



Mentoring Manual

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and customised for the specific use of
LIANZA mentors participating in the
mentoring of registrants*

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Introduction

This manual is intended to support the LIANZA registration scheme (www.lianza.org.nz) and in particular be used to guide mentors as they work with new librarians / registrants in their first year in the profession.

It is based on my experience as a mentor and coach since 1999 working with people at all levels across a broad range of both the local and central government sector, both in NZ and overseas, as well as private sector organisations. Given my own professional background as a librarian, libraries and librarians have always figured largely in my client base.

This manual is organic in format in that I see it growing and developing as people use it and work with it. I will be keen to get feedback and ideas about extra areas that I can include, as mentors and registrants start to work with the registration scheme ~ and this manual.

There are a couple of assumptions I have made in preparing this document. The first is that both mentors and registrants are thoroughly conversant with the LIANZA registration scheme and processes inherent in it. The LIANZA website has comprehensive coverage of this.

The second is that mentors in particular are familiar with the scope of their role within the registration scheme and fully understand what is expected of them. Again there is a full explanation of this on the LIANZA website, and at various stages throughout this manual I have mentioned ways to ensure you are clear on your role, your registrant's role, and the risks of getting side-tracked

This manual is intended to be self driven and throughout the text you will find a number of exercises. Before you turn the next page I suggest you put a stake in the ground now ☺ so far as your understanding of mentoring is concerned. That way you can assess your level of preparedness as you proceed through the following pages, and maybe even open up to the possibility of a little self-coaching! I do encourage you to do this bit of pre-preparation, even if you are an experienced mentor.

EXERCISE

Thinking about the role of mentor that you have agreed to take on, please take a few moments to reflect on specifically how you will need to BE as you approach this challenge, and then, what you believe you will need to DO. In my view the BEING is the critical piece to get right ~ the DOING will then follow from that.

These are my first thoughts about how I need to BE as a mentor

These are my first thoughts about what I need to DO as a mentor

Section 1 The Mentoring Role

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who serves as a trusted confidante, often over an extended period of time. In a formalised arrangement mentors guide and enhance the development of the person they are mentoring in an objective, non-judgmental and unconditionally supportive way. It is an extremely unique professional relationship.

Here are some key elements of generic mentoring:

- Mentoring is one-on-one and totally focused on the needs of the person being mentored
- It is independent of hierarchy and line management or specific business drivers
- Mentoring involves providing a reliable sounding board
- The person being mentored takes ownership of the process
- Mentoring focuses on enhancing development and building confidence, in a way that is more than simply passing on lots of new information
- Mentoring is concerned with building future capability and sustainable patterns in the person being mentored that continue to benefit them long after the period of mentoring is complete

Some things that mentoring **IS** and **IS NOT**

Mentoring **IS** guiding, supporting, developing, building

Mentoring is appropriately paced, relaxed, empowering and rewarding

Mentoring is a learning experience for both parties

Mentoring is humbling

Mentoring is fun

Mentoring **IS NOT** telling

Mentoring is not rescuing

Mentoring is not training

Mentoring is not managing (altho some excellent managers are also great mentors)

Mentoring is not problem solving

Mentoring is not over-loading with info about how you did it!

What is the mentor's role?

In this instance the mentor's role is the provision of guidance and support to help the registrant develop a Professional Training Plan and complete it. The role may also include such things as:

- suggesting a wider view or different approach
- help to identify learning opportunities
- provision of links to contacts or other resources

This role is carried out within the broad framework of the LIANZA professional registration scheme as detailed on the LIANZA website.

Key attributes of a good mentor

The NZ Mentoring Centre website says: *Expertise in a specific content area does not qualify a person to be a mentor. Mentoring/coaching are skills in themselves which need to be developed.* www.mentorcentre.co.nz

It is important for everyone embarking on their new mentoring role, even if you have done mentoring before, to consider it a unique and different role from your appointed job (your day job).

Two of the key skills that good mentors develop are those of **listening** and **questioning**. They are essentially the two key tools mentors use.

Good listeners are people who can:

- relax and b-r-e-a-t-h-e, and totally focus on the mentoring conversation
- come to the mentoring session with a clear (rather than cluttered) mind
- be comfortable with silence
- stay out of advice-giving mode
- listen listen listen ~ and not analyse
- be empathetic and supportive
- notice what is NOT said ~ and stay curious
- use eye contact appropriately (if mentoring face to face)
- have their registrant feel special and empowered
- enjoy the process rather than want to rush to a solution, or attach to a particular outcome

NOTE ~ there is more about Listening on page 20-21

Good questioners on the other hand are people who can:

- relax and b-r-e-a-t-h-e, and totally focus on the conversation (**YES the same as above!**)
- come to the mentoring session with a clear (rather than cluttered) mind (**ditto!**)
- be curious and ask questions from that curiosity space, rather than being prying and inquisitive ~ and know the difference
- ask lots of open questions, and know when to ask closed questions
- 'dance' with their registrant by sometimes taking the lead and sometimes letting them lead in the questioning
- trust themselves to know the best question to ask, rather than use a prepared script or suffer from "bunny in the headlights" syndrome and freeze up
- pick up nuances and subtleties in responses to their questions that in turn lead naturally to the next question
- ask lots of WHAT questions ~ rather than relying on WHY questions
- trust their registrant to have the best answers (rather than feeling they have to prompt them in any way)
- see themselves as the empowerer ~ rather than the rescuer or problem solver

Defining the relationship

The mentoring relationship is not intended to create another management figure in the registrant's life. For many that will be the very last they need! As the mentor you have a unique and very special responsibility which needs to be held lightly and diligently. In my view you will be successful when you are seen by the registrant as

- part of their support crew
- unconditionally supportive
- firm as required
- totally focused on their best intentions
- someone who cares

There is a lovely quote which says ~ ***I will care about how much you know when I know how much you care.*** Good mentoring is about caring professionally and knowing how to do that ~ without swamping or overwhelming or protecting or rescuing.

