

Leadership and Management Development

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# MENTOR'S TOOLKIT

Tools and techniques to support mentoring conversations



  
WARWICK

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# INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit is for staff at Warwick who mentor other colleagues. It builds on the content of the ‘What is Mentoring?’ e-learning course. It is intended that you use this toolkit after the training, to refresh your knowledge of mentoring skills and techniques and to help you prepare for mentoring conversations.

## COACHING OR MENTORING?

It is important to distinguish mentoring from coaching. The two concepts are often used interchangeably when in fact they are different interventions. Coaching and mentoring are both powerful development interventions and have many similarities, however they are different and are appropriate in different contexts.

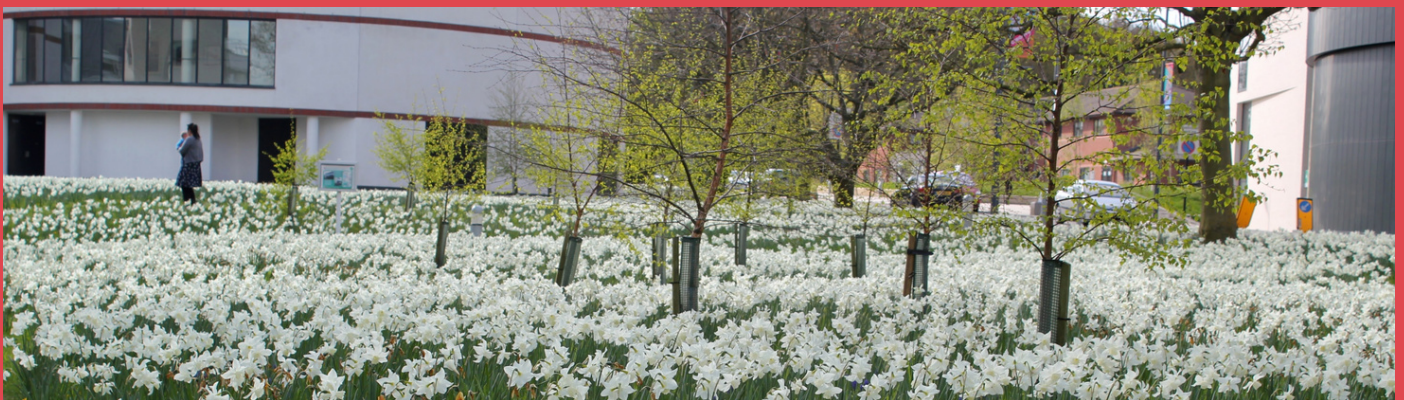
Mentoring is defined as:

“A developmental relationship in which one person draws on their experience, expertise and knowledge to advise and guide a less experienced person in order to enhance their performance, discover more about themselves and develop their potential capability.”

There are many definitions of coaching. Two definitions that are helpful here are:

“Unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” (Whitmore 2003).

“Coaching is about developing a person’s skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organisational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual’s private life. It usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals.” (CIPD 2009).

