

**Shared Characteristic Mentoring**

**A Practical Guide**

**Organisational Development and Professional Learning**



**Introduction**

These guidance notes have been designed to provide you as a member of staff with some basic information about mentoring as part of the EPSRC shared characteristics mentoring programme (whether you are taking part as a mentor or a mentee) to ensure that your mentoring relationship is effective and successful.

The notes are a resource to support you on the ‘how to’ aspect of mentoring. They can therefore be used as and when required, as a dip into store of practical tips, suggestions and activities.

Those who have been both mentee and mentor often describe mentoring as one of the most rewarding experiences they’ve ever had and it can provide a constructive and mutual learning opportunity, allowing for mutual personal and professional growth, skills development, recognition of excellence, and building of relationships across and beyond our University community.

The overall aim of the EPSRC mentoring project is to help shape an actively inclusive culture in the Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) community that supports, drives and sustains greater equality for all, including traditionally under-represented groups. Especially setting up role models, addressing the ‘leaky pipeline’ (loss of early career individuals from under-represented groups).

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**Definitions of Mentoring**

Mentoring has become recognised worldwide as a highly effective developmental process for employees in many diverse organisations. To be most effective, mentoring needs to be a voluntary activity with the primary purpose of supporting the mentee’s learning and development. It is a relationship – rather than a management activity – that guarantees a safe and non-judgemental environment in which to learn. Some definitions are:

*Mentoring is a relationship between two parties, who are not connected within a line management structure, in which one party (the mentor) guides the other (the mentee) through a period of change and towards an agreed objective, or assists them to become acquainted with a new situation.* (Kay, 2012)

*Mentors provide a spectrum of learning and supporting behaviours, from challenging and being a critical friend to being a role model, from helping to build networks and develop personal resourcefulness to simply being there to listen, from helping people work out what they want to achieve, and why, to planning how they will bring change about.* (Clutterbuck, D, 2004)

*Mentoring is a developmental process in which a more experienced person shares their knowledge with a less experienced person in a specific context through a series of conversations. Occasionally mentoring can also be a learning partnership between peers.* (European Mentoring & Coaching Council, 2013)

Thereare different models of mentoring, from peer, group, task-specific, informal and network mentoring,

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) project will focus on two specific types of mentoring, at least to start; shared characteristics and reverse mentoring.

**Shared characteristic mentoring**

This is where the mentor and the mentee both share one or more key identity related characteristic, as identified in the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief. This mentoring partnerships will operate along the more traditional lines of an early career/junior colleague (mentee) being mentored by a more senior member of staff (mentor).

**The Mentor**

The role of mentor can be a demanding one, as you will need to be flexible with your approach and skills in order to offer the best support for your mentee.

You can expect to take on diverse roles and practice different skills and behaviours within the mentoring relationship and your mentee is likely to see you as someone who is:

A role model, with experience of a shared characteristic

An expert with a rich source of subject knowledge at your fingertips

An experienced professional with a mine of organisational knowledge to help negotiate the University’s culture, politics and values

A well-connected colleague who can facilitate introductions and even flag up opportunities for career development

An adviser who will freely give support, guidance and advice

An empathic individual who can offer reassurance and comfort when things go wrong

Able to give positive and constructive feedback to facilitate their growth in the workplace

A natural motivator who can help them to feel good about themselves and their goals

Someone to challenge their thinking and encourage new ways of working

To be able to carry out the role of an effective mentor, you will need some specific attributes:

Enthusiastic about mentoring and acting as a role model

Generous in sharing your own experiences with your mentee to help them progress

Successful in your professional role

Able to build rapport with your mentee and reassure them that their confidentiality will be respected

A strong communicator, possessing key interpersonal skills such as actively listening, incisive questioning, and offering positive and constructive feedback

Passionate about your own and others’ learning and development

Able to offer between 60-90 minutes every 4-8 weeks to work with your mentee

Seven useful power questions for successful mentoringː

1. What are you expecting the next twelve months to hold?
2. If you stay on your current path where are you likely to end up?
3. What opportunities are available to you tight now?
4. What are your fears?
5. What is the worst that can happen?
6. What is most likely to happen?
7. What habits or behaviours are holding you back?

