



Connecticut's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Career Center

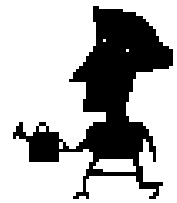
Career Mentoring for mentors and mentees



Mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship that requires care and feeding from both partners.

Career growth is at the heart of this mentoring relationship.



Mentoring self-reflection

- What are some things you could tell your mentee about yourself that would help you to get to know one another? What about you and your life story might be interesting and relevant to your mentee/or?
- As you think back on your life, who were the people who had an impact? Why?
- Why do you think they took a special interest in you? What qualities did they have that made them want to encourage you?
- What was it that made each of them a good mentor? What did they have in common?

Mentoring-self-reflection

- What lessons can you take away from these role models?
- What do **you** want out of the mentoring relationship?
- How can you find out what your **mentee** wants out of the relationship?
- What are some questions you could ask your mentee to get to know him/her without prying?



Mentoring – first steps

During the first meetings, the mentor and mentee should review the mentee's goals to make sure that the mentee's goals are specific, attainable and measurable

(use the *statement of understanding* as a jumping off point for the discussion).

The mentor can help by pushing the mentee to set challenging or “stretch goals” that push the mentee outside of her/his comfort zone.

Responsibilities and Safety

Agree on the frequency, duration and intervals of communications, and how communications will occur.

Are you most comfortable in keeping communication on a set schedule and using the website to communicate? Then say so.

But if you, as a mentor, are open to providing a job shadowing day or would prefer to have phone conversations, make sure that your mentee is also comfortable with those arrangements.

Responsibilities and Safety

Be **respectful** of each other's time – if you are unable to make a pre-determined call or online chat, let your mentee know as soon as possible.

For everyone's safety and comfort, **meet in a public place** for face-to-face mentoring.

Responsibilities and Safety

Respect **confidentiality**.

But, if you are put in a situation that feels **uncomfortable** or are given information that you feel might need to be shared, speak with a STEM Coach or CWEALF staff immediately.



Responsibilities and Safety

For the safety and security of mentors and mentees, interactions you will have on the e-tutoring site will be archived by CT Distance Learning Consortium.

CWEALF staff will monitor the communications on a regular basis, both to enhance mentor-mentee safety and to provide guidance to, and share news with, mentor-mentee groups in general.

Boundaries

- Boundaries will provide **a structure** for your mentoring relationship. You and your mentee should establish the parameters of your relationship early to avoid any confusion and misunderstanding, and to indicate limits to the relationship. Also, creating boundaries can help prevent mentor burn-out.
- Good boundaries can create **a safe place** to explore changing roles and expectations of the workplace, give and receive balanced and respectful career advice and discuss positive risk-taking.
- Poor boundaries can result in anxiety, unclear expectations, one-sided relationships and feelings of over-responsibility.

Boundaries

Effective mentors often don't limit their advice to work-related issues and often help mentees with all types of issues and challenges. Yet, they need to pay attention to **boundaries**. Resist giving personal advice and counseling especially when the mentee is experiencing psychological challenges. These can include major marital, family or financial difficulties, drug or alcohol misuse, depression, and other potentially complex and even life-threatening situations.

If your mentee brings up one of these issues, you might say,

I'm glad you mentioned _ (the issue) _____. I want to support you as you deal with this. As we discussed when we set up our relationship, we may run into something that I am not able to help with. How about if we talk with _ (staff) ____ on this and come up with a way you can get the assistance you need?

Boundaries

Here's a hypothetical situation to consider.

A mentor and mentee agree to email frequently but to have a telephone conversation every other Wednesday. After 10pm on the Friday evening following their Wednesday phone conversation, a mentee calls and leaves a message on the mentor's cell about something that happened in her/his training program. The mentor becomes frustrated about the late call and decides to ignore it and emails on Monday. This frustrates the mentee, who expected a return call.

- How might this problem be **resolved**?
- How could this have been **avoided**?

Cultural competence

We all have cultures we call our own.

Culture is more than ethnic food, or dance or language; culture is a lens through which a person makes sense of their experiences and the world.

Through this lens, we interpret such things as interpersonal dynamics, gender roles, education systems, and the workplace, and use those interpretations to guide decision-making and actions.

There are often significant variations in people's interpretation of the world and their actions in the world. Therefore, it is essential that a mentoring duo acknowledge and respect their similarities and differences to gain the most they can of their work together.

This is **cultural competence** - the recognition and appreciation of difference and the ability to work with a mentee of any culture to improve her/himself.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence begins with an examination of our own biases. We all have biases; what matters is whether those biases lead us to discriminate against a person or group of people based upon a stereotype.

Becoming culturally competent is a process; learning about and from different cultures can help us by increasing our openness to different points of view, and also increasing our flexibility in taking on new challenges.

