

# WORKBOOK FOR MENTORING

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## **“Mentoring is a journey**

where mentors are not simply providing actors with a road map and travel tips, but also walk some of the journey together with them.

The co-journeying enables both mentors and actors to develop; and they experience a new journey that is full of surprises.”

# Dear reader,

The popularity of mentoring has increased considerably in recent years. These days, various parties offer mentoring programmes that cover various themes arising from various needs. The University of Helsinki has also hosted several different mentoring programmes over the years. Students are offered mentoring through programmes run by student associations, soon-to-graduate students are mentored by alumni members, and the need for mentoring among doctoral students has been recognised, too. The University has also offered mentoring for newly appointed professors and academic leaders, and has supported teachers, supervisors and experts through peer mentoring.

Some of these programmes offer pair mentoring, some group mentoring. Mentoring can also take place outside programmes; initiating a mentoring relationship can be as simple as asking someone to be your mentor.

In our experience, both mentoring programme participants and independent mentor–actor pairs would benefit from support materials and practical tools. We have therefore produced this mentoring workbook for both mentors and actors to use as part of a mentoring programme or independent arrangement to provide support throughout the mentoring process. This workbook is written for practical purposes. Although it is not an academic or theoretical work, it begins with a description of mentoring as a method – only covering what the mentor and actor might find useful. We recommend that mentors also read the parts intended for actors, and vice versa.

This workbook covers the mentoring process in chronological order from start to finish and aims to offer practical tools that you can use throughout the mentoring process. It also introduces certain themes that arise regularly in the University’s mentoring programmes. These themes aim to illustrate the kinds of topics often covered in mentoring; they are meant to act as examples, not as restrictions. The themes discussed during the mentoring process should always arise from the actor’s needs and be adjusted to serve the actor’s objectives.

This workbook is written by the HR Development and Occupational Wellbeing unit and Career Services unit of the University of Helsinki. Päivi Kupias from Tevere Oy has acted as an expert during the project and has had an indispensable influence on the workbook and its exercises.

Sincerely,

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# WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a collaborative relationship that aims to promote learning, increase know-how and facilitate the actor's professional growth. Mentoring is a simple method founded on the interaction between the mentor and the actor, whose questions, interests and objectives determine what is covered in mentoring. Mentoring conversations are based on confidentiality, commitment and openness. Mentoring is about setting objectives and looking for ways to achieve them.

In work settings, mentoring has long been used to share and pass on the expertise of experienced employees to new employees and to transfer tacit knowledge. Mentoring is used especially to facilitate the career development and mobility of managers and experts, but also to orientate new employees. In education, mentoring programmes offer students advice and guidance on making career plans, finding work and planning for their future.

The mentoring process has a strong focus on development. Although mentoring concentrates on the actor's development, the mentor will also learn and develop in the interactive process. In fact, mentors often find a fresh approach to analysing their own career and planning their own future in the process.

In mentoring, the journey itself is rewarding. The fruits of mentoring are often picked throughout the long process in the form of a series of insights and steps forward.

## Mentoring experiences

"I got the courage to view my opportunities from a broader perspective and to make choices based on my wishes and interests."

ACTOR

"I got great practical tips for my everyday work as a manager."

ACTOR

"Mentoring gave me a chance to learn another unit's practices."

MENTOR

"Mentoring gave me a new approach to my work and taught me to appreciate it more."

MENTOR

"Mentoring taught me the skills that I need to find work, improved my professional self-knowledge and gave me self-confidence."

ACTOR

"It was rewarding to chat with a mentor who understood the challenges of my position."

ACTOR

"I gained new perspectives on career planning and learned to view my career and choices in a new light."

MENTOR

"Youth power, friends and a new tool."

