



Creative Mentoring Activities

Break the ice, spur meaningful conversation, and grow

When it comes to mentorship, there's no shortage of research supporting its immense benefits for mentor and mentee alike. In fact, 71 percent of people with mentors¹ say the experience resulted in great career advancements.

Because mentorship is so effective in helping us grow, it's no wonder that companies want to start their own mentorship programs. It's a great way to ensure every employee has access to career-changing guidance.

But there's a catch—mentors and mentees need structure to build an impactful relationship. A study by The Art of Mentoring reveals only 1 in 3 mentoring programs² drive tangible results if mentors and mentees don't have the necessary guidance to succeed.

For that reason, **to build a successful mentoring relationship you need to have a toolbox of useful discussion topics, questions, and activities.**

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Don't wing it:

Why it's important to have structure for your mentoring relationship

When you meet your mentor or mentee, it can be unclear as to what should happen next. Are you going to have regularly scheduled meetups? Will you talk mostly about work-related things, or is it okay to chat about personal issues too?

From the start, agree on [expectations of the relationship](#). They're like guardrails that keep the relationship on track.

So we're on the same page that having structure and not *winging it* is a must. What does structure look like? Simple: having the toolbox we mentioned above.

Below are the contents of your mentoring toolbox. It's an arsenal of creative mentoring activities.

Let's unpack each.



17 mentoring activities to inspire meaningful conversations that promote growth

Studies show that the best mentorships³ are built on a foundation of trust, respect, flexibility, and open and honest communication. Keep these values in mind as you explore these mentoring activities.

Activities to break the ice

Let's face it – icebreakers have a reputation of being awkward, stilted, and downright cheesy. But when used correctly, they can actually be a great way to get to know someone better and help jumpstart the flow of communication.

Here are a couple of our favourites:

Quick Questions: Before meeting up with your mentee, suggest that each of you write down a list of 10 quick questions. This can be anything from “What’s your favourite TV show?” to “How do you like to relax?” Once you’re together, take turns asking each other the questions.

Who would you meet?: Ask your mentee who they would meet and why, if they could meet any person in the world – living or dead. You’ll be surprised at how much this reveals about someone’s interests and values.



Activities to do 1-on-1 with your mentee

If you are in a 1-on-1 mentoring relationship, it's a great opportunity to have focused conversations about what will lead you or your mentee to growth.

Here are some activities that do just that:

Skills Development: Generate a list of all skills a mentee wants to learn. Prioritize the list by choosing a skill that would lead to the most immediate impact. Then lead a mini workshop on how to improve that skill. Draw upon your own personal experiences and expertise as the mentor.

Career Mapping: Does your mentee have a planned-out path for their career? Most careers don't look like straight, upward lines but [squiggles](#). First, identify goals and work backwards. Map out steps to achieve their goals, and offer advice and support.

Project-Based Learning: Give your mentee the opportunity to work on a project that interests them. This can be anything from starting a side business to writing a book or giving a presentation. Guide them through the process, offer feedback, and celebrate their successes along the way.



Mentoring activities to do with peers

We always think of mentors as more senior, but many professional relationships with peers are great opportunities to engage in mentoring activities. [Peer mentoring activities](#) can be a great way to learn from colleagues and develop new skills.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Book Club: Thousands of excellent professional development books exist, and there's no better way to absorb their lessons than by discussing them with your peer mentor. Choose a book each month and meet up to chat about it.

Problem-Solving Sessions: When faced with a difficult problem, most people tend to reach out to their mentors for help. Why not do the same with a group of peers? Have everyone send in briefs outlining a problem they're facing and prioritize one or two to unpack within your time together. Share advice, ask questions, and move forward.

Skill-Sharing: Are you an expert at public speaking? Excel macros? Delegation? Share your skills and knowledge with your peer mentor and learn from them in return. Organize mini-presentations where each peer can share their top talents with others.

Elevator Pitch Sessions: In most cases, you only have a few seconds to make an impression on someone. Help one another perfect your elevator pitches by practicing with your mentor and offering feedback.

