



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
SLUŽBA VLADE REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE ZA RAZVOJ
IN EVROPSKO KOHEZIJSKO POLITIKO



Ekipa Maribor ljudi

LJUDSKA
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CELJE

Mentor, a NEET surprise for you!

A handbook on mentorship for working with
young people from vulnerable backgrounds



Univerza v Mariboru



MLADINSKI SVET SLOVENIJE



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Ekipa Aktivnih ljudi

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A NEET surprise – empowering and integrating NEETs into the labour market and developing comprehensive support mechanisms for NEETs as well as providing recommendations for systemic solutions.

Within the project A NEET surprise we aim towards the empowerment and social activation of NEETs (young people, who are “Not in Education, Employment or Training”) in the labour market and in their social environment.

The goal of the project is empowerment and social activation of NEETs which contributes to creating support mechanisms for NEETs as well as improving the education and social





environment intended for supporting disadvantaged groups. The empowerment and social activation of NEETs contributes to creating support mechanisms by different methods:

1. developing a comprehensive program for empowering NEETs based on selected training modules, psychosocial support and motivation modules for NEETs;
2. creating a two-track mentoring scheme involving a mentor from the youth sector and a counsellor from the Employment Service;
3. elevating the importance of career counselling (individual plan for education and job searching, preparing a resume, preparing a business plan) which involves partners at the intermediate and macro level;
4. integrating NEETs into the labour market by developing a model of empowerment and social activation based on four pillars (training – program; integration – counselling; encouraging employment/developing a business idea – mentorship; registration at the Employment agency; engaging in volunteer work – systemic aspect).

Concrete goals

1. Empowerment and social activation of at least 30 NEETs in the labour market

By creating a training program with different modules (soft skills, communication, entrepreneurship, computer and digital skills) we will include 30 NEETs, specifically targeting those who are not registered at the Employment agency. The training program, created by the University for Adult Education Celje, will be based on the system of mentoring. Every NEET will have two mentors:

1. a mentor from the ranks of youth workers for elevating informal skills of NEETs (National Youth Council of Slovenia);
2. a mentor from the ranks of the Employment agency for elevating formal skills of NEETs.

40 mentors will be included in the program. As part of the training program, the University for Adult Education Celje will also develop a system of counselling which includes both professional (preparing a resume, creating a professional profile) and personal (psychosocial) counselling. Great emphasis will be put on motivation in psychosocial counselling with the aim of boosting self-confidence and productivity of NEETs.



We expect all 30 NEETs to enter the labour market after the training program. In doing so, we aim to achieve the following goals:

1. at least two NEETs draw up a business plan;
2. at least eight NEETs engage in volunteer work in their local community;
3. at least four NEETs obtain employment;
4. at least ten NEETs register at the Employment agency and become active job seekers.

2. Including at least 40 mentors in the established mentoring scheme

As part of the project, by creating a training program and a mentoring scheme involving experts (counsellors) from the Employment agency, we will develop a comprehensive model for managing NEETs at an intermediate level. The mentoring scheme, involving at least 40 mentors (youth workers, counsellors), is a key component of a comprehensive model of social activation. The mentors will acquire new skills which will also become a valuable asset to their organisations (non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and public institutions alike) because they will enable them to proceed with the implementation of the comprehensive model of early intervention with the aim of preventing an increase in the percentage of NEETs in Slovenia, with emphasis on working in their local community.

3. Empowerment of at least 100 stakeholders on a systemic level with a new methodology for identifying the basic characteristics and needs of NEETs

Throughout the project, researchers at the University of Maribor – in collaboration with experts from the Employment agency – will develop a methodology for identifying the basic characteristics and needs of NEETs (complying with all the regulations, including GDPR) which will provide public institutions and state officials with a tool for creating projections and public policies in order to enable an early intervention. Specific policy recommendations, which will include a precisely defined comprehensive model on three levels for effective management of NEETs, will be prepared within the methodology for identifying NEETs. The methodology and recommendations alike will be disseminated to at least five ministries, 50 government officials, ten public institutions and 20 cross-border partners who work with NEETs.





The project will be taking place from 1st June 2022 to 30th April 2024. The project partnership includes the University for Adult Education Celje, the National Youth Council of Slovenia, the Employment Service of Slovenia and the Norwegian partner NOSCO/Norwegian Organisation for Supervision and Co-Operation.

The project is co-financed by the Norwegian financial mechanism.

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1. I, super mentor

1.1. Who is a super mentor?

How to approach mentorship, personality traits, skills of a good mentor

Mentor – a person who appears in different areas of expertise and in different periods of life, always with the main goal of imparting knowledge and skills through a structured learning process and relationship. It is undoubtedly one of the most common forms of experiential learning through a relationship, which has been used for different purposes for quite some time, and is most frequently mentioned in literature on education and economy. Some aspects of the relationship remain unchanged, even though the theoretical framework of the mentoring process has changed a bit and updated according to the guidelines of the swiftly developing world throughout the years. The standard models of mentorship have highlighted the importance and responsibility of the mentor, whereas the more recent models address the reciprocal responsibility for learning in the mentoring relationship. Therefore, both the mentor and the mentee are responsible for the learning, the process and the relationship. According to authors, the main points of the modern view on mentorship are:

- learning – a key element that requires a supportive environment;
- progress, which needs to be emphasized and focused on the future;
- reciprocity – learning, responsibility and contribution are mutual;
- communication directed at solving questions and dilemmas as well as searching for answers.

The shared responsibility of both stakeholders is reinforced with active participation in the mentoring process, which we describe through four phases: preparation, agreement, training and closing (Govekar-Okoliš in Kranjčec, 2012).

We need a super mentor for a productive mentoring process. In this chapter, we will address the most important qualities of a super mentor which are a major factor for determining whether the mentoring process will be successful and productive because they play an important role in providing a pleasant learning experience for both the mentor and mentee. The first and main principle in a mentoring process should be as follows: it is a learning process where both parties are involved in learning, they respect and build each other up.





In their childhood, individuals often identify with many different fairy-tale heroes and the figures, values and behavioural patterns from the early periods of their life stay with them even later in life. When asked about the reasons for choosing a certain hero, children usually list their positive qualities which express moral and ethical values and are connected to broad social activity. At first glance, the highlighted comparison may not offer a straightforward connection to the mentoring relationship, however, we can still draw some parallels. Children identify with the heroes they adore, they find qualities they like, desire or admire about the heroes and mirror them. They wish to acquire their knowledge, skills, competencies, strengths and values because they perceive the hero as ideal. We want to achieve that in the mentoring process as well. The success of the mentoring process predominantly depends on the mentee's desire to learn and acquire skills and knowledge from the mentor, however, the mentor themselves play an important role in the process. It is important that the mentor is aware of their mission and the responsibility of their role because the mentee – similarly as in the case of fairy-tale heroes – idolises the mentor in this process and consequently gives in to the mentoring relationship more spontaneously and confidently. It is crucial to be aware that making an impression on the mentee is not necessarily based solely on the professional qualifications of the mentor, factors like personality traits, establishing a connection with the mentee, the mentor's attitude towards the mentoring process in general and the values they communicate with their attitude are also important. All these elements play an important role in determining whether the process will be successful and they metaphorically explain how strongly the mentee will identify with the mentor and feel the desire to learn and follow the mentoring process.

Because mentorship is present in various sectors and professions, there are many different theoretical models that explain the mentoring process. Authors T. D. Allen and L. T. Eby (2007) came to the same conclusion while reviewing literature and discovered that numerous definitions all emphasized the same element of the process – the mentoring relationship. The theories all share the following features:

- the mentee cooperates with the mentor,
- they have a lasting mentoring relationship which continues to develop,
- the mentoring relationship is reciprocal yet asymmetrical, deep and harmonious.

The first and main determinant of the mentoring process is building a relationship which begins when the first contact of the two (or more) people involved is made. By doing so, we



form a basis for a relationship that will be an important starting point for successful communication, which is certainly the key element of any relationship, professional or personal. Establishing a relationship is therefore the primary element of the mentoring relationship, which is in the mentor's domain, and is an important factor when starting the mentoring process. Facilitating a positive first experience and forming a good basis for a relationship is essential to ensure successful and reciprocal exchanges of information. The point and goal we want to reach in a relationship is that both parties are heard, that they hear and listen. This is the only way we can ensure transparent and high-quality communication, which is key in the learning process.

The latter is also confirmed by research conducted by R. Lazowski and A. Shimoni (2007). The authors were determining the view and expectations of the ideal mentoring role on the part of mentors and the mentees alike. When listing, all the participants prioritised professional and personal traits as well as the mentoring relationship and the mentor's attitude towards their role. The latter, in fact, proved to be an important determinant and the participants expressed that the mentor's attitude is also reflected in their openness, encouragement and availability. The findings also confirm the importance of a quality mentoring relationship which is crucial for the mentees. The mentees strive for a feeling of equality, respect, proactivity and support in the relationship, because it enables them to gradually develop professional confidence and competence. In the survey, the mentees were asked about the most important role of the mentor during the process. Out of the four roles – teacher, counsellor, consultant and patron – they emphasized the role of the teacher because it is key for professional development.

1.2. How to approach mentorship

To make sure we have a good basis for developing a relationship, we need to pay attention to the following aspects when the first contact is being made.

- First contact

When first meeting the mentee, we pay attention to the example we are setting as mentors and we make sure to enable a positive first experience with the mentee because it will shape their opinion on both the mentoring process and us. We want the mentee to see us as someone who enables them to advance both on a personal and professional level, which is why the first impression is so important. At the first contact we briefly introduce ourselves and maintain appropriate eye contact and facial expressions. We are positive and confident





yet give the impression of availability. We alter the introduction according to the environment in which we will develop the mentoring process (formal, informal) and express our willingness to cooperating with the mentee. By doing so, we ensure that the mentee will also feel accepted and welcome and will be more relaxed and confident in the relationship. If we feel up to it, we can use some humour but in moderation.

- Body language

We hardly ever realise how many messages we convey through our body language, often unconsciously. We could argue that reading body language is instinctive and is one of the collective skills of people because understanding and expressing emotions is automatic at the physical level. Therefore, body language is also important at first contact for establishing the mentoring relationship. We pay attention to the handshake and an upright and confident posture and express affection with positive facial expressions. In doing so, we also respect the personal space of the mentee and adapt to them (hugging, sitting too close, etc.). We pay attention to how relaxed our body is and we regularly make eye contact with the mentee, however, we do not stare. We also pay attention to our tone of voice and the coordination of gestures and speech. The mentee will undoubtedly notice all these details and respond to them accordingly.

- Introduction

We briefly and concisely introduce ourselves to the mentee, emphasize our work or position in the company/organisation and present our role in the mentoring process. It's good to display sincere fondness for working with the mentee and to show willingness to learn and grow. That is how we emphasize and deepen the awareness of egalitarianism in the relationship, i.e. the equality between the mentee and the mentor. We wish to create a horizontal hierarchy in the relationship where both parties involved are relaxed, empowered, encourage each other and contribute to the development of an optimal learning environment. During the first interview we pay attention to how we express ourselves and our pace of speech, we follow and adapt to the mentee.

- Other important determinants of the mentoring relationship

Apart from the importance of making a pleasant first contact, the mentoring relationship is shaped by the mentee's personality traits and values, which are modelled in the relationship and passed on to the mentee – indirectly, directly, unconsciously or consciously. We can find



different concepts in literature on the important elements of a successful mentoring process. A slightly older concept – nevertheless, still quite appropriate – is the one provided by Kristančič and Ostrman (1998). The authors listed three areas that have a conclusive influence on establishing a good consulting relationship:

- types and styles of communication of the counselling mentor,
- emotions of the counselling mentor,
- the mindset of the counselling mentor.

It would be unreasonable to expect that all mentors have perfectly developed all the qualities and that they possess all these values, however, it is important to invest in the development of our own potential, to regularly include self-evaluation and to always strive for personal progress. The latter should serve as support for our own evaluation process and progress planning with the aim of achieving excellence in the role of a mentor.

Because of the variety of competence, it is clear that the role of the mentor is very diverse since they have to assume different roles and perspectives in various situations with the mentee. Nastran-Ule (1994) emphasizes the role of the leader as the most important one. The author states that the role can be viewed through three different prisms;

- *psychological prism, where the mentor also provides psychological support and is viewed as someone with whom individuals identify, the mentor is also the symbol of the group, which gives individuals a sense of security, self-confidence and approval;*
- *social prism, in which the mentor is the one who assigns tasks to the individuals in the group, resolves conflicts within the group and represents the group of individuals externally;*
- *professional prism of the mentor, which refers to the role of the expert and coordinator of activities, planning.*

2.3. Which personality traits should a super mentor have?

For this handbook, we have collected the personality traits we find important in the mentoring process, especially when working with young people who are not included in the educational process.

- Respect



Every good relationship is based on respect and it needs to be mutual. It is a fundamental and universal personality trait. This is precisely why it needs to be present in the mentoring relationship as well. Respect is not expressed only with the choice of words, addressing the individual and gestures, it is also conveyed through other standards of attitude. It is key when working with young people because they will feel the important equality in the relationship and trust the mentor and the process more easily.

- Responsibility

The role of the mentor is very demanding because it involves the care and responsibility for the mentee, their process of learning and developing. The mentor is the one in charge of encouraging, learning, directing and reacting in time, if need be, and is also responsible for achieving the final goal. The mentee also bears their share of responsibility because they are also an active member in the relationship and are mutually responsible for their success. The key, however, is the mentor's guidance towards the goal and providing meaningful feedback. The mentor's responsibility is both the mentees professional and personal development as well as the mentor's own growth, where honest feedback is crucial for improvement.

