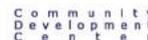


# A GUIDE TO MANAGING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP



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For more information about the Easier Transitions project and to access resources go to <http://easiertransitions.wonderfoundation.org.uk>

## What is a Mentor?

The mentor and mentee both have to work to make the relationship successful. However as a mentor it is your responsibility to take the initiative and gently lead the relationship. As a mentor you act as a facilitator.

“Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

- Plato

**Cambridge Dictionary definition:**

Someone who helps a person or organization do something more easily or find the answer to a problem, by discussing things and suggesting ways of doing things.

‘Mentoring is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee’s life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period of time.’

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation<sup>1</sup>

## Why Building a Relationship is so Important

As a mentor you are in a position to have a positive impact on a young person that will last a lifetime, but mentoring can only be successful when it’s built on trust and mutual respect. Young people, vulnerable young people in particular, may have many transactional interactions with the adults in their life and will sense if you approach a relationship with them from a place of trying to fix them. This can feel like more expectations that they cannot meet and may make them feel resentful. There is no need to rush getting to know each other or solving whatever problem they may be facing. Respect that mentoring is an ongoing process, do not expect instant results.

“For some young people a relationship with a befriender or a keyworker was simply one of a number of relationships with professionals or semi-professionals. Many had had experience with a number of professionals over a considerable length of time and held very negative views about these. Many described a lack of control over such relationships, complaining of frequent changes over which they had little say. They felt they were seen as a problem to be solved and were unhappy about this. In contrast, others often described the mentoring relationship as a special one that went beyond professional limits and that was personal to the young person and their partner. Where mentoring was successful, the relationship had developed over time and was flexible enough to allow both partners to take different approaches. These young people commonly stated that the mentor did not act as if they were a 'case' or a problem to be solved.”

Mentoring for Vulnerable Young People, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004<sup>2</sup>

### Getting to Know Each Other

Before launching into helping them with a CV or helping them with their coursework, make sure you and your mentee take the time to get to know each other.

It doesn't matter if it's icebreakers such as “Two Truths, One Lie” or just a chat about your favourite books and films, it's important that you start to understand each other.

### Setting Boundaries

This will vary from across mentoring programmes and individual mentoring relationships. What is crucial is that right from the start mentor and mentee understand what is allowed and what they both feel comfortable with. In your first session go over the guidelines with each other to ensure that you both understand what is allowed. Some mentoring programmes have contracts for both mentor and mentee to sign - agreeing to the terms.

If the young person you are working with is under 18, you might prefer that mentoring happens at the same time every week in a fixed location and communication happens only between you and their parent.

Different countries will have their own child protection guidelines and it's your responsibility if you are formally working with young people to be aware of these and make sure you are in compliance.

You might prefer to communicate personally with your mentee via phone and email and arrange your sessions that way. If that's the case parents and guardians should know about this arrangement, and it's good practice to check in with them every so often to let them know how things are going.

It is important that you let mentees under 18 years old know that while your sessions are confidential, if you are worried for their safety you will have to report it.

### Establish Goals at the Beginning

In your first session discuss the purpose of your mentoring. Both of you should have things you would like to achieve in your time together.

Sam - Mentor

“I was keen to mentor a young person but I had felt a bit apprehensive about coming up with things to do on a weekly basis. He'd had a mentor before so he talked a little bit about what they had done before which had been a lot of GCSE preparation and study skills. He was feeling more confident academically and now wanted more help with career skills. Chatting to him about what he'd like to work on and coming up with goals was incredibly useful for developing a timeline and coming up for content week to week for our sessions.”

### Regularly Check In

Take the time to evaluate whether you are on track to meet the goals you have set. What's working? What isn't? Are there other strategies you could adopt? Also use check ins as an opportunity to discuss whether these goals are still relevant. People and priorities change and the goals you set should reflect this.

### Be Honest

Honesty can be difficult but mentees can only progress if they are honest with you and you are honest with them. Honesty is earned and it's your responsibility as a mentor to work towards creating an atmosphere that encourages your mentee to feel safe and supported. Listen without judgement. Steer them towards making positive decisions for themselves, don't just tell them what to do.