Mentoring activities for groups

Group mentoring is when one leader or senior professional coaches multiple people at one time. Think of it as a collaborative discussion with an expert.

Group mentoring also provides a greater source of feedback for individuals, as they can interact with their peers and learn from more than one person.

Here are a few group mentoring activities to get you started:

Bucket List Brainstorms:

What are the things you've always wanted to do? Brainstorm a list of life goals, and offer advice on how to achieve them. These can be pipe dreams or concrete professional milestones you're working toward. The aim is to source advice on how to achieve those goals.

Career Exploration:

If you are mentoring a group of people all pursuing different career paths, help them explore the different options available to them. This could involve researching different jobs, attending job fairs, or networking with professionals in their desired field.

Team Building:

Working together to achieve a common goal is a great way to build team morale and relationships. Choose an activity that your mentees are interested in and work together to complete it – like an escape room, for instance, or an actual challenge you are facing within your company.



Mentoring activities to try virtually

Remote communication is no passing craze – it's the future of the workplace. This is why virtual mentoring activities are so important.

If your team is spread out across different locations, or if you're working with a remote mentee, virtual activities can help bridge the gap. Here are a few ideas:

Highs and Lows: Every week, ask your mentee about the highest and lowest points of their week. This will help you understand them better and provide support where needed.

Career Updates: Keep your mentee up-to-date on your own career progress by sharing articles, blog posts, or even just pictures of your new office.

Mood Boards: Help your mentee visualize their goals by creating a mood board together. Collect images, quotes, and other pieces of inspiration that represent what they want their future to look like.

Discuss Books and Podcasts: As part of your regular meetups, discuss the books and podcasts you've been listening to lately. This is a great way to learn about your mentee's interests and discover new content.

Create SMART Goals: Help your mentee set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Make a record of these goals and check in on them regularly.



What mentors should do during each mentoring session

Now that we've armed you with a number of unique activities to deepen your mentoring relationship (or at least shake up your next meeting) **let's look at the things you should consistently do during every session.**

Ask the mentee how their week has been

A bit of informality can create a comfortable atmosphere. This helps to build the human connection and sets the tone for a productive mentoring session.

Ask the mentee what their initial thoughts are on the topic for the session

This is a way of making the meeting interactive and showing the mentee he is free to air his views on the topic. Mentoring is not the typical teacher-student relationship. It is an open and proactive partnership that benefits both parties.

Address the mentees' thoughts, concerns, challenges, goals, or experiences with the topic

Based on the topic, the pair can address whatever needs the mentee has at that moment. The focus should be on learning and not exposing weakness or failure. This is an opportunity for the mentor to share any similar experience and provide relevant resources to tackle the need.

Discuss any articles or videos that were sent ahead of time

The mentor can send articles and videos related to the topic ahead of the meeting. That way, they can move straight to discussing them rather than having to consume the content during the meeting. This will save time, put less pressure on the mentee, and make sure he has time to digest the content of the materials.

Ask the mentee how they feel about the discussion as the session concludes

Towards the end of the session, it is important to take some minutes to reflect on the discussion. The mentor can ask for feedback on the discussion to better prepare for future meetings.

Agree on a topic for the next session

Before rounding off the session, it is important to conclude on the topic for the next session. It has to align with the mentees' goals. This makes both parties accountable and mentally prepared for the next session.



Quick tips on how to be a great mentor

So you've got everything you need to lead an incredible mentoring session. Let's look at further tips to make you a stronger mentor.

Below are ten [actionable tips that are the backbone of great mentors](#).

1. Set realistic goals
2. Offer feedback when necessary
3. Lead by example and be a role model
4. Instill confidence in your mentee
5. Don't solve the mentee's problems for them
6. Acknowledge your mentee's wins
7. Listen more; lecture less
8. Follow up on the mentee's goals to promote accountability
9. Don't just talk about work
10. Always come prepared to mentoring meetings

5 mistakes mentors make and how to avoid them

Mistakes are a reality for new and seasoned mentors. Ironically, some mentors don't consider these faults as actual mistakes. Sadly, these errors impair mentor and mentee relationships.

Below are five common mistakes with tips on making them go away..