- Trust

One of the most important qualities is undoubtedly trust because it is one of the key elements of the mentoring relationship or any relationship for that matter. Trust is of the utmost importance in relationships where we have to share our personal experience, emotions, needs and desires, because we need to feel safe and accepted. Trust is a prerequisite for establishing a secure relationship. The mentee needs to feel safe in the relationship and trust the mentor so they can share their most intimate wishes about their career and personal goals as well as their fears and concerns about the process. This is where the mentor's attitude towards trust is necessary and essential for establishing an open and secure relationship throughout the entire mentoring process.

- Empathy

Empathy is one of the personality traits that foster trust in a relationship. It refers to the ability to take another person's perspective and understand their emotions and behaviour. This is also important in the mentoring process because it gives insight into the understanding of an individual's inner experience and the emotions they experience during a certain event. In more recent theories empathy is interpreted as a multidimensional construct consisting of a



cognitive, emotional and social component and related to altruism (Senese, De Nicola, Passaro and Ruggerio, 2016). With an empathic attitude and communication, it is easier to get closer to an individual when they are in crisis and provide them support and help more effectively. When explaining the concept of empathy, it makes sense to mention emotional intelligence, which is related to an individual's ability to perceive, evaluate, understand and respond accordingly in social situations. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of self-awareness, self-management, expressing emotions as well as empathy, motivation and social skills (Goleman, 1996). If the mentor wishes to grow in the relationship with the mentee, they need to monitor, assess, regulate and understand what they are experiencing and evaluate their own reactions and behaviour. People who actively develop and manage their emotional intelligence have a greater chance of developing their own potential, furthermore, they have better conditions for successfully managing relationships (Parvesh and Gopal, 2010). Empathy as well as the span of emotional intelligence are related to the successful coping with everyday stress and other non-normative situations. An emotionally empowered and stable individual will therefore be able to resolve disputes and disagreements in the mentoring process more easily while also being aware of their motivational tendencies as well as ways and effects of influencing other people, which is crucial in a mentoring relationship (Možina, 2001).

- Professional competence

The professional competence or expertise of the mentor in a certain field is crucial because it is the basic requirement for carrying out the mentoring process with the focus on the learning experience and imparting knowledge. Even though we stress the importance and quality of the mentoring relationship as a key factor in the process, the breadth and quality of knowledge that we want to impart through the relationship is also important. The role of a mentor can be taken by someone who possesses expert knowledge and skills in a certain field of expertise. Expert knowledge can be defined as specific knowledge, experience and effective problem solving within a certain profession (Swanson and Holton, 2001). Experts possess a set of related facts, knowledge, skills, experience, attitudes and value judgements that are directly connected to their work, furthermore, they need to be able to function properly in various situations (Herling and Provo, 2000). In addition to expertise, the skills of teaching, imparting knowledge and managing the mentoring process are also important because they are the complementary elements of the mentoring relationship which are a



crucial factor in separating mentorship from an ordinary learning process where we merely impart knowledge.

- Availability

Availability is a feeling which indicates that the person wants us to feel welcome. Based on the individual's behaviour towards us, we assess how open and receptive they are to other people, i.e. how approachable they are. In the mentoring relationship, the focus is on the teaching and guiding the mentee while the relationship remains reciprocal. This can only be achieved if the mentor makes themselves available and the mentee feels accepted. The mentor also needs to address and clearly express their availability and limit it if necessary. It will be easier for the mentee to adapt to and understand the dynamics of the relationship in a structured environment.

Graphic: diagram of personality traits

1.4. Key competence as the basic tool of a super mentor

Personality traits based on values are certainly a good foundation for establishing, shaping and maintaining a favourable and pleasing mentoring process, however, competence expressed through various roles of the mentor is also necessary for achieving the desired goal. Author K. Kram (1983) conceptualised the role of a mentor from the developmental-relational point of view and confirmed two fundamental functions: career and psychosocial. The first function is aimed at the professional development of the mentee, whereas the second function refers to the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Competence refers to the individual's ability to merge their own theoretical knowledge and acquired skills and apply them to a certain situation.

- Efficient communication

The effective transfer of information between two people is the core and basic driver of the mentoring relationship. The mentor and the mentee alike have to be able to express their needs, wishes, concerns and ideas as well as address them through appropriate and respectful communication. How smoothly the mentoring process will go and whether the mentee will achieve their goals depends on reliable and transparent communication.

The fundamental rules for effective communication are the principles of active listening.



- Mirroring or reflecting

This is one of the techniques of active listening where we show interest and attention in the conversation with the individual by mirroring their exact words. To put it simply, we repeat the thought we think is important, powerful or otherwise crucial for the individual's understanding of their own experience and therefore mirror it. In doing so, we always use the same words or phrases that the individual used. We aim to direct the individual's attention to certain parts of the conversation that are important in a specific context and parts the individual should be aware of. This technique is used to emphasize important statements (Bras, 1977, Vec, 2002).

Practical example

Mentee Jake: "I wasn't able to finish the assigned task because I had an extremely busy day. I wasn't able to focus and write the report. Mostly I have trouble with forming the financial plan of the project because I don't understand the gross and net sums. Could you explain that part to me, please?"

Mentor Eve: "Oh, I hear you had a busy day and had trouble focusing on writing the report."

Mentee Jake: "Yes, that's right. I've been having trouble concentrating for the last week and I feel like I'm drowning in work."

Mentor Eve: "All right, I'll help you. We'll make a plan together, put down the tasks you need to finish and decide which ones should be the priority. I'll also help you form the financial plan. Don't worry, you can do it!"

- Paraphrasing

When using the paraphrasing technique, active listening is expressed summarising the individual's story with other words. We focus on highlighting the main purpose of the message and briefly summarize it. This is a way of showing the individual that we are listening to their story, that we understand them and that we hear what they are saying. This is one of the basic therapeutic approaches used for easily checking whether we understood the message of the individual correctly. It is good to point out the emotions that were included in the story because this is a way of highlighting and emphasizing the individual's experience, which is crucial in a problematic situation.



Practical example

Mentee Jake: "I wasn't able to finish the assigned task because I had an extremely busy day. I wasn't able to focus and write the report. Mostly I have trouble with forming the financial plan of the project because I don't understand the gross and net sums. Could you explain that part to me, please?"

Mentor Eve: "Oh, it sounds like you're having some trouble and that some of the tasks are burdening you."

Mentee Jake: "Yes, that's right. I've been having trouble concentrating for the last week and I feel like I'm drowning in work."

Mentor Eve: "All right, I'll help you. We'll make a plan together, put down the tasks you need to finish and decide which ones should be the priority. I'll also help you form the financial plan. Don't worry, you can do it!"

- Asking open-ended questions

Asking open-ended questions in a conversation is important because it encourages elaborate answers and there is a bigger chance to find out what we want to. Open-ended questions begin with the interrogatives "what", "where", "who", "why", "how", "which", etc, whereas close-ended questions can only be answered affirmatively or negatively (with "yes" or "no"). Giving the individual cues for thinking and giving them space for their own contribution are also ways of building the conversation.

Open-ended questions to deepen the conversation:

"Which goals do you want to achieve in the mentoring process?"

"Why do you think so?"

"Which factors influence your decision, opinion, choice?"

"How would you describe the mentoring process?"

"What would you like to improve regarding your experience in the mentoring process?"





Even though there is less confusion regarding clear theoretical models in communication compared to mentorship, some authors have developed different ways of interpreting communication. One of the authors described communication through four perspectives:

- from the perspective of the process, where communication is understood as the transfer of information, ideas and emotions using symbols;
- from the perspective of understanding, where communication is a dynamic process that is constantly changing and through which parties understand each other;
- from the perspective of connection, where communication is understood as a process which enables different parts of the world to connect;
- from the perspective of acquiring power, where communication is understood as a mechanism for asserting power (Littlejohn, 1992).

Every individual has their own way of communicating and so do mentors. Each mentor decides how to communicate with the mentee based on the mentoring relationship, their own personality traits, the structure of the environment and the purpose of the established relationship. In theory, several different typifications of communication used by the mentors have been distinguished and covered in the following types:

- *precise mentor – they are concrete when giving instructions, which are clear and structured, there is a smaller chance of misinterpreting the message;*
- *“I” mentor – they often use “I” sentences in a conversation as they frequently describe situations from their point of view, their observations and reasons, they also describe the impact of the event on their own experience and therefore makes it easier to approach the mentee and encourage two-way communication;*
- *coherent mentor – they have a simple, transparent, concise and interesting way of communicating, the gist of the story is usually presented using fewer words while remaining comprehensible, furthermore, this kind of mentor often holds a leading position;*
- *objective mentor – they avoid their personal experience, subjective opinion and observations in communication, the latter is based on impartiality and fairness;*
- *intelligible mentor – a person with a clear insight into themselves and others as well as an understanding of their own and the mentee’s inner impulses, thinking, behaviour and emotions, they try to build and maintain a real dialogue, moreover, this type of mentor is usually successful and convincing;*



- *indirect mentor – they give the mentee space and time to express their experience, emotions and observations.*

Regardless of the type of mentor and communication, to ensure a successful mentoring process, it is essential that mentors evaluate the method of communication they use in their relationships with the mentees and try to optimise and adjust it to their own personality traits as well as the personality traits of the mentees (Brajša, 1983; v Govekar-Okoliš in Kranjčec, 2002).

- Teaching, encouragement and counselling

Competence, which refers to the mentor's capability of teaching, encouraging and counselling, is also the key to success. As already mentioned, the mentoring process is almost always established with a learning goal the mentee tries to reach throughout the relationship. As already mentioned, the mentoring process is usually established with a learning goal that the mentee tries to achieve through the relationship. At the same time, the mentee has a personal supporter, teacher and encourager by their side, who guides them through the process. It is very important that we agree at the beginning which goals the mentee will pursue in the relationship and which method of communication suits both the mentor and the mentee. The mentee's goals – not the mentor's goals – always need to be in the foreground, as this ensures an internal locus of control, which plays an important role in maintaining the mentee's internal motivation in achieving the goal. The mentor must independently judge when it makes sense to provide support, which must be appropriately timed and located. In any case, the mentee will need more support and support at the beginning, but it is important that the mentor knows how to slowly allow them more and more autonomy in their work throughout the process. Indeed, autonomy is a very powerful tool with which we communicate to the individual that we trust them and believe that they will be able to complete a certain task on their own. This gives them additional self-confidence and motivation to believe in themselves, and as a result, they will more easily overcome all obstacles on the way to the goal. The special wisdom of mentoring lies precisely in the fact that, as a mentor, we know how to distance ourselves and not intervene in the process when this is not absolutely necessary. With this, we indirectly encourage the individual and offer them the possibility of their own learning experience. However, regular monitoring of progress and development is essential, as this is the only way we will be able to assess whether our techniques and methods have been successful and whether they need to be



further adjusted for a successful process. We always provide the mentee with resources they can use and rely on. The latent dimension that directs the entire process must be one's own desire to pass on knowledge and skills, sincere goodwill, and the desire for one's own and the mentee's personal and professional growth. Precisely the latter could be defined within the framework of the concept of generativity, which the author Erikson (1950) initially defined as one of the stages of psychosocial development and refers to concern for the establishment and management of the next generation. Usually, this tendency is manifested in the choice of the role of parent, teacher and mentor (Huta and Zuroff, 2007). It is a personality trait that has proven to be a very strong predictor of an individual's social responsibility, their competence in socially responsible leadership, and a predictor of successful learning outcomes for the mentee or students (Rossi, 2001, Hastings and Sunderman, 2019, Dreschsler et al., 2011; NASPA and ACPA, 2004).

- The urgency of feedback

A fundamental rule of continuous improvement is the importance of establishing a culture of feedback. Insofar as we as a mentor strive for a process that ensures continuous improvement of ourselves and the mentee, we must place regular feedback at the core of the mentoring relationship. Since it is a slightly more vulnerable content, it makes sense to follow the golden rules of giving feedback, described below.

- Good intentions and respect

Feedback should always be given in a sincere and well-intentioned manner, with the aim of helping the other person progress in personal or professional development. We provide feedback on a certain action or situation only when we assess that it is absolutely necessary for the individual's personal progress, and we want to give them the opportunity to improve. It often happens, especially in unfavourable situations, that we have a tendency to give feedback, because an event burdens us or we want to express our dissatisfaction with the process or the outcome. Here, it is essential to first determine how the feedback will affect the person in question, what will be different for them and what we want to achieve with the person.

- Agreed-upon method of providing information

Giving information about an individual's success or failure can be a very vulnerable and difficult content for someone, and they may not be able or willing to accept it due to their





predispositions. This is precisely why it is essential that the mentor and the mentee agree on giving feedback in advance, specify the method and execution, and commit to giving feedback regularly. It makes sense that the mentor is the main initiator of the process and presents the concept and purpose of regular feedback to the mentee in an appropriate way. Thus, from the very beginning, it provides the possibility of creating a favourable culture of feedback in a mentoring relationship, which significantly contributes to open, transparent and effective communication.

“Hi” or “greetings”?

“Bye” or “regards”?

- Appropriate place and time

When giving feedback, we need to ensure that we provide the appropriate space and time, as this is the only way to ensure that our message is heard. If we start giving feedback to the mentee in front of other employees and in an exposed public place, there is a greater chance that the other person will not want to hear the feedback, as they will feel embarrassed, exposed, and may put themselves in a defensive position due to the feeling of attack. Therefore, it is crucial that we ensure a quiet space, that the time is appropriate and that both people feel good. Only in this way will important and well-intentioned information be heard and accepted.