Being clear about the scope

It is critical in developing the mentoring relationship that you are very clear about the scope of your role. This is defined on the LIANZA website in the following way

The mentor's role is to help the registrant develop a Professional Training Plan and complete it. The role may include provision of guidance and support, suggesting a wider view or different approach, help to identify learning opportunities, and links to contacts or other resources. The mentor does not normally evaluate the current work performance of the registrant, and is not the line manager. www.lianza.org.nz/registration

Occasionally I have seen well-meaning mentors stray from the strictly mentoring path so that suddenly, and often unconsciously, they find all sorts of other extraneous subjects creeping into the mentoring conversations. Staying mindful at all times of what is being discussed and how it is being discussed is part of the mentor's role. If you have any sense that you have moved into chatting mode, or worse still gossip mode, you have strayed off the mentoring path.

To draw that reality to your registrant's attention is a good way to mitigate that risk, and do some good modeling along the way. All you need say is something like *'I notice that we have strayed off our intended topic for today – let's get back to our mentoring'*

To not correct your course back to the intended area for discussion will be to undermine the success of your mentoring and provide your registrant with less than they deserve. Look out for this one – it is a huge trap!

Being clear about each registrant's needs

If you are mentoring more than one person (the LIANZA website suggests a maximum of 2 registrants per mentor) it is critical that you treat each one as a new and unique experience. What works for one will not necessarily be the same for the second so you need to create each relationship as a separate entity and check out what is needed for each one, what their expectations are of you, what will work, and not work, and how to ensure you become a valued member of their professional network.

Exercise

As you orientate yourself to your new role (even if you are an experienced mentor) here are some questions to consider

1. What is your experience of being mentored?
 - what worked?

 - what did not work?

 - what did you particularly appreciate in your mentor?

- what was the biggest single thing that you remember?

- what impact did that factor have on you at the time?

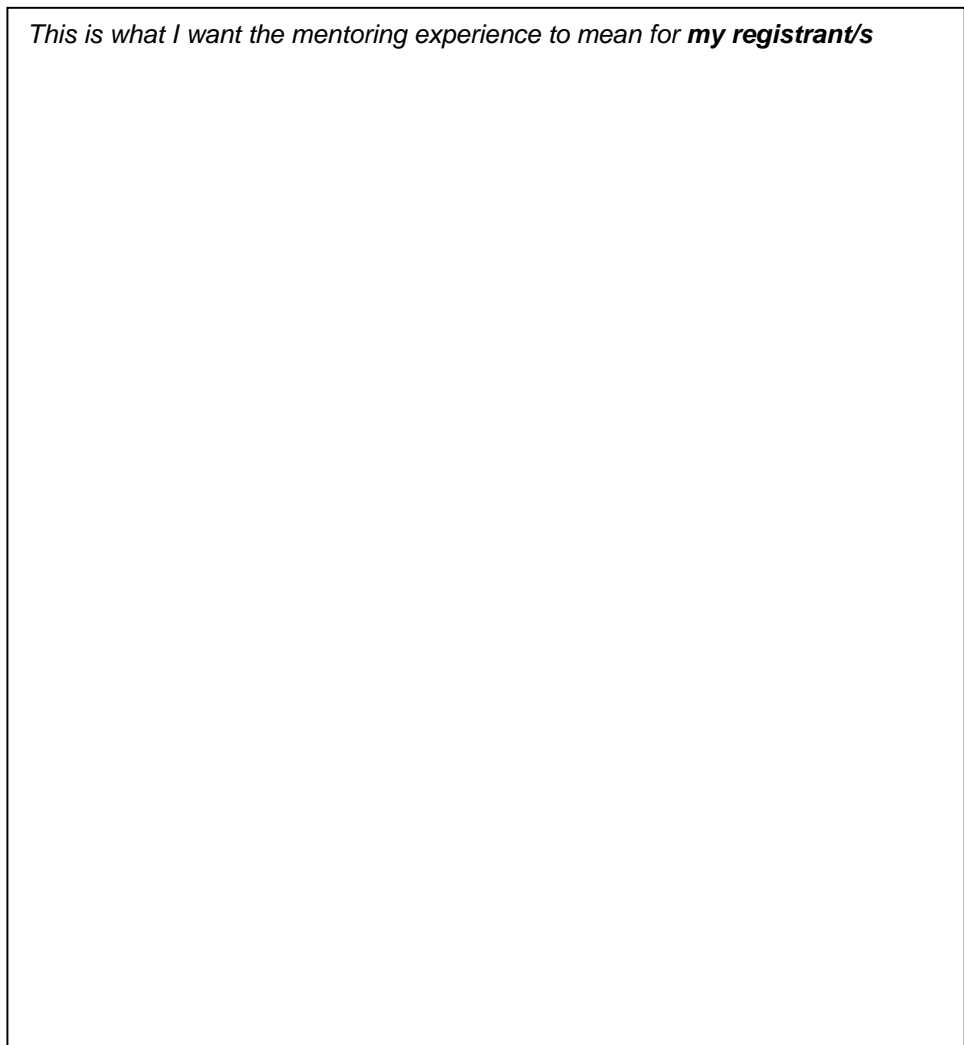
- what impact does that factor have on you now?

- what is the ongoing outcome of your being well mentored?

NOTE: If you have no experience of being formally mentored then take a few minutes to think about someone who has had a hugely positive impact in your life – maybe a teacher, a grandparent, a former boss, a valued friend. Now ask yourself the same questions above. Often people we have been drawn to in the past have in effect been mentors to us

2. Now thinking about YOU as the mentor, what do you want your registrant to be saying about the way you mentored them long after this year of mentoring is complete? It is likely that if done well, your mentoring will have long lasting positive impacts

*This is what I want the mentoring experience to mean for **my registrant/s***



There are some ideas on the next page however it is best if you make some notes above before you turn the page!!

