



# Mentor Handbook

# Introduction

## How to use this handbook

Mentorship has been around for a long time, and it's proven to be one of the best ways to achieve personal and professional growth whether you're a mentor or mentee.

We designed this Handbook to break down the different areas of your role as a mentor and the best practices that will help you drive a successful mentoring relationship. It's designed to be easy to skim but also provide depth if you want to learn more about a particular area. In addition, at the end of each section, we've provided a further reading list for you to explore if you want to go even further in your learning.

By using these mentorship Handbooks you'll be well prepared to build a successful mentoring relationship.

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# What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who helps a mentee grow, develop, make decisions, and receive guidance for their future. The mentor acts as a role model for the mentee, but mentoring relationships are beneficial to both parties.

## Benefits to a mentee

It may feel that a mentor has to give value to another person and not receive some in return. However, that's not the case. You can think of the relationship between you, the mentor, and your mentee as an exchange.

**Yes, your role is to help your mentee grow and learn, but this is a great opportunity for you to learn as well. Being a mentor:**

- Drives self-awareness
- Expands the mentor's professional network
- Improves leadership skills
- Increases awareness of available talent throughout the organization
- Increases likelihood of receiving a promotion
- Increases visibility throughout the organization

**Do you see that there's a lot for you to learn through this relationship?**



# What to know before you're a mentor

## Your role as a mentor

Mentorships exist to be a positive experience for both the mentor and mentee. Challenges can become opportunities when you have someone who can reveal a different perspective.

At the beginning of the relationship, spending time clarifying what you can legitimately expect to give and get through mentoring is essential. It is especially beneficial for the individuals involved to discuss, negotiate, and agree upon expectations. We'll go over expectations in its own section later on. But before that, let's establish what mentorship is and isn't.



# What mentorship is and isn't

It is essential that both you and your mentee understand what does and does not constitute a mentoring relationship, as detailed below:

Mentoring is	Mentoring is not
<p><b>Development tool:</b></p> <p>It is a development program that grows knowledge, networks, and careers. For example, the process allows more experienced employees to support and develop other HIPO employees.</p>	<p><b>Guarantee of promotion:</b></p> <p>A mentoring relationship does not assure promotion or increase in compensation. However, both parties may develop competencies and skills that improve overall job performance.</p>
<p><b>Knowledge sharing opportunity:</b></p> <p>It is a process that improves cross functional knowledge sharing and facilitates the flow of information and ideas throughout the organization.</p>	<p><b>Replacement for formal development:</b></p> <p>Mentoring cannot take the place of formal training but rather should augment formal development activities.</p>
<p><b>Organizational culture enhancer:</b></p> <p>It can help employees better understand the organization's operations, policies, and culture.</p>	<p><b>Management replacement:</b></p> <p>The mentor should not take on the responsibilities of the mentee's manager.</p>
<p><b>Candid and specific:</b></p> <p>A good mentoring relationship provides honest and specific feedback and a route to growth.</p>	<p><b>Personal counseling:</b></p> <p>It is best to seek help on personal issues from a life coach or mental health professional.</p>

# Difference between a mentor and a coach

Mentoring and coaching differ in their objectives, impacts, and durations, as detailed below:

Mentoring	Coaching
<p><b>Helps facilitate a culture of growth and development within the organization</b></p> <p>For example, a mentor can help mentees see new opportunities within their organization that they could laterally transition to. If this is multiplied across dozens of mentors in an organization, more employees would be experts in more than one organization area.</p> <p><b>Concentrates on the individual's development needs and goals based on their career aspirations</b></p> <p>For example, a mentor doesn't have a direct motive to increase the mentee's performance. Instead, the mentor can determine what their mentee's individual goals are for their career and help them work towards those goals without thinking about their current position and KPIs.</p> <p><b>Mutually benefits both the mentor and mentee</b></p> <p>The mentor also benefits from their relationship with the mentee. For example, the mentee can provide feedback that helps the mentor listen better before they jump to problem-solving.</p> <p><b>Builds a long-term relationship</b></p> <p>Many mentoring programs don't end when the sessions do. Many mentors and mentees continue to check in with one another to support them and keep them accountable to their long-term goals. For example, a mentor could check-in at the end of each quarter with their mentee and check in on their progress toward an ambition they set for themselves.</p>	<p><b>Assesses and improves an individual's performance in a particular area</b></p> <p>For example, a coach could focus specifically on speaking skills and how to improve them. They may not question why they want to get better at speaking, but the tactics that lead to stronger presentations.</p> <p><b>Disproportionately benefits the person being coached</b></p> <p>For example, the coach isn't there to get feedback on how they can be a better coach. Instead, they are expected to be an expert in their domain and transfer that knowledge.</p> <p><b>Time-bound relationship</b></p> <p>The coaching relationship usually has a timeline on what improvement is expected to be seen. For example, a coach may decide that within six weeks, the mentee needs to be meeting specific KPIs or objectives within their role to demonstrate improvement.</p>

