AGED AND COMMUNITY CARE SERVICE PROVIDERS RURAL AND REMOTE eMENTORING PROJECT

What is mentoring?

Mentoring has a number of meanings and can vary in process depending on the context it is practiced. In this project, mentoring is defined as a relationship between two people or a group of people that encourages reflection, professional support, learning, action and professional development. Typically, the mentoring relationship is between an experienced practitioner (mentor) and a less experienced practitioner (mentee). Morton-Cooper and Palmer (2000) describe mentoring as a relationship that encourages growth and development in a respectful and collegial environment.

Mentoring is not a form of clinical supervision and is not concerned with the monitoring of clinical skills or competence (Mills, Frances & Bonner, 2005). Neither is mentoring concerned with the provision of clinical advice. If practitioners require advice and help with the development of clinical skills, they should seek this from colleagues who they work with.

Mentoring is carried out away from the immediate clinical context, and aims to support critical reflection and questioning with the ultimate effect of supporting the mentee to find her own answers. Other elements of mentoring may include career advice, help with networking, advocacy and provision of information. Needless to say, every mentoring relationship is different and should meet the individual participants' needs.

Models of mentoring

Mentoring has a number of different meanings and forms in which it is carried out. One model of mentoring takes a sponsorship approach in which the mentor is senior in the organization hierarchy, and actively promotes the mentee with the primary outcome

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being career success (Megginson, Clutterbuck, Garvey, Stokes, & Garrett-Harris, 2006). The developmental model of mentoring is focused on personal development which may have career success as a subsequent outcome. The mentor is experienced in the issues that pertain to the mentee's learning, and supports the mentee in achieving self-directed learning. In health, mentoring does overlap at times with preceptorship, which is a mechanism of support that focuses on orientation to the clinical situation and development of clinical skills (Mills, Francis, & Bonner, 2005). Mentoring also happens informally when two people naturally gravitate together into a mentoring relationship.

Benefits of mentoring

The advantages of mentoring are that the mentee has an opportunity to learn from someone who is knowledgeable. The mentor benefits because she can share her knowledge with someone who wants to learn.

Benefits for mentees (Megginson et al, 2006)

- Personal growth.

- Support with developing and achieving goals.

- Support for career development especially at the beginning of one's career or returning to practice, and at specific defining moments such as a change of work role eg moving from clinical practice into management.

- A sounding board for ideas and plans.

- A 'safe' place to debrief and critically reflect on practice.

- Positive and constructive feedback on professional and personal development.

- Extended network for support and development.

Benefits for mentors (Megginson et al, 2006)

- Opportunity to play a part in someone's personal and professional development.

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- Share one's wisdom and knowledge – to be recognized as an 'expert'.

- Increased communication and interpersonal skills which will enhance one's own professional development.

- Increased awareness and understanding of one's own knowledge, beliefs and attitudes.

- Personal growth.

- Developing/increasing leadership skills.

- Contribute to the development of one's own career.

- Developing collegiality and collaboration.

- Hearing a different perspective.

- Contribute to the future of aged/community care.

Benefits for the organization/employer

From an organizational and professional view point, mentoring is seen as an effective means of supporting staff, encouraging professional development and life-long learning. This is particularly important for staff who practice in isolation eg rural/remote practitioners. The long term effects of mentoring are believed to be decreased stress and burnout, as well as increased job satisfaction for mentees and mentors, which in turn enhance staff recruitment and retention (Morton-Cooper and Palmer, 2000). Organizations and employers further benefit as staff become increasingly competent and confident, as well as share knowledge and skills. This has the flow-on effect of boosting organizations' and employers' culture and image (Rolfe-Flette, 2002).

Activity: Think of a situation when you received mentoring support be it at school, work, or in an informal/social context. Why did you require mentoring – what were you wanting to achieve? How did mentoring help you to achieve your goals?

