



Mentor: Preparing for the mentoring sessions

Theories of Mentoring/ Models of Mentoring

Mentoring is based on the fundamental aspects of mutual respect, valuing different viewpoints, acknowledging influences, sharing resources and communication. Traditional mentoring relationships have been between two people working together, investing time to develop aspects of the mentee. Mentoring, an empowering relationship between novice and experienced nurses is one best practice that fosters successful nursing careers for new nurses and those in transition or experiencing burnout.^{1, 2, 3} Mentorship is a relational humanistic model that enriches clinical practice with deeper holistic focus on nurturing the whole person.^{4, 5}

Phases of the Mentoring Relationship⁶

There can be great diversity in the way in which mentoring is experienced within formal programs and informal mentoring relationships. Informal mentoring relationships are not constructed in this way; they evolve and can take place over several years depending on the needs of the party. Regardless of the type of mentoring relationship employed, evidence suggests that mentoring relationships tend to be characterised by a number of important milestones or phases.

Specific phases that characterise a mentoring relationship:

1. Initial phase — the parties get to know one another and build the relationship
2. Cultivation or development phase — both parties benefit from the relationship, with learning and growth strongly present.
3. Termination or separation phase — the relationship ends and contact decreases

Another important phase called 'redefinition' which may occur at the end of the relationship, when both parties choose to work together, but with different expectations. For example, both parties might decide to work as 'peers' rather than as mentor and mentee because the mentee may have developed the requisite skills. Redefinition, then, signals a new type of relationship.⁷ An effective mentoring relationship is one where both parties feel satisfied that the journey has been rewarding and worthwhile.

¹ Daniels, M. Mentoring: Link to the future. *Reflections on Nursing Leadership*, 2004; 30, 24-25

² Pinkerton, S.E. Mentoring new graduates. *Nursing Economics*, 2003; 21, 202-203

³ Hodgson, A, Scanlan, J. A Concept Analysis Of Mentoring In Nursing Leadership *Open Journal Of Nursing* 2013; 03(05): 389-394.

⁴ Morton-Cooper A, Palmer A. *Mentoring, Preceptorship and Clinical Supervision*. Second edition. Blackwell, Oxford; 2002.

⁵ Verdejo, T. Mentoring: A model method. *Nursing Management*, 2002; 33(8), 15-16.

⁶ Rolfe-Flett, A. *Mentoring in Australia*. Pearsons Australia Pty Ltd: Frenchs Forest; 2002.

⁷ Mullen C, Schunk, D. Operationalizing phases of mentoring relationships. In S. J. Fletcher & C. A. Mullen (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mentoring and coaching in education* (pp. 89–104). Sage Publications: London; 2012.

Adult learning theories

The mentoring relationship involves the mentee as an adult learner, engaged in a life experience and is presented with new opportunities for growth and development. Adults learn best when they are in a supportive environment as the mentor supports and enables the learner to function as the active partner. Malcom Knowles' adult learning theory Andragogy is based on five assumptions: changes in self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn, motivation to learn and orientation to learning.⁸ Adult learning principles encourage the mentee to take responsibility for their own learning by actively pursuing their own answers through critical reflection and problem solving.⁴ The mentor is framed as the conscious, experienced and professional supporter, who listens and expands learning.⁹

Adult Learning Principles and Mentoring Practices

- Adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning. As a mentor facilitate learning activities and encourage the mentee to share, reflect, and practice new skills.
- Creates a climate of respect and conducive to learning and acknowledge the experiences each bring to the learning environment.
- Adult learners have a need to be self-directing. Assist the mentee in determining learning needs and to incorporate these into a learning plan. Use resources to guide discussion about the mentee's goals and objectives.
- Clearly state the learning goals at the beginning of the activity.
- Life's experiences are a primary learning resource so the life experiences of others add enrichment to the learning process. Relate new material to the mentee's existing knowledge and experience by connecting life experiences and prior learning to the new information.
- Adult learners have an inherent need for immediacy of application. Ensure the learning is applicable to the mentee's work or other responsibilities of value.
- Adults respond best to learning when they are internally motivated to learn. Adjusts learning strategies to accommodate mentee's learning style.

The role and expectations of the mentee

- Be responsible of your own development
- Identify goals, priorities and career interests
- Communicate clearly and honestly when sharing your concerns and achievements
- Use your mentor as a sounding board to discuss issues and review your own progress
- Respectfully listen to feedback with an open mind and expect to be challenged with alternative points of views
- Treat your mentor with courtesy and respect
- Maintain confidentiality

The role and expectations of the mentor

Relationship building

- Building trust and a strong rapport with your mentee
- Support and encourage your mentee to build confidence
- Be respectful of and sensitive to individual differences
- Respond promptly to requests for meetings

⁸ Knowles, M. *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. Gulf Publishing Company, Houston; 1973.