My mentor made everything seem more possible

My mentor never judged or criticised me but nor were they overly nice! They struck a really good balance between challenging me and supporting me that suited me really well.

My mentor helped me see where I was getting in my own way and how to work out different ways to tackle stuff

My mentor ensured that I acknowledged what I was achieving, rather than let me always be worrying about what I still had to do

My mentor helped me enjoy the year, and I learnt heaps about myself and my working style

We had a lot of fun when we were doing the mentoring

Now go back and check out the outcomes that you have written on the previous page that you want the people who **you** mentor to be recognising a year from now, and beyond.

What other ideas do you want to capture now that you want to contribute to, and get from the mentoring experience.

*This is what I want the mentoring experience to mean for **me***

Section 2 The Mentoring Relationship

Who will drive the process and initiate the contact

Once you have been identified as a LIANZA mentor your name will be added to the file that registrants can access. A registrant will then approach you to be their mentor and you will need to decide if you can agree to their request.

Reasons why you might decline will include:

- you already have 2 registrants to mentor
- your current work situation does not allow you to mentor at this particular time
- for whatever reason you do not feel that this particular registrant is the best match for you

Making that first contact with a registrant

If you agree to proceed with the mentoring it is a good idea to get to know your registrant a little before the mentoring starts so an informal meeting, either in person or by telephone, is a good idea. Some things for you to check-out with them are

- their previous experience of working with a mentor or coach eg what did they particularly like or not like (this info is great guidance to you as their new mentor and is like 'gold' as you establish the relationship)
- what are they particularly excited about in this stage of their career / role / life – this will give you a sense of what drives them
- where they see their main challenges – this will give you a sense of their perceptions of their year of being a registrant, their doubts and even fears
- what other factors they want you to know about them in order that you can mentor them well

In this initial conversation it is absolutely critical that you not judge, or try to give advice, or solve any problems that are identified. Be aware that this rushing-to-solutions on the part of the mentor can be a natural path for people who are in a managerial role, but is not a tool for mentoring. Registrants will learn very little from a mentor who bombards them with how they did it!! Yours is not a telling role but it is a **listening and empowering and supporting** role.

One way that this set-up conversation can help you as the mentor, is to give you some guidance as to the initial areas for focus during the mentoring, and how they would like to use you as their mentor. It is therefore important to take some notes as you talk, OR if you prefer, grab a few minutes immediately after the conversation to record the key points that were discussed while they are fresh in your mind.

You will need to find a way to do this that you feel comfortable with. Saying to the registrant *'Do you mind if I just take some brief notes?'* will give you the leeway to do this, but you need to do it in a way that the registrant does not feel like they are in a court-room giving evidence. Keep focused on **them**, not your notes, and record key concepts and main ideas that you can later flesh out when the conversation is complete.

Whether the initial contact is by telephone or in person it is important that **your registrant** does most of the talking. Your skills in questioning and listening will immediately be tested here. If you end up doing most of the talking you will not be mentoring. You are likely to be telling. In my experience it is one of the most common traps for managers or other experienced staff moving into a mentoring role. The temptation to burst forth with the 'answer' to their 'problem' is huge, so look out for this one!!

Ascertaining if you 'click'

It is important that as the mentor you set your mind to enjoying being part of a mentoring relationship. If you are doing it from a sense of duty, then in a word, forget it!! Registrants deserve better, and will be looking for people who are committed to their (the registrant's) success.

You are likely to know quite quickly at an initial meeting or first telephone conversation whether you think this will work for you ~ and please, do not worry about whether the registrant thinks they can work with you or if they will like you. That is THEIR decision and being a good mentor will kick in at this early stage, as you leave THEM to sort that out for themselves. Just be yourself and notice what happens by way of open-ness, rapport, maybe even a little laughter, and signs of their being willing to trust you to support them through this important year. If it feels positive and the time flies and you get the sense that they are keen to get started, then proceed to work through the steps as outlined in the section entitled **'Setting up the first mentoring appointment'** on page 15. You can move to this stage by saying something like: *'Having listened to what you have said I think we would work well together. What are your thoughts?'*

If on the other hand they seem uncomfortable, reluctant and not very enthusiastic ~ and you can't get a breakthrough at that first meeting, then maybe this person is not the best match for you. You will probably get an intuitive feel that this may not work, and in this instance it can be best to sway on the side of caution and not proceed. Registrants will have enough to do without having to worry about the lack of a 'click' between you.

NOTE: You do not need to identify **why** you think it will not work. Simply acknowledge that the fit does not suit you and act accordingly. In this instance you can say something like: *Having talked with you I don't think I would be the best mentor for you, but here's what I can do . . .* [and you may like to suggest another mentor who you think could be a better fit].

If you feel you must give reasons for not taking up the mentoring invitation, then be honest. It could well be that you do not have the timeslot available to suit the registrant, or you are already mentoring someone else and realise that this second person would overload you, or you think a mentor with a different background would be a better fit in this instance. There are a raft of reasons ~ and you need not feel uncomfortable about it. It is best to be upfront at the beginning rather than becoming increasingly drawn into an arrangement that does not suit you, because that is likely to get more and more uncomfortable for both parties as time proceeds.

Setting up the first mentoring appointment

Let's assume that you have both decided that you want to work together as mentor and registrant. There are two more key things to talk about at the first discussion ~ and they are the medium you and your registrant will use to work together, and the timing of the first appointment.

There are 3 key media to use to mentor and they are not mutually exclusive – you can use one or more methods combined in ways that suit you both.

1. face to face
2. telephone
3. email

It is not recommended that you use email solely as your mentoring medium, (the lack of interactive conversation does not suit most people) however it is a great way to stay in touch between meetings or phone calls.

Many people believe that mentoring cannot work without face to face contact however in my experience that is not so. Telephone mentoring can be extraordinarily convenient when people are prepared to give it a try ~ it is very time efficient (no travelling or parking) and potentially allows people more privacy in that they can be in a quiet spot of their choosing. Whenever I have met initial reluctance to telephone mentoring, I have always encouraged people to give it a try ~ and rarely found people do not enjoy it. And if you are really keen you can invest in headphones so you can be hands free.