- “I” sentences

It is not only important when and where we give feedback, but above all in what way it is given. It also depends on how the speaker will perceive us on the other side, whether they will be able to recognize in our words that we wish them well and that we are giving them information about their success or failure with the aim of optimizing their own performance. When giving our own opinion, it makes sense to take into account the structure of the "I" sentence, which allows the individual to more easily understand our feelings, thoughts and point of view in a given situation. With "I" sentences, we communicate our feelings in a given situation, while not shifting the blame onto the speaker, thereby reducing the possibility of a defensive reaction. It consists of three parts:

- we point out behaviour that we perceive as inappropriate or inappropriate in relation to the given situation (“When you don't take my advice seriously, ...”);





- the emotions we feel when this happens (“... I feel sad and angry, ...”);
- the consequences we feel as a result of this behaviour (“... because I have a feeling that you do not perceive me as a competent mentor.”).

It is quite clear that various theories and models have been developed in the field of mentoring, which interpret the mentoring relationship from different points of view. Nevertheless, there are some common characteristics of mentoring that Eby, Rhodes and Allen (2007) have identified.

- Mentoring is a unique relationship between two individuals, and each mentoring is unique, as it involves the involvement of two unique individuals who exchange knowledge with each other. Some mentoring relationships are so deep and rich that they can change an individual's life, while others are a bit more superficial or even destructive.
- Mentoring is a learning partnership – although it takes place in different settings and the goals can be very broad and varied, almost all of them involve the acquisition of knowledge. Learning is effective in a favourable mentoring process, while sometimes one or both may perceive the mentoring relationship as inadequate and the learning experience is not guaranteed.
- Mentoring is a process in which the main role is played by the way in which the mentor supports the candidate. The mentor's skills and functions in the relationship are divided into two main poles: professional or instrumental (e.g. informing, exposing the mentee) and psychosocial or emotional pole (e.g. friendship with the mentee, acceptance of the mentee).
- Although the mentoring relationship is mutual, it is still asymmetrical – despite emphasizing the learning experience for both, the primary goal is the growth and development of the mentee.
- The mentoring relationship is dynamic and changes over time – the longer it lasts, the stronger the impact of mentoring.

1.5. Preparing for the mentoring process

The decision to become a mentor is certainly exceptional, but it also brings with it certain organizational and logistical obstacles, which can be solved with good planning. In this chapter, we will address precisely how to organize the work well, so that the mentoring



process does not affect or complicate one's own work and at the same time provides the mentee with everything they will need.

- Organization and time management

Mentoring brings certain responsibilities and a new person to focus our attention, energy and time on. As a result, it is imperative that we organize our time optimally, as this is the only way we will be able to provide optimal support to the mentee and protect ourselves from unnecessary stress and burnout. Before the first meeting, it makes sense to first check the time and logistical options ourselves, with which we can provide the mentee with enough support and time to be able to successfully achieve the learning goals. Let's mark the dates and possibilities when we could have time for the mentee, while taking into account that the meetings will be more frequent at the beginning, and over time the mentee will in principle need less support interventions, which will also mean fewer meetings and meetings with the mentee. Before starting the mentoring process, we must also prepare accordingly. It is a good idea to make a list of things that we need to agree on with the mentee at the beginning, and to write down the information that we must give to the mentee at the beginning. If we introduce a mentee to a company or organization, we must inform all other employees before the start of the arrival and prepare them for the fact that a new person will enter their work environment. We also inform the mentee about this.

- Communication channels

Before starting the process, we have to decide how and when we want to communicate with the mentee. It is healthy to set clear boundaries, because this way the mentee will also feel better and will have easier and faster access to help if they find themselves in trouble. However, we will protect ourselves against the possibility of excessive workload and constant readiness, which is not healthy in the long term and does not maintain the mentoring relationship, because due to the abundance of obligations, we can become unproductive and ineffective, which would significantly affect our ability to offer support to the mentee. It is good to agree on the final method and method of communication together with the mentee and also take into account their wishes and needs. In addition to the method of communication, it is also necessary to agree on formalities or informality of communication. It's okay to judge for ourselves what suits us and what doesn't, and communicate this clearly to the person on the other end. It's okay to feel good and set clear boundaries, which we also express and explain. Together with the mentee, we decide on the basic etiquette in the



relationship, which will delineate the boundaries of the relationship and enable clear and effective communication.

Graphic design: different communication channels; e-mail, phone, letter?, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger? Etc.

- Friendly welcome and establishing a routine

As we have already mentioned several times, the first contact of the two participants depends on how they will feel in the relationship in the continuation of the process. It is precisely for this reason that the mentor has the responsibility to extend a sincere welcome to the mentee upon arrival and express affection and a positive attitude towards the mentee through verbal and non-verbal communication. If the mentee will be part of a larger organization, it makes sense to introduce them to other colleagues upon arrival and to have the opportunity to chat with them briefly. These little tricks are important for the mentee's well-being, which will in turn have a positive effect on their desire to learn and belonging in the mentoring relationship. If the mentee will stay longer in the organization, it makes sense to gradually include them in all important traditions and rituals that employees have (special surprises on birthdays, weekly drinks, team building at the end of the year, etc.). At the beginning, it makes sense to devote some time in the relationship to coordinating the work routine, which can make it much easier for the new person to organize and understand the operation of the mentoring process, and at the same time, with the help of a precisely and sensibly arranged schedule for the day, week or month, they can find their way more easily and be introduced to the work area more quickly. The defined routine is like a compass for the individual, by which it will be easier to orient oneself and find oneself at the beginning of the process.

1.6. Potential challenges in the mentoring process

In this chapter, we would like to draw your attention to the potential challenges that mentoring brings with it. The more informed we are, the easier it is to prepare and the more likely the process will run smoothly without unexpected problems. Below are listed the most common challenges in the field of mentoring and measures that can be taken preventively.

- Setting personal boundaries and preventing burnout

We have already mentioned the importance of setting healthy boundaries in the mentoring relationship several times, because for the sake of mental and physical health it is essential to know our capabilities and limitations. In the long run, exceeding our personal capabilities



does not bring us anything good and positive, and burnout can hit us before we fully realize how deep we have fallen. Therefore, prevention is absolutely necessary. Clearly expressing your needs and setting time and logistical frameworks regarding the communication and accessibility you offer must be openly communicated to the mentee and adhered to. If you express a wish that you are not available during the weekends, and then respond to messages nonetheless, the mentee may mistakenly think that you are also available then, and expect the latter in the future as well. Of course, the situation can also be reversed. Regardless of who is on which side, however, this creates unclear boundaries that lead to confusion and the destruction of personal agreements in the relationship. As a result, the compass of communication and behaviour in the relationship is lost and the latter can bring a lot of dissatisfaction for both parties. In addition, the mentor must remain aware that the mentoring role represents only a small part of their personality, just as the professional identity is only a part of our overall identity. Internalizing this fact is a good and healthy cue for acting in the mentoring process.

- Mentorship or friendship?

Depending on the different environments in which the mentoring relationship takes place, the levels of formality at which the relationship is developed are also different. At the beginning, it is advisable to emphasize that the level of formality is definitely a joint decision between the two stakeholders, but it often happens that the relationship develops into an informal friendship. It would be inappropriate to judge whether the latter makes sense or not, as each mentoring relationship is unique and in each mentoring relationship both parties consciously decide how deeply they want or do not want to develop the relationship. It is reasonable to emphasize that the mentor must clearly express at the beginning of the process to the extent that it is their wish and need to maintain the relationship on a professional level.

- Understanding the difference between coaching and a mentoring relationship

One of the most common mistakes in understanding mentoring is to confuse this process with others – it is often equated with coaching or consulting. Despite some parallels, there are clear differences between what coaching is and what a mentoring relationship is. Coaching is key to getting to know the social and organizational environment, and the role of coaching is also in developing and strengthening the mentee's personal capital. Mentoring differs from coaching in that it is a broader and more complex concept that includes getting to know and introducing the mentee to the organization, getting to know work tasks and colleagues. In





addition, the mentor's task is also to plan and monitor career and professional development. Modern teaching methods are usually present in the mentoring process, which include training for specific skills, and this is where mentoring and coaching begin to closely intertwine. Coaching is usually used in training to acquire a certain skill, either in a professional (complicated technical process in a technical company) or private (time management for better organization of time) environment. It is usually based on the mentor's specific and well-defined knowledge of a skill, which they must pass on to another person through a structured process. The basic goal of the process is usually achieved when the mentee acquires a skill in coaching. The latter points to the fact that the basics of coaching are certainly also used within the mentoring process, as the mentor, among other things, takes care of the transfer of skills to the mentee (Allen et al., 2009, Podlesek, 2016).

1.7.1, mentor of a group of NEETs

As we have pointed out several times, mentoring is certainly a responsible and important role, even more so when we work with a vulnerable population of young people. NEETs or young people who are not involved in education or training or they are not employed, they definitely belong to a more vulnerable population and have specific needs, also in the field of mentoring. This is precisely why it is essential that mentors are aware of this before entering the mentoring process with NEETs, prepare accordingly and empower themselves with additional knowledge and skills. We would like to emphasize that all the ingredients and components of a good mentor, which we listed in the first chapter, are essential for any mentoring relationship, however, when working with a vulnerable population, we must place even more emphasis on empathic relationship building and appropriate and effective communication. It is precisely this human factor that can have a decisive influence on the quality of the mentoring relationship, and it is precisely on the latter that it depends on how successfully the mentee will achieve the set goals in the mentoring process.

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2. Our organisation – a mentoring organisation

2.1. Purpose of mentoring and effects for the organization

The host organization is the organization in which the mentor is employed or works as a volunteer.

Responsibilities of the host organization:

- appointing a mentor in their ranks;
- enabling the mentor to participate in training for mentors;





- the program of work with young people within the framework of the project A NEET surprise is included in the work tasks of the mentor;
- providing the participant with basic materials and equipment for work (desk, computer);
- when possible, involving the participant in internal training.

2.2. Why mentorship in an organisation?

What does mentoring bring to the organisation and what effects does it have?

- Mentoring should be an integral part of the organization's strategy, as mentoring programs in organizations represent a strategic advantage in attracting new talent;
- it presents an effective tool for identifying existing potentials;
- it supports incoming professionals and strengthens the knowledge and skills of existing employees;
- it builds an inclusive mentoring culture, focused on learning, sharing ideas and creating a common vision and goals;
- it reduces exclusion and neglect, increases commitment, development of competences, self-confidence and thus psychological resilience of employees.

2.3. Key steps of introducing mentoring programs in organisations

- Defining the purpose and goals in accordance with the organisation's strategy, vision and goals;
- defining the basic characteristics of the program;
- communicating about the mentoring program within the organization;
- a number of mentors and mentees;
- creating mentoring pairs;
- training mentors and mentees;
- implementing the program;
- defining the success of the program.





It is important to be aware of the organization's responsibility if it commits itself to the mentoring process, to allow the mentor time to support them in the process and to upgrade their work by adapting certain processes to the mentee.

It is important that the mentee feels at home and safe in the organization, so that they can plan their learning effects and their progress.

How can you make sure that the participant feels good in the organization?

- invite them to team meetings;
- create a curriculum;
- ask what they want to learn;
- explain how your work is done;
- agree that working with mentees requires time and plan it in your weekly schedule;
- give the mentee the opportunity to get to know the culture of your organization and get involved in it.

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3. Planning the mentoring process

In this part of the manual, we focus on elements that will help us in planning the mentoring process.

To do this, we will examine:

- steps of the mentoring process;
- stages of development of the relationship between mentor and mentee;
- challenges that arise in practice;
- tips and tricks from experienced mentors;
- specifics of the NEET population;





- motivation for changes;
- ethical concerns.

The steps of the mentoring process will help us structure the mentor's work and understand what should happen at the beginning, middle and end of the mentoring process.

An overview of the development phases of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee will allow a deeper insight into the background processes that occur simultaneously in the mentoring process, and present this relationship as the most powerful tool used in the mentoring process.

Then we will focus on bridging theory and practice and examine the most common challenges that arise in mentoring practice and consider how to deal with them, highlighting some additional tips and tricks from practice.

It is important to keep in mind that we are focused on mentoring a specific and quite diverse population, young NEETs. Therefore, we will provide some thoughts on the specifics of mentoring young NEETs that we should be aware of when working with them.

One of the important roles of a mentor is to motivate the mentee, and in order to do this, we will look at the motivation for change and the model of the stages of change.

Finally, every professional relationship also raises ethical concerns. We will examine the basic principles of the mentoring process and the main ethical issues that arise in practice.

3.1. Steps of the mentoring process

1. Before the beginning of mentorship

Before mentoring begins, the mentor must take a conscious step toward organizing a formal program for mentees. This is where critical decisions are made regarding the type of mentoring program, participants, resources, etc. for optimal results.

On the other hand, it is important that you as a mentor think about what you personally bring to mentoring. What are your competencies, values, beliefs? Where are you emotionally right now, what are your capacities?

What is your previous mentoring experience? What is your previous experience working with NEETs? What do you bring to this relationship? What are you worried about? What are you looking forward to?





2. Meeting

The first meeting between mentor and mentee is really important. Think about the power of the first impression – that's why we already touched on it in the first chapter of the manual, and special techniques you can use when getting to know each other are also presented in the fourth chapter.

The purpose of this step is twofold: to clarify roles, expectations, and logistics, and to set the tone for the mentoring process. Concretely, this means that both mentor and mentee must share and understand who is who, why they are there, what their expectations are from this process, and agree on how they will work and communicate. Some of these elements, especially those that consider logistics, may change over time. Your expectations of the process will definitely change as you begin to delve deeper into the process. But the key is to ensure clarity.

Of course, you won't get to know each other on the first meeting. As we have mentioned before (and we'll say a few more times), a key component of the mentoring process is the relationship between mentor and mentee. Getting to know each other, developing relationships, building trust and creating safer spaces are long-term processes in which it is important to invest all the time.