MENTOR

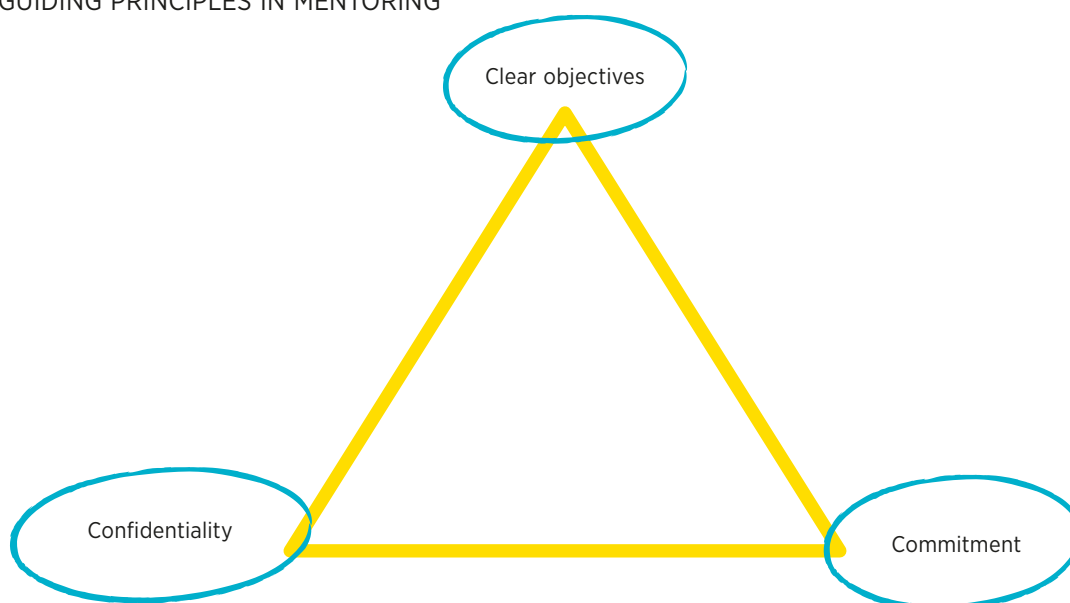
## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Successful mentoring has three guiding principles: commitment, confidentiality and clear objectives. Pay attention to these, especially at the early stages of the process, and discuss the following:

- ▶ Am I committed to a long-term mentoring process?
- ▶ Am I building an atmosphere of mutual trust that allows genuine interaction?
- ▶ What are my mentoring objectives?

In a successful mentoring relationship, both of you follow all three principles. For the mentoring relationship to grow deeper and for both to have a successful experience, consider all three corners of the triangle below.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN MENTORING



## Commitment

*As an actor*, you commit to meeting your mentor or mentoring group regularly. You also commit to learning, including spending time thinking and working on the mentoring themes between meetings. You are responsible for setting your objectives and choosing your mentoring themes, and should let your mentor know the following meeting's theme in advance so that your mentor can also prepare for meetings. It is important for you and your mentor to lay down ground rules and discuss what to do if your schedules conflict or you encounter other challenges.

*As a mentor*, you commit to attending meetings and following commonly set rules. Mentors usually do mentoring alongside their day job and receive no compensation for it. Actors should bear this in mind and not expect their mentor to use unreasonable amounts of time.

The mentor and actor should discuss time limits together and decide what means of communication they use. Actors choose the mentoring themes, but mentors should consider the best ways to work on them. A theme can be approached, for example, through an exercise or reflection task introduced in this workbook.

## Confidentiality and mutual trust

The mentoring relationship is founded on confidential conversations and mutual trust. Mentors and actors typically find it easy to trust one another because mentoring is usually voluntary for both parties.

Confidentiality is something you should discuss together to reach an agreement about what you can and cannot share outside the mentoring relationship. As a general rule, you can share personal thoughts and insights with other people, but you should keep anything related to other people confidential.

You can and should discuss confidentiality when the process begins, but mutual trust can only be born in interaction, after both parties have deemed each other trustworthy. When you trust each other, the mentoring relationship survives difficult questions, constructive criticism, delicate issues and possible setbacks. On the other hand, trust can be easily lost if one of you shares something confidential with outsiders. If trust is broken during the mentoring relationship, it is very hard to regain.