## Evaluation

A key difference between coaching and mentorship is the place of evaluation. Mentoring is non-evaluative, while coaching is based on measuring performance change. Evaluation can be through company performance reviews or tests. For this reason, mentors shouldn't be direct supervisors or managers of the mentee.

## Who drives the relationship?

The mentee drives mentoring; coaching is the opposite. The mentee sets the relationship goals and comes to their mentor with the problems they want to solve. In coaching, the coach or supervisor is driving the agenda for the relationship. The relationship is about performance. The coach is helping the mentee reach a specific goal or develop a particular skill.

## Mentoring is highly personalized; coaching is repeatable.

In mentoring, a mentee has specific needs and needs to discuss challenges that are not necessarily tied to company-wide, top-down performance initiatives. Mentoring also carries the benefit of building your network by meeting multiple mentors and making new connections. Mentoring in this way is particularly helpful when onboarding new employees.

In coaching, the organization identified a specific skill gap, and one or more coaches are selected to provide a generalized program to make improvements. Thus, content is reused and generalized, and a coach wouldn't typically be a networking opportunity for a coachee.



# Further reading

If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:



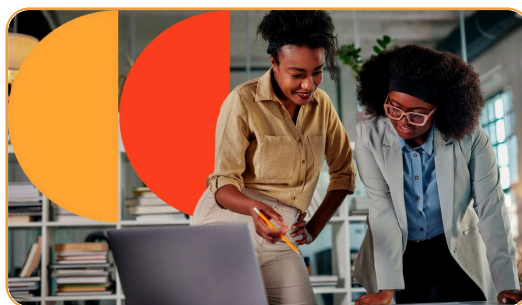
[What is the Difference Between Mentorship and Coaching?](#)



[Modern mentoring](#)



[How to be a good first-time manager](#)



[What is the Purpose of Mentoring?](#)

# What type of mentor are you?

Mentorship can take different forms. As a mentor, you may feel that you are more active in problem-solving issues with your mentees. Other mentors may be better listeners who provide the guidance needed for their mentees to conclude themselves.

Here are eight different types of mentors. Which one best describes you?





## 1. Advisor

An advisor is someone who makes suggestions and recommendations on what their mentee should do. Advisors also give advice based on their professional expertise and personal experience. Mentee's who want to follow the same path would do well with an advisor.

Here's where advisors are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acts as a sounding board and facilitator</li><li>• Maintains privacy/confidentiality</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fixes problems for you</li><li>• Assumes responsibility for mentee</li></ul>

## 2. Developer

A developer is similar to a coach but is an observer without specific goals for performance improvements. Developers are good listeners and will point out red flags they recognize in their mentees. Likewise, if a mentee displays positive qualities like honesty, humility, or critical thinking a developer will make sure to point them out and commend them.

Here's where developers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives structure and direction</li><li>• Provides guidance based on observations during interactions with mentee</li><li>• Empowers mentee to handle his/her problems independently</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dictates, controls learning</li><li>• Looks for quick-fixes</li><li>• Provides general criticism or judgment</li><li>• Tells mentee what to do</li></ul>



### 3. Broker

A broker is great at connecting their mentee with opportunities to grow. Rather than discussing possibilities for growth, a broker will determine what their mentee wants to learn and then connect them with whoever is an expert in that area. Brokers are great mentors for mentees who are less inclined to talk a lot but are hungry to pursue learning opportunities.

Here's where brokers are effective and ineffective:


Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifies skill or competency gaps through a “third party” lens</li><li>• Identifies and facilitates development opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows for personal biases</li><li>• Abdicates, does not follow up</li></ul>

### 4. Challenger

A challenger thrives on tough love and playing the devil's advocate. They won't stand for poor attitudes or faulty logic. They will push back on their mentees if they begin to complain about their challenges without considering possible solutions. Mentees that want someone to “tell them how it is” will thrive under these mentors. However, they may need thicker skin.