3. Setting goals

This step may take several sessions. The emphasis is on setting goals that you will achieve together in the rest of the mentoring process. These goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. You can read more about SMART goals in the fourth chapter. In order to arrive at the goals, you need to explore the challenges the mentee is facing, as well as explore what they would like to achieve.

Your most important tool in this process is asking questions. More on the specific research and open-ended questions you can use can be found in Chapter Four.

4. offering support

In this step, mentors and mentees meet at frequent intervals to share knowledge and achieve their predetermined goals. Here it is very important to go back to expectations and communicate very clearly what you can and cannot offer. In this step, the mentor should not only support the mentee in achieving their goals, but also carefully encourage their



motivation, because in this phase, after increasing the set goals, it can drop significantly when the first challenge appears.

5. Evaluation and closure

One of the very important elements of the mentoring process is providing feedback. While this is an integral part of the overall relationship, it should be at the fore here. Especially when the mentoring process is coming to an end, as it needs to be evaluated, the mentee's progress honestly assessed and the relationship closed. This can be a very emotional process for both parties. It is important to acknowledge this and discuss the next steps – how the mentee will continue their journey independently after the end of the mentoring process.

3.2. Stages of development of the mentoring process

Research by Hubble, Duncan and Miller (1999) shows that attitude is 7 times more powerful as a change agent than any technique. Successful mentoring relationships go through several phases that build on each other and vary in length.

A) Initiation

In this phase, the mentor and mentee informally discuss some of their shared values, interests, dreams and goals. At that time, a common agreement is formed on how you want to cooperate. A good mentor will enable the reflection of expectations, fears and needs and will take this as a starting point for a joint agreement.

Establishing confidentiality is also important at this stage. It must be very clear to the mentor which content is confidential and which they will have to share or to report on it outside. A typical example of this going beyond a confidentiality agreement is when a mentee says they will harm themselves or someone else. Clarifying what is confidential and being precise and clear about what is not will help develop trust.

What really accelerates the development of a mentor-mentee relationship is taking the time to set at least one achievable goal in your relationship together. What do you both want out of this relationship? It's also a good idea to help your mentee set personal goals. This can be another opportunity to set goals and work towards them.

B) Negotiation



At this stage, there may be a lack of communication or communication difficulties. The mentee may be reluctant to trust mentors and may try to manipulate them.

As a mentor, it is important to ensure predictability and consistency. Consistency is necessary to speed up the process of building trust, even if the mentee is not as consistent as you.

It is often the case at this stage that the mentee is testing the mentor to see how they will react. The mentee may not come to the scheduled meeting or may arrive late. This happens when the mentee uses a coping or defence mechanism to determine if they can trust you. He's basically testing you to see if you care about them. Be firm and commit to the mutual agreement you created at the beginning.

C) Growth

We talk about this stage when trust is established. At that time, the mentor and the mentee start working towards the goals they set in the first phase of the relationship.

In this phase, mentor and mentee can feel a genuine closeness in their relationship. This does not mean that the relationship is perfect. There may be some difficult times. Mentors should be prepared for this and not assume that there is something wrong with the relationship if this happens.

If, as a mentor, you find that your relationship has reached this level, affirm its uniqueness. You can also do something together to celebrate an achievement in your relationship. This may mean that at the end of the meeting you treat yourself to chocolate or symbolically exchange encouraging messages.

D) Conclusion

It is crucial not to overlook the closing phase. Many young people, especially in the NEET population, have already experienced adults come and go in their lives, and very rarely are they given the opportunity to say a proper goodbye.

Tips for the final part:

- pay attention to when the relationship should end;
- find a personal way to express your feelings about the mentoring process;
- say thank you;





- even if you are disappointed with the outcome, recognize and express the positive benefits you have gained as a result of the mentoring relationship;
- take time to reflect on what you have learned and figure out what you will do differently in another mentoring relationship;
- celebrate.

3.3. Challenges that arise in mentoring practice

- The mentor and the mentee do not take time to devote to the relationship.

This is probably one of the most common challenges. This is usually the result of either the mentor not being able to be fully present at the meetings, or the mentee not recognizing the potential fruits of this type of support and holding back. Not only will this have less impact, it can be very stressful for both parties. In the mentoring sessions, share what is currently weighing on you. Of course, sometimes this is not possible due to great emotional intensity. In this case, you better think about whether you are ready for this kind of relationship. Maybe you don't have the capacity at this point, but would be involved in mentoring, or the focus of mentoring needs to change.

- The mentor and the mentee do not get along well.

This can be due to different personalities, different expectations, we can irritate each other with our experiences, behaviour or personality traits. If this happens, open the conversation in mentoring sessions. Be fair and try to get the mentee another mentor.

- Establishing a relationship and setting boundaries.

Boundary setting is especially common during the negotiation phase, when the mentee may begin testing the mentor. If the mentor does not "earn" respect, the mentee may become rebellious and test them further. Be very specific when creating a common agreement, because this is the moment to come back to it. Remind the mentee of what you have agreed and indicate next steps if necessary. Use "I" statements in communication. Occasionally, mentees report that they have the feeling that the mentors just give them tasks and then check whether they have completed them. The emphasis must really be on supporting people in this process, and it is also important to appropriately escalate the complexity of the tasks.

- The mentor does things instead of the mentee.



This is usually done with good intentions, but unfortunately it is a disservice. The mentee should develop new skills and be empowered to do things on their own. If you find yourself doing this, consider your motivation behind it. Where does your need come from? How can you better support a mentee to learn to be independent?

- The mentor adheres too strictly to the mentoring plan.

It is important to think and update the plan on the fly. Life is not black and white and contexts change. Maybe something you planned is no longer important, or something else has become a pressing issue. Be stubborn about your vision, but flexible about your plan.

- Lack of feedback.

Feedback is information given to a person about performance against set goals or outcomes. The goal of feedback should be to create improvements in the person's learning. Without honest and relevant feedback, the mentee will not be able to grow and progress.

- Adjusting expectations.

Both mentors and mentees can have unrealistic expectations throughout the process. This often has to do with the relationship becoming more personal. The mentee may expect more support from the mentor, or the mentor may "want more" from the mentee. Invest time in setting expectations early on to avoid this. Think regularly about expectations.

Extra tips

- Consider the frequency of meetings. Between one meeting and another, there should be enough time for the mentee to complete the tasks you have agreed on, but not too much so that they do not lose motivation.
- The place where you meet can also affect the speed of establishing a relationship. If you're meeting in the office, try a plant or offer cookies to make the meeting a little less formal. Also consider potential distractions. Turn off your phone and tell your co-workers not to disturb you.
- Sometimes the language used by the mentor may be too professional for the mentee to understand. Try to explain complex concepts more simply and see if the person understands you. When you talk to your mentee, mirror the words they use.



- Consider the time of day you meet with the mentee. Maybe an early morning meeting isn't the best idea if your mentee doesn't function well before drinking coffee or has to catch public transportation even earlier to get to the meeting.
- At the beginning, agree on how you will communicate. Will you be communicating via email, phone calls or otherwise? Which channel should the mentee use to send homework? Also check with the mentee if they know how to use a certain channel.
- Accept the silence, because maybe the mentee just needs some time to think things through, or it might help if they take some notes during the conversation. Check out what might help them.

3.4. Motivation for change

In the broadest sense, motivation explains why someone behaves in a certain way at a certain moment (Beck, 2003). Even in this definition, some elements of motivation can be observed, which is related to behaviour and changes over time.

Bertolino (1999, after Žižak, 2010) lists some other characteristics of motivation. It is specific, variable, interpersonal and can be internal or external. When we say that motivation is specific, it means that a person is motivated for a specific thing. In the context of mentoring, for example, they can be motivated for only one area. This is very useful because the mentor can praise the mentee if they notice an increased interest in the mentee in an area. They can suggest that they research this area by themselves, start a conversation about it, etc. The mentor can also check which elements of this field the mentee is interested in, so that they can adjust their approach in other fields as well (Žižak, 2010).

Motivation is also variable, so it will not be the same in all phases of the mentoring process, but it will certainly not be constant. In practice, this means that the mentor must work on motivation throughout the entire process.

In addition, it is interpersonal, i.e. dependent on other people, and is influenced by various factors.

We distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Internal motivation comes from ourselves, and the goal of action is in the activity itself. We want to achieve something that interests us, we want to develop our skills, learn something new and understand it. The process is often more important than the results and can be a source of satisfaction in itself.



Extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour driven by external rewards. These rewards can be tangible, such as money or grades, or intangible, such as praise or fame.

Motivation is an essential part of the change process. It is the stimulus for the focus, effort and energy needed to move an individual through the entire process of change, and implies the existence of a desire and willingness to do something.

When it comes to NEETs, we are mainly talking about motivation for change. Simply put, motivation to change is a person's desire to change their behaviour.

In the next few pages, we present a model of rates of change. This model provides an integrative framework for understanding the process of behaviour change that involves the initiation, modification, or reduction of certain forms of behaviour.

This can be a great tool for mentors as they can gauge where the mentee is at and encourage them to move to the next level.

Phase 1 – recontemplation

At this stage of the behaviour change process, the mentees are unaware of the problem and do not want to think about it, as it discourages them from taking action, or they have decided that it is not beneficial for them to change their behaviour. They do not feel that the negative consequences of their behaviour have outweighed the positive ones, which is why mentees are often characterized as resistant to change.

Advice for mentors

Your task is to find out why the mentee feels resistance and to redirect this resistance in a positive direction. The reasons for resistance in precontemplation are best explained within the 4R model. Each of the above ways of thinking and feeling supports the mentee in resisting change.

4R model (reluctance, rebellion, resignation and rationalization)





a) Reluctance

Due to a lack of knowledge, the mentee does not want to think about changes, cannot manage the risk that changes bring, or is completely unaware of the negative effects of their own behaviour. They are passive, they do not want changes.

Advice for tutors

It is good to use active listening, feedback and empathy techniques.

b) Resistance

The mentee is often aware of their problems and behaviour and the consequences that the latter brings. Their behaviour is hostile and strongly dismissive. They often quarrel with the mentor, makes it clear that they do not want to participate in the change and lists a whole list of reasons why they do not intend to change.

Advice for mentors

The mentee should be encouraged to freely express strong feelings about the changes and, by the way, direct them in a positive direction. For example, having the mentor agree with the mentee that no one can force them to change can often reduce resistance to the mentor, as well as to the process. The best approach is to create a list of options for change and encourage the mentee to make several small changes rather than introducing a "quick fix". The mentee should be encouraged to see for themselves the reasons for and against the change and make a decision based on this. This is an unobtrusive way of encouraging the mentee to consider all options and take responsibility for the situation.

c) Resignation

The mentee has given up on changes and believes that it is too late for them.

Advice for mentors

Instilling hope and exploring barriers to change is most productive. It is important for the mentee to realize that repetition is part of change, not failure. Many people go through the stages of motivational interviewing several times before adopting a change as a lifestyle, and each attempt is a learning opportunity. Often the key to success in working





with such a mentee is building confidence through advice and decision-making support, and rewarding every success they achieve, no matter how small.

d) Rationalization

The mentee does not consider change because they think they have thought enough about the personal risks involved in their behaviour, or they believe that their behaviour is a normal reaction to the behaviour of others. A mentee who rationalizes things gives false answers to questions about their feelings and thoughts. They are willing to discuss their views because it benefits them by reinforcing their initial opinions even more.

Advice for mentors

The best techniques for working with such mentees are empathy and reflection. The ideal strategy is for the mentee to list the good things that come out of their behaviour. Then they can understand that we have no intention of arguing with them and that we understand that their behaviour has a purpose. When they list all the good points of their behaviour, they tend to be more open to discussion. Reflecting on and highlighting the ambivalence helps them realize that some of their reasoning is skewed.

Phase 2 – thinking

In this phase, the mentee grapples with thoughts about the problem, the causes and what are possible

solutions. The mentee is often aware of the bad consequences of their behaviour, but persists in them nonetheless.

This is the phase in which the key goal is for the mentee to become aware of their ambivalence or identify and explore it and to explore the relationship between personal goals, values and current behaviour.

Once the mentee realizes the benefits of the change, it is important to highlight the losses that come with the change. Key techniques are active listening, summarizing, feedback, reflection, giving confirmation/permission, talking about experimenting with 'changed behaviour'.

Advice for mentors





First of all, it is important to find out how long the mentee has been thinking about the change and whether they have already tried to take steps towards the change. It is important that they are aware of the risks that their behaviour entails. Describe in detail their behaviour and its impact on the lives of others around them, emphasize the positive results that come with change, and point out that change is possible.

Phase 3 – preparation

In this phase, the person must develop an individual change plan. A large proportion of mentees are at this stage determined to make a change. The challenge is to create a plan for change that is acceptable, accessible and effective.

Advice for mentors

The basic task is to help the mentee in creating a creative effect of the change plan, including taking into account their life circumstances and past experiences with changes. Designing several options is the best approach, as the mentee has the option of choosing the one that is most acceptable to them. The mentor can also offer plans from other people who are facing similar challenges and have managed to change some of the timelines. It is necessary to listen carefully to the mentee and to think and develop trust, because at this stage they need security and support. Many motivational researchers have found that we humans are much more motivated when we have at least two or three choices, not just one (Miller, 1985; McMurren, 2002).

Phase 4 – taking action

At the beginning of the phase, the mentee makes a key change, e.g. stops drinking, smoking, etc. They implement the plan they prepared together with the mentor and actively participate in the change. Works towards achieving goals for change. This phase seeks to enable awareness of self-efficacy by focusing on the mentee's activity, validating one's own decisions to change, and attributing success to one's own intrinsic qualities, motivations, and effort.