### Mutual trust requires that both of you

- ▶ Consider the other party able and suitable as a mentor/actor and conversation partner
- ▶ Are convinced of the other party acting openly and honestly
- ▶ Express your goodwill by showing interest and giving positive feedback
- ▶ Prove you are worthy of trust, for example, by holding on to your agreements

## Clear objectives

A successful mentoring experience requires not only commitment and mutual trust, but also clear objectives. Without them, mentoring conversations have no clear direction, rendering mentoring rather fruitless. Clear objectives help give the lengthy process structure, allow the actor to set concrete goals and make it easier for the mentor to prepare for meetings. Mentoring objectives should be set right at the beginning, but they can be reviewed and redefined later in the process.

Mentoring builds on the actor's needs and objectives. Mentors cannot set objectives for their actors, but they can help clarify them. Actors can set one main objective or several smaller objectives that they approach from different angles. Actors typically have something that has led them to seek mentoring, and they use this as their starting point when they start discussing their objectives with their mentor.



## EXERCISE

For the mentoring process to succeed, you should start the process by answering the following questions:

What are we committing to?

How can we promote mutual trust?

How can we ensure good communication and interaction?

How can we determine realistic objectives?



## APPROACHES

Mentoring can be approached in various ways, and it can involve different roles. Typically, mentoring involves one mentor and one actor. In such pair mentoring, the more experienced person – the mentor – offers his or her knowledge, skills, experience and ideas to the less experienced person – the actor – to use. Pair mentoring can be intensified by introducing several mentor–actor pairs to each other for them to exchange experiences.

Mentoring can also be a group activity. In group mentoring, a mentor (or two) mentors the group, but group members also receive peer support from each other. In contrast, in peer mentoring, the group consists solely of actors, with one actor leading and facilitating the group. In this case, the group leader is not a mentor, but an equal member of the group and also there to learn. Peer mentoring blends the roles of mentor and actor and rests instead on a dialogue of equals to create a new kind of shared understanding and knowledge.

The following table illustrates different approaches to mentoring. Both mentors and actors should be aware of these approaches, regardless of the type of mentoring they are involved in. These approaches do not rule each other out; instead, adopting different approaches at different stages of the mentoring process can be particularly advantageous. Mentors should assess the best approach for each situation to help actors reach their objectives.

MENTORING APPROACH	MENTOR'S ROLE	ACTOR'S ROLE
Traditional mentoring: transferring knowledge	The mentor is a provider of information who shares his or her understanding and experience.	The actor is a passive recipient who uses the more experienced person as a model.
The mentor as the actor's supporter and guide	The mentor supports the actor's thought processes, shares his or her experiences to promote learning, and offers guidance.	Discussion is based on the actor's objectives and questions, and learning is based on the actor's insights.
The mentor as a coach and sparring partner	The mentor listens to the actor and acts as a mirror. The mentor does not offer advice or guidance, but supports the actor's own learning process.	The actor is very active: he or she takes initiative, determines his or her objectives, seeks the necessary support and tools for achieving them, and asks the mentor questions to learn from the mentor.
Peer mentoring / reverse mentoring	The mentor is the actor's equal, and conversation is based on a dialogue between peers.	The actor is an active and equal partner. Mentoring is founded on shared thinking, ideation and the building of knowledge.

