

About being a mentor



What is an effective mentoring relationship? Based on the results of a number of studies on effective mentor/mentee relationships; the following are a number of pointers to help develop an effective mentoring relationship.

- Develop trust. Both mentor and mentee need to be patient to develop a relationship of trust, we have all had negative experiences when a person in whom we have trusted has let us down, it may take time for a mentee to develop trust in the advice of their new mentor.
- View your purpose in the relationship as being available to give. Understanding that, at least initially, the relationship will be one-directional.
- Offer reassurance and support. Don't be afraid to tell your mentee that you believe in them, too few people ever hear these words.
- Suggest ways to solve problems. Try to listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgement.
- Practical suggestions rather than criticism or preaching are usually most helpful for your mentee.
- Whenever possible, try to think together of ways to solve a problem, rather than tell your mentee what you think she/he should do.
- Identify the mentee's interests and take them seriously.
- Try to include your mentee in determining both the activities you engage in and the areas in which you offer help.

Think about the following questions:

1. Which areas of mentoring are you strongest?
2. Are there any skill areas where you feel you need development?

Types of mentoring



- Face-to-face or online **one-to-one mentoring** is the most common sort of mentoring.
- Face-to-face or online **group mentoring** (or peer mentoring) is where a small group of individuals facing the same type of career issues come together either face to face or online to discuss their challenges.
- **Telephone mentoring** – can be used to complement online or face to face mentoring or can be the only form of mentoring contact.
- **E-mentoring** – this uses tools like Skype and can be used on its own or to supplement other forms of mentoring.

Think about the following questions:

- 1. What type of mentoring are you most comfortable with?*
- 2. How will you discern the best type for your mentee*

Being an effective mentor



- Do not force the mentee to talk about personal issues. Delving into your mentee's personal or family life, particularly early in the relationship, is usually not productive. If your mentee resists sharing information don't push. Silence does not necessarily mean rejection. It's important not to measure a relationship's success by the extent of the mentee's disclosure.

On the other hand, you may be surprised by how much your mentee shares with you early on without any prompting or enquiry from you. It's important to determine why this information is being given so early and fully. There is the possibility your mentee may be testing you to see if you are "shockproof".

- Have realistic expectations. Many mentors get discouraged when they feel their mentees aren't "turning their lives around" or making huge improvements. Although you certainly will have an impact on your mentee, it is unlikely that she / he will be totally transformed by this relationship. Gains may seem small but they are none the less signs of progress. Adjusting your expectations and understanding that your

mentee may not always express gratitude directly will help prevent mentor “burnout” and frustration.

Try to relate to your mentee’s personal experiences. Although you may not have faced the same problems as your mentee, try to remember some of the difficulties you have had within your life.

- Attempt to understand your mentee’s family, social class and culture.

Confidentiality



Confidentiality underpins the mentoring relationship. Everything discussed in the mentoring session is confidential. The exceptions are when legal obligations compel the mentor (or the mentee) to report any criminal activities, any misconduct, or any potential danger. This should be made clear at the start of the relationship. Where for the benefit of the mentee the mentor feels obliged to raise a concern they should seek permission from the mentee before doing so.

Think about the following questions:

1. *How will you establish a clear understanding about confidentiality?*
2. *How will you record information safely and securely?*

Your first discussion with your mentee



The relationship that evolves between you and your mentee over a period of time is crucial to the success of the mentoring journey. Although your mentee will control what you get out of the relationship, you are the guardian of the relationship because of your experience and knowledge.

Your first discussion is vital because it will set the tone of the relationship. Ideally, this will get off to a swift and productive start.

Please encourage your mentee to refer to their specific goals for this mentoring relationship that they set in their proposal.

This is very important as it provides a framework for both of you to work within, and a way to assess the mentee's progress. You can both refer to these goals throughout your mentoring process.

You might feel a bit uncertain about your first discussion with this mentee but don't worry about it – a lot of people do.

Remember: if you don't hit it off straight away, don't panic. It takes time to build a relationship and it will get easier the more you interact because you will build trust and get to know each other.

Think about the following questions:

1. *What are your expectations of your first discussion?*
2. *Are they realistic?*
3. *What can you do to maximise the effectiveness of that first discussion?*

Twenty questions for mentees

Here are 20 questions that we might expect a mentor to use:

1. What will give you the most value from today's session?
2. What do you want to focus on today?
3. What is keeping you awake at night?
4. What is your present situation in detail?
5. What is working well?
6. What is happening that tells you that you have a problem?
7. What do you have control over?
8. What strengths and resources do you bring to this situation?
9. Where do you want to be a year from now? How will you measure your success?
10. What would your solution be?
11. What do you not know about this situation/project? How could you find out?
12. If you improve one thing you do, what change would make the biggest improvement to your performance?
13. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?
14. What do you enjoy about what you do?
15. What might you be overlooking?
16. Has anyone else done this before?
17. What have you learned from this?
18. What will you do differently next time?
19. What did you do well?
20. What will you do next?

Think about the following questions:

- 1. How many of these questions would you expect to use?*
- 2. Which other questions might you use in a mentoring session?*

What have you learnt about being a mentor?

To complete this course, please ask yourself:

What have I learnt?

How can I apply it?

What do I need to do next?