Advice for mentors





It is important that the mentee receives external recognition and support or to get a prize. It is possible that they will miss the former way of life, but at such moments it is necessary to support them in their persistence in changing, as well as to check whether a certain part of the plan needs to be corrected. If they lack awareness of self-efficacy, it is very likely that the change will not be sustained in the long term. It is important to talk with the mentee about the "triggers" that could lead them to repeat problematic behaviour, classify them, make them aware of the riskiest "triggers" and develop strategies with them to address them.

Phase 5 – maintenance

In this phase, the mentee recognizes the gains made during Phase 4 and struggles with temptations. This is a risky phase in which the goal is for the mentee to maintain the new change in their life and develop ways to cope with risky situations. They encounter an environment full of triggers. Sometimes there is a repetition of old patterns, but this should not be considered a failure, but only a step back in the process of change. If a relapse occurs, the mentee has learned something valuable and has experienced change.

Advice for mentors

Mentees often experience recurring crises when they need additional support. They come in overwhelmed and afraid that the old habit will overwhelm their effort, so they seek re-empowerment and confirmation that they made the right decision. It is important to show that a crisis is an opportunity to learn and not a failure. If there is a repetition of old patterns, it is important to motivate the mentee to start a new change plan that will be more effective. In order for people to be more successful in maintaining the change and integrating the change into a new lifestyle, they can be helped by prosocial relationships and encouragement to reward themselves for each "step forward". Determining which behaviours would be constructive can help the mentee break bad habits. We encourage them to try to establish an environment that encourages them to have good habits (Prochaska, Levesque; according to McMurren, 2002).

3.5. Ethical questions

The most common ethical questions that arise in the relationship between mentor and mentee are (among others) the following:

the mentee becomes too dependent on the mentor;





- the relationship changes from professional to personal;
- power dynamics between mentor and mentee;
- Compassionate exhaustion
- maintaining confidentiality and privacy in the relationship;
- several roles of the mentor – how to balance different roles in the mentoring process;
- a mentor is not a therapist – setting boundaries and recognizing that the person needs additional support;
- cultural aspects – personal stereotypes that the mentor introduces into the process.

We have some tips on how to prevent this.

- Get ready. Before becoming a mentor, consider the time, energy, and emotional capital you will need to invest in supporting a mentee.
- Protect mentees' privacy. Mentees benefit from the process when they perceive mentoring as a safe space to reveal their fears, concerns and failures.
- Make sure the mentee gets the recognition they deserve.
- Maintain boundaries. Avoid blurring the boundaries of the relationship and letting the relationship turn into an inappropriate one. While it's good to be friendly, avoid becoming friendly, at least initially, and don't act like their therapist.
- Be clear about expectations and communication. Allow both yourself and the mentee to reflect regularly.

We hope this chapter has clarified what you need to keep in mind when planning your mentoring process. Motivating, empowering, supporting, questioning, thinking ... We need to be a really great mentor for all of this!

In addition to everything, the super mentor will also respect the principles of ethical mentoring:

- whenever possible, promote the interests of mentees;
- avoid harming mentees (neglect, abandonment, exploitation, boundary violations);
- work on strengthening the mentee's independence and maturity;
- keep your promises;
- ensure fair and just treatment of all mentees;



- promote transparency and open communication regarding expectations;
- avoid potentially harmful roles and discuss overlapping roles with mentees to reduce the risk of exploitation or poor outcomes;
- protect the information the mentee shares confidentially and discuss any privacy exceptions;
- establish and continue the development of competences.

4. Methodological approaches

In the previous chapters, you learned about the basics of the mentoring process and the important skills that a good mentor must have, and in the following you will learn about some more techniques that help mentors do their job effectively.

With the listed techniques, you will improve the mentoring process and make your work easier, thereby helping your mentees in their personal growth. The listed techniques are effective, as their effect has been proven in various studies and in practice.

Models

5C model

This model provides a blueprint for conducting a structured mentoring process or individual meeting. The model is particularly useful in situations where you need to help your mentee consider alternative ways to solve a challenging situation where there are multiple possible solutions, and you want to help your mentee explore those options.

The model has several stages that can be followed sequentially, however you may find yourself jumping between the stages of the model several times during the mentoring discussion. The mentor's role is to structure the discussion appropriately.

The levels of the model are:

1. challenges;
2. choices;
3. consequences;
4. creative solutions;
5. conclusions.

This model advocates that mentoring works well when the mentor is able to:





- enable the right balance between "pulling" and "pushing";
- make practical and mental preparations for the meeting;
- enable a structured approach to the mentoring meeting.

Mentors should start the mentoring process at the stage where the mentee is, and then they should encourage progress using two main methods: "pulling" and "pushing".

"Pulling" requires the mentor to:

- offer a refuge – a safe space outside the usual work, study or research environment;
- offer a place of trust where the mentee can share their plans, interests and goals without worry;
- offer support by listening, asking the right questions and encouraging the mentee's own responses to their problems and challenges.

"Pushing" requires the mentor to:

- offer stimulation that helps the mentee to think in different or deeper ways and about alternative perspectives;
- offer both challenge and creative ideas and solutions, knowledge, success stories, models, tools, thinking aids and wisdom;
- offer conclusions that the mentee finds important and valuable.

Good mentors balance these two approaches, pulling rather than pushing when in doubt to ensure that the mentee maintains control of the situation and can complete their plan.

This approach provides the tutor with a number of possible questions corresponding to each stage of the model. There are also a number of questions available before the meeting itself, which are intended to get to know the mentee even before the first meeting with them. Having some general information about what the mentee would like to discuss in the meeting allows mentors to prepare for the meeting in advance and helps ensure that the mentee considers what they would like to gain from the meeting.

For each level, you have several questions to choose from so you can choose the ones that suit your style or individual context. Some questions also cover personal and professional life. As a mentor, it is important to use questions that are appropriate for you and the type of process you are participating in.



Below is a list of questions you can use when working with Model 5C.

1. Preparation for the mentoring meeting

Some questions you might want to ask your mentee before the meeting:

- What issues would you like to discuss at the meeting?
- What are the key challenges you are currently facing?
- What results would you like to achieve?
- In your opinion, what would make the meeting (more) successful?

2. Level of identifying challenges

a) Introductory questions:

- What are your goals for this meeting?
- What are the key things you need to focus on in the next week/month/semester/year?
- What are three key things you can do to give yourself the best chance of success?

b) Research questions:

- What is the first challenge you would like to explore?
- Can you introduce me to the situation, what is happening?
- Can you give a concrete example?
- What would you like instead?
- What would be a positive outcome?
- What are the real results you would like to achieve?

c) Before we delve deeper into this challenge, let's revisit your personal contribution to your work.

- What are your strengths?
- What do you enjoy?
- What do you do best?
- What is your idea of "perfection"?
- How do you feel when you are engaged in an activity that you are good at/find important?





- If you imagine yourself in the future, how would you know that you considered your work/life successful?

d) Let's go back and explore the next challenge you want to take on.

3. The degree of determination of various choices and options

- What do you think are the chances of meeting the challenge?
- What is Option A?
 - What steps should you take if you choose this option?
- What do you see as option B?
 - What steps should you take if you choose this option?

Each option has both good and bad sides, and we will consider the individual consequences later. Now let's just explore what options you see for dealing with this challenge.

- What do you see as option C? Option D? Option E?
- Can you think of any other options?
- What have you tried?
- What were the consequences?
- Which option do you think is the most possible?
- Is there anything we haven't thought of so far? If so, is there anything else you'd like to add to the list of options?
- Maintaining the status quo and doing nothing is sometimes also an option. Is this also possible in your case? If so, what do you think would happen if you did nothing?
- Do you think this is enough variety of options?

In the next step, we consider the consequences. We can always come back later and add options.

4. Level of investigating possible consequences

- What do you see as the pros and cons of implementing Option A?
- Are there any positives?
- Are there any benefits that are not immediately obvious?

Let's take it a step further and consider the downsides.



- What do you see as the disadvantages of option A?
- Describe all possible downsides.
- What do you see as the possible advantages and disadvantages of implementing Option B? Options C? Options D? Options E?

Let's try to create as comprehensive a picture as possible of the possible consequences associated with the search for different options for dealing with the set challenge. In the next step, we will move on to exploring some potential creative solutions. First of all, we want the mentee to check their feeling for each of the options we have described.

Let's take a look at the different ways you can reach the goal for the given challenge.

- How attractive do you find each of these options?

Let's rate the attractiveness of each option on a scale from 0 to 10.

- Take a minute to rate each of the possible solutions – and think about why you gave them those ratings.

5. Level of finding creative solutions

Let's take a look at your options and see if there are any possible creative solutions.

- What are the real results you want to achieve?
- How can you work to achieve these results?
- When do you want to achieve these results?
- Looking at the options you have created, is it possible to take the best of each option and create a new option? What would that look like?

Let's look back for a moment and try to learn something from past experiences.

- Have you ever been in a similar situation in the past and successfully resolved it?
- What did you do to achieve a successful outcome?
- What are your successful patterns in life/study/research/work?
- How can you follow these patterns again in the future?

Let's explore what we can learn from best practice and positive role models.



- Are there other people, teams, institutions that have successfully dealt with this kind of challenge? What did they do to successfully master it?
- How can you follow these principles in your own way?

Let's imagine you have a blank sheet of paper.

- What would you do if you could start over tomorrow?
- What would you do if you could do whatever it took to achieve the perfect outcome?
- How can you follow these principles in this situation?

Let's focus on your good qualities.

- What are your strengths?
- How can you use them to tackle this challenge?
- What kind of help do you need from other people with certain knowledge/experience/acquaintance?

Let's focus on your key supporters.

- Who are your key supporters?
- How can you satisfy these people?
- What kind of support do you need from your supporters?
- How can you reach a clear agreement with them to ensure satisfaction on both sides?

Let's conclude by exploring any other options.

- Looking back at the challenge, is there anything else you can do?
- Are there any far-reaching options? Or possible imaginative solutions?

Let's determine the path you want to continue.

- Based on what we have discussed, what is your chosen option?
- What do you need to do to make this happen?
- What is your backup plan?
- What do you want to do if your first option fails? What are your second and third options?

6. Level of conclusions



It's time to wrap up the discussion and finalize a plan to tackle your chosen challenge.

Let's explore the option you chose.

- What will be the good sides?
- What will be the downsides?
- How can you build on the good sides and minimize the bad sides?
- Considering these consequences, are you ready to proceed?

Let's move on to your action plan.

- What steps do you need to take to achieve your goals/results?
- How can you take these steps?
- When do you want to start?
- What can you do to achieve some early successes?

Make a to-do list and schedule. Let's finish with a reality check on a scale of 0 to 10.

- How much do you rate your desire for this option?
- How likely are you to be successful in achieving your goals?
- What is the next challenge you would like to discuss?

STAR model

The STAR model is a tool designed for those who want to improve their problem solving and stress management skills. The tool is based on cognitive behavioural therapy and can be a very effective way to help someone get rid of harmful or limiting thoughts and behaviours.

STAR is an acronym for:

- S – situation: what is the specific situation that caused you problems?
- T – task or thoughts: what thoughts come to your mind and what do you think you should do?
- A – action: how do you usually act in such a situation, what is the response to the situation itself and what is the response to your thoughts and feelings?
- R – results (results, reflection): what are the results of your actions in practical terms and how do you feel after that?



The mentor can use this model to identify goals with the mentee and to create an action plan together that the mentee can then use. This model provides the basis for a structured, positive conversation and focuses on the mentee charting the path and the mentor merely guiding the process.

1. Situation

In the first phase, we look at the mentee's current position. Where do they currently stand and what will it take to get them to where they want to be? In the process of discovering their values, beliefs and perspectives, we create additional awareness, which leads us to lay solid development foundations. Because this is the most intense phase, it is also especially rewarding: it is full of many "aha" moments and new insights into who you really are.

2. Task or thoughts

In the second phase, we focus on the desired goal. What do you want to achieve and what needs to be done to achieve it? This stage goes beyond daydreaming, as it is important to be as concrete as possible.

3. Action

The third phase is about action that leads to success. We explore all the small and large steps needed to reach the level required to achieve goals. It is intended to identify and overcome obstacles, recognize strengths and opportunities.

4. Results

The last, fourth phase is dedicated to reflection. We return to our inner self and in this process we think about the desired and achieved goals, the insights gained throughout the entire process.

GROW model

The GROW model is a simple but powerful framework for structuring a mentoring process or individual meetings.

GROW means:

- G – goal;





- R – reality;
- O – options or obstacles;
- W – will or way forward.

A good way to think about the GROW model is to think about how you would plan your trip. First, decide where you are going (the goal) and figure out where you are right now (your current reality). Then you explore different routes (options) to the destination. In the final step, establishing the will, ensure that you are committed to the journey and prepared for the obstacles you might encounter along the way.

Advice

For its traditional use, the GROW model assumes that the mentor is not an expert in the mentee's situation. This means that the mentor should act as a facilitator, helping the mentee to choose the best options and not offering advice or instructions.

Steps to use the GROW model

1. Set a goal

You must first examine the behaviour you want to change with your mentee, then structure that change as a goal you want to achieve.

Make sure it's a SMART goal (more on that in the next chapter): a goal that's specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

As you do this, it is helpful to ask questions such as:

- How will you know that the mentee has achieved this goal? How will you know the problem is resolved?
- Does this goal align with the mentee's overall career goals?

2. Examine the current reality

Ask the mentee to describe their current reality in relation to the set goal. This is an important step because too often people try to solve a problem or achieve a goal without fully considering their starting point, and often they may even be missing some of the information they need to be able to effectively achieve their goal.





As you reflect on your current reality, a solution may also begin to form in your mind.

Useful mentoring questions in this step are:

- What is happening now (what, who, when and how often)? What is the effect or result of this?
- Have you already taken a step towards your goal?
- Does this goal conflict with any other goals?

3. Explore the options

Once you've explored your current reality, it's time to figure out what can be changed—which means identifying all the options for achieving your goal.