**The Mentee**

In order to have a successful relationship with your mentor, it pays to think about both what you would like to achieve as a result of the mentoring and what you will need to contribute to the relationship in order to achieve a successful outcome.

As the mentee, you are primarily responsible for ensuring that there is a successful mentoring relationship. It is up to you to determine your priorities and seek the impartial support and guidance required. For instance, you may wish to access mentoring in order to:

Achieve clarity around your role or potential career path

Build networks to boost your career and collaborative opportunities

Develop greater self-confidence

Find a healthier work-life balance

Gain research advice and achieve greater success in obtaining research funding

Solve problems more effectively

Manage your time better.

Impact on cultural change within the university and beyond

In order to achieve any one of these ambitious goals, you will need some specific attributes:

Keen to gain clarity on your expectations about what you would like to accomplish

Commitment to the agreed way of working together to ensure a positive and success mentoring relationship (such as sticking to the agreed time and date for meeting)

An openness and honesty to identify when you have successfully dealt with challenges in the past, and when you have been less successful in dealing with challenges, and what you can learn from each

Openness to constructive feedback and constructive challenge

Commitment to exploring different ways of thinking and doing things (willingness to break old habits)

Willingness to undertake reflection and action in the time between meetings in order for you to make progress

Seven useful approaches for successful mentoringː

1. Be positive about the relationship
2. Be proactive with your learning
3. Challenge your thinking and habits as you progress
4. Don’t expect the answers, expect support in finding your own solutions
5. Ask yourself purposeful questions
6. Respect your mentors time and commitment
7. Commit to taking action

**The Mentoring Process**

Once mentors and mentees have registered an interest it you will be matched using shared characteristics and interests. However, it will be the mentees choice if they wish to take up the mentoring with the mentor suggested or not.

**Partner Organisations**

There are currently nine partner universities involved in the EPSRC projectː

* Durham University
* Lancaster University
* Leeds Beckett University
* Newcastle University
* Northumbria University
* Teesside University
* University of Huddersfield
* University of Hull
* University of Leeds

**The Process**

All mentoring relationships will be required to complete a Mentoring Contract to confirm commitment.

The exact duration and regularity of your meetings should be agreed between the mentor and mentee (and written into the mentoring contract) but, as a rough guide, you can expect to make yourself available for meetings lasting approximately 60 minutes, every 4 to 6 weeks, at times that suit both the mentor and the mentee.

**The Mentoring Relationship**

**Planning for your first meeting**

It is essential, for the mentoring relationship to be successful, that both mentor and mentee take the time to consider a number of key points well before the mentoring relationship has started, such as:

**YOUR OBJECTIVES**

* What do you want to get out of mentoring, as a mentee or mentor?
* What would make it successful for you?

**MEETINGS MANAGEMENT**

* How often can you meet?
* For how long?
* Where can you meet that will feel like a neutral and safe environment for both of you?

**THE MENTORING CONTRACT**

Look at the Mentoring Contract (see end of document) and think about what you would need to put in those boxes for the mentoring to be successful for you

You are signing up to having a confidential mentoring relationship: what situations could possibly arise where you would need to forego the confidentiality? You would need to cover this with your mentor or mentee at the first meeting.

Further, it is essential, both mentor and mentee work together to build a supportive and confidential learning environment which is based on mutual trust and respect.

For this to happen, it is vital that:

Both mentor and mentee agree to keep the content of their discussion confidential

Access to sensitive information – such as who is accessing mentoring and mentoring matches – is available only to the Project Co-ordinator/s

When asked to provide statistics for reporting purposes, scheme co-ordinators only provide information on the number of mentoring relationships and mentoring hours recorded, along with broad factors such as shared characteristics

If asked by a manager, the Project Coordinator/s will not share information on the content of the mentoring relationship

**Your first meeting**

The first meeting will be a process of exploration: of you getting to know the other person, your respective objectives for the mentoring and how you are going to work together. It is the formalising of what you have already thought about in your preparation for your first meeting, with the other person’s perspective to consider.

One of the most vital aspects of this meeting will be establishing a set of ‘ground rules’. Whilst this sounds very formal, in practice it is essential to set out your joint expectations, agree how you will work together and how much time you are honestly willing to commit to the relationship.