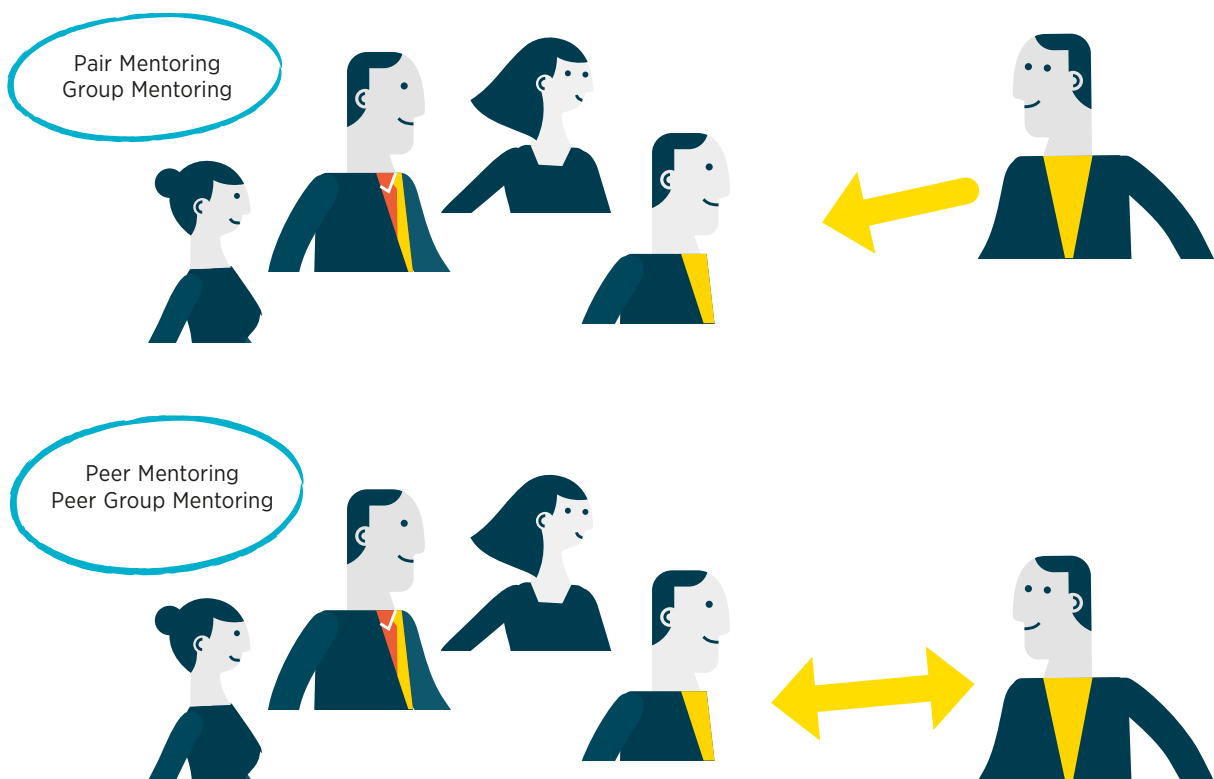
*KAdapted from Kupias & Salo 2014*

Traditionally, mentoring has been regarded as a way of “transferring” the experienced mentor's know-how and experience to the younger actor. According to modern theories of learning, knowledge cannot be transferred from one person to another as such, but it is obvious that actors can nevertheless

learn from their more experienced mentors. At best, the transfer model allows both the actor and mentor to benefit from the mentor's sharing of his or her knowledge and experience. In this approach, the actor is mainly a passive recipient, which conflicts with recent thinking.

By taking a different approach, mentoring can resemble coaching. When the mentor acts as a coach, his or her role is not to transfer knowledge or even offer guidance, but to listen and ask questions and thus facilitate the actor's own learning processes. This approach works well when, for example, clarifying the actor's career objectives.

Mentoring compares favourably to many other methods of self-development because it can employ different approaches and roles, depending on the actor's objectives. The purpose of mentoring is not to reach a common end result or a shared understanding. Mentoring is successful when the parties clarify their own thinking by comparing thoughts and reflecting on their ideas. Actors should discuss different approaches with their mentor to verbalise the thoughts and expectations each party has for their role. If the actor and mentor have very different ideas about each other's roles, their expectations for the mentoring process can conflict.



## ROLES

### The mentor – A reliable supporter

The table (page 9) illustrating different approaches to mentoring describes the different roles of the mentor. Mentors can indeed help actors in many ways. They can be guides and role models, they can be understanding listeners, sparring partners and coaches, or they can be critical friends who evoke novel thoughts and help question established ideas and fixed thought patterns. They can also build bridges and lead their actors deeper into the themes of professionalism, working life, the professional role or personal strengths. Moreover, they can be their actors' peers, evening out the traditional setting of an experienced mentor and inexperienced actor.

Whatever their role, mentors are not employment agents, sponsors, bosses, career or guidance counsellors, initiators, tutors or therapists. They do not make decisions for their actor or direct their actor strongly into one direction. Mentors should also not judge their actors' choices, although they can help them see things from a novel perspective. Mentors must act responsibly: they should be appreciative of their actor's questions and objectives, and instead of intentionally trying to influence their actors, they should offer different viewpoints to help them make decisions.