Here's where challengers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positively provokes, pushes toward highest standards</li><li>• Helps mentee explore potential career opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pushes too far too soon</li><li>• Discounts mentee's thoughts and opinions</li></ul>





## 5. Clarifier

A clarifier is a great companion to their mentee. A mentee who is independent and can pursue their growth without much direction would benefit from a clarifier. A clarifier will quickly be able to fill the gaps in the mentee's knowledge based on their own experience within the organization. They can lean on their mentor if the mentee needs to know how to act at an upcoming board meeting.

Here's where clarifiers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches organizational values and politics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removes obstacles so mentee does not have to deal with organizational politics</li></ul>

## 6. Affirmer

An affirmer is great for mentees that respond well to a soft shoulder. Rather than tough love, affirmers are great listeners. If a mentee is going through a stressful situation they can trust that their mentor will be there to talk through it with them.

Here's where affirmers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives needed support, enhances self-esteem</li><li>• Exhibits empathy and understanding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives too much feedback</li><li>• Discounts mentee's feelings or concerns</li></ul>





## 7. Sponsor

Sponsors help their mentees meet the people who will make the difference in their careers. They have large networks and credibility. By having their recommendation for promotions or new opportunities, these mentees will gain access to professional growth much faster than if they were on their own.

Here's where sponsors are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provides visibility and recognition of mentee</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promotes mentee at the expense of others</li></ul>

## 8. Protector

A protector is great for a mentee who is in the midst of a transition which can be stressful and have some risk. Protectors help prepare their mentees for growth by making sure they don't make any mistakes that would be detrimental to their careers.

Here's where protectors are effective and ineffective:

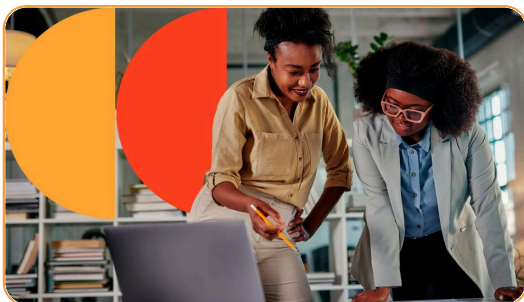
Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Supports, is a safety net</li><li>Ensures a safe environment to take risks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fights mentee's battles</li><li>Overprotects</li></ul>

# Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

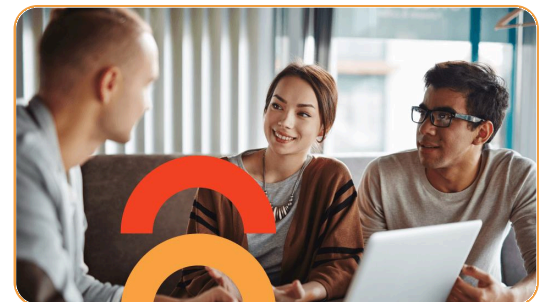
They include:



[What is the Purpose of Mentoring?](#)



[Different types of mentoring and their uses](#)



[How to Mentor Someone At Work](#)

# How to be a great mentor

## Skills and qualities of great mentors

There are several characteristics that you need to have to be a good mentor. These include:

- Motivation
- Communication Skills
- Enjoy Learning
- Team Player
- Committed
- Positive Attitude

These characteristics express themselves differently in professional settings.



**Here are some of the things that will qualify you as a good mentor.**



### **Skilled and experienced in the field and industry**

Mentors who have worked in their area of expertise for some time and who have gained experience with the company will be a good fit for mentees wanting to follow their same path. A mentor can share what they know about their job, how they fit into the organization and share insights about their industry. In addition, you'll have the unique ability to groom your successor or prepare a new manager in your department.



### **Desire or motivated to share wisdom**

Good mentors are those that not only have gained lots of knowledge and experience but are also motivated to share what they know with others. In particular, they must understand and respect the mentor-mentee relationship and take the workplace mentoring program seriously.



### **Commitment to extra responsibility**

Being a mentor can take time and energy. To be an effective mentor, you'll need to be committed to putting in the extra time and effort. It's your responsibility to demonstrate an understanding of what you are committing to and be willing to do what it takes to help make the relationship, and ultimately, the mentoring program work.



### **Positivity**

Good mentors are positive people. If you accept the responsibility of being a mentor but do so grudgingly, your mentee won't feel comfortable opening up about their goals and challenges. It's beneficial to see the glass as half full and have an optimistic view of what the relationship can provide.