See the Mentoring Contract for all the basics for contracting successfully.

The practical aspects and questions are likely to be around:

**GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER**

* What has brought you both to mentoring?
* What common ground do you share?

**YOUR JOINT OBJECTIVES**

* What do you both want to get out of mentoring?
* What would make it successful for you?
* What are the measurable outcomes that will tell you that the mentoring relationship has been successful?

**MEETING MANAGEMENT**

* How often are you going to meet?
* How long is each meeting going to last, ideally?
* Where can you meet that will feel like a neutral and safe environment for both of you?
* Is interim contact (between meetings) appropriate? If yes, how much contact is acceptable? Would you have contact via email or telephone?
* How long is the mentoring relationship likely to last?
* When is the date of your next meeting?

**What to cover at each meeting?**

It is often useful during mentoring meetings to use a structured questioning approach, such as review and ToGROW.

**REVIEW PROGRESS**

* How have you got on with your previous actions?
* What has gone well since the last meeting?
* What hasn’t gone so well?
* What have you learnt from this?

**TOPIC**

* What would you like to discuss during todays meeting?
* Is there anything more you feel, think or would like to say?

**GOAL**

* From your topic, what is the most important thing to focus on first?
* What, exactly, is the goal?
* What will this goal give you?
* How challenging is this goal going to be for you?

**REALITY**

* Where are you now with your goal?
* What have you done so far towards achieving your goal?
* What gets in the way?
* What resources do you have that will help?
* What additional resources / support / development do you need?

**OPTIONS**

* What could you do now that would move you one step closer to achieving your goal?
* What’s missing?
* What advice would your role model give you?
* What else could you do?

**WAY FORWARD**

* Which option will take you closer to your goal?
* What will you do now?
* What specifically?
* How will you do this?
* When will you do this?
* How realistic is it this will happen?
* What could stand in your way of taking these actions?
* On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to making this happen?

**ROUNDING OF EACH MEETING**

* How do you feel you have progressed towards your goal?
* What have you learnt?
* What could you both reflect on to make the next meeting even more useful?
* When are you next going to meet?

**POST-MEETING**

After each meeting update the Mentoring Project notes field in SUMAC???

**Concluding your mentoring relationship**

It is vital you aim for a positive and constructive end to your mentoring relationship. This can be difficult for some people who may have become dependant on the relationship. However, throughout the mentoring relationship, with the use of the questions noted above, you will have been confirming ownership and responsibility.

**REVIEWING PROGRESS**

Review the progress of the mentee’s objectives from the start to the end of the mentoring

Identify next steps for the mentee as they move out of the mentoring relationship

Review the progress of the mentor’s objectives

Identify and discuss emerging development needs

**POST-MENTORING**

After the mentoring relationship is concluded update the Mentoring Project notes field in SUMAC.

**Evaluating the success of the mentoring**

Once the mentoring relationship has been concluded, the success of the relationship can be evaluated using:

Review of the progress of the mentee’s objectives from the start to the end of the mentoring relationship

Subjective outcomes, such as the mentee’s career satisfaction and level of confident engagement at work around their shared characteristic

Objective outcomes, such as the mentee’s career advancement, research income and grant success, salary progression and other practical considerations

When used in conjunction with more informal feedback from mentors and line managers, these evaluation strategies can be very valuable.

Whilst the mentoring is underway, both mentor and mentee can reflect on both the relationship and process and how it is meeting the needs of both parties.

It is the hallmark of an effective mentoring pair that they will openly discuss how they can work together more effectively.

**Resources**

**Activities to support mentee progress**

Mentees will be in mentoring for many different reasons, but some of the key reasons are likely to be to support;

* career development,
* creating a work / life balance,
* development of self-awareness,
* relationship building / networking,
* confidence building,
* or moving beyond a place of feeling stuck.

The activities below are intended to be a useful resource to support mentees in these key areas. It is important to note the intension is not that you go through each of these activities with each mentee. Only use those that are relevant and appropriate at the time.

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

There is a great exercise around success role modelling that can help enable mentees develop the behaviours they think would be helpful to support their career development.