What is eMentoring?

eMentoring is mentoring using electronic forms of communication including telephone and online tools. Email, discussion groups, bulletin boards, instant messaging, web conference, wikis and blogs (Stewart & Wootton, 2005a). eMentoring enables mentoring to be an option for people who normally do not have access to mentors such as those who work in professional and geographical isolation. eMentoring provides national and international mentoring opportunities for people who may normally be disadvantaged because of the lack of mentors in their locale. This in turn allows the mentee to choose a mentor who meets her needs as opposed to having to take what is on offer. Whilst eMentoring still requires a time commitment, there is greater flexibility which allows people to communicate outside normal working hours at a time that is convenient to them, especially if asynchronous (people are online at different times) communication modes are used such as like email (Kennett, 2006).

Roles and responsibilities of the eMentee may include (Rolfe-Flette, 2002)**:**

- Commitment to the mentoring relationship which includes timely response to asynchronous communication like emails, and attending online synchronous (people are connected online at the same time) meetings.

- Negotiation of how the mentoring relationship works by making it clear what the aims and goals of the relationship are to be.

- Identification of learning and development needs.

- Expectation of being challenged on issues facing practice, as well as strengths and weaknesses.

- Honouring the agreed relationship and boundaries that has been agreed.

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- Actively 'listening' to mentor and discussing any reservations. Being respectful even if mentor has a different opinion or attitude. At the same time, the eMentee is not submissive in the relationship.

- Remaining accountable for clinical practice.

- Taking responsibility for learning and not relying on the mentor to do all the work.

- Cultural appropriateness which includes awareness of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Roles and responsibilities of the eMentor may include (Rolfe-Flette, 2002)**:**

- Assisting in the development of personal and professional aims and goals.

- Facilitating opportunities for reflection and subsequent development of action plans.

- Asking 'critical' questions that facilitate self-reflection and subsequent learning.

- Providing feedback about performance and plans.

- Acting as source of information.

- Providing advice and support for professional and career development

- Providing support and counseling at times when the mentee faces particular stress and challenges.

- Acting as guide to the employing organisation – providing information and insights into how the employing organisation works.

- Supporting the mentee to develop strategies to deal with workplace challenges.

- Facilitating networking within the employing organization and the aged/community care profession.

What makes an effective eMentor? (Dancer, 2003)

- Commitment to the mentoring relationship which includes timely response asynchronous communication like emails, and attending online synchronous meetings.

- Being respectful and non-judgmental

- Cultural appropriateness which includes awareness of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

- Being an effective communicator. This includes taking time to read asynchronous communications such as emails, and preparing for synchronous online meetings. It also means responding in an appropriate way that address issues brought up by mentees. This means taking 'netiquette' into consideration (more on this later).

- Asking questions in a way that facilitates constructive reflection rather than negatively criticizes and demoralizes. Periodically check out with the mentee how questions and comments are being received. This is especially important when using online communication tools that prevents one seeing clues from body language that would normally be picked up in a face-to-face context.

- Facilitating self-directed refection and learning. The mentor should not prescribe what the mentee should do nor do it for her. The mentoring relationship must be driven by the mentee's needs, aims and goals.

- Acceptance that the mentee may have a different opinion or way of working from the mentor.

- Being aware that the mentoring relationship has a 'power' element which may impede the effectiveness of that relationship. The effective mentor will recognize this and work with the mentee in order to ensure that both participants are 'empowered' within the relationship.

- Acceptance that mentoring is not about 'teaching' but learning. The mentor will learn along the mentee.

Activity: Think of a person who has worked with you in a mentoring role. She[1] may not have been a formally identified mentor, but may have been someone you respected and turned to for help and support. Identify what attracted you to the mentor and think about how she supported your learning and development.

Phases of a mentoring relationship

A mentoring relationship has several stages (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2004). The first stage is when the relationship starts. During this phase, the participants develop the boundaries of the relationship; set aims and goals and get to know each other.

During the middle stage, the participants work together: the mentee becomes more independent and the mentor learns from the mentee. The dissolving stage involves a winding up of the relationship with an evaluation of what has been achieved.

The final stage includes a re-defining of the relationship. Participants may become friends and view each other as equals and valuable resources. It may be that the relationship does not continue in any form, especially if the relationship was unsatisfactory.