⁹ Lennox, S, Skinner, J, Foureur, M. "Mentorship, preceptorship and clinical supervision: three key processes for supporting midwives," *New Zealand College of Midwives Journal*, 2008; 39, pp. 7–12

Information sharing

- Share your knowledge of the department, profession, networks and experiences
- Offer career advice
- Refer to third party services for issues outside your expertise

Facilitative

- Actively listen and questions to elicit facts
- Assist your mentee to achieve short and long term goals by encouraging them to find their own way
- Encourage your mentee to take responsibility for their development and decision making

Challenging

- Constructively and respectfully challenge the mentees expectations and ideas allowing them to gain insight into their decisions and actions
- Encourage your mentee to listen, to clarify understanding, review and consider different perspectives
- Simulate the mentee's critical thinking and develop problem-solving skills

Modelling

- Be a role model for the mentee by sharing life experiences and thoughts

Visionary

- Help them to envision their future and build their career by exploring options an offering opportunities

Setting SMART goals^{10,11}

The **SMART** acronym may assist the mentee to develop attainable goals during the mentoring process

SMART	Example questions
<p>Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific and significant • Well defined • Clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who: Who is involved? • What: What do I want to accomplish? • Where: Identify a location. • When: Establish a time frame. • Which: Identify requirements and constraints • Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
<p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning and motivational • Know if the goal is obtainable and how far away completion is • Know when it has been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the criteria for measuring progress of each goal? • How will you measure progress? • Have you set target dates? • How will I know when it is accomplished?
<p>Agreed Upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainable, achievable, acceptable and action-oriented • Agreement between the mentor and the mentee of what the goals should be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set plans of how you will achieve these objectives • Establish a time frame • Break the goals down into smaller ones • Review the development of the processes • What attitudes, abilities, and skills do you need to achieve these?
<p>Realistic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant, reasonable, rewarding and results-oriented • Within the availability of resources, knowledge and time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal realistic? • Does the goal motivate? • Do you truly believe that it can be accomplished?
<p>Time Based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely, tangible and trackable • Enough time to achieve the goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal grounded within a time frame? • Does this goal have a sense of urgency?

¹⁰ Faron, S, Poelter, D. Growing our own. Inspiring growth and increasing retention through mentoring. *Nursing for Women's Health*, 2007; 11(2), 139 – 143.

¹¹ Canadian Nurses Association. *Achieving Excellence in Professional Practice. A Guide to Preceptorship and Mentorship*. Ottawa. Canadian Nurses Association; 2004.

SWOT Analysis^{12, 13}

A SWOT analysis is a self-assessment exercise that mentors can use to examine their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to mentoring. They can use the results to identify priorities for action. The main aim of doing such an analysis is to empower mentors by focusing on strengths as a motivational tool. It is also a useful tool to use with mentees to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

- What are your good qualities as a mentor?
- What skills are you good at in relation to teaching, learning and assessing?
- What do other people see as your strengths? What else are you good at?
- What are your personal strengths as a mentor?
- What type of leader are you?

If you are having difficulty answering these questions, try writing down a list of your characteristics as a mentor – hopefully, some of these will be strengths. In considering your strengths, think about them in relation to the development of the mentee.

Weaknesses

- What could you improve in your development of mentorship skills?
- What do people see in you that are likely to be a weakness as a mentor?
- What do you think are your areas of weakness?
- Where are you inexperienced and how do these missing areas affect your development as a mentor?
- Do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see?

Speak to other staff in your workplace or develop an anonymous questionnaire asking colleagues to identify what your weaknesses may be as a mentor.

Opportunities

- What opportunities are there for you as a mentor?
- What interesting developments are you aware of?
- What opportunities are there to help you achieve competence in mentoring skills?

A useful approach to looking at opportunities is to consider your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them

Threats or barriers

- What obstacles do you face?
- What barriers prevent you from effectively teaching, learning and assessing in your workplace?
- Do you have difficulties creating professional boundaries?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten you as a mentor?
- Do you have the skills to support challenging mentee?
- Do you find giving verbal or written feedback daunting?

¹² Finkelman AW Leadership and Management in Nursing. Harlow: Pearson Education; 2006

¹³ Lawson L .CPD for mentors: creating a portfolio. Nursing Times. 2011 107: 21, 15-18

Mentor S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths are your positive attributes and resources which enhance your ability to mentor someone.