First, get the mentee to identify three key skills or behaviours they have witnessed in at least three people they consider role models.

These should be skills and behaviours the mentee thinks are helpful and desirable for them to develop themselves.

This activity needs to be specific, so ask:

* What did you see the role models do when they did X (whatever the skill or behaviour was they have identified)?
* What did you notice about their body language, especially hand and facial gestures?
* What did you notice about their voice, tone, volume, what they said?
* How do you imagine they felt at the time?

Now identify specific steps the mentee will take to master these actions. It will be important the mentees put themselves in positions where these actions will be required and can be developed.

It is possible that the mentee could identify skills or behaviours that they value in the role model which do not suit the culture of the organisation. In this instance it will be important to look more closely at the mentees career choices.

**CAREER CHOICES**

It may be useful to discuss the mentees choices, viewpoints and possible direction. A good activity to support this could be;

Create a template based on the four quadrants stabilise, search, shift and stretch. Clarify with the mentee what is meant by each aspect.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stabilise**  The option to stay in the same role in the same organisation. | **Search**  The option to search for a new role in the same organisation. |
| **Stretch**  The option to look for a new role in different organisation/s. | **Shift**  The option to look for the same role in different organisation/s. |

This is particularly useful for mentees who find they have a values clash with the organisation, or who are in the early stages of their career. Giving multiple career options spreads the risk.

If one route is closed off, you are still able to take action in a different direction.

This activity will only be of use if the mentee is willing to engage in multiple options. It is important to get them to open up about all their possible choices, thoughts, considerations and preferences in each quadrant.

Once the mentee has engaged it is then important to select two or three different options from the list and identify short term, medium term and long term actions for each potential career option.

**WORK / LIFE BALANCE**

One of the key issues that is affecting our ‘leaky pipeline’ is the lack of either real or perceived work / life balance.

This activity was originally developed to support working women achieve a work / life balance, but is suitable for a much wider audience.

For this activity have the mentee draw a circle and split it into three equal sections. Label them;

* work (w),
* home (h),
* leisure (l).

List the things done in each and the time spent on each. Visually change the size of the sections to represent the approximate spilt in terms of time and energy spent on each. This represents their **life as it is now**.

An example might be:

Redraw the circle, but split as the mentee **would like it to be.**

Return to the activities, but this time posing questions before the activities are re-entered, delegated or discarded:

* Why am I doing this?
* Do I have to be doing this?
* Do I want to be doing this?
* Who else could do this?
* What else could I have in *(the sections where the gaps are)*?
* What would happen if I did (*more of / less of)* this?
* How would it feel to make changes?
* How important is it to make these changes?

Please bear in mind this is not about listing everything and getting into the nitty gritty detail (difficult for some detailed people). The purpose is to get a sense of the overall as a vehicle for change.

**DEVELOPING**

**SELF-AWARENESS**

It can be difficult for some people to engage with change, just as it can be difficult for some people to let go of the detail and consider the overall feel or vision.

Understanding yourself is fundamental to a greater degree of self-awareness, and from there an awareness of others (we will come on to this in the next activity).

One of the easiest ways for mentors and mentees to better know themselves and build their self-awareness is to ask some simple questions.

* Are you outgoing, or more reflective?
* Are you more task or people focussed?

This will already give both mentors and mentees an indication as to whether they are:

* Outgoing
* Reflective
* People
* Task

It is important to recognise that none of these personality traits are any better or worse than the next. Each have their strengths, and each have their potential weaknesses.

Get the mentee to identify which of the quadrants they most comfortably sit within:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Outgoing and task orientated | * Outgoing and people orientated |
| * Reflective and task orientated | * Reflective and people orientated |

This has significance in term of how we might relate to others, how we might go about the roles we perform, how we might deal with stressors and change, and what might motivate us to do what we do, and in the way that we do them.

For example:

Outgoing and task orientated people can be determined, doers who like to be in control. For a mentee, these people can have great drive, and could want things happening now, but could find it difficult considering the full range of options.

Outgoing and people orientated people can be very interactive and fast paced. For mentees, these people could embrace change but to an extent where they lose focus, or can at times be overly optimistic – taking on too much.