The frequency that people communicate with each other varies according to the type of mentoring relationship, the goals the mentee is attempting to achieve and the modes of communication they are using. The mentoring couple may agree to meet or communicate with each other at strictly time-tabled intervals, or as and when the need arises. Initially,

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[1] I use the pronoun 'she' but obviously a mentor/mentee can be either gender.

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the meetings or interactions may be quite frequent, but as the mentee becomes more confident or achieves her goals, the interactions may become less frequent (Stewart & Wootton, 2005b)

Teaching and learning

Before entering into a mentoring relationship as either mentor or mentee, it is helpful to think about how people learn and identify what type of learner you are. There are a number of theories of learning. The constructionist theory of learning says that the teacher is a facilitator and people learn by problem-solving and their own experience. People construct their own meaning and don't rely on memorizing facts and the 'right'' answers. Mentoring takes the constructionist approach to learning. The mentor does not tell the mentee what she should do or know, but rather acts as a sign post that helps the mentee to find her own way ((Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

The challenge of eMentoring using email or other asynchronous form of communication is that it is text-based. This is not too much of a problem for people who are visual learners: people who learn by seeing, reading text, making diagrams and detailed notes. However, it could be more problematic for people who are either auditory (learn through listening) or kinetic learners (learn through doing and touching). Thus, it is useful to explore different modes of online communication and sharing information so that all types of learning style are catered for, such as face-to-face communication with web cam, video, audio and photo exchanges using tools such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), SlideShare (www.slideshare.com), Flickr (www.flickr.com), Animoto (www.animoto.com). There are also a number of other online tools that allow you to carry out synchronous activities together which may be useful in developing the mentoring relationship, and identifying needs and goals such as mind-mapping (www.mindmeister.com).

Activity: Carry out an online assessment of your learning style.
(http://www.ulc.arizona.edu/learning_style.php).

How you will get the most out of online communication in a mentoring relationship if you are an auditory or kinetic learner?

Reflective practice

Critical reflection is a process whereby you think about practices and ideas and then challenge and confront your own thinking by asking probing questions. In the mentoring relationship, it is usually the mentor who asks the questions that encourage the mentee to think beyond an event or idea. Critical thinking is brought about by reflective dialogue between mentor and mentee, which is believed to be an integral part of the mentoring process (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). Self reflection can be self-limiting because it can be difficult to be objective enough to look critically at oneself, and can lead to an insular view of the world.

Reflective dialogue is reflection with another (in this case, the mentor) and can be challenging. It can lead to:

- a reconsideration of what has been done and what can be done;
- reconsideration of values and beliefs;
- learning about learning itself eg thinking about the process that led to change.

How a mentor may lead reflective dialogue (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

1. Summarize the main points that comes from the mentee's story.
2. Respond without questioning until clarity is achieved or learner stops. It using (this may take a couple of emails back and forth).
3. Use questions in your emails.

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4. Open questioning - what, how, where, when, who & why.

Feelings: why were you there, what else happened, how did you feel, who else was involved?

Thinking: what surprised you, what was different, what did you think?

Actions: what would you do differently, when will you do this, who can help you?

5. Respond, including empathy in response as appropriate

6. Summarize, including what the mentee has learnt and what her future actions may be.

What's the big deal about reflective practice and why is it such an important element of mentoring? The main reasons are because reflection makes you question your thoughts and actions. This in turn has the potential to change practice; resolve conflicts; increase self-esteem and satisfaction; produce practice knowledge and increase ability to adjust to new circumstances (Baird & Winter, 2005).

Activity: Think about an incident that has happened in your practice. This may be an incident that went well or not so well; something that made you think about your practice; an incident that was very demanding. Ask yourself the following questions and document them.

- Where and when did it happen?

- Why is it important to you?

- What were you thinking about at the time?

- What were your feelings then?

- What did you find demanding or satisfying?

- What would you do if you found yourself in a similar situation differently?

- How do you feel now?

- What did you learn from the incident?

- How would you change your practice?

- If you wouldn't change your practice, why not?

- What broader issues such as ethical, political or social arise from this situation?