Just a little caution about using SKYPE for mentoring calls. I have used SKYPE but found the sound quality and immediacy of the inter-connection to be too variable to recommend it, however if you and your registrant are both proficient SKYPE users, then go for it!

Who will call who if by telephone

One thing to check out is who will pick up the toll charge (if that is applicable). Also be aware that often the registrant will not have a private phone at their workplace and calls may need to be scheduled at weekends or evenings.

Protocols around cancellation

It is important to agree with your registrant about how you will contact each other in the event that either person needs to cancel in an unforeseen emergency – getting a cellphone number early on is often best if last minute changes are required. However both parties must see the mentoring appointment as a firm commitment, as they would any other formal appointment and expect to show up on time.

One thing to look out for is repeated postponement or what may be seen as avoidance of mentoring contact. In this case there is usually some other issue that needs to be checked up on, eg registrant is getting behind with their work and feels uncomfortable about admitting it, maybe they are not finding the mentoring helpful, maybe you are not the best mentor for them. Refer to the section on **What can go wrong** on page 35 for ideas on how to address this situation.

Length and frequency of sessions

As part of the mentoring set-up process you need to discuss and agree likely frequency of contact, just so you each know what the intention is, but be flexible in the event that this needs to change. Many registrants will initially be unsure of just how much contact they will need with you.

It could well be that you connect up on a weekly basis for the first few weeks, and then go to 2 or 3-weekly appointments after a month or so. I do not recommend just monthly appointments especially in the early stages, unless your registrant is extraordinarily focused and well-organised. A series of regular appointments in the early stages will develop the rapport and momentum needed to build a strong relationship for maximum benefit and best outcomes.

As to length of appointments, most people find an hour is about the maximum. Anything longer than this can be quite exhausting for both mentor and registrant, so look out for the temptation to go on longer as it can mean that things are not being sufficiently focused. A good mentoring session can be completed well within 60 minutes. I suggest 30-40 minutes to start with, then see how you go.

If you indicate at the start the timeframe that you have agreed the session will last, then it is the role of the mentor to manage that timeframe and signal that time is almost up by saying something like

We are almost at the top of the hour

We are coming to the end of our appointment

We are almost up for this appointment so before we close let's summarise etc etc

It is quite likely that the registrant will be surprised when you mention that the hour is almost up. The time will fly for them when the mentoring is going well.

Informal spontaneous contact between formal appointments

A way that you can add extra value for your registrant is to keep in touch with them between formal appointments. This is a nice added extra which your registrant is likely to appreciate. It simply involves your spontaneously calling or emailing them every so often, just to check up on how things are going for them and their training plan. Something along the lines of '*Good luck at that meeting today*' or '*How did you go with that piece of work you had to complete this week?*' is often exactly the light touch they need to spur them on, or lift their spirits and

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energy on a busy day. I have often received hugely appreciative comments from clients when I have followed an instinct to send a quick email referring to something I know they are planning to do or investigate. It will not work for everyone but is certainly worth considering as you get into your mentoring role. Here are some recent comments I have received back ~

You have no idea how timely your email was – I was just starting to get nervous but you reminded me of what I had to do!! And now it is complete. Yeh

How did you know that I was feeling overwhelmed – that was exactly what I needed to hear this afternoon

I was about to call you but now I am feeling encouraged – I will let you know how I get on.

Confidentiality

As in any mentoring or coaching relationship the content of the appointment must remain confidential. As the mentor you are in a position of trust and must respect that at all times. If on a rare occasion it becomes appropriate that you reveal or share info about the registrant, it must be **only with the express agreement** of the registrant. In my experience it is best even then to err on the side of caution. There is too much at stake for both of you if things are misunderstood by either party.

Venue – if face to face

If you are mentoring face to face, it is important to be aware of the status implications of the venue you choose, if indeed it is you who chooses the venue. An office may not be the best place, even if it is their office! To get the best out of your mentoring the registrant will need to feel comfortable and relaxed and often mentoring in their office reminds them of all the things on their TO DO list!! I find a neutral space is often best. People tend to think more clearly and creatively when they are away from their work surrounds, so a nearby park or a café are good possibilities, and getting them out of their day-to-day space can often be a bonus so long as you have a quiet and confidential space to meet and talk. The place where the entire staff go for their morning latte is not an option, unless you go in a quiet time! The people at the next door table will have ears, and even though they cannot hear your discussion, they can always make it up!

Timing – in work or out of work hours

It is important to check out with your registrant their expectations re timing, in case they can talk with you only outside office hours, or maybe they need to work around their children's commitments and care arrangements. On the other hand you may well want to do your mentoring only in work time so it is best to make this discussion part of your initial meeting. This will avoid agreeing to work with someone and then discovering your diaries cannot coordinate free times.

In Summary

Here is a Set Up Checklist listing the key factors to work through with your registrant before your first formal mentoring appointment

- Time for initial introductory meeting, or phone call
 - your preferred times
 - their preferred times
- Agreement to work together
- Contact details for each registrant
- Date and time of first formal appointment
- Venue if face to face
- Who will call who if by phone
- Postponement protocols

And a key point to remember

It is very important to remember that you are likely to learn as much as you contribute, or more!

Mentoring is a professional relationship between peers within the Library and information profession, so expect to be surprised about what you learn as the mentor, and note ~ the bigger the difference in age relativity the more you as the mentor are likely to learn!!

The mentoring relationship is one to honour and enjoy. You are being entrusted to support and encourage another, so do take it seriously, continue to hone your mentoring skills and the rewards will be yours as you watch your registrant fulfill their goals and expectations.

Section 3 The Mentoring Tools

Back on page 6-7 we talked a little about the role of listening and questioning in mentoring. They are so important that they need some expansion!