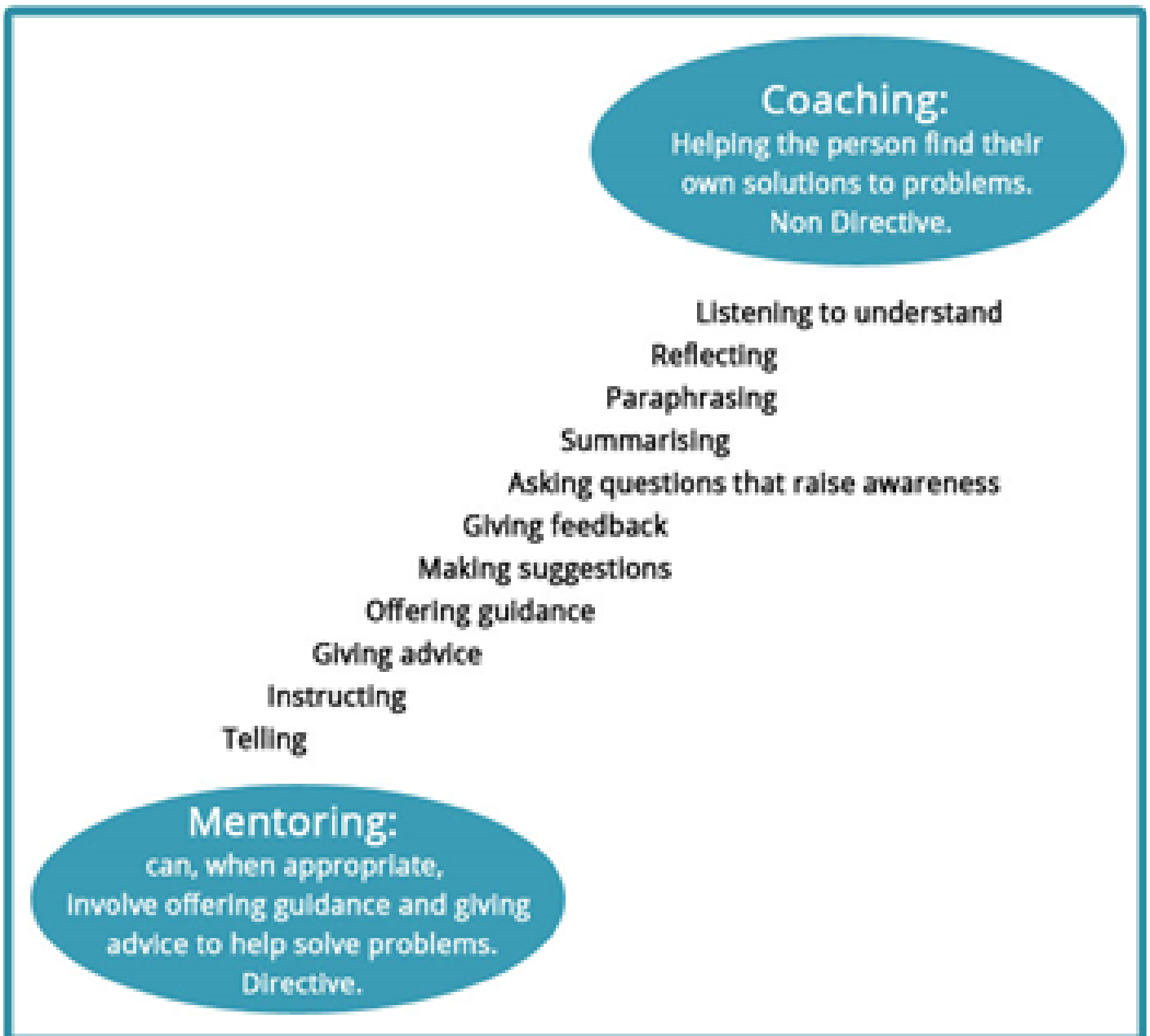


## IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING AND MENTORING

Features	Coaching	Mentoring
Focus	Specific and immediate performance and/or development areas.	Takes a broader view of a person's development; the focus is usually on career, personal and professional development.
Length of relationship	Usually shorter in duration – typically 6 months.	Ongoing and can last for a long time. The University's Mentoring Scheme covers a 12 month period.
Structure	Typically more structured and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis, e.g. monthly.	Typically more informal, with guidance and support meetings set up as and when required by the mentee.
Agenda	Focused on achieving specific, immediate goals identified by the <u>coachee</u> .	Focus can flex over time. It may involve a number of different development areas which are generally set by the mentee but which may play into wider organisational initiatives
Directive or non-directive (see below)	Non-directive; coach does not make suggestions, give ideas or share their own experiences.	Both. Generally involves a more experienced person passing on advice and guidance, which is a directive approach. But a skilled mentor will also be non-directive.
Specific knowledge and expertise	Coach does not need knowledge/expertise of <u>coachee's</u> role/ profession/ career/sector etc.	Mentor generally has experience in a similar role/ profession/ career/ sector etc.
Qualifications	Within the University scheme coaches are required to hold a coaching qualification at ILM Level 5 or equivalent.	Within the University scheme mentors do not require a formal mentoring qualification but must have completed the e-learning and skills training.
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements	A specific number of coaching hours and supervision sessions to be undertaken per year.	No minimum requirements but mentors are expected to ensure their own professional practice is up to date.

