perspective: Perfect. That's actually one of the best reasons to begin coaching. You don't need to have your life sorted to start. In fact, coaching can be a key tool *for* sorting things out. It gives you space to ask big questions without the pressure to have all the answers. Through reflection, experimentation, and honest dialogue, coaching can help you uncover what truly resonates—and what doesn't.

What we've seen: We find about 70% of clients who say this go on to take coaching, and about half of them do so fairly soon after speaking with us their first time. The other half often try therapy or self-help approaches before coming to us. What they tell us is that they either found therapy focused too much on the past and not on progress, or they needed more direction and accountability than the self-help approach afforded them.

Scenario 5: "I can see clear benefits, and I like the coach, but gives the cost feels too high."

Our Perspective: We get it. Coaching from us isn't cheap. But it *should* be valuable. We encourage the viewpoint that the time - and money - spent on coaching is an investment in our clients.

The returns can be in productivity and paychecks, but we think the highest returns are on the most human capital of all for our clients: clarity of thought and emotions, relationships that are energising and positive, a sense of calm and peaceful minds, and knowing decisions were taken for the right reasons.

Perhaps it helps to ask yourself: What's the cost of staying stuck for another year? Or what could change if you made your key decision better?

If you're wondering about value, let's talk. You deserve to feel confident in your investment before you make it.

What we've seen: Our clients find that achieving clarity, in thought and emotions, an enormous benefit as it has ramifications across all areas of their lives. We often invest significantly in understanding what has the most value to clients, and that leads to being able to trust that their decisions and actions are right, no matter how big and daunting the situation.

Clients are also often able to resolve longstanding doubts, and when they do, they tell us there is truth in the ancient saying "There is no joy like the removal of doubt".

Scenario 6: "I'm a high-achiever. I should be able to figure this out on my own."

Our Perspective: That mindset? It's exactly why you might benefit from coaching. The highest performers in the world have coaches—not because they're failing, but because they're committed to growing. Coaches offer an outside perspective, challenge your assumptions, and help you stretch further than you can solo. You're not weak for asking for help. You're wise for knowing that growth doesn't happen in a vacuum.

What we've seen: Clients are often high achieving for reasons imposed on them by circumstances or background, eg fear of failure, or of disappointing a relative or parent. Despite their successes, many are still living with guilt, imposter syndrome, or perennial unhappiness and depression. We've worked with several to create an understanding of the drivers of their success to date, and helped them find even more powerful, positive drivers. We've also helped them internalise the difference between aspirations and expectations, reducing continual negative self-judgment and conflict. Our clients tell us about their higher quality of life, often surprised by how little effort was ultimately required.

Conclusion

Coaching isn't about fixing you. It's about partnering with you, to become more of what your ideal is, to achieve more of what you value most.

When the time is right, it can be one of the most rewarding decisions you make. If any of these scenarios resonated, maybe now *is* the right moment.

There's no pressure from us, just an open invitation to have a no-strings conversation. Take one step, in one moment, and see where it leads.

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