

THE PHASES OF MENTORING

1. The initial phase-orientation phase (mentor and the mentee meet)

The initial phase begins with the mentee's "help need" looking for a mentor and the first interaction with the mentor. This is the meeting of two strangers. When two people meet for the first time they observe and develop mental images and value judgments about each other.

It is possible that both the mentor and the mentee have some anxiety which may be communicated to one and another. Even though the mentee felt the need, the need may not be identified or understood clearly by the mentee herself. The mentee may also be anxious of what the mentor may think of her, what is expected of her and whether she will be able to work with the mentor. Will the mentor listen to her? Will she feel relaxed and at ease with her? Will she encourage her to work with the issues she will bring to the sessions? If she asks for an advice would the mentor be willing to share her experiences with her?

The mentor may also be anxious about performing a helping role and worried about rejection by the mentee. The mentor can decrease her own anxiety by preparing for her first contact with the mentee.

In this initial phase, the mentor gives the mentee some information on who she is and what her purpose is for mentoring her. She attempts to become oriented to the mentee's goals, needs and expectations of herself. Importantly in this phase, a collaborative work in analyzing the situation to explore, clarify and define feelings and needs takes place.

It is accepted that the mentor and the mentee discuss aspects as;

1. What both sides are willing and capable of contributing to the relationship
2. Needs, expectations and limitations that exist on each side
3. What success would a mentor and mentee most importantly want to get from the relationship
4. Importance of clear and honest feedback, the overall aim to make the mentee independent
5. Implications of each other's styles (such as. detail vs. big picture, specifics vs. concepts; methodological/systematic vs. spontaneous/instinctive, etc.) and how that might affect the relationship
6. The boundaries of the relationship. Such as how long will the mentorship last? What other issues needs to be considered?
7. How to work together. Such as whether a structured approach would suit better to the relationship.
8. How to deal with conflict if it rises.
9. What confidentiality means. It is not acceptable for he mentor or mentee to tell anyone other than the line manager that they are working together
10. The best means of communication. Such as the telephone or e-mail
11. Ways of contacting the mentor in between sessions if advice or support is required in a crisis

12. Handling of missed appointments. Such as how much notice is required
13. Any specific needs of the mentee? Such as working on her confidence and self esteem. Whether the mentor is able to cover these issues
14. Clearly stated expectations and goals. Such as mid objectives and final objectives of the mentoring relationship, where mentee and mentor develop together.

At the end of this stage, both the mentor and mentee build personal relationship with feelings of security, respect, appreciation and trust for one another. The mentee decides that the mentor is trustworthy, truthful, reliable, understanding and helpful. The mentor believes in the mentee's ability and feels that the mentee needs her and believes that she has something relevant to give the mentee.

In the first or second meeting mentee and mentor are asked to sign a written or verbal contract. The contract is sent to the coordinator. This agreement should state aspects as:

1. The aims and expectations of the mentee with regard to the mentor as well as the terms of their relationship
2. The practical details such as frequency, place and duration of meetings
3. Confidentiality statement working in both ways
4. Reliable and structured mid objectives and final objectives

Some important hazards of this stage would be the development of a type of social interaction rather than helping interaction, failing to establish a bond of mutual trust, and a lack of common understanding about the mentee's goals. The length of this phase varies according to the situation.

2. Transition Phase

Transition phase may not take place in all mentoring relationships. If it did, it is characterized by an ambivalent and testing behavior of the mentee. The mentee may go back and forth between true involvement and rejection with the mentor. This can be difficult phase for the mentor who experiences frustration at her ability to win the mentee's trust. As a result the mentee and mentor may move to the cultivation phase and continue with the process or the relationship may end by mutual agreement, from both sides.

3. The cultivation phase (mentee learn form mentor)

By signing the mentoring agreement, both mentee and mentor define the objectives of their relationship within the mentoring program. By doing so, mentee and mentor together become responsible for the implementation and conduct of their mentoring relationship. Clearly defined objectives and mutual expectations and a well defined contract can make mentoring partnership an easy one till the end.