## Communicator

One of the most critical factors in a mentoring relationship is good communication. Therefore, someone who has proven they can communicate positively and effectively will be a good mentor. In addition, you will need to provide guidance and give constructive feedback to the mentee. Thus, it is essential to know how to do so in a constructive way.



## They find fulfillment in their job

To pass along your knowledge and encourage the mentee to grow in their field and organization, you should enjoy what you do. If you're not interested in your field of expertise, you're not going to develop enthusiasm in the mentee.



## Enjoys learning

Mentors that enjoy learning and are well-informed about their field will make the best mentors. These are those individuals who continuously learn about the changes and innovations happening in the industry. They read journals and attend workshops and other training sessions to stay ahead of the game. A person who is up-to-date about the field will pass along that information to the mentee.



## Team player

Individuals who can work well independently and contribute to a team effort will also be good choices for mentoring programs. These employees are often skilled at sharing and with and listening to others. They usually value others and understand the importance of being part of a team in the workplace.



## Emotionally intelligent

Emotionally intelligent people have a good understanding of their own emotions and know how to be sensitive to others. This skill helps a mentor relate better to the mentee. In addition, they are often empathetic and can see things from another person's perspective.

# Further reading

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They include:



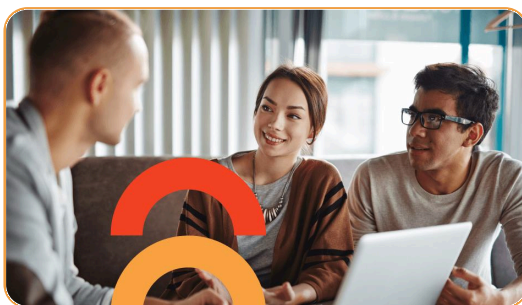
[Who Can Be a Mentor?](#)



[Different types of mentoring and their uses](#)



[Develop Leadership Skills with a Mentor](#)



[How to Mentor Someone At Work](#)

# Your first meeting

## How to create the foundation for a trusting relationship

Use the following questions to guide your first mentoring conversation, which will help you get to know one another and establish mutual expectations and goals. Then, note both parties' responses for future reference.

### Questions to understand their background:

- What is your educational and professional background (including your current role and how long you have been with the organization)?
- What are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What are your short-term career goals? Long-term career goals?
- What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

### Questions to get a sense of what your partner is expecting:

- What do you see as my role as your mentor?
- What ground rules should we set (e.g., confidentiality, openness, honesty)?
- What topics are off-limits (e.g., performance reviews, personal lives)?
- What do you think will be challenging about this relationship?
- Are there any topics of urgent interest?
- What topics do you want to cover in our conversations?
- What do you hope to gain from this relationship?
- How do you prefer to communicate between meetings?
- When is the best time for you to meet?



# Decide on expectations

For the relationship to be fruitful, mentors and mentees should define their roles and expectations of one another. What do they expect from one another? Should your sessions be more casual or formal? You should decide beforehand.

## Here are some expectations to agree upon:

### Core performance expectations

- Be willing to discuss failures and successes
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in helping the mentee
- Demonstrate application of learning obtained through the relationship
- Exhibit a desire to improve in a specific area or learn a new skill
- Identify professional development goals, priorities, and career interests
- Listen actively
- Provide honest feedback
- Seek ways to achieve objectives and contribute ideas for solving particular problems

### Time commitment obligations

- Be accountable for scheduling meetings with mentee
- Be respectful of mentee's time and schedule
- Commit the requisite time and energy
- Do the necessary pre-work for mentoring conversations
- Follow up on action items identified during development conversations
- Informally communicate regularly with your mentee

### Will you be a mentor outside of the sessions as well?

- Attend mentoring-related meetings and events
- Maintain privacy/confidentiality of development conversations
- Provide input to assess and improve the mentoring program
- Take advantage of organizational resources
- Track development and career progress

# The do's and don'ts of relationship building

The stronger the connection between the mentor and mentee, the more each of you stands to benefit. Knowing some of the do's and don'ts of mentorship can help keep you both on the right track.

## Do's



### Engage the mentee by listening and goal-setting

You shouldn't shy away from getting advice. Providing constructive feedback helps bring the mentee closer to their goals. For example, if a mentee shares that their goal is to be a manager of a department one day, a good mentor would take the time to understand why they want that position. That example is different from immediately outlining all the steps the mentee would need to follow to get that position.