Cultural competence

It is important that we do not apply broad stereotypes to an entire group of individuals. In promoting understanding between groups of individuals that, as a whole, think somewhat differently, we must recognize that **differences among individuals in a group may be more significant than those between members of different groups**, especially with heterogeneous populations and value systems.

Cultural competence

There are certain attributes of culture which can influence your communication with a mentee. Some of these follow:

- *What is **communication** like in your mentee's culture(s)?*

In some cultures, things are made explicit, and there is considerable dependence on what is actually said or written. In others, communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views – less is spelled out explicitly and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways.

Cultural competence

- *How is **time** perceived in your mentee's culture(s)?*

In some cultures, time is seen as being a limited resource which is constantly being used up. In other cultures, time is more plentiful, if not infinite.

Cultural competence

- *Is your mentee's culture **past, present or future oriented**?*

Past-oriented cultures reflect traditional values and ways of doing things, tend to be conservative and are slow to change. Present-oriented societies see the past as history and the future as uncertain, and often prefer short-term benefits. Future-oriented societies are optimistic about their ability to shape the future through their actions.

Cultural competence

- *Is your mentee's culture more **individualistic or collectivist**?*

In individualist cultures, self-determination is valued. In collectivist cultures, people identify with a specific group and value their membership.

Cultural competence

- *What is your mentee's cultural relationship with power?*

In some cultures, differences in power between people are accepted; in others, relationships assume more equality between people.

Cultural competence

Some suggestions for **culturally competent** mentoring:

- Remember that difference does not equal greater or less value- all cultures have value.
- Do some research about your mentee's culture. For instance, find out about the more mundane - food, music, holidays – and also about the place of family and community, of education, time orientation, and personal space needs.
- Show interest in your mentee's background; having a warm and inviting personality (yes, even onscreen) will allow her/him to talk about her/his life experiences.
- Talk about a culturally based strength you think you bring to your career. Discuss with your mentee the strengths *he or she* brings to their work, or to their education or training.

Effective listening and reflective questioning

When **listening**, you need to ask questions but don't want to monopolize the conversation.

If you take over, you not only risk showing the talker disrespect, but you may never find out what they know and are (or were) planning to say next!

In a new relationship, such as that between a mentor and mentee, there are often pauses in conversation as both parties consider their comments or responses.

Learn to be comfortable with some silence, but the following hints might help you to keep them talking.

Effective listening and reflective questioning

Restate and ask the mentee to reflect. The simplest way to ask a question is to restate what the talker just said, then ask a reflective question for more information.

Reflective questioning emphasizes that the best questions often call for more than a simple recall of facts; they also call for analysis or synthesis. They help to draw out connections between facts, inferences and applications that a mentee may not previously have recognized. Reflective questions also **require more than a yes or no**; these questions suggest multiple answers or solutions. Yet, reflective questioning requires forethought and an array of questions at hand.

Effective listening and reflective questioning

Some situations in which you may need to ask a reflective question:

- the talker stops talking before you think they've really finished;
- the talker changes the subject;
- the talker keeps repeating themselves;
- the talker presents options without recommending one in particular;
- the talker doesn't offer their opinion;
- the talker looks or sounds upset, but doesn't volunteer why.

Effective listening and reflective questioning

For example:

You're working with a mentee who has just told you that her supervisor won't always let her out of work at the scheduled time and that because of that she often misses the bus and is late to class.

You might say... *"I hear that you are feeling some stress about getting out of work on time to get to class."* And then you might ask one of the following questions:

- What do you **think** about this?
- What would you **do** about this?
- What's **most important** about this?

Effective listening and reflective questioning

In other situations, other examples of reflective questions include:

- Why did you do it that way?
- Are you comfortable with what you have to do?
- What kinds of things did you learn?
- How would you handle the situation differently?
- Are there times when this approach might not work?
- Have you looked around to see how others handle this?
- Can you define your role in the group?
- What gets you really excited about your work? Or school?
- What do you feel you can do if you get stuck on something?
- What skills are you developing that can be used in other fields?
- How are the decisions you are making now affecting the path you will follow after this?

Effective listening and reflective questioning

Ask for help in deciphering jargon. When the person you are listening to uses a new or unfamiliar word or phrase, it's important to get clarification quickly. Listening with clarity makes a difference both to your understanding of what is being said and the talker's experience of being listened to.

Keep in mind that the talker is going to do a better job of presenting information, and have a more rewarding experience if they sense they are being understood by you.

However, when you seek clarification, it's also important not to sidetrack the talker or make any judgments (except in the case of inappropriate language). In this situation you can always try explaining: "You know, I'm not familiar with that word or phrase, could you please explain a little about it to catch me up?"

Effective listening and reflective questioning online

E-mentoring has its own set of benefits and challenges. E-mentoring can make participants more willing to offer honest feedback.