## DIRECTIVE – NON-DIRECTIVE SPECTRUM

Mentoring uses both directive and non-directive approaches. It can be helpful to see this as a spectrum:



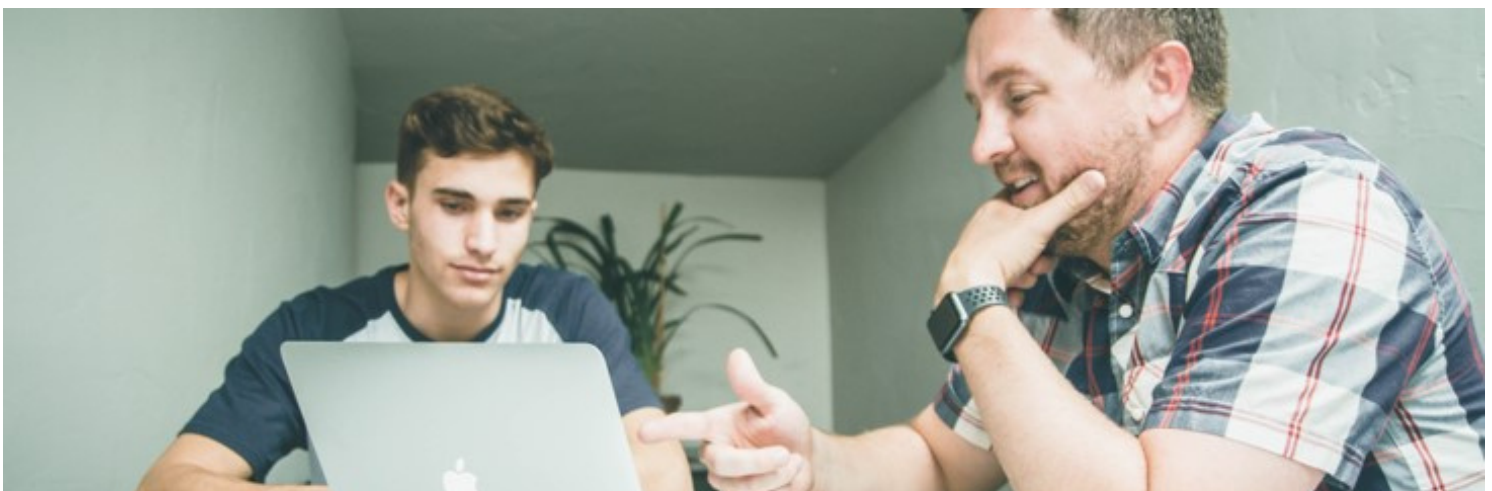
A mentor will use the whole range of this spectrum. A good rule of thumb is to initially take a non-directive approach, but if the mentee is struggling to come up with their own ideas or solutions, or they simply do not have enough knowledge or experience, then a directive approach may be appropriate.

# ACTIVE LISTENING

The ability to listen to the mentee is a very important skill in mentoring and requires the mentor to give their full attention to the mentee for long periods of time. It is fully concentrating of what is being said as opposed to passively hearing a message, or hearing what you want to hear. It involves listening with all the senses and giving the mentee a 'safe space' to talk without interruption or judgement.

Steven Covey in 7 Habits of Highly Effective People identifies these five levels of listening:

<b>Empathic</b>	You are listening to what the mentee means, as well as to their words. You are giving your time <b>and</b> full attention. Instead of projecting your own views, beliefs, ideas and interpretation, you have access to the other person's reality: their 'view of the world'.	Listening takes place within the other person's frame of reference
<b>Attentive</b>	You are giving your time and attention to the other person but still hearing from within your own reality or 'view of the world'.	Listening takes place within your own frame of reference
<b>Selective</b>	You probably only want to hear part of the message. You may be quick to interrupt or finish what the other person is saying.	
<b>Pretend</b>	You give the impression that you are hearing what the other person is saying, but really you are thinking about or doing something else.	
<b>Ignore</b>	You are not paying attention to what the other person is saying.	



# TIPS TO BECOMING AN ACTIVE LISTENER

- Stay focused – use natural eye contact, don't judge, be patient.
- Really listen – don't think about your own similar experiences. Silence your own internal train of thought.
- Don't be afraid of silence – some people need silence to reflect and gather their thoughts; wait until the mentee speaks again.
- Repeat or paraphrase the mentee's words back to them – this shows you are really listening and encourages them to open up.
- Understand the emotions behind the words – when you paraphrase, express the mentee's emotions back to them.
- Be prepared for longer conversations – active listening takes more time and energy.



## OPEN QUESTIONS

The most powerful questions, those which raise awareness, insights and learning, are open and non-directive.