Weaknesses are aspects you feel you need to improve upon or skills you lack, aspects which you feel detract from your ability to be a good mentor.

Opportunities are the resources and opportunities you have around you which you might be able to access and which support you in the role.

Threats are the pressures and practicalities and other aspects of your role and responsibilities which might get in the way and hamper your ability to be a good mentor.

Action Plan: based on the above analysis, what do you need to do?

Development area	Developmental activities and timeline	Measures of success

Things to talk about upfront

- Well defined goals and outcomes – What do each of you want from this mentoring relationship?
- Successful criteria and measurement – How will you know when you both have been successful in this mentoring relationship?
- Delineation of mutual responsibility – What do each of you agree to do?
- Accountability assurances – How will you work together to hold each other accountable for making time to do what you plan?
- Confidentiality – What do you agree to in terms of protecting confidential information? What do you agree to in terms of deciding when each one might need to seek the assistance of others?
- Protocols for addressing stumbling blocks – What are your routines for collaborative conversations or problem-solving strategies?
- Boundaries – When and how do you agree to communicate with one another? What are the topics that are relevant? What is off-limits, in terms of your mentoring relationship?
- Partnership agreement – How do you document your decisions about these issues?

Questioning: A key mentoring technique^{14, 15}

There are four levels of questioning:

1. Objective level: questions based on facts and data and viewed as 'external' to the mind. These are seen as 'what' questions.

- Where are you up to?
- What work have you done since I saw you last?
- With whom have you been working?
- What have you achieved since we talked last?
- What are your observations?
- What words or phrases stood out for you?

2. Reflective level: questions that invite personal reaction to the data/facts presented. Sometimes the responses can be based on feelings. Questions viewed here are considered 'internal' - questions that relate to 'gut feelings'.

- What has been the response of others to the work you have done?
- What have you enjoyed doing the most?
- What have you enjoyed doing the least?
- How are you feeling about things now?
- What surprised you?
- What's missing for you?
- What were you reminded of?

3. Interpretive level: questions that draw out meanings, values, beliefs and the significance of the issue. Questions here are concerned with: 'what does this mean?'; 'why'? Sometimes these questions are referred to as 'so what' questions.

- What have you learned about yourself, others, so far?
- What are some issues you continue to worry about? Why?
- What alternatives are you thinking about for dealing with some of the ongoing challenges?
- What makes x important?
- What implications are there for you?
- What might be the impact of ...?

4. Decisional level: questions that elicit resolution, new directions and actions. This is where the conversation is brought to a close and decisions are made - sometimes referred to as 'now what' questions:

- What are you going to do next?
- What is your plan and how are you going to achieve it?
- Can I help and if so how?
- Are things moving in the right direction for you?
- What recommendations do you have?
- What can you do differently in the future?
- What have you learned from this?

¹⁴ Stanfield, R. B. (Ed.). The art of focused conversation: 100 ways to access group wisdom in the workplace. New Society Publishers; 2000.

¹⁵ Hudson, P, Hudson, S. Mentor feedback: Models, viewpoints and strategies. Paper presented at the Australian Teacher Educators Association (ATEA) conference, Sydney, Australia; 2014.

Mentor pre-meeting preparation

The purpose of this tool is to plan and prepare to facilitate a conversation during the initial mentor meeting.¹⁶

My goals for this mentoring relationship

Expectations I have of the mentee for this mentoring relationship

Some getting to know you questions I have prepared

Prepared questions (see definitions of each questioning level on page 7)

Objective questions

Reflective questions

Interpretive questions

Decisional questions

GROW Model

The GROW Model¹⁷ is used with coaching conversations. The framework encourages an exploration of the individual's development needs and how they can be achieved. The GROW

¹⁶ Royal Children's Hospital. Formal Mentoring A Guide for Nurses at The RCH. Melbourne. 2015

Model is based on the principle that everyone has the potential to develop and improve themselves, but just need help to unlock their potential. This framework encourages people to take responsibility for their own actions, which results in commitment, and therefore optimises performance. Using questions rather than instructions will foster change more readily. Here are some examples of the types of question you could use to conduct the session as productively as possible.