Story telling

Health professionals love telling stories. Story telling is a powerful method of getting across a point or encouraging reflection (Alterio & McDrury, 2002). Reading a story is will make the subject seem much more real. However, story telling can disintegrate into a gossip session or become widely exaggerated in order to capture attention.

Activity: Think of a story from your practice that you think would be a tool for facilitating reflection. What is the issue that you would like to emphasize, or question you would like to raise?

Preparing for the mentoring relationship – setting goals and objectives (Rolfe-Flette, 2002)

Before you can get started in a mentoring relationship, you will need to think about what you want from this relationship – this applies to both mentor and mentee. Part of this process will involve completing the mentoring contract between you and your mentoring partner – see below.

Some people will have very definite ideas about why they want to be involved in a mentoring relationship and what they want to achieve. It may be very pragmatic reasons eg mentoring is part of the established orientation package to the firm/institution. Other people may have concrete things they want to achieve eg a person may want to be a mentor because it is part of their career progression; another person may wish to be mentored because they are working through some difficult issues at work. For other

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people, their aims may be more nebulous eg they want to be mentored as a means of support but have not anything tangible they want to do within the relationship.

Whatever the reasons for seeking to be part of a mentoring relationship, be aware that your aims and goals may change as the relationship grows and develops, and you may need to re-visit them with your mentor/mentee as time goes by.

Mentee

You will get a lot more out of your mentoring relationship if you have an idea of what you want to achieve within the relationship. You may have a specific goal, for example you may want to develop a specific clinical skill or require support with a particular project. On the other hand, you may not have an explicit goal but rather want the mentoring relationship to provide you with support to enable you to become a more confident practitioner. Whatever the goals are, they should be flexible because they are likely to change and grow over a period of time.

When deciding on your goals, it is important to make them realistic within the constraints of time, resources and opportunities. Break the goals down into smaller, achievable ones. For example, your long-term goal may be to achieve promotion. Within that overarching goal may be several smaller goals such as:

- updating your CV;

- acquiring the skills you would need in this new position by attending workshops or study days;

- identifying what you can do to show you are already functioning at the level you would need to be at in the new position;

- talk to your manager about your goal.

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Your goals may be very short term ones or long term goals that may extend past the end of your mentoring relationship.

Another thing to think about is whether you have a professional development plan or career plan. This is something else you can develop with your mentor.

Activity: Think of a goal/plan you wish to achieve and document it.

- Goal or objective to be achieved

- Commencement date

- Completion or review date

- Key steps

- Resources required

- Results – how you will measure them

- Others involved

Mentor

Your job is to work with the mentee to identify and clarify her goals/professional development/career plan. The goals should be achievable keeping in mind the constraints of time and resources that may affect the mentee. The mentee may have a very clear idea of what she wants to achieve. On the other hand, she may have entered this mentoring scheme with little idea of what to expect, so you will be required to work with her to clarify her needs and develop a plan as to how to meet those needs. Her goals may range from the development of a career plan to becoming a more reflective practitioner. Here are some areas you can explore with the mentee in order to help her identify her goals.

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- What is her current skills and expertise?

- Where does she see herself in the next 3-5 years?

- What skills and expertise would she like to develop in the future?

- How does that fit with the requirements of Blue Care?

- What resources would she require to achieve those aims?

- Is there anything concrete she needs to do such as a formal course of education?

- Is the time line she has set herself a realistic time frame - will it be achieved within the time frame of your mentoring relationship?

Questions to ask to when working with your mentee to set goals:

- how does she feel about her goals she has set?

- are they her goals or someone else's goals?

- how realistic are the goals?

- what must she do to achieve her goals?

- how can you help her achieve her goals?

- how you can both work together so she can achieve her goals?

Activity: Think of why you want to be a mentor - what goals do you wish to achieve and document it.