The first of the two key tools for mentors is Listening

Listening takes considerable practice to do well. In preparing to mentor it is important to take some time in meetings at work over the next week or two, or personal interactions with family or groups of friends to step back from actively contributing to the conversation and simply LISTEN.

A wise person once said: *Listening is not wanting to talk*

As an experienced person in the library and information profession you may well find it more of a challenge than you expect, particularly if you have what would be considered to be an extravert way of relating to others, or have a role at work that requires you to tell or instruct others in what to do.

Here is an exercise to help you 'not want to talk' and actively and consciously step into listening mode.

Exercise

Choose an occasion in the next day or two (either at home or at work) when you can detach a little by pulling back mentally from the circle of conversation to consider the following questions

Take some time to observe the participants.

What do you notice?

What are the patterns of conversation?

Who is listening more than talking?

Who is talking more than listening?

Who is not listening at all? How can you tell?

If you were to map the conversation, what would that look like?

- Who is talking to whom?
- Who is dominating the overall conversation?
- Who is being left out ~ or maybe choosing not to contribute?
- What do you think might be needed to draw that person out?
- What would it mean for the others if the quiet person had a chance to speak?
- What else do you notice overall about this conversation? (be prepared to be fascinated!)

And then afterwards do some self reflection along these lines ~~~

How hard did you find it to just listen, and do nothing more in a given conversation?

What does that then tell you about the ease with which you can take on the mentoring role?

Here are 10 attributes of good listeners

1. they have a good intuitive sense ~ they trust their gut
2. they notice stuff
3. they are extraordinarily non-judgmental
4. they have high EQ (emotional intelligence)

5. they have their own stuff sorted
6. they are not driven to rush to a quick solution
7. they are comfortable with silence in a conversation
8. they hold back from giving advice
9. they understand that to listen is to give someone the gift of T-I-M-E
10. they know that listening is about not wanting to talk

The second of the two key tools for mentors is Questioning

Questioning takes time to develop if you are to do it skillfully and well.

In order to prepare to think anew about the art of questioning you might like to take special note of what happens in the next few situations that you are part of that involve questions just to see how very different they each are.

Here are just a few examples

media interviews: Next time you are listening to the John Campbells, Kim Hills and Mary Wilsons of the world, take special note of their questioning style, and how different it is depending on the circumstances, age, and often gender of the interviewee

work interviews: think about the types of questions you have used, or been asked at recent work interviews

inter-personal relationships – how about the sort of questions you ask people in your family and personal networks, for example . . .

- a friend who is upset
- a friend who is excited
- a partner who has forgotten to do something they agreed to
- a child who has taken action you disapprove of.

What sort of questions do you use in each case? Each and all of them will be slightly or radically different depending on your circumstances and the nature of your relationship with the other person. Being aware of all these nuances and subtleties both in yourself and in professional interviewers will help you make wise and conscious decisions about the types of questions that you will take into the mentoring role. They may be nothing like the ones you use, or see used in any of the situations described above!

In choosing the types of questions to use when mentoring it is important to remind yourself of the key elements of your role as mentor, as outlined earlier . . .

mentors guide and enhance the development of the person they are mentoring in an objective, non-judgmental way, and unconditionally supportive way. (page 5)

the mentor's role is the provision of guidance and support to help the registrant develop a Professional Training Plan and complete it. (page 6)

good mentoring is about caring professionally and knowing how to do that ~ without swamping or overwhelming or protecting or rescuing. (page 8)

Yours is not a telling role, but a listening and empowering and supporting role. (page 13)

Here are some key elements of a good mentoring question

It will shift the registrant's thinking away from the expected and patterned response.

It will come from a place of curiosity in the mentor, rather than inquisitiveness.

It will be asked in a way that engenders personal exploration, rather than just information.

It will likely be an open question in that it will not stop conversation, but instead take it places that the registrant may not have ever considered alone.

Here are some examples of not-so-good, and good mentoring questions.

<p>Have you thought about what you'd like to talk about today?</p> <p>Are these the only 2 options you think you have?</p> <p>Are you going to accept this decision or not?</p> <p>Why do you think you are not enthusiastic about this?</p> <p>You know what you need to do now, don't you?</p> <p>Do you need any help from me?</p> <p>Why would anything get in the way? You'll be just fine!</p>	<p>What are the key things we need to be talking about today?</p> <p>What are some other options we could explore?</p> <p>What are some other ways you could look at the challenge presented by this decision?</p> <p>What do you think might be behind your lack of enthusiasm?</p> <p>What would you like to do next ? OR What would the very first thing you could do?</p> <p>What could I do to support you in this?</p> <p>What do you think might get in the way during this next phase?</p>
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And now let's consider the qualities of people who ask good questions ~ because they usually make very good mentors!

Ten attributes of good questioners

1. they stay in the moment
2. their questions elicit genuine 'aha' moments in the registrant
3. they don't step over or around 'issues'
4. they can quickly get beyond the prosaic
5. they follow hunches and check stuff out via their questions
6. they know that the best questions will come to them when they really listen
7. they are creative in the way they tackle things that may be worrying the registrant
8. they find ways to keep their questions simple but powerful
9. they make an art of staying in curious mode
10. they know when to shut up and let the silence create the 'space' for the registrant to talk

Exercise

This is moment-of-truth time for mentors ☺

Please take a few minutes to go back through each of the **10 Attributes** lists above (both of listeners and questioners) and answer the following questions

Which elements of the **Good Listeners** list (page 21) are you renowned for? List the key ones here

-
-
-

How can you honour these skills in your mentoring?

Are there any of the dot-points in the **10 attributes of good listeners** list that you know need some more development on your part?

List them here in turn and make some commitment to honing them up over the next few weeks.

The areas on the LISTENING list that I am not strong in are:

-
-
-

This is what I plan to do about each one

Now think about which elements of the **Good Questioners** list (page 24) you are renowned for. List the key ones here

-
-
-

How can you honour these skills in your mentoring?