More reserved and people orientated people can be very sincere, great listeners and security driven. For mentees, these people could encounter work / life balance issues through giving more support than they get, or could avoid stretching themselves and stepping up the pace.

More reserved and task orientated people can be conscientious and detailed planners. For mentees, these people can be motivated by the pursuit of excellence, but which could tip into perfectionism, becoming overly pedantic and critical.

It is important to identify our key strengths and potential weaknesses so we can now plan our action steps to either harness and utilise our strengths, or address our weaknesses to minimise their disruption.

A useful mechanism to plan actions is the GROW model mentioned in Page 12 and 13.

G – Goal

R – Reality

O – Options

W – Will / Way Forward

**RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

Relationships are one of the most complex challenges of human existence. Conflicts within relationships can very quickly cost us our inner peace.

One reason so many people have difficulties in their relationships is that most of us don’t look beyond our own wants and needs. This can lead to power struggles as we each attempt to 'be right'.

Many people believe that to have a healthy relationship requires that all relevant parties work on the relationship itself. This might seem like common sense, but the reality is, the only person you can work on is you.

Some simple practices can help us to make significant progress in enhancing our relationships. These methods include listening, speech and delivery.

**Listening**

It is often said there are three levels of listening:

1. **Internal listening,** where we are focussed on the self (our own inner voice), usually what we are going to say next.
2. **Focussed listening,** where we focus on the other person, showing empathy, with an absence of ‘mind chatter’ (our inner voices).
3. **Global listening,** where we notice everything that is around you (through a sense of peripheral listening) without taking our focus off the other person.

## There is an old saying ‘we have two eyes, two ears and one mouth, and should use them in that proportion’. So only a fifth of your time should be spend talking. How many of us can honestly say we do that?

## *But listening is hard.*

So how can we listen better?

Try these two tasks.

Task 1 - The next time someone says something to you – do not respond. Listen instead. Or simply say to them ‘I’m listening.’

And then, listen.

Task 2 - When you are listening to them, do not interrupt. Even if what they are saying is wrong, in your opinion, or you think you have the solution, or you think you have something extremely important to add.

Don’t. Just listen.

Interruptions are our way of saying:

* I know better,
* I have the solution,
* My thoughts need to be heard,
* My thoughts are more important,
* Anyway, if I interrupt I’ll save them time (that’s a great one for rationalising interruptions).

**Speech**

Conflict in relationships often happens as a result of incorrect assumptions or misunderstandings. Somebody misjudges what your intentions were when you said what you said.

Whenever we’re engaged in a conversation, we often (mindlessly) say the first thing that comes to mind. We rarely stop to carefully consider how our words will be interpreted by another person. Yet most people assume that others will fully understand what we mean when we say whatever we say.

We cannot control how other people are going to react, respond to or interpret our words, but we can reduce the likelihood of being misinterpreted or misunderstood.

We begin by resisting the urge to mindlessly and immediately react to the things that other people say and do to us. In the same way that we can be guilty of saying the 'wrong thing' at times, other people can be equally as guilty, and this isn't always because other people mean us harm, it’s just that none of us are perfect communicators.

***Pause, reflect and choose your words wisely.***

## To support this there are 3 key aspects to clarity in our speech; what are often called the 3P’s: plan, prepare and present.

1. **Plan** what you want to say in advance. This in itself will slow you down and ensure you take more time to consider what you say before you say it.
2. **Prepare yourself.** This is about practicing what it is you want to communicate prior to your key communications taking place; the content and the delivery. To improve on this, you will want to expand your language (including your emotional language).
3. **Present.** This is about learning how to breathe, about your stance and posture, your gestures. As well as the tone and pace of what you are saying.

Seven useful questions for mentors and mentees to ask are:

1. Is your stance open or closed?
2. Are your hands open and exposed or closed and bunched?
3. Are your legs firmly planted and balanced or crossed?
4. Is there eye contact or are they diverted?

(Be aware though that different cultures have different expectations around eye contact).

1. Is your tone of voice reasoned, aggressive, excited or bored?
2. Is your pace of voice quick, even or slow?
3. Are your words clipped or rhythmic?

**CONFIDENCE BUILDING**

Confidence, in its broadest sense, means feeling sure of yourself and your abilities (not in an arrogant way, but in a realistic, secure way).