Felicity, Mentor

"Because we had built a relationship and she knew that I wanted the best for her, as we spent more time together, I felt more comfortable giving her constructive criticism. And I could tell she appreciated that."

When giving your mentee feedback be straightforward but sensitive. Praise their effort, acknowledge their challenges, then tell them where they are doing well or going wrong and most importantly, offer suggestions and solutions.

Talk about outcomes – what will your mentee gain in the future from the work she is doing now? In the future, when you are not there, they will be better equipped to think and evaluate the decisions they are making.

Make sure your verbal affirmations are specific – make it clear what behaviours/ attitudes are being praised. Support your mentee's positive self image. Always be positive – expressing that you are confident in their ability to improve.

## Be Patient

There are many barriers your mentee might be facing and issues they are dealing with. They might be late or don't communicate as they should. It's important to understand that progress is incremental. You are making more impact than you know by giving them space to work on themselves.

## Be Sensitive

Try to understand the context you're mentee is living within. Don't take it for granted that you have the same values. They may have very different life experiences to you. This is a good thing. You can both learn from each other and expose other ways of thinking. Remember what it's like to be that age and the challenges that come with it. How would you have liked to be treated?

## Be Committed

Mentoring is a big responsibility. Mentoring works best when a relationship is sustained over a long period of time. Be honest with yourself about your capacity to regularly give up your time to spend it with your mentee. You also have to prepare yourself for challenging moments when your mentee might be less than cooperative.

### Keep Your Promises

It's so important that young people are able to trust their mentors. Your mentee might have a very chaotic and dysfunctional home life and you are in an excellent position to offer them some much needed consistency. Young people who have experienced a lot of disappointment from family and/or other adults often becoming resentful and display anti social behaviour.

By doing what you say you will, not only will they trust you more, but you can also model for them a healthier way of life. Life happens and sometimes you might have to cancel. Try and give them as much notice as possible and explain what happened.

"She said she would help me get an internship and she did. Which was amazing. It's good to have somebody I can trust."

Cari 20, Mentee

If you're not sure you can deliver - try not to promise them anything. A surprise is better than being disappointed.

### Have Fun

Balance is key. Making time to just enjoy each other's company will help you develop your relationship. Bonding over common interests will result in a greater level of trust that you will both enjoy and will help you continue to work.

"My mentor is the best! Once I've finished my homework - we get to play games like Uno and Scrabble. It's so fun."

Faith - 8

### Things to Remember

- Have confidence in yourself and your mentee
- You are getting just as much out of mentoring as your mentee
- You are a role model
- You are making an impact
- Focus on your mentee, don't let other stress impact your sessions

### Saying Goodbye

Inevitably mentoring relationships end but that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Don't let mentoring just taper off, try and have a final session to celebrate the progress you have made and share words of encouragement for the future. Failing to end your mentoring relationship properly can mean that young people feel rejected and can undermine the progress you have made. Taking the time to reflect on what you have achieved as you've worked together is important for reinforcing learnings and boosting self confidence.

"Even though I couldn't commit to seeing my mentor once a week it was nice to have. And it's good to know that if I need to chat to someone I can still reach out to her from time to time."

Serena, 16

"I've really enjoyed being mentoring and it was really good for both of us to reflect on how far we've come together. And I was really touched to hear from her how much she's enjoyed our sessions and that she was going to miss me."

Maria - Mentor

### The Partners Behind the Easier Transitions Helping Hands Project

#### ABOUT WONDER FOUNDATION

The Wonder Foundation was set up by a group of young people with a youth initiative grant in 2012. Wonder's mission is to improve the all-round wellbeing of vulnerable communities worldwide, through increased access to education, healthcare and economic and personal development tools. In Europe our focus is very much around social inclusion and employability for young people with few opportunities. Our projects primarily support women and act as a stimulus for ending poverty in their families and communities whether in Europe or in the rest of the world. Easier Transitions Helping Hands, builds on our earlier Erasmus + funded project Easier Transitions where we developed an app, iGro, that helps young people to record and reflect the key employability skills they are developing in and out of the a work environment.