But in e-mentoring body language and vocal cues are absent, this can make immediate feedback difficult and communication can seem impersonal.

Effective listening and reflective questioning online

Mentor Place, IBM's online mentoring program between students and professionals, offers these suggestions to make an e-mentoring relationship more satisfying to both partners include:

- **Be warm** and share personal experiences and perspectives.
- **Invite dialogue** – as with face to face interactions, don't give yes or no answers or ask yes or no questions. Ask for clarification or more information.
- Read over your posting before you send it. **Be clear** in your writing and minimize the use of jargon. Answer any questions posed, or if you can't, acknowledge the message and say you're thinking about it.
- **Visualize the mentee**. Communicate in a way you might if you were sitting talking to her/him.

Giving and receiving feedback

Giving feedback is one of the most important tasks of a mentor, yet is also one of the most difficult. The National Mentoring Partnership offers some suggestions for how to give a mentee constructive input and guidance.

- Double-check your statements to make sure you are not using judgmental language or making generalizations. Don't give feedback if you're feeling stressed or are upset - arrange for a time when you can calmly discuss the issue at hand.
- Give you mentee a "heads up" that you want to give him/her some feedback so he/she is prepared to listen.
- Remember to listen and to be empathetic – but don't be side railed by excuses or apologies
- Get feedback on your feedback. Ask your mentee how she/he felt about how the feedback was delivered – what worked and what you could do better.

Giving and receiving feedback

Here's a template for planning for mentee feedback.

Step 1. Identify the behavior you want to give feedback on.

I would like to give my mentee some constructive feedback on_____.

Step 2. Describe the focus of your feedback in terms of behavior.

I've noticed that _____.

Step 3. Describe the effect of the behavior.

When you say _____-, I _____.

Step 4. Describe the change in the behavior you are recommending.

Problem solving

Defining a problem is a first step to solving it. What is the problem or issue your mentee wants to work on? Define it on paper, asking yourself, why is this a problem? Is this a symptom?

Make use of creative techniques such as role playing. This can help your mentee to think in a different way about the problem at hand, walk through it in a less-threatening fashion and may generate new solutions.

Problem solving

Generate alternatives. Come up with a list of choices- don't edit- brainstorm. Then pick the 2 or 3 solutions you like best and evaluate their chances for success. Consider how long each will take, the kinds of resources you may have to use accomplishing the alternative, if there are any downsides to one solution or another and what alternative you would prefer to pursue.

Define success in solving your problem. If you were to resolve this problem you've identified, what would a successful outcome look like? Describe what might happen if you were successful.

Problem solving

Agree on an action and plan the task, including when and what resources you might need to carry out your action.

Set some time aside to evaluate whether the plan (or parts of it) worked or didn't. Why do you think the plan worked? What would you do differently?

Checking in on the process

After working together for a while, a mentor and mentee usually develop a communication style that works well for both of them. But sometimes we are so busy talking about the week's events and issues that we forget to check on how communications are going.

One suggestion is for mentor and mentee to separately address each question of the following questions (next slide) – and then come together and compare.

How are responses similar or different? Then talk about next steps-what you can do to continue the good work and overcome any difficulties.

Checking in on the process

Do you feel that there has been enough trust established? Why? Why not? What has contributed to that?

If you had to guess, what would your mentee/mentor say she/he likes about how you work together?

Can you identify three things that are going well in the relationship?

Is there one thing you wish you could change about the relationship?

Termination

Mentoring relationships may change over time and may end for any number of reasons. Some of these reasons can include:

- either the mentor or the mentee drops out of the program;
- work or life circumstances may make it impossible to continue the relationship (for example, a mentor is transferred or changes in family responsibilities or living situations occurs for either mentor or mentee);
- you have completed and have determined that you are unable to extend your time commitment to the program;
- a mentor and mentee pair is not a good “fit.”

Termination

The end of a relationship can be difficult for both the mentor and mentee; yet modeling a satisfactory transition with your mentee gives them a good picture of the way relationships can change.

Here are some strategies you may wish to use when it is time to terminate:

- *Give your mentee ample warning of the closure of the match. Be clear about the date of your last meeting and be sure to inform your mentee of this ahead of time. Start addressing this issue as soon as you know the relationship will be coming to a close.*
- *Be honest, candid, and supportive, regardless of the reason for the termination.*

Termination

- *If you and your mentee enjoyed your time together, you might say “I am going to really miss you. I have enjoyed our time together.” However, be honest. If your time together was not great, then don’t lie but be gentle.*
- *Help him/her anticipate any feelings of anger, denial, guilt, sadness or relief. In the same way, be aware of your own.*
- *Plan a closure activity to acknowledge and celebrate the end of the important work you have both done.*

Disclaimer

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