So, a lack of confidence usually comes from a lack of surety.

We often talk of the skills needed to build confidence. Usually these are wrapped around study skills, employability skills, and transferable skills. Things such as, reading, writing, listening, speaking, presentation skills, communication, critical thinking, research, digital skills, problem solving, self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

But really these all sit within the ‘ability’ to learn. So long as we are open to learning and willing to grow we are able to counter our lack of surety.

This connects to what are often seen as the eight key barriers to confidence.

1. Goals which are too big or too far away.
2. Lack of thorough analysis (critical thinking).
3. Declaring victory too soon.
4. Self-defeating assumptions.
5. Blaming someone else.
6. Defensiveness.
7. Over-confidence.
8. Going it alone.

These barriers can be split into two groupings; 1-3 are related in one way or another to the inappropriateness of the goals, while 4-8 are related more to our mindset.

This gives us two clear, interconnected, routes to counter these barriers and grow our confidence.

First, through utilising something like the GROW Model for appropriate and realistic goal setting and action planning we can set about learning new skills and mindset:

* Goals - Set long-term goals (but then break them down into medium and short term objectives, as stepping stones).
* Reality - Undertake assessment / analysis of the current situation. Specific evidence based, NOT assumptions.
* Options - Cover the full range of options. NOT assuming you already know best, or that the few options you say you have are all there are.
* Will (or Way forward) - Commit to action. Take responsibility. Identify possible obstacles and set-backs. Confirm support needed. Set and take specific and measurable actions.

And secondly, through developing a Growth Mindset, as advocated by Dr. Carol S. Dweck (she talks about a fixed and a growth mindset).

A fixed mindset is when we believe the level of intelligence we have is fixed, or where we can learn new things but this does not really alter us fundamentally (which can inhibit confidence in new areas of our life).

With a growth mindset we believe we can change, and when we learn new things we consequently increase our level of confidence (increasing IQ, thinking skills, and EQ, emotional intelligence) through continuous growth.

Practically, there are usually seen as three key aspects to lacking confidence:

1. Lacking confidence in our competence and abilities.

Using the GROW model, or similar, we can take steps to identify and address these skills gaps.

1. Lacking confidence in who we are.

This could relate to our personality (see Developing Self-Awareness, page 17), or to our identity, or our values base (we will deal with these aspects in the next section).

1. Lacking the confidence to move beyond our comfort zone and our fears. This often leads to a feeling of being ‘stuck’.

So, let us now deal with this aspect.

**MOVING BEYOND A PLACE OF FEELING STUCK**

There are numerous reasons why we become stuck, such as:

* thinking there is only one way, one approach to doing thing so never getting fresh input,
* having a lack of focus, being continually distracted, and so never getting the clarity required,
* or maybe through a lack of confidence (as mentioned above) and building a disempowering belief in ourselves,
* or over-worrying and over-analysing things, creating paralysis by analysis.

Whatever the reasons, it is likely they have resulted in unproductive habits that are holding us back. The challenge then is to change these habits.

The question though is how do we go about doing this if we are feeling stuck?

There are usually seen to be three key aspects:

**Change our thinking.**

To do this we need to disrupt our current thinking and the way to do that is by asking different questions. We need to disrupt our ‘habitual questions’. This is one of the reasons this handbook is so heavily focused on offering new questions.

**Change our emotions.**

To do this we need to change the language we use, so rather than “I’m angry” we could say “I’m disenchanted.” This is particularly good when connected to the power of questions as mentioned earlier. When you feel angry, ask “What do I want to feel instead?”

**Change your bodily posture (or movement).**

Think how impossible it is to feel depressed when skipping. Or, how difficult it is to skip when depressed. Think how difficult it is to smile when you feel angry. Or, how impossible it is to feel angry when smiling.

Move your body and you move your state.

There are a number of key factors we need to keep in mind if we want to change our state to support us to move from being stuck to becoming unstuck and, importantly, for this shift too last.

* It takes energy. If we are using our energy on a particular area of change, we need to recognise that we will not have energy for something else. So, if you are saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?
* There is a need to practice, practice, practice the new thought, feeling or behaviour (changing the old saying ‘practice makes perfect’ to ‘practice makes permanent’).