The purpose of mentoring is to promote the actor's development, but mentors often also gain new thoughts, ideas and insights during the process. After the mentoring process, mentors are often better able to analyse their own career and plan their future from a fresh perspective. Being a mentor is a valuable experience, and one that often gives mentors genuine joy when they get to help their actors.

## The actor – An active developer

In mentoring, the active participant is the actor. The primary purpose of mentoring is to promote the actor's development. For this reason, it is crucial that the actor sets the mentoring objectives, which then determine the themes discussed in mentoring meetings.

Actors are responsible for guiding their own learning and for applying their mentor's knowledge. Actors decide how they respond to the experiences, advice and guidance their mentor shares. The entire mentoring process rests on the actors' desire and ability to develop themselves and have conversations that promote the achievement of their objectives.

Actors are also responsible for ensuring that the mentoring process progresses and for making any practical arrangements. It is the actor's duty to contact the mentor before a meeting to make sure that both are aware of the following meeting's theme and to organise the spaces for meetings, if necessary. If face-to-face meetings require one participant to travel, the actor should mainly be the one travelling.

### CHECKLIST FOR **THE ACTOR**

- ▶ Commit to a long-term process by ensuring you truly have the time for personal development. Define your mentoring objectives and discuss them with your mentor.
- ▶ Keep a learning diary and/or write down your objectives in the mentoring plan.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to ask questions, address areas of personal development or discuss challenges.
- ▶ Be bold in your dreams and objectives.
- ▶ Take responsibility for your personal development and for making practical arrangements. Start putting ideas acquired in mentoring discussions into use immediately.

### CHECKLIST FOR **THE MENTOR**

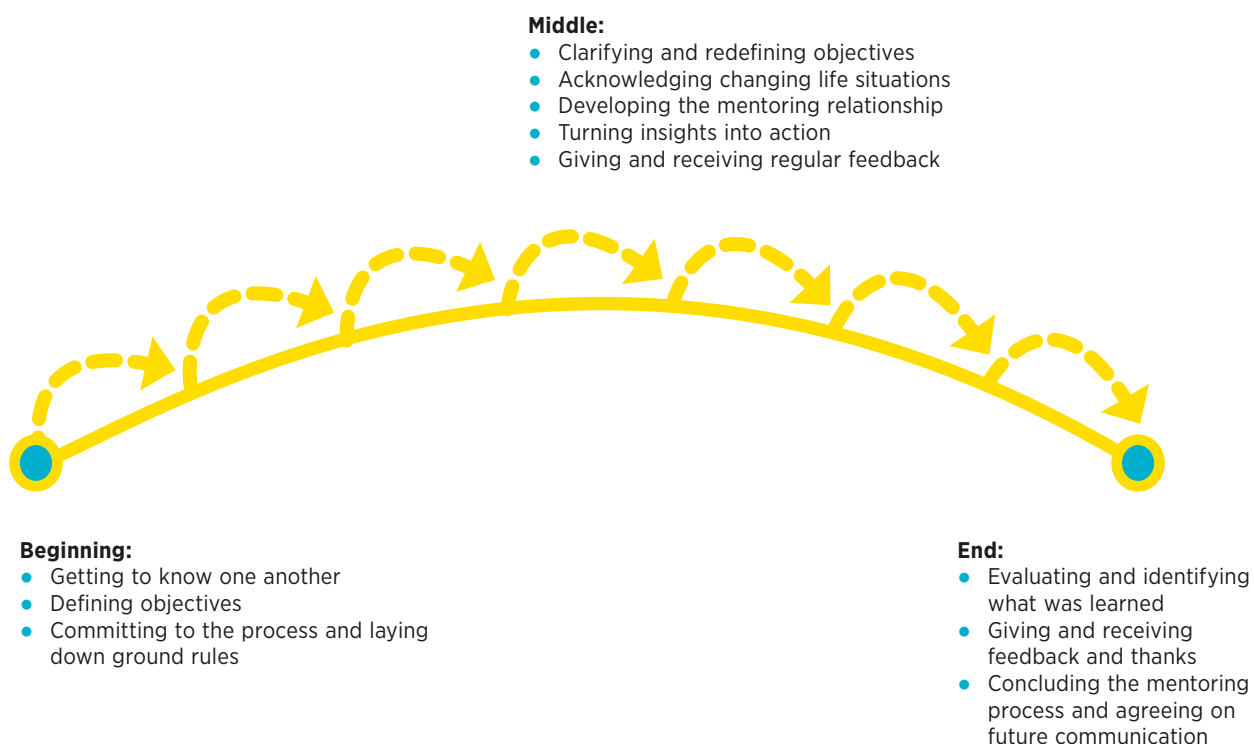
- ▶ Be prepared to reserve enough time for the meetings. Let your actor define his or her mentoring objectives, but help clarify them if necessary.
- ▶ Listen to and take into account your actor's wishes and objectives.
- ▶ Listen and ask questions – trust is built through genuine presence and interaction.
- ▶ Be prepared to share your knowledge and experience.
- ▶ Be open to new ideas, thoughts and feedback. Consider what is best for your actor's personal development: offering direct advice or finding solutions by discussing matters together.
- ▶ Let your actor take responsibility for his or her own personal development and learning.