- Goal or objective to be achieved

- Commencement date

- Completion or review date

- Key steps

- Resources required

- Results – how you will measure them

- Others involved

Agreeing to ground rules – agreeing a mentoring contract (Rolfe-Flette, 2002)

Before the mentoring relationship gets going, the mentee and mentor are well advised to agree a mentoring contract. The contract will act as a basis for the mentoring relationship and may be referred to throughout the mentoring period. There may also be times when it is renegotiated. This contract acts as a beginning point for the mentoring relationship. Ground rules may vary from relationship to relationship but are likely to include agreement about (Brockbank & McGill, 2006):

- boundaries – what personal information is disclosed

- confidentiality, both in terms of personal and patient confidentiality

- creating a safe environment to 'talk' as well as giving and receiving constructive feedback

- being non-judgmental

- respecting each other's views

- being honest and open

- challenging the statement, and not the person

- being prepared to ask questions

- being prepared to be challenged

- renegotiation of the contract if necessary

- maintaining a professional relationship

- dealing with conflict

- 'no-fault' clause to ending the relationship if participants do not get on

- when to end the relationship

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It is very important to think about the legalities of your relationship. In this day of litigation, there is the potential for mentors to be sued as a result of the advice that they gave a mentee, especially if the advice led to some sort of 'negative' outcome. Therefore, it is important to discuss this, and you may need to insert a disclaimer into the mentoring contract. Mentees are responsible for their own practice, and should always view advice from mentors in relation to their professional and employment responsibilities, standards and policies.

"Netiquette" - rules of computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Online communication is a little different than face-to-face meetings and has specific challenges, especially if you are using asynchronous tools such as email or synchronous text tools such as instant messages.

On the one hand, it can be difficult because you do not have body language to gauge the impact of what you are saying, unless you use web cam. For example, it is easy to respond to an email without thinking about what you are saying and inadvertently be offensive. It is also easy to misunderstand the implications of an email compared to face-to-face communication. You may be a mentor asking challenging questions, so you need to think how you can frame up the questions in a way that is not rude. You may need to check in regularly with the mentee that she understands what you are trying to say.

On the other hand, CMC can be quite liberating and allow you to disclose things that you might be too embarrassed to disclose in a face-to-face setting. Because you cannot see the person, you are not so quick to make judgments about her based on her physical appearance.

If you choose to communicate using asynchronous tools such as email, you will find that it is not necessarily less time consuming because you need to read the email and think carefully about how you will respond. However, email is more flexible and allows you to respond at a time convenient to you, as long as the response is within the time limit agreed with your mentor/mentee. Whilst you cannot be physically comforting ie give the person a hug, you can use words to be supportive.

Here are a few 'rules' to help you with your online communication:

- do not use inflammatory language
- do not use capital letters because that means you are shouting
- think carefully before you respond to a written communication – read your reply out loud before you send it, especially if you are unsure how it reads
- if you are offended in any way, ask the sender to clarify what she means – her meaning may be very different to how you understand it
- if you receive an upsetting communication, do not respond straight away – take time to consider your response

Developing your online relationship

When you first start communicating, you will need to introduce yourself and give information about who you are. It is up to you how much personal information you share. You may exchange photographs or videos of yourselves, your work places or where you live – that depends on how you want your mentoring relationship to develop.

In a face-to-face meeting, the mentor should review the previous meeting; focus on a given issue, explore it in depth; agree on action points and end by summarizing the session and reiterate action points (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). This can be a little more difficult with online communication, especially with text or email messages that fire back and forth, but the mentor may attempt a similar format with each thread of conversation

[a thread is a topic of conversation, which may run though a number of text messages or emails].

Evaluation of the relationship

For both mentors and mentees, it is worth reflecting at intervals on how you are performing in the relationship. Think in terms of what you can **start, stop** and **continue** in order to be a more effective mentor/mentee. This is also a simple formula to use with each other when you review your relationship.

Mentoring relationships some times do not work out. This may be for a number of reasons:

- mis-match of personalities;
- lack of understanding about the mentoring process or commitment to that process;
- overwhelming difference of philosophies, values and beliefs;
- lack of organizational support.

Mentors may be 'toxic' in that they manipulate the mentee; block her from learning and developing; criticize and belittle; are inaccessible and undermine her both in private and public (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000)..

Conversely, mentees may be overly dependent on the mentor or completely unresponsive (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000).