- Goal. After initial discussion, establish a realisable goal to progress in the session.
- What outcome do you want from this process?
 - How do you feel this process will help you?
 - Will this session be sufficient to cover the points you need to cover?
 - What would it take for this process to be a success?
- Reality It is important that this session is grounded in reality. The mentee should be able to assess their present situation, and give concrete examples of their performance to date. Feedback should be provided at this point.
- Tell me about the current situation?
 - Give me a specific example?
 - What happens/happened when you
 - Are there times when it is different?
 - What do you want to change about the way you...?
- Options This stage offers the opportunity for the mentee to suggest possible courses of action, and together with any that the coach puts forward and evaluate.
- How could the situation change?
 - How could you improve the situation?
 - What have you tried so far?
 - What can you learn from others?
 - Can you provide some specific options for action?
 - Are you aware of the possible downsides to those options?
 - Which of these suggested options would you like to try?
- Will The final part of the process involves the mentee making decisions. Future steps should be confirmed and the mentor should agree how they will support throughout the ongoing development process.
- How can you put appropriate options into action?
 - Are you aware of any obstacles to these actions?
 - What is the first step? What specifically will you do?
 - What further support do you need?
 - Does your organisation offer support for change?
 - Who do you need to tell/ask?
 - How will we know when you have achieved this?

¹⁷ Sir John Whitmore, Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose. Nicholas Brealey; 2002.

Developing the mentee

Feedback is information about how we are doing in our efforts to reach a goal. We can either gain feedback by self-observation of the impact of our efforts, or we can gain feedback from others. Providing feedback is integral part of the mentoring process and should be continued throughout the partnership. Opportunities to use that feedback, enhances performance and achievement of goals for the mentee. Feedback is an important tool for shaping behaviours and fostering learning that will drive better performance.

Key Feedback Principles

- Ensure it is goal referenced. Information becomes feedback if the individual is trying to achieve something and the information tells them if they are on track or need to change course. Goals are often implicit and we feel they are fairly obvious, but if a person is unclear about a specific goal or task, it is crucial to remind them of the goal and the criteria by which they should self-assess how they are doing, or by which we provide observations on progress to set the context for quality feedback.
- Ensure it is tangible and actionable. Quality feedback is concrete, specific and it provides actionable information. “Good job!” or “Rework this” is not feedback. The performer needs to know what specifically should I do more or less of next time, based on the information provided. The information should be neutral, goal-related facts. Observe the behaviour or action and comment on what you observed. Then question the staff member to help them think about how to apply the observations to get closer to their goal.
- Don't judge the person. This is likely to cause a defensive or angry reaction and your feedback will not be heard.
- Make it timely and in the right location. By giving feedback as soon as possible after an event or during project milestones, it will have greater impact. You will also find it easier to be specific as you will more readily recall the event and will be able to provide accurate observations. Make sure the setting is appropriate for giving feedback. Avoid a few rushed moments in the corridor. Take the time it deserves to give feedback without interruption and in a setting that is private. This way you and the staff member can discuss and learn from the feedback.
- Make it regular. Adjusting our performance depends on not only receiving regular feedback but also having opportunities to use it. If I receive regular and timely feedback then I can reshape my performance to better achieve the goal. Providing quality feedback is not a once a year event. It needs to be frequent, ongoing, and cover both good performance and areas of performance to improve.
- Build your awareness of your feedback approach. When we are all busy, it is easy to overlook good work or extra effort, or to take it for granted. Look for opportunities to give positive feedback regularly. This promotes good performance and a positive work place. Equally, some managers find it difficult to give feedback when performance is not on track. Make it a habit to give developmental feedback as soon as it's needed. Don't keep the staff member 'in the dark'. You can't expect them to automatically know that they need to change or improve their performance

Strengths in giving and receiving feedback

- What are your strengths in giving and receiving feedback?

- Are there areas you could improve?

Consider the following questions.

- Do you help people to identify clear goals and reinforce how your observations link to these goals when giving feedback?
- Do you actively listen and stay present in the conversation?
- Do you ask questions to facilitate people to find their own creative solutions to their work problems?
- Do you acknowledge what other people are trying to say to you with paraphrasing or summarising? Do you seek to understand?
- Do you tell people when they are doing a good job?
- Do you give credit to people for their ideas? • Do you praise achievement of outcomes and expected behaviours?
- Do you positively acknowledge creativity and improvement ideas?
- Do you compliment people on their strengths?
- Do you explain clearly and non-judgementally where a person's performance is not helping them achieve their goal?
- Do you do this in a timely manner?
- Do you encourage your staff to give you feedback, so you can continually learn and grow as a manager?
- Do you react to challenging feedback?
- Does every person in your business unit know how she or he is performing? At the end of every month?

Mentor post-meeting reflection

Reflect on that conversation during your time with the mentee.
Consider the following points when formulating your ideas:

- your communication skills
- the dynamics of the relationship
- the role you played
- your mentee's interest and comments
- any other impressions

What worked well?

What needed improvement?

What comments did your mentee provide regarding your performance? How can you use this feedback to improve next time?

What do you need to work on to enhance your mentoring skills?

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