Help the mentee think of as many (good) options as possible, then discuss them and help them choose the best one. You can also offer your suggestions in this step, but only after the mentee has already exhausted all their ideas and shared them with you – the mentee should be the one who speaks most of the time. It's important to guide them in the right direction without actually making decisions for them.

Typical questions you can use to explore options are as follows:

- What else could we do?
- What if we removed this or that restriction? Would that change things?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- What factors or considerations will you use to weigh each option?
- What do you need to stop doing to achieve this goal?
- What obstacles stand in your way?

4. Establish the will

By studying the current reality and exploring the possibilities, the mentee will have a good idea of how they can achieve their goal. That's great – but it may not be enough on its own. The final step is for the mentee to commit to specific actions to move forward toward their goal. This will help them build their will and raise their motivation.

You can ask helpful questions here:



- So what are you going to do now and when exactly? What else will you do in the future and when exactly?
- What could stop you from progressing? How will you overcome this?
- How can you stay motivated?
- When do you need to look at progress? Daily, weekly, monthly?

Finally, agree on a date to meet to review and evaluate progress together. This will give the mentee a greater sense of responsibility and allow them to change their approach if the original plan does not work.

1st tip

A great way to practice using the model is to address your own challenges and problems. By practicing on your own case, you will learn to ask the most helpful questions. You can also write down some basic questions to use in the actual meetings with the mentee.

2nd tip

The two most important skills of a mentor are the ability to ask good questions and the ability to listen effectively. We have already talked about both skills, and you can read more about them later in this chapter. Remember:

- do not ask closed questions that require a short answer or only a “yes” or “no” answer (such as "Did this cause a problem?") – instead ask open-ended questions, e.g. "What effect did this have?". Prepare a list of questions for each stage of the GROW process;
- use active listening skills and let the mentee do most of the talking. Remember that silence provides valuable time to think and you don't always have to fill it with the next question.

5. Techniques mentors can use in their work

Active listening

Active (empathetic, effective) listening is a way of listening where the activity of the listener is high and important. The goal of active listening is not only to understand the message itself, but also what lies behind it.

Active listening is an indispensable part of good communication and good interpersonal relationships. When we listen actively, the person speaking will get the feeling that we are



really paying attention to them. Active listening allows for a higher level of understanding and is therefore a necessary part of the mentoring relationship. Active listening is a process that is the exact opposite of passive listening, which is what people often do in their daily lives.

	PASSIVE LISTENING	ACTIVE LISTENING
BODY LANGUAGE	<p>The listener shows boredom, may scribble on the paper, look away, and does not lean their body towards the speaker.</p> <p>With facial expressions and body gestures, the listener does not respond to what the speaker has said. With crossed legs and arms, it shows restraint, non-relaxation and a defensive position.</p>	<p>The listener looks at the speaker while listening and maintains eye contact. They nod to encourage the speaker to continue communication.</p> <p>With an inclined body posture towards the speaker, but with an appropriate distance, they show their interest.</p> <p>Avoids repeated gestures that disturb the speaker, maintains the same rhythm and speed of body movements. The listener has no crosses hands and feet.</p>
ATTENTION	Attention and comments are directed at the listener.	We only focus on the speaker.
ACCEPTANCE	He does not accept the speaker's ideas and emotions.	We accept the speaker's ideas and emotions.
SYMPATHY	Contempt for emotions.	We sympathize with the content of the speaker.
EXPLANATION	They do not check whether they understands correctly, the listener forms their own opinion about what was said.	We check whether we understand the speaker, in case of ambiguities we ask for clarification.



ASKING QUESTIONS	We rarely ask additional questions, we only ask with closed questions.	We ask open-ended questions, encouraging the speaker to continue communication. The questions are related to the content.
SUMMARY	We do not summarize.	From time to time we repeat a certain content of what was said, draw conclusions.

Three qualitative levels of listening

When listening to an individual, we can distinguish three qualitative levels, which are distinctly different from each other in terms of the quality of interpersonal communication. These three levels of listening are:

1. perception – we hear words but do not understand them or even ignore them;
2. understanding words, which often have multiple meanings or even hide the true meaning of the message the person is expressing;
3. understanding the message – we listen to the meaning of the words and recognize the non-verbal signs of the person conveying the message to us.

In turn, these three levels could be described as listening with the ears (auditory), with the brain (mental) and with the heart (holistic).

How to listen actively

1. Paraphrasing

If you use the paraphrasing technique, you will listen to the speaker in a much more focused manner and at the same time pay attention to the most important information. This means that you try to briefly repeat in other words the content that the speaker told you. This gives the speaker the feeling that we are really listening to them and that we are interested in what they have to say, and this establishes trust, which is especially important in a mentoring relationship.





2. Open questions

Avoid questions that can only be answered with "yes" or "no" – these are closed questions. Instead, ask open-ended questions to which the speaker can give a longer, more in-depth answer, which helps the conversation develop more easily.

3. Body language

In active listening, body posture and other non-verbal cues are also important, as they can be used to communicate our attitude towards the speaker. Pay attention to the fact that your body language is as respectful and open as possible. Maintain eye contact, but make sure it doesn't seem forced or even intimidating. It's perfectly natural to occasionally look away for a second or two. At the same time, pay attention to your posture – being closed gives the feeling that your thoughts are somewhere else entirely. Nodding can also contribute to more successful communication, but here too, be careful not to overdo it and to use the gesture at appropriate moments. Use non-verbal behaviour that supports good contact (nodding the head, maintaining eye contact, imitating the rhythm and body movements of the speaker, slightly leaning forward, arms and legs not crossed, appropriate distance...). Of course, also use verbal responses such as "aha", "I understand", "just say it" and the like, with which you encourage the speaker to continue speaking.

4. Don't focus on your response

The inability to listen actively can be related to lack of interest, but it is also often the result of focusing too much on what we are going to say ourselves. If you're already thinking about how you're going to react the moment your speaker opens their mouth, it's no surprise that you can't really be composed. Try to be as alert as possible, i.e. focused on the given moment.

5. Do not interrupt the speaker

A very important component of active listening is knowing how to wait for the speaker to really finish a single thought. Don't be caught off guard – it's definitely better to wait a little longer than jump in when the other person hasn't made up their mind. This, of course, means that you must free yourself from the fear of silence. It is a completely natural part of the conversation. If your speaker is silent for a few moments, it does not mean that they have said everything they intended. Maybe just choosing the most appropriate word. Responding too quickly interrupts the flow of their thoughts, so the most important things can go unsaid.



6. Give up other activities

During the conversation, avoid doing other activities, such as looking at the clock or phone, scribbling on a piece of paper, reading, etc. With this, you are telling the speaker that the content they are telling you is not of interest to you and is unimportant to you.

7. directing attention to the non-verbal language of the speaker

Directing attention to the background of what is said plays an extremely important role. A very large part of human communication takes place non-verbally. Tone of voice, facial expression, and body language often reveal a message that was not conveyed through words. These non-verbal messages illustrate emotions (e.g. anger, excitement, sadness, fear, ...) and are usually much more important than a verbal message. By perceiving and understanding all this, we are richly rewarded, as we participate in good interpersonal communication.

8. Show empathy

Show that you understand the other person's feelings. Acknowledge the importance and show respect for the other person's opinion. Pay attention to the emotions of the speaker and emphasize or check them, ask questions with an emphasis on emotions.

Mind mapping

Mind maps can be a useful tool in the mentoring process. Begin by writing in the centre of the page and circling the question or topic that needs to be researched. Then add questions related to the central theme and place them on the map as branches arising from the central theme. Each of these related questions can be explored and developed in the same way. The resulting mind map can be used to assess which ideas are most important and worthy of further exploration, and which are less relevant to the situation. This can be a useful technique for a mentee who is struggling to see their way forward.

Setting goals

In the mentoring process, it is important that the mentee sets appropriate goals. The mentor has an important role in this, but it is also important that the mentor never sets goals instead



of the mentee, as this reduces the sense of ownership over the goals – in this they only help and support the mentee.

This can be done in several ways.

1. Ask questions that help mentees think about what they want to achieve, such as, "What do you want to achieve with this mentoring?" or "What are your long-term career goals?"
2. Help mentees develop a personal mission. This can be a great way for mentees to clearly define their goals and stay focused on what matters to them.
3. Encourage mentees to set SMART goals. Such goals will help them stay on track and ensure that their goals are realistic.

SMART goals

SMART is an acronym for the key elements of a well-defined goal. SMART goals are:

- S – specific;
- M – measurable;
- A – achievable;
- R – relevant;
- T – time-sensitive.

Each SMART goal set by the mentee must contain all five components mentioned above.

The meaning of individual components

S – specific

The goal should be specific, clear and precisely defined, as this has a motivating effect on the mentee. For a more precise definition of the goal, we can help ourselves with the classic questions of who, what, where, what kind and how much.

M – measurable

We use measurable indicators, numbers, which allows us to determine whether the goal has been achieved or not. In this way, we can monitor progress in achieving the goal.

A – achievable





We have to consider whether we have enough different resources to reach the goal. Resources can be knowledge, opportunities, skills, money, help from others, etc. Every intelligently set goal must also be achievable, otherwise it may happen that we are just wasting time and energy. If the goal is not achievable, it must be adjusted or divided into smaller goals that follow each other in a meaningful way.

R – relevant

Whatever you want to achieve, let it be something that can benefit you and make your life better or easier. Never commit to accomplishing something that is important to someone else and you have absolutely no interest in doing. A relevant goal is one that is worth working towards.

T – time-sensitive

For the goal, we must set a time limit in which we will achieve the goal, because otherwise it may happen that we procrastinate. The deadline should be realistic, but at the same time we also have the opportunity to ask ourselves whether now is the right time to achieve it. A SMART goal requires us to act as the deadline is running out.

Once mentees set their goals, the mentor must help them achieve them. But don't take charge of the afternoon – let mentees figure out how they want to achieve their goals, with your guidance, of course. This kind of free approach will help mentees to have more control over their own development and will also be more likely to stick to their goals in the long term.

Visioning

Visioning is a technique that is used in many situations, but it is especially useful in goal setting. At the core of effective visioning is the engagement of inner emotions and all the senses – especially sight, smell and touch. The mentor invites the mentee to close their eyes and imagine themselves as they want to be in a certain period of time. The bigger and broader the goal in general, the more far-reaching the projection (looking several years ahead). The mentor then asks the mentee a series of questions.

Visualisation

- Where do you want to be (specific place)?





- Describe what you see around you – environment, people?
- What do you look like?
- What do you do? Why?
- Describe how you feel. If you feel good, why do you feel that way?
- Describe how the people around you feel.
- Describe what you hear.

Determination

- How does this differ from the current situation?
- How big is the gap between how you see yourself and how others see you?
- How big is the gap in your well-being? How do others feel?
- How do you feel about this gap? Do you have a real desire to bridge it?

Actualization

- What could be done to make the vision a reality?
- What is your first step?

Asking the right questions

Asking the right questions is an important skill of a good mentor, as they can lead the mentee in the right direction with correctly chosen questions.

We know several types of questions:

- closed – we use them to establish facts, get short and concise answers, the mentee can only answer with "yes" or "no" or other short answers (e.g. "Have you finished this project yet?");
- open – they encourage interpretation, give information about the deeper reasons for a certain thinking (e.g. "Can you tell me more about this project?");
- specific questions – used to obtain concrete information (e.g. "What exactly did you mean by that?");
- questions to check understanding – we use them when we want to clarify something (e.g. "Do I understand correctly that...?");



- hypothetical – we present a situation and ask how the mentee would feel in it (e.g. "If a certain opportunity arose, how would you feel?");
- suggestive – when we want to offer a specific answer (e.g. "Do you like to work in a team, if necessary?").

The choice of question format depends on the information you want to get from the mentee.

More about open questions

Mentoring is about the mentee opening up and sharing their views and thoughts, as this often results in the mentee finding solutions on their own. Mentoring is not about the mentor speaking exclusively and giving the mentee all the answers.

For open questions, we usually use interrogatives such as what, who, where, when, why, how, etc.

It is also important to be aware that the "why" question can be accusatory and thus unproductive. It can often be replaced with a "how to" question, which works more openly.

The mentor must know how to choose appropriate questions so that the mentee shares their thoughts, feelings, desires, goals, values and priorities. The mentor can use questions such as "Can you tell me something more?" and "Could you explain that to me in more detail?". Sometimes slightly more sensitive questions are also needed, which can be softened by a preliminary question "Do you mind if I ask you...?".

How we formulate the questions is also important. It is more effective to focus on achieving the goal than on the problem or even on the mistakes of the mentee.

Examples of ineffective questions:

- What problem do you have?
- Who is to blame for this problem?
- What do you think is wrong with you?
- Why haven't you solved the problem yet?

Examples of effective questions:

- What do you want to achieve?





- What resources do you have available?
- What help do you need to be able to achieve this?
- What are the steps in the plan to achieve this goal?

Some more examples of great questions:

- How do you feel about your current situation?
- What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing?
- If you could do anything career-wise, what would you do?
- Who are you if you ignore your career/job?
- Which passions would you like to (still) follow?
- When were you most proud of yourself?

It can also be useful to ask the mentee about their career path so far and learn more about them in this way. However, you should use specific questions instead of general "tell me about your career so far" questions.

While it's good to have some questions ready, you don't have to stick to a script. Remember: when you ask questions based on information your mentee has already provided, it shows your interest in them.

Here are some sample questions:

- What was your educational experience like?
- What was your first job?
- What led you to your current path, situation?
- Did you plan this journey or did it happen organically?

However, it is important that you also get to know the mentee as a person, separate from the career path. You don't need to be too personal, but asking a little more personal questions can help build trust and rapport. Asking the right questions can lead you to learn more about your mentee and better understand who they are and what is important to them.