Open questions begin with:

- How
- What
- When
- Where
- Who

We suggest avoiding the use of 'Why' as this can be perceived as judgemental, even if you don't intend to be.

## TED MODEL

The TED model supports a non-directive, non-judgemental approach and can be used in conjunction with the GROW model or any other questioning models you wish to use.

The TED model encourages the mentee to open up and tell you more:

Tell me.... / Tell me more...

Explain....

Describe...



## SMARTER GOALS

**As far as possible help your mentee to identify SMARTER goals:**

- Specific – is the goal clear?
- Measurable – how will you know when it has been achieved?
- Achievable – does the mentee have the resources and time to meet the goal? Is it realistic?
- Relevant – does the goal align with the mentee's development needs and/or career?
- Time-based – does the goal have a deadline or series of milestones?
- Engaging – does the mentee feel motivated to achieve the goal?
- Reviewed – arrange a date to review progress.

Encourage the mentee to use an active verb or action word to help make the goal specific and measurable, for example: complete, publish, plan, produce, develop, design, install, observe, identify, investigate, propose.

Remember, the SMARTER the goals, the easier it will be to measure progress made towards achieving them.



# GROW MODEL

The GROW model is a simple 4-step process for structuring a conversation. It can be a helpful model to use in mentoring conversations. It enables the mentee to identify their goals, ways in which they can achieve those goals and to take responsibility for their own learning and development. Remember that the GROW model does not have to be used in a linear format; you can move between the different stages of the model during a conversation in any order that is helpful. Also, you may not be able to work through the whole of the GROW model in one conversation; it may take more conversations and that is fine. Similarly, you may work through the GROW model more than once during a conversation in relation to different goals. The important thing to remember is that the GROW model is designed to help you, not to constrain your mentoring conversations. There are other models and if you are familiar with a different model it is fine to use it.

<p><b>Goal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want to achieve?</li> <li>• What do you want the outcome to be?</li> <li>• What is your goal?</li> <li>• How important is it on a scale of one to ten?</li> <li>• If you could wave a magic wand, what would you like to happen?</li> <li>• Imagine the problem/issue has been solved, what would you see, hear and feel?</li> <li>• Imagine it is three years from now. What are you doing?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the situation.</li> <li>• What is happening right now?</li> <li>• What is your concern about this?</li> <li>• How much control do you have?</li> <li>• What action have you taken so far?</li> <li>• What has stopped you?</li> <li>• What obstacles have you encountered?</li> <li>• What resources do you need?</li> <li>• What else do you need?</li> <li>• Where can you get it from?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are all the different ways in which you could approach this?</li> <li>• What are the positives and negatives of each one?</li> <li>• What if 'X' was not a factor?</li> <li>• What if you had the opportunity to...?</li> <li>• Make a list of all the alternatives.</li> <li>• What else could you do?</li> <li>• What would you do if you had more time/ a larger budget/ if you were the boss?</li> <li>• Which of these options appeals most to you, or feels best to you?</li> <li>• Which would give you the most satisfaction?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Will or What next</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which option or options do you choose?</li> <li>• What are your measures of success?</li> <li>• What is the next/first step?</li> <li>• When are you going to start and finish each action?</li> <li>• What personal resistance, if any, do you have?</li> <li>• Who needs to know what your plans are?</li> <li>• What support do you need and from whom?</li> <li>• What could I do to support you?</li> <li>• How committed are you to this, on a scale of one to ten?</li> <li>• What prevents it from being a ten?</li> <li>• What could you do to raise your commitment closer to ten?</li> </ul>

# NEURODIVERSITY AND MENTORING

Neurodiversity is the view that brain differences are normal, rather than deficits. It is understanding and acceptance that everyone has a different brain; that we all think, feel and view the world differently. Around 15% of people in the UK have a neurodiverse condition and the concept that people are naturally diverse learners is important in mentoring.