'No-fault' clause

In this mentoring scheme, we wish to emphasize that if a mentoring relationship does not work, blame will not be attached to either mentor or mentee. Neither participant will be made to feel that they have 'failed'. This is an important part of the mentoring contract

that is signed by both mentee and mentor. Participants will be contacted regularly by the eMentoring project officer, who will provide support, advice and debriefing, especially if the relationship does not work according to plan.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict can occur in any situation where two people work together, especially in what can be an intense relationship. It is important to work out whether this has occurred as a result of a misunderstanding, differing opinion or misinterpretation which can happen easily in online relationships. Working these issues out can be challenging, but ultimately can have a positive effect on the relationship. Conflict that turns into personal attacks have turned from being issue-based, to centered on personality. They are often irrational, caused by emotions such as anger and frustration.

Here are some ideas about how to deal with conflict within the mentoring realtionship (Brockbank & McGill, 1999; Triple Creek Associates, 2006).

- Maintain a supportive environment – do not be defensive.
- Do not be judgmental. Use 'I' statements because they explain your view points. Do not use 'you' statements because they can sound judgmental.
- Do not be haughty or patronizing.
- Do not comunicate when you are feeling angry.
- Have a clear plan of what you want to happen or achieve in your discussions.
- Be specific about why you feel there is conflict – use facts to explain your concerns, not vague accusations.
- Do not rehash past disagreements.
- Keep an open mind and carefully consider feedback.
- Acknowledge the legitimacy of the other person's views even if you do not agree with them.

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- Check that you fully understand the meanings behind messages you are giving and receiving.
- Use facts in your discussions and not opinions.
- Work out a goal that is agreed upon which may require a degree of compromise.
- Stay focused on mutual goals and do not be distracted into arguments.
- Agree on a time for reviewing the situation – if anyone is still unhappy, start the process again.
- Be prepared to 'agree to disagree' and to move on from that point
- Do not be rude or disrespectful.

Questions that may be asked to generate discussion.

- Do you believe that there is conflict?
- How do you feel about it?
- How do you feel we should resolve this?
- How should we resolve conflict in the future?

The advantage of text-based communications in the situation of managing conflict is that the issues can be clearly documented and are recorded for both participants to read in their own time. You can also take your time to respond, which hopefully will encourage careful consideration and resolution of the issues causing the conflict.

If conflict cannot be resolved within the mentoring relationship, project staff are available to act as intermediaries at the request of either mentor or mentee. Three-way online mediation 'meetings' are an option.

Activity: Think of a situation of where you experienced conflict. How did you manage it and how would you manage it differently now?

Giving and receiving feedback

Feedback is an important part of learning and professional development, and consequently is a fundamental element of a mentoring relationship.

Activity: Consider these questions.

- If you described the feedback you have received recently, what words would you use?
- What are the features of constructive feedback?
- What do you think colleagues consider as constructive feedback?
- Do we seek feedback on our performance?
- Do we seek feedback on our feedback?
- What are the consequences of destructive feedback?
- What are the consequences of constructive feedback?

Now, think of a situation where you have had to give a colleague feedback.

- Where did you do it?
- Who was there?
- What did you say/do?
- Do you think the feedback was constructive?
- What do you think the person heard you say?
- What long term effect do you think the feedback had?
- How would you do it differently?
- How would this feedback be given by online communication?

In a mentoring relationship, a mentor will give feedback about the mentee's development, ideas and practice. The mentee will also give feedback to the mentor about her

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performance as a mentor. Thus it is important that you have the skills to give and receive feedback effectively.

When giving feedback, there are a few guidelines to consider (Brockbank & McGill, 1999; Triple Creek Associates, 2006).