## STRUCTURE AND DURATION

Mentoring should be a relatively long process: preferably 6–12 months. A long process leaves time for both parties to build trust and for the actor to not only process the mentoring themes and bring up issues that arise during the process, but also to revisit themes discussed at the early stages of mentoring. The mentoring process should have a clearly defined beginning and end. During the process, the mentor–actor pair or mentoring group usually meets once a month. Pair meetings typically last one to two hours, group meetings an hour and a half to three hours. The participants can freely determine the time and place of their meetings.

The mentoring process can be viewed as a large arch that comprises multiple small arches – individual meetings.

### THE MENTORING ARCH



“The mentoring process should have a clearly defined **beginning and end.**”



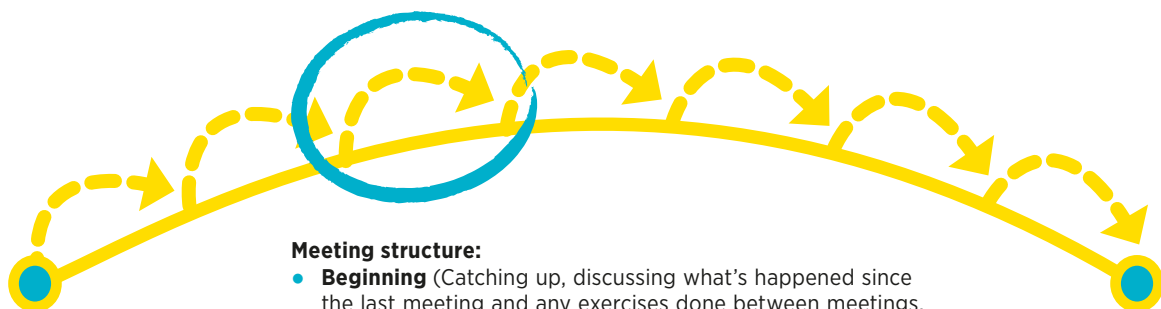
## Meetings

To enable focused working, meetings should conform to some sort of structure. For example, you can start meetings by catching up. After exchanging news, you can use most of the meeting to discuss the actor's pre-chosen theme. At the end of each meeting, you should evaluate your progress and give each other feedback. Unless the upcoming meetings' themes have already been decided, you should also decide the following meeting's theme either at the end of your session or before the following meeting.

The actual "meat" of the meeting is the discussion about the mutually agreed theme. The theme can be discussed through example cases, which the actor first introduces and you then discuss together. In group mentoring, members take turns introducing example cases and discussing them.

Sometimes meetings can centre around a current issue or be spontaneously lead. In such meetings, however, it is easy to lose focus of the mentoring objectives. Moreover, spontaneous discussion can be challenging for the mentor to lead in group mentoring.

### MEETING STRUCTURE



#### Meeting structure:

- **Beginning** (Catching up, discussing what's happened since the last meeting and any exercises done between meetings, and confirming this meeting's objectives)
- **Topical issues** (Remember to reserve time for discussing topical issues)
- **Theme or example case** (Discussing the actual topic of the meeting)
- **Evaluation and assigning exercises** (Evaluating this meeting, assigning any exercises to be done before the next meeting, and deciding on the next meeting and its arrangements)

## EXERCISE

At the end of each meeting, discuss the following:

What did we talk about today? What topics did we cover?