Consider some of these suggestions or develop your own questions:

- Why are current values important to you?
- Do you have any role models you look up to or people you admire?
- What do you like to do outside of work?



- What inspires you?

An important part of mentoring is also helping mentees to define and achieve their goals. Helping them succeed is one of your mentoring roles, so you'll want to have a good understanding of what their goals are. Sometimes the mentee does not have a list of goals and you will need to help them define them.

Here are some questions to help you and your mentee do this:

- What are your short-term goals?
- What are your long-term goals?
- What attracted you to the mentoring process?
- In which areas of your life do you want to grow?
- What skills do you want to develop?
- If you could go back in time, would you choose a different life path?

To be an effective mentor, you will also need to have a good understanding of your mentee's strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes it is good to know how the mentee sees themselves. By asking the right questions, you can help them think more deeply about their strengths or things that are holding them back.

Examples of questions:

- What do you think are your strengths?
- In what areas do you think you need to improve?
- Does the current situation help you use your strengths?
- In what areas of your life do your weaknesses hinder you?
- How do you mitigate your weaknesses?

Not all mentees want to develop their skills or do not have a specific goal in mind. Sometimes mentees will need you to help them solve a particular current challenge. Your advice can be vital in helping them overcome whatever obstacles are holding them back.

Here are some questions to help you define the challenge for your mentee:

- What challenge are you currently facing?
- What ideas have you developed to help you overcome challenges and achieve your goals?





- What obstacles do you see that could prevent you from achieving your goals?
- What will you do differently tomorrow to face these challenges?
- How can I support you in overcoming your challenges?

By asking the right questions, you can also help mentees express gratitude, which is an important life skill. It can help us focus on the good things instead of all the things we think we lack.

Examples of questions:

- What are you most grateful for?
- To whom are you grateful in your life? What did they give you?
- What was the period in your life when you felt you grew the most? What contributed to this?

Analysis of opposing forces

This can be a useful technique for analysing the arguments for and against a particular course of action. The plan or proposal is written in the middle of the three columns. Favourable factors are listed in the first column and unfavourable factors are listed in the last column. By carrying out the analysis, you can plan to strengthen the factors that have a positive effect on a goal and reduce the influence of the opposite factors. The use of lines, colours and even drawings or logos in the analysis can be especially helpful for mentees who value the visual aspect of planning.

Positive personality traits

This technique is especially useful when working with mentees who are dealing with poor self-esteem or low self-esteem. Ask the mentee to identify their positive qualities, which can boost self-esteem. The continuation of this exercise could be for the mentee to ask some friends to share their positive qualities with them or describe how they see it. If their opinions do not match the mentee's, you can encourage the mentee to find out why.



Grateful inquiry

When a mentee is caught in a pessimistic view or feeling discouraged, you can ask them to recall a situation in which they felt successful or were proud of an achievement. Then help the mentee identify the factors that contributed to this achievement and well-being, and explore how some of these factors might relate to the current situation.

Career scenario

This is a longer-term strategy that could have been the basis for several meetings. The mentee outlines up to three different career visions in writing or diagrams, taking into account their goals, abilities, limitations and knowledge of opportunities that might be available.

Encourage the mentee to add realistic timelines and be willing to move between versions rather than sticking firmly to one, so that failure at certain hurdles won't have as much of an impact. Over time, a clear career path can emerge from this process. Identifying small steps towards bigger goals can be helpful in keeping you motivated.

What does success look like?

As the cat in Alice in Wonderland wisely says, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there." Helping mentees imagine what success looks like is a great starting point for any further activity. One simple way to help mentees define what success looks like is the magic wand method. As a mentor, you can ask the mentee, "If you could wave a magic wand and everything went smoothly, what would it look like?" The mentor then encourages the mentee to describe the positive, tangible and detailed elements of the image of success to bring it to life.

What already works?

As a society, we are by nature focused on the downside. Our focus is usually on what isn't working, what problems we need to solve, and what challenges we need to overcome, so even the optimists among us need help focusing on what is already working. Mentors play a valuable role in helping mentees figure out what works. One simple technique for doing this is to use a 1-10 scale. A mentor might ask a mentee, "If you imagine a scale from 1 to 10,





where 10 is the picture of the future success you just described, and 1 is the worst situation you've ever been in, where are you on the scale today?" The mentor then investigates why the mentee gave a specific rating so that the mentee can find out what is already working and what they can build on.

Wheel of life

The wheel of life is a simple but powerful tool that helps visualize all important areas of life at the same time. It is often used by life counsellors and career coaches to give their clients a "bird's eye" view of life. Seeing a visual representation of all areas of life at the same time helps you better understand which areas of your life are successful and which need more work.

The wheel of life is based on the theory that every person's life consists of several important segments:

- contribution to society;
- careers;
- finance;
- families/friendships;
- health;
- parties;
- love;
- personal development.

Each wheel segment represents a specific category. You can rate each category from 1 (extremely bad) to 10 (extremely good). When you rate each category and write it on the wheel, a spider web will emerge that shows which areas of your life you are happy with and which areas are falling flat. Each category affects your life. When drawing the wheel of life, it doesn't matter where you start or with which category.

It is important to take the time to complete the wheel of life. You should not fill it in too quickly because you may get wrong results. Think about every area of your life.

Career





How satisfied are you with your job? Is this your dream job or do you want something else?
Does your work bring you satisfaction and happiness? Does it enable you to live well?

Family/friends

Does your family support, trust and love you? Can you always turn to your friends? Are you spending enough time with friends and family?

Love

Have you found happiness in love? Do you have a committed partner by your side? Can you build the future with it?

Entertainment

Are you enjoying life? Do you do interesting things in your spare time?

Health

How are you feeling mentally and physically? Are you happy with your appearance? Is something bothering you? How physically active are you?

Finance

Can you satisfy your every need? Do you have debts? Is money the only thing that makes you happy?

Personal development

Are you satisfied with the direction in which you are developing? Are you open to new experiences? Are you connected to your inner and outer world?

Contribution to society

Do you help other people? Do you do volunteer work? Are you taking good enough care of the people you care about and love?

Based on the completed wheel of life, the mentor can help the mentee plan the necessary changes.



River of life

The metaphor of the river as a way of depicting a personal journey or history is universally known to different cultures. With visualization, the river can become a compass, a guide, as it covers milestones, failures and successes over time.

Using drawing, rope, puppets and symbols, the individual can represent their river of life. With the help of the river, we can make an overview of the past and present events of an individual. We can also see in which areas it is strong and why, where it is stuck, what has already moved for the better, how things are going now... In addition, with the help of the river, we can look into the future, where we want to go, how we see ourselves someday when we overcome the current crisis, and how to achieve it.

It is about the fact that, in addition to the mentoring conversation, we also process the content practically. When we place them in front of us, we can also talk to them, move them ... We can walk forwards or backwards along the river, take a closer look at certain moments or events, stop by them ...

Identity molecule

This method helps raise awareness of the concepts of multiple identities and self-identification by analysing and sharing one's own identities. It is an opportunity for self-identification that can create a broad definition of diversity in a seemingly homogenous group.

The mentees are asked to identify themselves with at least five social descriptors (age, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and draw an identity molecule for themselves. Based on what has been drawn, we can open a discussion about self-identification.

- Why did you choose these five descriptors?
- Are these the only identities we have?
- Are they given or chosen?

Mentees are then asked to fill in their identity molecule using as many social descriptors as possible and to assess whether each of the described groups is a source of privilege or hindrance in the society in which they live. We then open a discussion of the connection between identity and privilege and the use of privilege.





Solution walk method

It is an effective solution-focused method that takes place while walking together.

The idea of this method is:

- focus on solutions rather than problems;
- recognize all the resources and strengths that already exist, instead of what we lack;
- find out what is already working and what is not, what is going wrong;
- looking to the future and working with a vision instead of looking back and analysing the past.

During the walk we use different methods such as changing perspective, walking scale, jumping into the future and lots of positive addressing.

A change of perspective

When you walk, you move your body. You also move your head and allow your thoughts to move in new directions. This helps you see things from a different perspective.

At the beginning of each walk, we take the time to come to the park, to see, listen and smell what is around us, and to get to know how we feel in the park.

Then we ask the following questions:

- What is different today?
- What is different about your challenge/problem?

Walking scale

Scales are also used in the mentoring process to recognize progress.

Let's ask the question: "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 means you solved the problem, where are you now?"

This exercise is even more powerful when you can physically walk the ladder (e.g., the avenue) and remember everything that already works.





We can also ask mentees to leave a particular item in an identified place on the scale (e.g. 3) and then ask questions such as, "How is 3 different from 5? How did you manage to get to 3?"

Leap into the future – vision – next steps

The idea of jumping into the future is a "leap" into the desired future, where the problem is solved together with the mentee. Questions help us to be aware of what that future is and to have a vision.

When the mentee's vision is so clear that even we can see it, we ask the question, "What did you do to achieve your goal?" With this, we help them draw up a plan and define the next steps.

Positive addressing

We all know (negative) addressing, but positive gossip is much more powerful. It's amazing how well people can get to know and understand each other when they really listen to each other. Positive addressing is a very good reflection of this. What's more, those who address others positively perceive strengths and resources that others may not be aware of.

Of course, positive addressing works in other settings, but walking side-by-side is much easier, especially for people who are not (yet) used to giving or providing positive feedback.

Johari window

It is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness and mutual understanding between individuals in a group. This model can also be used to assess and improve a group's relationship with other groups.

The Johari window is a technique designed to help people better understand their relationships with themselves and others. In this exercise, the individual selects some adjectives from a list that the mentor prepares in advance and selects those that they think describe their own personality. Their peers or friends are then given the same list and each chooses the same number of adjectives that describe that individual. These adjectives are



then inserted into a grid of four cells. The first cell is the part of ourselves that is seen by both us and others. The second cell contains aspects that others see but we are not aware of. The third cell is a private space that we know but hide from others. The fourth cell is the unconscious part of us that neither we nor others see.

Reflected Best Self Exercise™

The RBSE is a feedback-seeking exercise that helps identify and understand unique strengths and talents. By gathering feedback from important people, they guide us through the process of creating a portrait of the best version of ourselves and an action plan for harnessing personal strengths.

Steps to perform RBSE exercise:

- list more than 10 people from different parts of your life;
- ask them when you were at your best and collect their answers;
- look for patterns in the answers;
- build your self-portrait of who you are at your best;
- reshape your life according to your strengths.

Step 1: make a list

Make a list of 10+ people from different contexts in your life who have seen you at your best. Try to include in your list as many areas of your life where you have worked closely with people.

Step 2: collect feedback

Ask each person on your list a simple question: "Can you please describe a time when you saw me at my best?" An important rule in this step is not to change the wording of the question. This question is intentionally very open-ended. It is designed to elicit more genuine and authentic responses than the question, "What are my strengths?"

Plan to receive responses within two weeks. Don't be afraid to remind the mentee to respond after one week.

Advice





The easiest way to collect responses is with a Google Form.

Step 3: look for patterns in the answers

When you have collected all the answers, look through them to look for patterns. A mentor can also help here. Answers will be grouped around specific themes. Multiple people can highlight the same skill or the same context in which you excel. Some may point to things that you may not have initially thought were your strong areas (often interpersonal skills). Rest assured that there will be commonalities and things that you won't be able to ignore if you've asked a large enough circle of people.

Note recurring themes, even if you don't agree with them at first.

Step 4: create your self-portrait

Create a self-portrait of who you are at your best by combining reflection (internal inputs, your own opinion) and RBSE themes (external inputs, other people's responses). A self-portrait is your answer to the question, "Who am I when I'm at my best?"

It's also the answer to the question, "What are my strengths?", because you're at your best when you use your strengths in the contexts in which they come to the fore.

Your self-portrait is a 1-2 paragraph written statement. It starts with: "When I'm at my best, I'm ..." In a few paragraphs, concisely describe what you do when you're at your best, drawing on the topics that came up in your RBSE as well as reflecting on your past.

Step 5: reshape Your Life to Your Strengths

The final, and perhaps most difficult, step is to use your newfound understanding of your strengths to take immediate action in your life.

Consider the following questions:

- How can you spend more time improving your strengths?
- How can you make life decisions to optimize your strengths?
- What activities, practices, and experiences will deepen your strengths and increase your impact?
- How can you use your unique strengths to empower them?
- How can you reorient your work and life to make the most of your strengths?





Knowing your strengths allows you to (re)orient your life and work to use your strengths and improve them.

Our house

The exercise is suitable for developing cooperation and cohesion in the group. It can also be used to discuss (personal) values. Participants sit in a circle. The trainers ask them to get into the situation where everyone lives in the same house. Their task is to reach an agreement on the common rules of life. Once the agreement is prepared, there is a reflection on the process (how they came to a common agreement, personal interest versus community interest, values reflected in the agreement). This can also be prepared by the mentor and mentee in pairs.

Mentorship agreement

At the beginning of the mentoring process, it can be helpful to draw up an agreement or contract that both mentor and mentee agree to and that sets the framework for the mentoring process and relationship.

The purpose of the contract may be to start thinking about the mentee's and mentor's expectations of each other and to identify any questions or concerns.

First, we ask the mentee whether they agree to prepare a joint agreement, and what advantages the preparation of an agreement can have. Typical answers might be:

- clarify expectations regarding results and behaviour during the mentoring process;
- provide a baseline for measuring progress;
- establish relationship boundaries;
- find out who is responsible for what in the mentoring process.

Then we ask the mentee what they want to include in the agreement. We encourage them to make a list of elements that need to be included in the agreement in two areas:

- formal, written provisions;
- informal, unofficial provisions, can also be "unwritten rules".