### Point your mentee in the right direction

You can encourage mentees to take advantage of any advice or opportunities that you provide. These could be opportunities such as helpful workplace programs to advance skills or external opportunities for training. Of course, you can't know everything, so sometimes it's better to suggest training for the mentee rather than taking that burden on yourself. For example, the mentor may encourage a mentee to take a master class in sales to improve their objection handling skills. The mentee would, in turn, report back with their newly developed skills and share them with both their mentor and their team.



### Celebrate with the mentee

Another important element of the mentor-mentee relationship is establishing a connection with one another. A mentor can and should celebrate with the mentee when a goal or accomplishment has been achieved. For example, a mentor may remind themselves to congratulate their mentee on applying what they learned in a master class on objection handling during a successful sales call.



## Show them the ropes

From a business perspective, one of the most valuable factors of the mentor-mentee relationship is the opportunity to shape another employee and encourage them to develop productive habits. In addition, by educating the mentee on workplace expectations, the mentor can positively impact not just the relationship but also the organization long-term. For example, a mentor may have their mentee shadow them as they meet with other teams so they can understand the team culture.



## Be a teacher and a guide

Essentially, the mentor's role is both a teacher and a guide. They are responsible for shaping the mentee's professional development. They must acknowledge the expectation to be a positive role model. By demonstrating to the mentee how to adhere to the corporate policies and requirements, they will help enhance the mentoring relationship. For example, a mentor could guide them through how to address workplace violations constructively.



## Don'ts



### Talk more than you listen

Communication is key to working together, and if you cannot communicate well with your mentee, it could be a bad sign. Your role is as a teacher and a guide, not as a lecturer. It's important to remember that their career doesn't have to be the same as yours. For example, listening first and then responding is better than telling them all they should do without considering their goals.



### Discredit their goals and ambitions

A great mentor will know how to balance providing critical feedback and supporting a mentee's goals. Your role is not to approve or deny their decisions but to help them make sure they have confidence in those decisions after discussing them with you. For example, a mentor could discredit their mentee's goals by saying that they're not good enough and that they should have different goals instead, possibly goals more in line with the different goals instead, possibly goals more in line with the mentor's career trajectory.



### Provide vague or unactionable feedback

Few things are as frustrating as getting negative feedback that is unclear and doesn't provide actionable ways to improve. If you become aware of a way of thinking, a behavior, or anything else that could have negative ramifications on your mentee, make sure you acknowledge it. For example, a mentor may say that the way a mentee approaches a problem is short-sighted and doesn't consider long-term consequences. What long-term consequences are they not considering? A good mentor would tell them before it's too late.



### Be overly positive

As a mentor, you will learn how to deliver feedback. Hopefully, you will understand when to be frank and blunt or gentle and sensitive when you provide feedback. One of the downfalls of peer performance reviews is that you have an incentive to remain positive because you'll have to continue working with them. For example, a mentor may smooth over negative feedback about their mindset around a particular problem. Doing so would be a disservice to them because it could negatively impact their future. But we all have things we need to work on, and in a mentor mentee relationship, the mentee's goal is to grow. That growth may require them to confront some negative mindsets or habits.



### Break trust

This may be obvious, but it is of the utmost importance to respect your mentee's privacy and respect their trust in you. Use your discretion, but do not share causally private details of your relationship. For example, don't share in a team standup what challenges your mentee is facing without their permission. They shared that challenge in confidence. Your relationship with your mentee is built on trust. Respect that fact and don't do anything to jeopardize the trust your mentee has in you.

# Further reading

If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:



[Getting the Most Out of a Mentoring Relationship](#)



[How to Build a Successful Mentor Relationship](#)

# During your sessions

## How to cultivate a successful mentoring relationship



### Be active

Mentees and mentors need to be actively involved in the relationship. Mentees need to define goals, seek out advice, attend meetings and ask questions. Mentors are responsible for offering advice, guiding goal achievement and encouraging a mentee to develop their skills and networks.



### Get a good match

Finding a good mentor-mentee match doesn't mean you should connect two similar people. Sometimes the best mentorship is between participants who are opposite of each other. The two can challenge each other in new ways and help them understand different perspectives.





## Develop trust

Trust is crucial to a mentoring relationship. Yet, it can also take some time to build trust between a mentor and mentee. Start your mentorship with a getting-to-know-you-style meeting. In this first session, both the mentor and mentee should exchange information about their backgrounds and interests. Refer to the section, How to create the foundation for a trusting relationship for more information on this. Slowly, as the relationship progresses, you can share more information, leading to more trust.