What did we do to reach our mentoring objectives?

What working methods worked well?

What could we do differently?

What do we want out of our next meeting?

## EXERCISE

After each meeting, **actors** should also write a learning diary entry or make notes of what was discussed and what insights you had. Keeping a learning diary helps you focus on your objectives and notice your progress. You can write about the following:

What did we talk about today? What topics did we cover?

What thoughts did this evoke in me during the meeting?

What did I learn or understand?

How did our topics tie in with my objectives?

In group mentoring, **actors** can take turns writing brief summaries of the meetings and send these to the mentor and other group members.

**Middle:**

- Clarifying and redefining objectives
- Acknowledging changing life situations
- Developing the mentoring relationship
- Turning insights into action
- Giving and receiving regular feedback

**Beginning:**

- Getting to know one another
- Defining objectives
- Committing to the process and laying down ground rules

**End:**

- Evaluating and identifying what was learned
- Giving and receiving feedback and thanks
- Concluding the mentoring process and agreeing on future communication

# GETTING STARTED

## GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

For the mentoring relationship to rest on a solid foundation and develop, it is important that you spend time getting to know one another.

You should meet as people, not only as a mentor and actor, and take time to get to know each other. This helps you promote trust, improve interaction and understand the other person's viewpoints and values.

If you skip this stage and dive right in into defining objectives, you can have difficulty understanding where the other person is coming from and what motivates him or her, making it harder for you to define mutual objectives.

Mentoring programmes provide their participants with instructions on how to get started with the process. Those with independent arrangements can help things along by sending each other introduction letters or doing a preliminary exercise before their first meeting.

**To start getting to know one another, discuss the following questions:**

- ▶ Who am I?
- ▶ Where do I come from?
- ▶ Why did I decide to become a mentor/actor?
- ▶ What things are important to me at the moment?

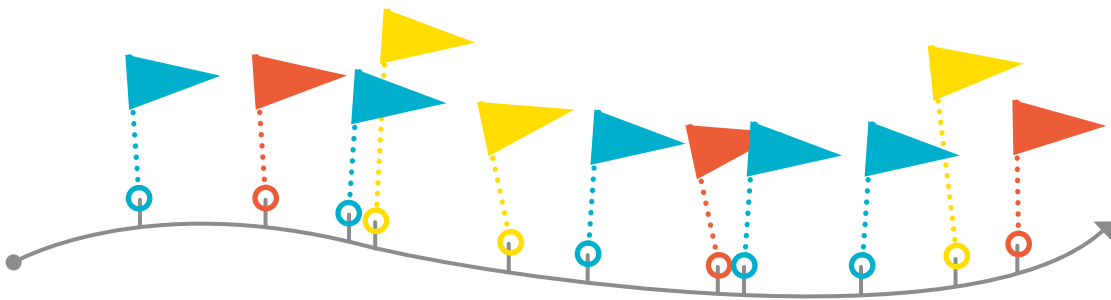


Should you wish to, you can also do the lifeline exercise. In this exercise, you can choose things you want to share in mentoring.

## EXERCISE

### TIMELINE

- Draw a timeline of your life on a piece of paper.
- Include important memories: life events and people related to them, major decisions and changes of course, themes, stages, studies, work, your achievements so far, and anything else you want to include.
- Study your drawing. Do you notice recurring themes or patterns? How does the path you've taken so far meet your future path? How have you made choices previously? How do the dreams and interests of your childhood and youth affect your life? Who are the people you consider important role models, who are the people that walk your path on your side, and who are the people that have influenced your life?



In groups, you can also use the following exercise to get to know other group members:

- Choose a picture, object or song and use it to introduce yourselves.

“How does the path you’ve taken so far meet your **future path**?”