Are there any of the dot-points in the **10 attributes of good questioners** list that you know need some more development on your part?

List them here in turn and make some commitment to honing them up over the next few weeks

The areas on the QUESTIONING list that I am not strong in are:

-
-
-

This is what I plan to do about each one

Section 4 The Mentoring Sessions

How to structure a mentoring session

In planning your first mentoring session it is worth having a general shape or structure in your mind so that things do not drift aimlessly, however, as has been highlighted earlier in this manual, the best mentoring is done very much 'in the moment' rather than being too pre-planned.

This can be more than a little stressful for a new mentor, but what the registrant will be wanting from you is your time and energy and commitment to their success, not a masterful 'agenda' . In fact no agenda is the best agenda so let go your need to be organised or structured, and simply listen, listen, listen.

When you are mentoring your best, you will work with whatever your registrant brings you, so r-e-l-a-x, and then they are more likely to as well!!.

Having said that, here are some ideas to be guided by . . .

Step 1 ~ Establish the focus for this session

The purpose here is essentially to decide on where you both want to start in your mentoring relationship. What does your registrant want to look at first? And how do you find that out?

The answer is encapsulated in two simple words: **ASK THEM!**

Deciding on where to start is not your decision as the mentor ~ it is their decision as the registrant so hold back from thinking you know what they should or could do. Yes, you are likely to have your own ideas, but this is not about telling or advising ~ it is about mentoring ~ so take a deep breath and let them do the work here in deciding where they want to start.

Things to look out for

- They may say they do not know where to start, however as new professionals they need to take responsibility for their own decisions and actions so give them some time to think it through

- They may ask you what you think they should do ~ I suggest you quietly smile and ask them what they would LIKE to do
- They may tell you what they do NOT want to do – great – list all the things they do not want to do, and then go back with the original question – what DO they want to do. Ironic though it may seem, getting clear about what they do NOT want to do, often makes it much easier for them to decide what they DO want to do
- They may try to get you to tell them what you would do, but you will not be caught by that one!

Step 2 ~ Explore the issues surrounding the area you are focusing on

Once your registrant has decided on the focus area it is important in this step to simply listen and learn as the registrant talks about the factors surrounding it. You want to find out things like

- what is going well
- what needs more thought or development
- what ideas the registrant has for getting a breakthrough
- what would encourage them to carry through with their ideas
- what is getting in the way.

Remember this is NOT where you offer solutions. This is where you listen and stay curious. Your role is to enhance development and encourage commitment, not to do the work for them. If you fall into this pattern of rushing to what is essentially your ideas for a solution you have just stopped mentoring and are becoming a rescuer. This may sound dramatic, but it is where mentors are most likely to shoot themselves in the foot. Your giving advice and/or solutions will close down a mentoring conversation quicker than anything else. Your registrant is likely to have had more advice that is good for them so do not add to that particular burden!! Instead create some 'space' for them to talk and brainstorm with you.

Step 3 ~ Encourage the registrant to decide on a desirable result

Once you have fully explored the focus area, the next step is to encourage the registrant to start thinking about the next stage which will be the goal, or desirable result, that they want to create and work towards.

And here, timing is important. If you move to the goal-creation stage too early the registrant will feel that they are not being listened to, or pushed along too fast. And if you delay it the registrant may have successfully encouraged you to unwittingly collude with them in their procrastination!! As the mentor this is a judgment call and getting it right will depend on how well you have been listening, and noticing, and getting a sense of when the registrant is ready for that gentle nudge!

At this point it is worth noticing your, and your registrant's, language and the specific words you each use. Some people do not like the word *goals*, but they will be more tempted by the term *results* or *objectives*. Talk with your registrant about which terminology works for them and help them find words they are comfortable with. The mentoring will not work well if you keep asking them about how their goals are coming along, if they have an absolute aversion to the mere mention of the word!! Taking some time to come up with phrases and terminology that inspires rather than turns off, will go a long way to creating an enjoyable and fulfilling path to your registrant's success.

There are some points to note about creating a desirable result or goal, and here you will need to encourage the registrant to continue to refine the goal statement until it meets these criteria.

The well known **SMART** acronym works well here. The 5 key elements are not mutually exclusive. Here is just one way of drawing out the key elements of a successful goal or project

Specific –

- in creating a specific goal your registrant will need to know exactly what they want to accomplish
- if it is a big goal they will need to break it down into a series of smaller ones, each with their own timeframe
- the more specific the goal the more likely the chances of success

Measurable

- in creating a measurable goal your registrant will need to be clear about how they will know when they have achieved their goal
- they will also need to know how to recognise a significant milestone along the way.
- sometimes tackling big goals in bite-sized chunks is a very good way to get someone started where they may have been procrastinating, so look out for signs they are getting stuck before they even get started

Achievable

- ensure that what your registrant is committing to is achievable by getting them to talk about how they will fit in their registration work with everything else
- look out for people aiming too high or too low – both are discouraging – and expect them to achieve more with your good mentoring than they might have alone. That in fact is the rationale behind this whole programme so encourage them to go slightly higher. A moderate stretch is good and the feeling of success that will ensue is very motivating!

Realistic

- it is important that registrants believe that what they are embarking on is in fact do-able
- mentors can help here by keeping an eye out for both the hopelessly idealistic and the habitual under-achiever – the former is likely to set themselves up for frustration and disappointment and the latter will set you the mentor up for frustration and disappointment
- it is appropriate for the mentor to regularly check in with their registrant on progress in getting into action and monitor any slippage on agreed timeframes
- the mentor can be alert for patterns and draw them to the attention of their registrant.
- If the mentor's warning goes unheeded then it is not for the mentor to start getting stressed - pointing out the registrant's pattern of behaviour is as far as you need to go – as I have indicated earlier this is about building professional responsibility, not rushing to the rescue!