These guides were developed in partnership with the Baytree Centre, a centre in Brixton that supports women and girls who face multiple barriers to inclusion such as lack of English language skills; lack of opportunities to learn in culturally appropriate settings; inability to access employment opportunities; poverty; poor housing; isolation; depression; racism and discrimination (including religious discrimination); abusive homes; family breakdown and a lack of family support and structure.

#### ABOUT FUNDACIJA SURSUM

Established in 2007, Fundacija Sursum is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation, promoting an integral, human, and cultural formation to the person and offers insights to the challenges women face today. Sursum's mission is to carry out activities aimed at training, education, and sociocultural promotion of women and young people in the Republic of Slovenia, the European Union and other countries. They aim to share knowledge and experiences across the European Union and other countries in order to harness the potential of intercultural training, with the goals of improving relationships across cultures, promoting solidarity, tolerance, and respect for others. Sursum is working with Roma young people, migrants, and refugees in helping them through fun activities and friendships, to integrate and develop their talents.

### ABOUT CANFRANC FOUNDATION

Fundación Canfranc an independent, non-profit organisation which was founded in 1996, works for the social promotion and personal development of all individuals. The particular focus of the foundation is on young people, for whom it runs free-time activities to enhance skills through daily study time. In its work for women, the Fundación Canfranc developed a training and qualification programme for unemployed women, of which 90% are resident immigrants in Saragossa. The sphere in which the Fundación Canfranc operates is autonomous: in Aragón, La Rioja and in developing countries through aid projects (Subsaharan Africa and Latin America). The main objective of the foundation's projects is to respond to social problems, which appear at any time and in any place, with a firm belief in the dignity of every person. Fundación Canfranc prioritises the development and training of young people in all of its activities in order to make them leaders in their communities, instilling values to the young people around them and encouraging them to actively participate in societal development in their county and Europe, actively developing a sense of European citizenship. Furthermore, Fundación Canfranc works directly with, and for, young people with Voluntary Service Programmes and by organising and managing camps and informal activities during school holidays. It also works indirectly with Youth Organisations to encourage solidarity and active participation among young people in their own projects. At the same time Fundación Canfranc works with the managers of these Youth Organisations, supporting their work, organising training seminars for the workers of these organisations, etc.

### ABOUT KOPIENAS ATTĪSTĪBAS CETRS (KAC)

KAC was founded in Riga in 2008, with a mission to popularise and carry out the community development, technical cooperation, humanitarian aid, and education for the development and social awareness in Latvia. KAC works with young people, women, and socially disadvantaged groups, with a strong focus on adults and children with learning disabilities. They aim to develop mentoring and befriending methods and resources to help youth workers and young people improve their self-esteem, possibility for integration in life and to obtain a job. The mentoring and befriending projects will also create an awareness of young people with disabilities within Latvia, and provide nurture and empowerment of disabled young people.

### ABOUT MS SKAŁA

MS Skała was founded in 2003 and is based in Krakow. MS Skała's mission is to empower women of every age group, sector and race by providing personal enriching and professional, life-long training programmes. MS Skała has organised orientation programmes, soft skills workshops, and professional mentoring and coaching sessions catered to women, particularly in the Małopolski Region in Poland. By providing a rich variety of non-formal educational platforms for life learning and people skills, MS Skała hopes to empower and equip women with key competencies such as communication skills, team working skills, and people skills. MS Skała focuses on efforts to reduce unemployment and promote integration in Polish society. This is especially relevant as MS Skała currently looks after 1000 refugees.

### About the Authors:

#### ABOUT OLIVE

Olive studied Ancient World Studies at UCL, during her time at university she mentored teenagers and developed and delivered Project RAISE which was designed to offer academic and personal development support girls to girls in East London. After graduating she worked in TV and new media at a variety of organisations. She is manager of the Easier Transitions Helping Hands project and she also works as Youth Manager at the Baytree Centre.

#### ABOUT NICOLE

Nicole studied Communication Sciences and Disorders in Wisconsin, U.S.A. During her time at university she mentored incoming international students to ease their transition into university life. After graduation she taught English as an AuPair in Poland. She is currently pursuing her MA in International Child Studies at King's College London. In conjunction with her studies, she is working as an intern at the Wonder Foundation, working on the Easier Transitions Helping Hands project.