The mentor also prepares their own list, and at the end the mentor and the mentee compare the lists and discuss the differences and similarities. It's important to remember that people want/need different levels of formality in a mentoring arrangement. Anything the mentee declares off-limits can be a key topic of discussion once a trusting relationship is established.

Questions that must be taken into account when preparing an agreement

The minimum requirement is that the mentor and mentee should discuss issues regarding the purpose of the mentoring relationship and the management of their relationship in order to gain a common understanding.

Some useful questions to discuss when preparing an agreement:

- What do we expect to learn from each other?
- What are our responsibilities to each other? What are the limits?
- What responsibilities do we have as a result of this attitude towards others (eg colleagues, peers, HR department)?
- Where and how often will we meet? How long and how frequent will the meetings be?
- What restrictions are there (if any) on confidentiality?
- When and how will we check if this relationship is suitable for both of us?
- How ready are we for new challenges?
- How do we feel when we receive candid feedback?
- Do you think you can be really open with me? If not, what's holding you back?
- Is there anything that either of us absolutely does not want to talk about?
- Do we agree that openness and trust are essential? How will we ensure that an appropriate relationship develops?
- Are we both willing to give honest and timely feedback?
- What are we willing to tell others about our discussions and meetings?
- How formal or informal do we want our meetings to be?
- How will we measure progress?
- How will we manage the various transitions, especially at the end of the mentoring process?
- To what extent are we willing to share personal information?
- When and how will we evaluate attitude and progress?





- How will we celebrate achievements?

Discomfort zone

It is not unusual for a mentor to encounter someone who keeps a high wall around them and protects their privacy to the point that it is difficult to get to know them. Of course, it is possible to create a relationship with such a person, perhaps very friendly and even relaxed, but the relationship will lack the depth necessary for a successful mentoring process.

The reasons why some people are unwilling and/or unable to share themselves are varied, from clinical (e.g. Asperger's syndrome) to fear of disclosure. The mentor's role is not to provide therapeutic counselling in such situations, even if they are qualified to do so, and the dilemma is often how to reconcile the desire for greater openness with the individual's desire for the mentoring process to not interfere with their personal areas.

The best learning often takes place on the edge of comfort. A simple approach to creating openness in the mentoring relationship is to include a special provision in the concluded mentoring agreement (mentioned in the previous point), with which the mentee agrees that the mentor will take them into the zone of discomfort at least once in each meeting.

Balloon of change

Knowing exactly what you want and/or how important it is to you are important elements in achieving positive change. Among the techniques that are useful for setting priorities is the change balloon, which graphically presents the process of choosing priorities.

In this process, the mentor asks the mentee to write down their wish list. The list can refer to a specific situation (e.g. job hunting) or to life in general. The mentor draws a hot air balloon with a large basket. Each wish should be written on a sticky note that becomes a weight and hangs on the side of the basket.

The mentor now asks the mentee to imagine that the balloon is slowly leaking. One of the weights will need to be cut off. Which weight will they drop first? The selected item is deleted and recorded as the lowest priority from the list.



One by one the weights can be dropped until only one remains. How does the mentee feel about the ranking of priorities created in this way?

When discussing this process, mentees often say that it is difficult to get rid of any one weight because they are all interconnected. It is helpful to note these links and research them later. If they want to work on one of the elements, they will have to pay attention to those related to it.

6. Techniques of reflection and giving feedback

As a mentor, it is important to create a confidential space for two-way feedback. It can be scary to think that your mentee would be critical of something you said or did. We all want others to see us as infallible, but that's just not possible – so be proactive about asking for feedback.

Mentees are often reluctant to provide critical feedback, but this is an essential part of the mentoring relationship. It allows mentors to reflect on their behaviour and modify it if necessary. So make it clear to your mentee right from the start that you want real-time feedback from them.

What are the goals of reflection?

- Completion of the mentoring process;
- participants reflect on the collected experiences, feelings and thoughts;
- participants become aware of the lessons learned;
- mentors raise awareness of the problems and needs of mentees;
- giving feedback by mentees to the mentor;
- mentors can give feedback to mentees.

Basic guidelines of reflection:

- reflection is not discussion;
- everyone speaks only for themselves and in their own name;
- we do not interrupt each other;
- we accept the feelings and impressions of others;
- we do not evaluate the experiences of others;





- we use "I" sentences, do not generalise;
- we try to be as clear as possible;
- express both positive and negative feelings;
- questions are only allowed if we need clarification.

Reflection can be done in a group or individually.

Doors

The mentor collects pictures in advance that represent doors in different styles. They place the pictures on the table and invites the mentees to choose the picture that best reflects their current feeling. Then the mentees present the picture and explain the reasons for their choice.

Reflection with dice

For each number on the dice, the mentor writes down or asks a different question, e.g.:

- (1) my behaviour,
- (2) group,
- (3) content,
- (4) methods,
- (5) accents,
- (6) mentor.

Each participant rolls the dice and answers the question posed. Multiple repetitions are possible.

Finger barometer

The group stands in a circle. Everyone closes their eyes and holds out their thumbs. The mentor asks questions, and the participants give the answer with their thumbs. A thumbs up indicates a good grade, a straight thumb indicates a grade somewhere in between, and a thumbs down indicates a bad grade.





Five finger reflection

Each participant is given paper with a palm print (or participants draw their own palm outline on blank paper). They supplement the sheet with the following content:

- thumbs up – that was great;
- pointer – this is something I want more of;
- middle ground – this was not so good;
- the ring – this is what I remember;
- little finger – this was too short;
- palm – trainer's rating.

Reflection with postcards

The coach collects postcards with different motifs in advance and places them on the table. Each postcard has its own meaning. Each participant can choose one or two of them that best describe their current state/mood, etc. Participants present their choices.

Note: Dixit cards can also be used instead of postcards.

Heart, hand and head

Draw an outline of a person on a piece of paper. Explain that learning takes place at the level of the heart, hands and head: personal, practical and intellectual/theoretical. The person outline is now empty, and the mentee will fill the body with their points from the mentoring process. The mentor provides the mentee with sticky notes/papers in the shape of a hand, heart and head (or related symbols). We talk about the mentoring process at all three levels and write it down. Then we attach the pieces of paper to the right places on the outline on the paper and have an additional discussion.

ORID method of directed conversation

The purpose of this method is to reflect and interpret the experience of the mentoring process and decide what to do as a result.





The acronym ORID comes from the first letters of the four levels of questioning:

- O – objective level – what was happening?
- R – reflective level – how did you feel?
- I – interpretive level – what did you learn?
- D – decision level – how will you use this?

1. Objective level: facts, data

Objective questions relate to thinking, seeing, hearing, touching and smelling and are used to elicit data from experience.

- What people, comments, ideas or words caught your attention and why?
- What sounds do you remember?
- What tactile sensations do you remember?

Participants learn that different people have different views of the reality we can observe and can remember the same experiences differently.

2. Reflective level: reactions, feelings

Reflective questions refer to the affective domain – emotional responses and mood.

- What were your feelings during the mentoring process?
- How did this experience affect you?
- What was the best moment?
- What was the lowest point?
- What was the overall mood during the process?

3. Interpretive stage: explanation

The mentor invites the mentee to reflect on the value of the experience and its meaning.

- What was your key insight?
- What was the most important aspect of this process?
- What can you conclude from this experience?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- How does this relate to any theories, models and/or other concepts?



4. Decision stage: what now?

The mentee determines future decisions and/or actions.

- How, if at all, did this experience change your thinking?
- What significance did this experience have for your studies/work/life?
- What will you do differently as a result of this experience?
- What would you tell people who weren't there about the experience?
- What would help you apply what you have learned?

Reflection with symbols

This tool is simple and safe to use even at the beginning of the mentoring process, but you can also use it later in the process. The mentor places eight different reflection cards on the table (see below) and asks the mentee to choose the card that relates to the most important learning point of the process so far, which they then explain.

An alternative way of using the cards is for the mentee to blindly draw a card from the deck and then prepare an answer to the question on the card, or the mentor spreads the cards face down on the table and the mentee turns over a certain card and answers the question.

General tips and tricks

Reduce the awkward power dynamics

The mentoring process may inadvertently be based on a certain level of authority, which should not be the goal of mentoring, so the mentor should strive to reduce power dynamics in order to create space for meaningful discussion. Power dynamics can put the mentee in a stressful, unproductive position. They worry about making a mistake, saying the wrong thing, or distracting the mentor from helping them.

Power dynamics can be reduced by keeping mentoring meetings relaxed and informal. The mentor can show that they are not an authority to the mentee in various ways – e.g. already by sitting with them on the same side of the table, not on the opposite side or at the head of





the table, or by choosing a slightly more informal setting for the meeting. Even a small change can help create an equal position between mentor and mentee. You can also choose to:

- meet somewhere outside the standard place for a relaxed chat over coffee;
- take a walk outdoors;
- attend a networking event or social gathering together.

Turn off notifications on your phone

Our smartphones are designed to be addictive. Like it or not, we'll be automatically checking our phones to vibrate or ring, and that's the last thing you want in a mentoring session. Think of a conversation you had when someone checked their phone every few minutes. It's incredibly annoying and annoying, but it can also make you feel insignificant. The same applies to mentoring sessions. Turn off notifications and keep your phone in your pocket or bag.

Be consistent but not rigid

In the initial stages of mentoring, mentors often confuse consistency with rigidity. They make a months-long schedule of meetings with the good intention of being thorough and proactive, but forget the flexibility that is so important in the mentoring process. Unfortunately, this can overwhelm your mentee. It seems like a huge commitment if they have to fix the exact time and place of meeting months in advance at the very first meeting. Believe it or not, you can be flexible and consistent at the same time. Why not agree to meet three times a month, and you will determine the exact dates on the fly? This gives your mentee the ability to reschedule if something gets in the way, and they also know you're reliable and available.

Prepare an agenda for each meeting

Despite the flexibility, planning is very important. If you're not prepared for the meeting, you probably won't be able to cover everything you wanted to in a short amount of time, so it's important to have a mentoring plan ready – even if it's just a rough guide of what topics you want to discuss.

There are some good reasons for this:

- an agenda ensures that you get the most out of the meeting – your time is valuable and so is your mentee's time;
- an agenda provides structure for discussion without stifling it;



- an agenda allows you and your mentee to refer back to previous conversations, which is extremely useful when you want to measure progress or give feedback.

You can use the outline meeting structure to get started, but of course you can customize it to your liking:

- greeting;
- share the highs and lows of the time since your last meeting;
- check the status of the agreed goals;
- dive deeper into the topic of discussion;
- share feedback on how the mentoring process is going;
- conclusion, plan for the next meeting.

Of course, the agenda doesn't always have to be the same – you can deviate from it if something more important comes up – but establishing at least a partial routine is a great way to ensure that your mentoring sessions are productive and useful.

Define what is allowed and what is not (boundaries)

There are many different relationships that provide deep emotional support; a therapist, a close friend, or a romantic partner. Mentoring must never cross this line if it is to be effective. A mentor cannot replace a therapist or professional counsellor.

There are several reasons for this:

- it can be confusing for mentees to receive mixed signals from their mentor;
- mentoring is a professional relationship and should be treated as such;
- it is difficult to give honest feedback when the lines between personal and professional relationships are blurred.

This doesn't mean you can't be personal with your mentee—in fact, it's essential to establish a good relationship, but it's important to define what's off-limits in the relationship and respect those boundaries.

What boundaries will you set about time limits? Will you allow your mentee to contact you outside of scheduled meetings? What about opening personal topics?



The key is to be open and communicate clearly about the boundaries you have set, as this will prevent any potential confusion or hurt.

Mentors need support as well

Mentors also need support or even their own mentoring process. As a mentor, you will run into things that you can't – or shouldn't – solve on your own, and you need someone to talk to about those things. Your mentee is not that person. Instead, you should make sure you have a mentor or other person you can talk to, discuss, and solve problems with.

Keep in touch between meetings

Keeping in touch can be minimal gestures that let the mentee know that the relationship is maintained, despite the fact that you don't meet them every day. Even a short email can make a big difference, e.g. "Hey, I just wanted to see how you're doing. How was your last meeting? Any progress on the goal we set? I look forward to hearing from you."

You can also structure the process of keeping in touch a little more if you feel it is necessary, and set a specific time for a short check-in between meetings – this could be a short phone call.

1. Show your vulnerability

Accepting your shortcomings is often the first step to progress, and mentors can also be an example and role model for this. You too can tell mentees in which areas you want to improve, or even ask the mentee for advice. This can help strengthen the relationship between mentors and mentees.

2. Mentor asynchronously when necessary

Let's face it – we can't stick to our commitments all the time. Obligations get in the way of our plans and that's okay. When you can't meet with your mentee in person, try to at least stick to the meeting plan asynchronously. You can send the mentee a list of questions to answer before the next meeting, or send them feedback. This asynchronous way of communicating is a great way to keep momentum going, especially when you're short on time (which is unfortunately quite common these days).



3. Make your meetings more interesting

Mentoring sessions can get boring if you stick to the same routine every time. Spice things up by alternating face-to-face and remote meetings, or try different mentoring activities.

Some ideas for creative meetings:

- watch the educational video together and discuss it;
- take a walk and talk about your mentee's progress so far;
- write down goals for the next meeting and share them with each other;
- consider ideas for the mentee's professional development;
- have a meeting during breakfast or lunch.

4. Make use of your acquaintances

Your mentee probably wants to learn from other individuals in your circle as well – so introduce them to people who can be relevant to them. Mentees are often generally eager for more connections and insights into different real-world situations and experiences, and introducing a mentee to someone in your network can be a great way to strengthen your relationship with that person and the mentee. Organize e.g. a meeting together with another mentor-mentee pair, creating an opportunity to share stories and knowledge and observe how your mentee interacts with other professionals.

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