Tangible (time-bound has already been covered under several dot-points above)

- to have a goal be successfully accomplished your registrant will need to be able to SEE and FEEL the reality of what they are aiming for
- they need to be able to imagine the tangible results and imagine it happening by the end of their registration period
- you can help here by having them think about and talk with you about the benefits to them of this year –
 - **what** is it a step towards?
 - **what** will they feel proudest of having achieved?
 - **what** will that then open up?

Step 4 ~ Consider a range of options and choose a preferred one

Once your registrant has decided on a tangible result and discussed it at some length with you to ensure its 'smart'-ness, they are then in a position to think about a range of possible options to get there. This is essentially the HOW piece and will involve them thinking about

- the methodology they might use
- the benefits and 'costs' of each one
- what appeals to them the most, and the least

Do not expect to get this decision made in one session, and do not be surprised if the first plan does not work out. The registrant has considerable choice here about just what to focus on, and how to go about meeting their commitments, so give them time to choose a way forward that works for them.

A word of warning – do not be persuaded to tell them what you think they SHOULD do, or even ought to do, or could do. Ask them what they WANT to do. For some people this is quite a scary place to be in ~ deciding what they really, really WANT to ~ but you are entitled to 'hold' them there till they experience the choices they really do have.

A good mentor will enjoy the anticipation of an approaching wise decision. An inexperienced mentor will collude with their registrant and have them hurry, or may even 'push' them to make an early decision. If you go down this path you are likely to pay the price later via an uncommitted registrant.

My suggestion is that you take some time now to reflect on recent experiences you might have had in supporting someone in their decision - making

Exercise

When was the last time you had to wait for someone else to make a decision about something they were required to do?

How did you respond to the waiting?

What does that tell you about how you will deal with a registrant who needs time to think things through?

Step 5 ~ Help them plan the actions to get started

This is now getting to the action end of the process. Having decided on a desired result and chosen a way to get there from a range of possible options, your registrant now must decide what has to happen in the next few months, then the coming weeks and then what specifically in the next few days.

If they are a person with a structured work-style you will be impressed by their ability to simply get on and do stuff. If on the other hand they are a person with a more flexible work-style then you will be impressed by their ability to delay and put off stuff. Mentor them accordingly!

Remember at all times to keep summarising

- what they have decided
- the timeframes they are committing to
- the first actions they are going to take
- the support they would like from you
- and when you will connect up again

Step 6 ~ Agree on next appointment

It is important in my view to conclude each appointment with an agreement about when the next meeting or call will be. Either of you can change it but leaving it to one of you calling or emailing the other sometime in the future leaves too much to chance. And people get very busy and forget! Better to make a time and reconfirm it when you get back to your diary, than not make a time and wonder later who was going to get back to who!

Step 7 ~ Review the session

I think it is important for any mentor to take a few minutes after the session has closed to just think back over the conversation and do a little self assessment. Here are some things you might consider

- How did the session go generally – timing? venue? rapport?
- What worked well?
- What needs to be done differently?
- What surprised you?
- Will you follow up with them before the next session? About what?
- What do you need to note down to ensure you remember for next time?

Some things to consider for each successive session

And finally here are some ideas about what to consider for each successive session . . .

1. Before you connect up each time take a little quiet time to prepare by revisiting the notes you made from the previous session. Sometimes your registrant will want to continue on the same tack as last time and sometimes they will want to talk about something completely different. Either is fine because they set the agenda.

2. Be alert for patterns developing and acknowledge them and bring them to the attention of your person. Doing that will increase their learning and either have them feel better about themselves (when you comment on the positive patterns) or give them some over-arching things to think about (when you comment on the negative patterns). To shy away from giving them this feedback is to miss a very valuable opportunity as their mentor.

- Some positive patterns
 - i. They email you between sessions to report on progress
 - ii. They initiate extra activities to further their learning
 - iii. They have an appropriate level of self acknowledgement

 - Some negative patterns
 - i. They are often late for appointments or forget them completely
 - ii. They repeatedly judge and criticise themselves
 - iii. They have a generally negative focus in their conversation
3. At each session remind your registrant of the over-arching purpose of your work together, check-out how the mentoring is going for them, say how you are finding it, and generally give evidence that you are enjoying the experience. Having good energy during the time you are together is likely to increase the sense of fulfillment that both of you will experience, and is especially motivating for the registrant – they will feel special and valued.

What can go wrong ~ and how to rescue the situation!

In the process of working with your registrant in what is likely to become an important professional relationship for you both, it is important for you to look out for patterns and tendencies the registrant may have to unwittingly put obstacles in their own way. Here are some of the likely traps . . .

1. Self criticism and self judgment

You may find that your registrant is very good at finding fault in themselves, brushing off praise and always focusing on where they have gone wrong or been found wanting. This is common, it is human, and it is less than helpful. It is worth just pointing out to them each time they do this, but do it in a light way, otherwise your showing them what they are doing may lead to even more negative self talk. If you decide this is presenting your registrant with a major challenge, one thing you can do is ask them to leave the self criticism at the door when they come to meet with you, or park it while you talk on the phone. They can always pick it up

again at the end of your conversation (if they must!) When I have used this technique myself with clients, people initially laugh, but then think about it and take the feedback very well.

2. Over-use of the word **should**

When a registrant asks a mentor what they (the registrant) should do, they need to be gently challenged immediately, by asking them what they WANT to do, and then exploring options and deciding which one to pursue.

What you as the mentor think they should do is of no relevance at all, if you are committed to their development. Decisions they make for themselves and goals they set, will be much more fulfilling and satisfying than those that even the best mentor in the world decides for them.

3. Over-use of **why** questions

When a registrant or mentor keep on asking WHY questions you are likely to get nowhere fast. Some likely unhelpful **why** questions are

- Why did I not think of that?
- Why did he/she say/do that to me?
- Why am I getting behind?
- Why do I not know what to do next?
- Why is this mentoring not going well?

Why questions are inclined to put one party or both, on the defensive and look for someone to blame, neither of which are forward-focused or destined to find a solution.