The cultivation phase is composed of a progress of interrelated thoughts, feelings, and attitudes transmitted or communicated by both the mentor and mentee. The mentor acting as a mirror also with her nonjudgmental attitude provides an accepting, academic, nurturing, trusting, encouraging, supportive, respectful, positive atmosphere and an emotional climate.

Through this climate and the relationship mentee's growth is being encouraged. The mentee practices inquiry and critical thinking. Become more self aware, begin to see things from a different perspective, recognize and explore her feelings, thoughts, how she perceives herself and others, how she relates to others, learn about her own way of doing things or ways in which some of her behavior caused her problems, how she copes with problems, what she values, what supports are available to her, how she handles feelings, issues related to her work. She may experience insight into situations that she never understood or realized before such as uncertainty, feelings of inadequacy, strengths and weaknesses. Mentee eventually begins to use her actual strengths to minimize her weaknesses.

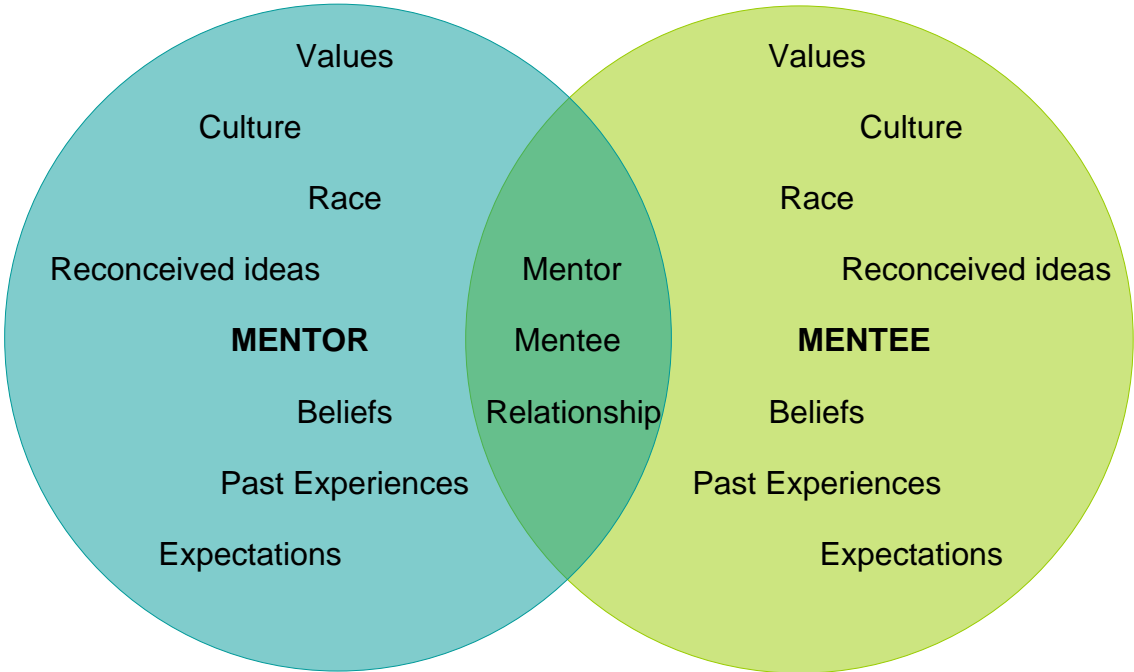


Figure 1. Factors Influencing the Blending of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship (Adapted from Figure 4-1 of Reference 3)

Mentor uses her skills to perceive how the world looks to the mentee or the mentee's frame of reference. Mentor uses her personality, communication and helping skills in full awareness to lead the mentee's growth. She accomplishes these by clarifying, listening, accepting, teaching and interpreting to facilitate her exploration of mentee by helping mentee to talk. The mentee benefits from verbalization of her feelings because words can be examined more easily.