There are a number of perspective shifts that can help when we feel stuck.

1. Take on a more global perspective. When we have problems, issues or feel stuck it is usually because we are caught up in the detail or in the localized problem.
2. Take on a future orientated perspective. Ask:

What will my life be like in 10 years’ time if nothing changes?

What is my passion, and am I working to fulfil this passion, or to fit in?

Am I waiting for permission?

1. Take on someone else’s perspective. Ask:

How would someone else see this situation?

How would an independent third party see this situation?

Consider - that which is most natural to us is that which we practice the most. So, practice seeing things from someone else’s perspective.

**OUR IDENTITY**

**Issues of self-image**

Whether we come at identity through the 4 Dimensions of Diversity model (adapted from Loden and Rosner, 1991) or the Diversity Iceberg model, sometimes referred to as the Waterline of Visibility, who we are appears to be mixed up with issues around our self-image.

There is an exercise we might want to try out.

In one short sentence, without using your name, write down who you are.

How did you answer this?

This is usually enough to illustrate just how context dependent the response will be. Are you a; Professor, Researcher, Mentor, Mentee, Mother, Father, Daughter, Supervisor, Partner, etc, etc…

If you are filling out an official form what is:

* Your ethnicity?
* Your gender?
* Your…

These things all define part of your identity, which is multifaceted and context based.

But, who is the ‘real’ you?

If there is no specific context, we normally answer with our name.  That is what identifies us. But is this your identity? In what way does this define the ‘real’ you?

Do your various identities relate in any way to your self-image?

Does the interrelationship of your various identities in any way shape your self-image?

By self-image we mean the idea, or the mental image we have of our self. It has been shown that our self-image will vary depending on the level of self-esteem we hold; more or less favourable self-esteem will give us a more or less favourable self-image.

Interestingly, our self-image can be very different from how the world sees us. The priority therefore is to observe more closely our own self-image.

A useful model is the Johari Window which provides us with a format for representing our personal experience of life (and our degree of self-awareness) from four alternative perspectives.

1. Our public image
2. Our private image
3. Our blind spots
4. And the unknown

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Johari Window | What others see | What others don’t see |
| Seen by you | **Public Image** | **Private Image** |
| Not seen by you | **Blind**  **Spot** | **The Unknown** |

The Johari Window can serve as an excellent self-reflection tool for comparing the perception we have of ourselves (our self-image) with the perceptions that other people might have of us - enabling a feedback route for personal development and improvement.

The intention with the Johari Window is to expand and strengthen our public image, thereby reducing the unknown, through identifying and addressing our blind spots, in order that our private and public images align.

For this activity to be successful it needs to be carried out with trusted others (ideally a minimum of three other people, individually) who will offer honest ***and*** supportive feedback.

Go through each quadrant in an honest and constructive manner until you have fleshed out areas of strength and areas for development.

Then turn this into action points to strengthen your self-image (again, this is where you might want to use the GROW model or something similar to set appropriate actions).

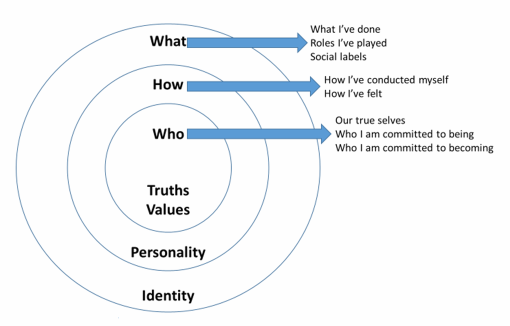
**OUR VALUES**

Most people are unaware that there are two sets of values. Our aspirational values which we would like to live our life by, and our operational values, the values we actually act out daily through our behaviour.

If there are issues in our life, whether that is tension, conflict or self-image concerns it is often due to our aspirational and operational values not being in alignment.

So how do we align our values?

There is a simple framework called the Core Identity Framework that can help.



There are three elements. The first two are the constructed us and are where our daily behaviours sit:

1. What (what we’ve done and are doing, the roles we’ve played and are playing. These are the social labels we tend to define ourselves by).
2. How (how we have done what we have done, how we feel, how we have and are conducting ourselves).