## Have guidelines

Every relationship has a set of “rules” that govern it. For example, a mentorship should have some clear guidelines regarding behavior and responsibility of the participants. Early on in your relationship, both the mentor and mentee need to set some rules about their roles. Share what you both expect from the other person. Also, consider what you bring to the relationship. How can you help cultivate a successful connection?



## Set goals

A big part of the job for mentees is to define the goals they want to accomplish during the mentorship. While this includes the career development steps they want to achieve, it is also important to understand what you want from the mentorship. By identifying these goals early, it can help clarify the type of mentor you should be. For example, are they looking to network, gain new skills, or get advice on significant career decisions?



## Communication

In the mentorship context, the mentor needs to provide constructive criticism rather than harsh judgment. They should be sensitive to the mentee’s feelings. The mentee also needs to be able to express themselves clearly. If they feel that a mentor does not understand something or offering advice that they are not comfortable with, a mentee should say so in a diplomatic way.

# Guidelines for meetings

Prioritizing meetings with your mentee throughout the relationship is critical for both to benefit fully from the relationship. Ensure a productive, successful relationship by implementing the following guidelines:

## 1. Prepare a day before the meeting using your agenda

If you're using Together's platform you'll have access to an agenda that will also be emailed to you before each meeting. Be sure to come prepared to the meeting by reviewing the Before & During notes to have a more effective mentorship session.

## 2. Identify next steps after each meeting

Set next steps at the end of each discussion and clarify who is responsible for each of them. You can leverage the Shared Notes functionality in Together's platform or create an "Action Item" for your partner. If follow-up poses a challenge for either of you, use the opportunity to problem-solve together.



### 3. Follow up

After each meeting, use the Shared Notes functionality to describe how you benefited from the conversation; ask him/her to share his/her thoughts too.

### 4. Set reminders for yourself to share resources

Set a reminder on your calendar to send an interesting article to your mentee each Friday. You can add these directly to Shared Notes in the Together platform.

### 5. Don't forget important events

Note important personal events in your mentees' lives, such as their birthday and anniversary date with the organization. In addition, you can use your Personal Notes for any reminders or items you'd like to keep top of mind during your mentorship sessions.

### 6. Share with them upcoming educational events

Attend educational events (internal and external) together, such as lectures, talks, and discussions.

### 7. Reflect and share what you've learned together

One of the best ways to learn is through taking time to reflect on where you've come. In the moment challenging feedback can be hard to swallow. It's only afterward that we realize how helpful it was. In those cases, share with one another how you help one another grow. That's what the program is all about.

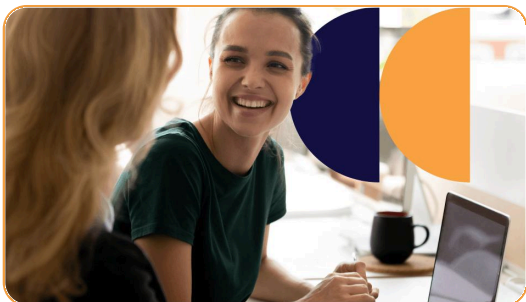


# Further reading

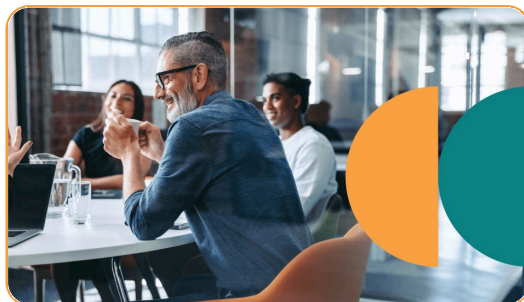


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They include:



[Tips for Effective Mentoring at Work](#)



[Common mentoring challenges](#)



[How to Build a Successful Mentor Relationship](#)



[Building an authentic connection when mentoring](#)





## Conclusion

We hope this Handbook has and will continue to help you in your mentoring relationship. The Handbook's purpose is to provide a starting point for developing strong and fruitful relationships with your mentee.

The tactics and recommendations can all be reduced to clear communication, transparency, and a growth mindset. If you have those qualities when you meet with your mentee, you'll be well positioned to help them, and yourself experience growth, both personally and professionally.

### See our software in action

Together software is purpose-built for running high potential mentoring and learning programs.

[Book Demo](#)