At one point of the mentoring relationship, mentee's confidence in herself may increase. From her new self-knowledge, mentee may reevaluate her strengths and weaknesses and develop a new personal inventory, where her focus, interests, priorities or life goals may change. In relation her mentoring goals may also be changed or the beginning agreement may need to be re-adjusted. These adjustments sometimes may be difficult to be met. The mentoring agreement could allow a premature termination of the relationship. But such requests may be explored to understand the need underneath so that the relationship would continue.

Unfortunately, not every helping interaction will have such positive outcomes as described here. The cultivating phase can be a difficult phase for both the mentor and mentee.

The mentee may be disappointed initially when she expects too much and learns that the mentor has no magic solutions for her and that she is expected to find her own answers. She may also experience, feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and failure when gaining new insight as she looks at herself. At times she may be so anxious that she may withdraw for a period of time and avoid working on her self-discovery.

The mentor may live through different experiences also. The mentor may leave her reflective role and start giving advice which hinders mentee's learning opportunities. She may get carried away into the participant role and unable to guide the interaction. On the other hand she may over use the observer role so that she does not interact appropriately and warmly. It is expected of her to remain in the participant-observer role so that she can guide the interaction in the way where the mentee will benefit the most.

In addition, as the mentor understands the mentee's frame of reference, she might begin to see common aspects between the two. As the mentee discovers herself, it becomes two way learning for both.

Another important aspect of the cultivating phase is the transfer of the tacit knowledge by the mentor. Tacit knowledge as an invisible, strategically important, difficult to share, situational and a silent knowledge is a very valuable product of the individual's experiences. Tacit knowledge is what would make an individual an expert in her area. Mentoring relationship is the best opportunity to share the tacit knowledge by the mentee.

The working phase is usually the longest phase of the interaction. The length depends on the depth to which the interaction progresses.

4. The separation phase/ ending the relationship/resolution (structural and psychological separation)

Termination may occur suddenly if a mentee moves or leaves. Termination of the contract before the agreed time is also possible, when either the mentor or mentee wishes to do so.

The ideal termination of the mentoring relationship takes place when the needs or goals have been met or successful completion of the program accomplished by the efforts of the mentor and the mentee, where this mentee becomes ready for her next step in her career.

The termination of the helping relationship and dissolving the links between the mentor and mentee is usually a mild, temporary, grief-like reaction with conflicting emotions. The mentee may feel that she is "not ready yet" to end the relationship. She may be anxious to get on with her life yet sad to leave such significant learning environment.

This stage may be a difficult one for the mentor also. The mentor may be unable to free herself from her bond in the relationship. A successful ending of this phase lies in recognizing this ambivalence. This optimal gradual lessening of ties and transfer of interests to other activities is referred to as termination with resolution.

During successful resolution, the mentee drifts away from identifying with the mentor. The mentor is pleased with the mentee's progress and excited to see her ready to try the world on his own. The mentee's needs are met, where she can move toward new goals. Mentor and mentee becomes independent from each other. As a result of this process, both of them become stronger maturing individuals.

To plan for a successful resolution, several things may be helpful.

1. Be clear from the beginning about how long the helping relationship will last. If the mentor's role with the mentee has been identified clearly at the beginning, the time for termination will be recognized more easily
2. Occasional references can be made to the eventual termination
3. Mentee is expected to address the "last" meeting. (eument-net)
4. It is helpful to plan a specific time to accomplish termination as it approaches. At this time the mentor and mentee should:
 - Assess the mentoring. What has happened, how were the mutual agreement, the commitments and goals been met,
 - Express appreciation. For what each party has given and received in the relationship
 - Discuss what the mentee's plans are for the future. Discuss how they both feel about the end of the interaction
5. Consider any next steps. The mentee may now need a different mentor or may want to become a mentor herself
6. Celebrate the accomplishment
5. Re-definition phase/ friendship and mutual contact/ lasting friendship (relation is re-defined to a new sort of relation into friendship and mutual contact)

When mentoring is terminated mentor and mentee need to re-define their relationship. The relationship may continue informally or as friends.

6. References

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