The third element is the ‘us’ we are committed to being, the aspirational us:

1. Who (the true us. What are we committed to being? Who are we committed to being?).

Once we have identified our what, how and who, we are well placed to set a course of actions to align our values and our behaviours.

**Tips if problems should occur**

Mentoring relationships, like any other relationships, are not always successful and literature suggests that several key issues can have a negative impact:

**Time pressures on the mentor and/or mentee**

Both mentor and mentee must have clarity on time commitment at the start of the mentoring relationship, and confirm by signing the Mentoring Contract that they are able to fulfil this commitment.

Ask:

What level of importance is being given to this?

**Workload for the mentor and / or mentee**

There are times when unexpected work comes our way. However, when agreeing to undertake additional work we must be willing to negotiate this in light of current commitments.

Ask:

What level of institutional support is being offered to engage in mentoring?

**Goals and objectives have not been clearly defined**

At the start of the mentoring relationship one of the first tasks is to define, clearly, the goals and overall objective/s. Each meeting will be working to defined goals.

Ask:

Are the objectives specific and measurable?

How will you know you have achieved them?

**Disappointed expectations of either the mentee or mentor**

Disappointments often occur when expectations are unclear. This is why it is important at the start of the mentoring relationship to set ‘ground rules’ and have clarity on your joint expectations.

Ask:

Are my expectations realistic, and based on taking responsibility and ownership?

**The mentee is not taking responsibility for their development or believes that the mentor is responsible for their (the mentee’s) progress.**

It can happen that we become dependent on those who support us, and can at times expect them to solve our problems for us. To counter this we need to accept responsibility for our own actions.

Ask:

Am I showing misplaced dependency, and not taking responsibility and ownership?

**A clash of personalities**

It is not uncommon for people not to get on due to clashes in personality. There are many guides to personality traits and potential conflict areas. One such guide is DISC (see Developing Self-Awareness, page 17).

Ask:

Do you know your own personality traits, and the traits in others you find more difficult to get on with?

Are you willing to learn about others, and grow yourself?

Problems can usually be ironed out with an honest and open conversation, but if this does not resolve the issue then both parties may agree to dissolve the relationship. If this is the case, it is essential that this is accepted as a no-blame option on either side.

In the extremely unusual event that the mentor considers that something is seriously wrong – for example, that the mentee’s immediate health, safety or wellbeing is in danger, then the mentor may need to explain to the mentee that they have a duty to report this to an appropriate person.

If there is any uncertainty, please contact the Mentoring Project Coordinator.

**What other challenges might occur?**

**The mentee is just not committed**

It might be that a mentee likes the idea of being in a mentoring relationship more than the practicality of being committed to taking action. This could be taking no action, or procrastinating, or continually being distracted by other things in their life or work. It could be real or perceived. In either case you will need to check this out against the actions taken between each meeting.

Ask:

On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to making this happen?

**The mentor is lacking interest in the mentee or their relationship.**

As above, this can be real or perceived. The mentor may have lost interest, or the mentee may experience the relationship as such if there is a lack of effective communication. The priority is to consider how you are communicating and being perceived.

Ask:

Am I curious, and listening to understand? (see Relationship Building, page 19)

Am I paraphrasing and summarising, so the mentee knows I am engaged and understand?

Am I offering ideas, advice and guidance, so the mentee knows I am interested?

Am I asking about the mentee in general, so they know I am interested in them as a person?

**THE MENTORING CONTRACT**

For the mentoring relationship to be successful and based on trust, both of you need to sign up to strict confidentiality but this can mean different things to different people. For instance, would it be acceptable for the mentee to discuss elements of the mentoring with their line manager?

What would happen to the confidentiality clause if either party revealed illegal activity or discussed harming themselves or other people? Even though these circumstances are highly unlikely and irregular, the contract is essentially there to manage expectations and it is important to cover what would happen in these events.

Discuss your boundaries: for example, the mentor may wish to specify that they can help the mentee with a range of work-related or career issues but would not feel comfortable discussing issues of a more personal nature. In cases such as these, the mentor may wish to refer the mentee to the University’s Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service.

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