Consider these **WHAT** questions for each of the dot points above

- What would be a way that I could use that great idea?
- What can I do differently next time to get a more positive response?
- What do I need to smarten up / avoid / reschedule / delegate to stay ahead in my timeframes?
- What would help me decide how to make speedy progress on this?
- What can I say to my registrant to let them know that this is not quite how I imagined it would be?

4. Invitations from your registrant to collude

Be on the lookout for the occasional invitation from your registrant to collude with them about the difficulty of the whole registration process, or their job, or their boss or whatever! You will know you are in danger of this if you find yourself becoming seduced by the content of what they are saying, and start asking for more info from them. Your questions may be very well intentioned but you are not mentoring at that point. You are more likely to be chatting (like friends do) or maybe even gossiping – it is dangerous territory for a mentor and will undermine the success of your mentoring relationship.

Planning regular review sessions

It is good to schedule into your mentoring some regular review sessions. This allows both you and your registrant to share thoughts and insights about how the process is going, what's working well, what needs a little development, and what may be a waste of time! Both your and the registrant's time is valuable so best to make the best use of it.

Some possible questions include:

- How useful is this mentoring? Which bits are the most useful?
- What has been the biggest surprise to you during our work together?
- Where do you think we are missing the mark?
- What new areas would you like us to be addressing?
- What about the frequency and timing of our mentoring sessions? Are they the best they could be?

Conclusion

I wish you well in your mentoring, and hope it brings you satisfaction and fulfillment, and continually enhanced skills. As you progress I welcome feedback about the notes in this manual, things that need to be added or amended and any questions you might have. Please contact me at any time.

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Appendix

Here are some scenarios that may help with specific situations that arise during your mentoring. I have presented a range of possible presenting issues and then some strategies that may be useful in tackling them from your mentor's perspective.

Please note that although they are specific situations do feel free to use some of the suggested solutions at times other than the specific presenting 'problem'. The specific can be made generic if some of the challenges that YOU are faced with are not listed here!

Scenario 1

Your registrant shows initial enthusiasm but then seems to procrastinate when it comes to getting into action

Possible strategies for you as the mentor

- Name what you notice (rather than tolerating it) and have your registrant think about what could be under-pinning their seeming decline in commitment by using questions like this . . .
 - I notice that you seem to be [procrastinating / less enthusiastic / finding it hard to get started]. What has changed since we got started so enthusiastically a few weeks ago?
 - What was it is that gave you the motivation to give this your best shot back then?
 - What will it take to rebuild that enthusiasm?
- **CLUE** – give them as much time as they need to think about and respond to each one because these are quite challenging questions!

Scenario 2

Your registrant regularly shows up late for appointments or misses them all together

Possible strategies for you as the mentor

- Contact them as soon as possible rather than accepting the no-show
- Remind them of your appointment with them and see what has happened ~ there could be a very good reason
- If it seems they have simply forgotten you can ask them
 - How do we make sure we connect up next time – would it be better if I rang you (for example)?
 - Is there a better time that we can talk?
- If it seems like they are not treating the mentoring appointment as a priority, then get a little firmer in your challenge. Point out that you have entered the appointment in your diary the same as all your other appointments and wonder what it is going to take for them to do the same? Make it clear that you see this as a professional commitment and expect them to do the same.
- If it seems like this is a serious pattern then you might like to ask them if this is something that trips them up in other aspects of their professional life eg do they often arrive late for meetings or forget them, and what impact do they think that might be having on their work or the way they are seen by their colleagues?
- **CLUE** – it is important not to ignore this pattern because it is quite likely that the way they are treating the appointments with you may be the same way they are treating others, and getting your feedback and challenge will serve them well

Scenario 3

Your registrant seems to constantly criticise themselves and/or be pessimistic about their abilities

Possible strategies for you as the mentor

- Listen a lot, and do not judge and do not say things like *Don't be silly – you'll be great* OR *Whatever makes you say that – I know that you can do this* etc etc etc

- Acknowledge their beliefs about themselves, and be curious about whether they are actually true by asking questions like . . .
 - You say that you don't think that you can do this – give me some specific examples to show me that this is true OR
 - For a moment let's assume you do know what is necessary, what is the first step you need to take OR
 - How about you step outside your own skin for a moment and look at the situation you are in objectively – what advice would you give yourself right now about how to get a break-through here?
- **CLUE** – do not try to 'jolly' them out of this pattern of self criticism – others will have tried this and probably failed! Instead, take it on board and offer ways to work through it via the questions above. This is more likely to be successful in having them see it makes no sense to stay stuck

Scenario 4

Your registrant seems to constantly criticise others and be ready to blame their situation (eg lack of progress, lack of time, lack of energy, lack of in-house support) on their boss, or workmates, of the organisation they work for, or some challenge at home

Possible strategies for you as the mentor

It is critical that you not collude with them by delving into the scenario they present and asking for lots of facts and info about who said what and when and who to, and be seen to be taking sides or offering advice about what they should do, or sharing insights about you would do. That is the LAST thing they need, and is certainly not mentoring .

Instead my suggestion is that you detach completely from all of that and get them to focus on WHAT rather than WHY, as in questions like . .

- Given the challenges you are facing what do you need to do to ensure you get some time to focus on [your work / registration process / assignment etc etc]
- What do you need to do differently knowing what you know about [the situation at home / your boss/ your work pressures / your work colleagues etc]
- What does all this tell you about how you need to structure your time to ensure you meet your commitments to yourself over the next few months

- **CLUE** – If you find yourself getting in the least bit involved in their challenges you are likely to be delving into the details and in danger of giving advice, whereas as their mentor you need to be helping them to get, and stay, above all of that so they can see a clear path through it. This is the area that many new mentors find toughest, however you will be giving your registrant a huge gift if you step away from the temptation to get involved, and draw them back to WHAT they can do to still make progress in spite of all that they have to cope with. Do what you can to focus them back on their registration work and leave the “problem’ to sort itself out!! Starving it of attention is often exactly what is required.