**Here are some tips to accommodate neurodiversity in your mentoring:**

- Some people find unfamiliar environments difficult. Let the mentee choose where they would like to meet (within reason) and whether they meet you in person or online.
- Some people find meeting new people challenging. You may need to have more than one informal ‘chemistry conversation’ before the mentee feels comfortable to begin the mentoring.
- Unfamiliar routines and structures can be challenging. Some people may have set routines that they rely on and will struggle to work in any other way. You may think they are being inflexible but even seemingly minor changes to established routines at work can be distressing for them. Let the mentee suggest their own frequency and duration of mentoring meetings as far as possible. If you need to cancel or change a meeting, give them as much notice as you can.
- Be aware that some people find eye contact challenging. Don’t assume that the mentee is not engaging if they don’t maintain eye contact with you.
- Review regularly; check in with the mentee about how they are finding the mentoring. Ask what you are doing that is helpful to them, and what you could do differently.
- Remember that there is no one size fits all approach; just because someone has a neurodiverse condition it doesn’t mean that they will need the same approach as someone else with the same condition.



**Websites:**  
[Autistic UK](#)  
[Business Disability](#)  
[Forum](#)



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# CULTURAL AWARENESS AND MENTORING

Mentors do not need to have the same cultural background as their mentees, but they should be sensitive to the differences. You are not expected to be an expert in intercultural communication, but an awareness of differences is essential. If you are mentoring someone from a different cultural background it may be helpful to have an open discussion about cultural differences as part of the mentoring process; a suggestion is to include this in the mentoring agreement conversation. Mentoring naturally lends itself to learning about others; use your listening and questioning skills to learn about your mentee's world and to understand the culturally different values that they bring.

## Here are some points to be aware of when mentoring across cultures:

### Humour

Using humour can be very effective in building rapport. It helps to create common ground, reduce tension and to relax people. However humour is understood to be one of the last things that we acquire as we develop expertise in speaking new languages, and it has the potential to lead to cultural misinterpretation. If your mentee is not speaking English as their first language, bear in mind that use of humour may be interpreted differently to how you intend.

### Small talk

People from different cultures may do more or less small talk before moving on to the business in hand. You may need to adjust the amount of rapport-building small talk you do in the chemistry conversation and at the beginning of your mentoring meetings. You may also need to think about what kind of topics are appropriate for small talk.

### Turn taking

Turn-taking rules during conversation vary across cultures. If we're not aware of this we are unconscious of our own turn-taking rules and assume that people from other cultural backgrounds will behave in the same way. If they don't, we generally conclude that either they don't have anything to say (if they are not joining in) or that they are uninterested (if they interrupt constantly).

Some people like to have long pauses before they speak so that they have time to think carefully about what the other person has said. Other people expect turn taking to be quick, so one person starts talking as soon as the other stops. Others expect an overlapping style, where they talk over each other, to show enthusiasm and interest. If you're used to a style that has pauses, the overlapping style can feel as if you are being interrupted and not listened to.

## Pauses and silence

The length of pauses is tolerated differently according to cultural preferences. As we know, allowing silence is an important technique in mentoring, which allows the mentee to think and reflect. As you get to know your mentee you will be able to judge what is an appropriate length of silence.

## Intonation

Intonation patterns carry a lot of meaning in English. Various other languages stress all syllables equally and the meaning carried by stress in English is not necessarily transparent to people who don't speak English as their first language. Bear this in mind when having conversations with your mentee, and speak more slowly if appropriate. Also avoid using jargon, slang and colloquial phrases if English is not your mentee's first language.

## Touch and Personal Space

Higher contact cultures tend to stand closer together, make more eye contact, speak louder and incorporate touch more frequently. Examples include cultures from the Middle East, Latin America and southern Europe. For example in Greece, people tend to touch each other when they agree or just to express their enthusiasm.

If meeting your mentee in person, be aware that their need for personal space may be different from yours. This may not be so much of an issue if meeting in a public place like a café. You may wish to ask the mentee where they would prefer to sit if you are using a meeting room.

## Eye contact

In some cultures, particularly Asian cultures, extended eye contact can be taken as offensive or a challenge to authority. Avoiding eye contact is usually interpreted as being polite. However in Western cultures avoiding eye contact is often interpreted as being rude or submissive. You aren't expected to radically alter your own eye contact, but simply to be aware that your mentee may prefer more or less eye contact, and that they are not necessarily being rude, aggressive or disinterested if their use of eye contact differs from yours.

## Articles

Washington Post: [What 'personal space' looks like around the world'](#)

Independent: ['How personal space boundaries vary in different countries'](#)

## Further training and resources

- [Understanding Unconscious Bias e-learning](#)
- [Building Trust e-learning](#)
- [Emotional intelligence e-learning](#)
- [Developing Emotional Intelligence video learning](#)
- [Cultural Awareness in the Workplace video learning resource](#)