- Give feedback that should be of value to the receiver, not the giver.
- Plan what you are going to say – have a clear purpose for your feedback. Be clear about what feedback you are giving and why. Think about how you want your mentor/mentee to change. Also consider how you will evaluate the change.
- Be specific – general comments will not allow a person to learn what is wrong and act on it. So instead of saying "you are always late for our online meetings which really stresses me out", say "you are always late for our agreed meetings which makes me late for my next appointments".
- Be balanced - start with the positive. Do not use **but** because it undervalues all that has been already said. Limit the amount of negative feedback you give – if you overload the mentor/mentee with too much negative feedback, she is likely to ignore all the feedback. End your feedback email with a statement of support.
- Use language that will reduce defensiveness – focus on action/behavior, not one the person.
- Be relevant. Only give feedback on something that can be changed. If you give feedback on something that cannot be changed, that can be destructive leaving the mentee/mentor feeling frustrated and disempowered.
- Own the response – use "I" or "in my opinion" which means that you are taking responsibility for what you are saying.
- Be timely – give feedback as soon as possible after the interaction that instigates the feedback.
- Think about how you will react to the mentor/mentee's response to your feedback. Are you open to changing your opinion, and admitting that you have changed your mind?

- Once feedback has been received, work out together what the next steps will be ensuring that the mentor/mentee knows she has your ongoing support.

If you are the person giving the feedback, you may want to check how your mentor/mentee has received it, asking how she feels about it and how you can improve your feedback in the future.

Receiving feedback can be an uncomfortable and even painful process. However, it is important to give it due consideration. If we argue or reject feedback without reflection we will not learn or develop, which is one of the main aims of the mentoring relationship.

- When receiving feedback, do not jump to conclusions or become defensive. If you have any queries about what your mentor/mentee meant, ask her to clarify her meaning.
- You may wish to check out the feedback with others
- Ask for feedback on your performance if it has not been forthcoming.
- Decide what you will do with the feedback.

Ending the mentoring relationship

Mentoring relationships may vary considerably in length from six to 12 months to many years. As far as this project is concerned, the relationship will last four to six months. However, it may end naturally before that or continue long after the project has ended. In most cases the relationship ends because the mentee is ready to move on to the next stage of her development. The mentor and mentee continue to keep in touch with each other, but in different roles such as friends and colleagues.

The final interactions may include a summary of main points of learning and development from both the mentor and mentee's points of view:

- an evaluation of how goals have been met;

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- a clear agreement regarding future plans for keeping in touch, or not as the case may be;

- a plan for how the mentee is going to achieve her goals in the future.

There may be times when the relationship ends unsatisfactorily because of conflict or because a participant is reluctant to let go (becomes dependent on the mentee/mentor). If either situation occurs and cannot be resolved within the relationship, the project team can be asked to be intermediary.

Group/community mentoring

At times, it is not possible or desirable for one-on-one mentoring relationships. In this case, one mentor may work with a group of mentees. The group will come together with the mentor leading with reflective questions and feedback (Rolfe-Flette, 2008). The synergy that is produced by the different members of the group can add a different dimension to the mentoring process.

In the online environment, communication channels may involve synchronous meetings using web conference tools such as Elluminate (http://www.elluminate.com) and Skype (http://www.skype.com). Or, asynchronous meeting places such as:

- blogs (http://blogspot.com)
- wikis (http://www.wikispaces.com)
- community venues such as Ning (http://www.ning.com) or Facebook (http://www.facebook.com)
- email groups like Google Groups (http://groups.google.com).

Web sites with mentoring resources (accessed 16th February 2009)

I will develop a mentoring web site to add here before the handbook is published

http://www.3creek.com

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The Triple Creek Associates. This is a fabulous web site with work books that are great resources for mentors and mentees – a 'must' to look at.

http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/mentoring/policy_and_guidelines.asp#the_mentoring_policy

Mentoring at the University of Queensland. This web site has the guidelines for mentoring as a tool for staff development.

http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/ResourceCentre/Articles/Default.asp

The Coaching and Mentoring network has some useful articles if you want to know more about mentoring.

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A894BBCC1EFDF07CCA257070002F45D4/$File/mentor.pdf
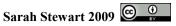
Mentoring for nurses in Australia – fact sheets.

http://www.icvet.tafensw.edu.au/resources/mentoring.htm

Mentoring resources that have been put together by Charlene Carpenter, TAFE NSW, South Western Sydney Institute.

http://www.mentoring-works.com

Ann Rolfe carries out mentoring workshops and has published books and guidelines for mentoring. This is her web site that allows you to download some very useful free resources.

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