Maintaining a distant relationship

When mentors don't personalize interactions with mentees, it creates a gap that'll likely defeat the purpose of the mentorship.

Remedy: Try to address the mentee on a first-name basis.

Lack of faith in the mentee

Your responsibility is to build the mentee in every possible way. Unfortunately, some mentors are largely pessimistic about their mentees' prospects.

Remedy: Remind your mentee about your confidence in them. This fuels their desire to impress you.

Want to make the mentee resemble you in every way

Some mentors force mentees to be walking representations of their ideas and views. This is counterproductive in helping mentees find their voice.

Remedy: Teach without the mindset of wanting to turn a mentee away from their standards.

Taking an unnecessary amount of credit for the mentee's deeds

It's selfish to insist that all of the mentee's victories are because of your efforts. This makes mentees doubt their abilities.

Remedy: Sing your mentee's praises when necessary. However, ensure that you don't overdo it.

Not following up with mentees

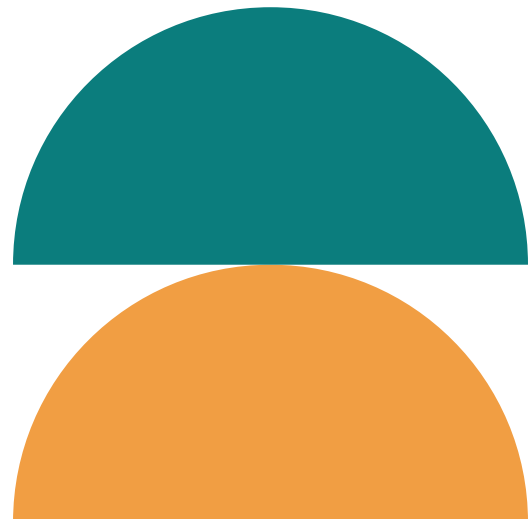
While assigning a duty to your mentee is important, monitoring their efforts towards finalizing the task is what mentors neglect.

Remedy: Oversee mentees' activities regularly.

Books and resources to sharpen your mentoring skills

Becoming a great mentor takes time, active practice, and continued learning. To keep you growing, we've prepared a list of books and resources that are sure to strengthen your mentoring muscles.

1. [Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women](#). Authors: W. Brad Johnson and David Smith
2. [The Mentors that Matters: Stories of Transformational Teachers, Role Models, and Heroes](#). Edited by Suzanne Fox
3. [Mentor Handbook 2021: How to Be a Great Mentor](#). Author: Together team
4. [The Mentoring Manual](#). Author: Julie Starr
5. [Mastering Mentoring and Coaching with Emotional Intelligence](#). Authors: Patrick Marlevede and Denis Briodoux
6. [Women Mentoring Women: Strategies and Stories to Lift As We Rise](#). Author: Michelle Renaldo Ferguson



About Together

Together empowers organizations to accelerate their employee learning and development through mentoring programs. With 1-on-1, peer, and group mentoring, we enable organizations to level up their employee development initiatives.

Organizations leverage mentorship programs to:

- Support [diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging initiatives](#)
- Prepare [high potential employees](#) to take on leadership roles
- Build communities of well-trained and [experienced managers](#)
- Set up new hires for success with [buddy programs](#)
- Build meaningful connections between your [remote employees](#)

HR and L&D teams love Together because our platform offers the best user experience for employees. They don't need to learn or download a new tool because our web-based platform integrates with existing email and calendar systems to make it as easy as possible to build meaningful mentoring relationships.

Each program is fully customizable, allowing administrators to white label their program with a custom URL and branding. Together's platform includes session agendas and resources that provide employees with cues and steps to support mentors and mentees at each stage of their development. In addition, Together's dedicated Support Team provides guidance every step of the way.

Some of our customers include



Want to see how we can help you
bring your mentorship program to life?

Book Demo



References

¹[Nine in 10 workers who have a career mentor say they are happy in their jobs](#) - CNBC

²[The common pitfalls in mentoring programs](#) - Art of Mentoring

³[What Makes a Mentoring Relationship Successful?](#) - Future Leaders of Yale