**“The objectives**  
set by the actor  
provide mentoring  
its framework and  
direction.”

## DEFINING OBJECTIVES

To ensure a successful mentoring experience, the process should have clear objectives. The objectives set by the actor provide mentoring its framework and direction. Actors should discuss these objectives with their mentor to ensure that both parties are driving the mentoring process in the same direction and working towards a shared goal. Actors can have several objectives, and the objectives can be reviewed and redefined during the process.

### Examples of mentoring objectives

- Expanding one's skillset
- Growing in a new position
- Reaching goals related to work
- Reaching goals related to working methods
- Clarifying and strengthening one's professional identity
- Enhancing one's expertise and in-depth knowledge
- Planning the future of one's own work, career or life in general
- Building networks
- Managing time and stress
- Increasing wellbeing at work
- Sharing empirical and tacit knowledge

*In group mentoring*, all group members have their own objectives. The group must define its mutual mentoring objectives and themes together, and ensure that all group members are committed to them. The group should discuss each member's personal objectives in its first meeting and define the group's mutual objectives based on the members' individual objectives.

## Tools for clarifying objectives

The following tools and conversation topics can help clarify mentoring objectives.

### EXERCISE

Discuss mentoring objectives from different perspectives using the following questions:

#### FROM **THE ACTOR'S** PERSPECTIVE

What do I want to achieve through mentoring?

When the mentoring process ends, what will be different and what will I have learned?

What things do I want to maintain and enhance through mentoring?

Where do I need my mentor's support?

## EXERCISE

FROM **THE MENTOR'S** PERSPECTIVE

What kind of support could I have used earlier in my career?

If I could have been a actor, what would I have used mentoring for?

How do I want to help my actor?

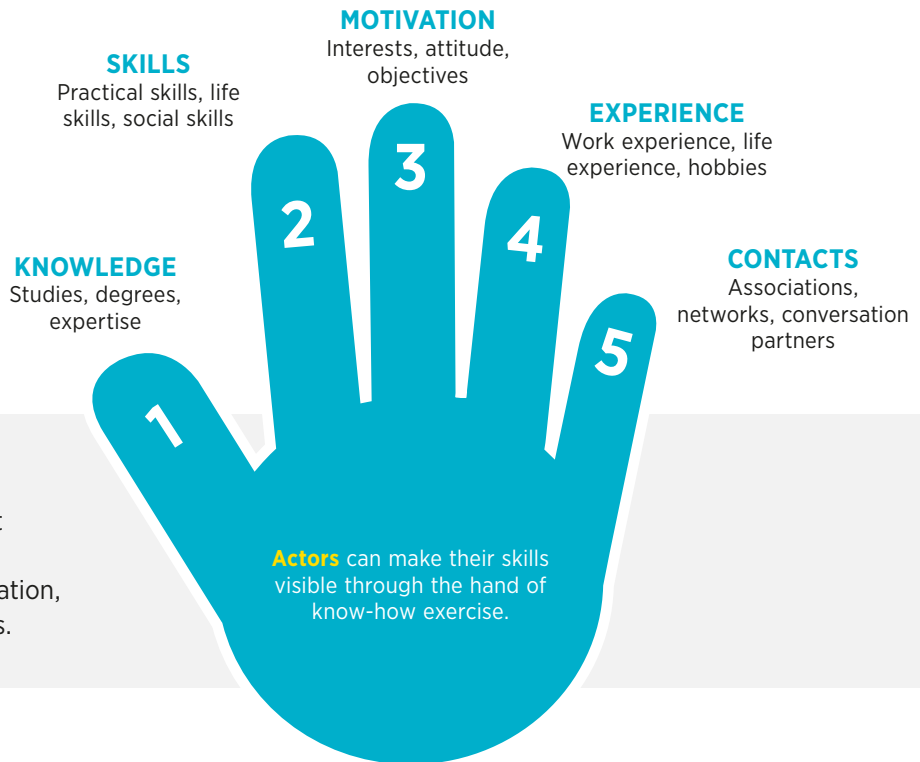
When the mentoring process ends, what do I hope my actor has gained?

As a mentor, what do I want to get from the mentoring process?

## EXERCISE

Actors can make their skills visible to their mentors and set mentoring objectives using the hand of know-how exercise:

### THE HAND OF KNOW-HOW

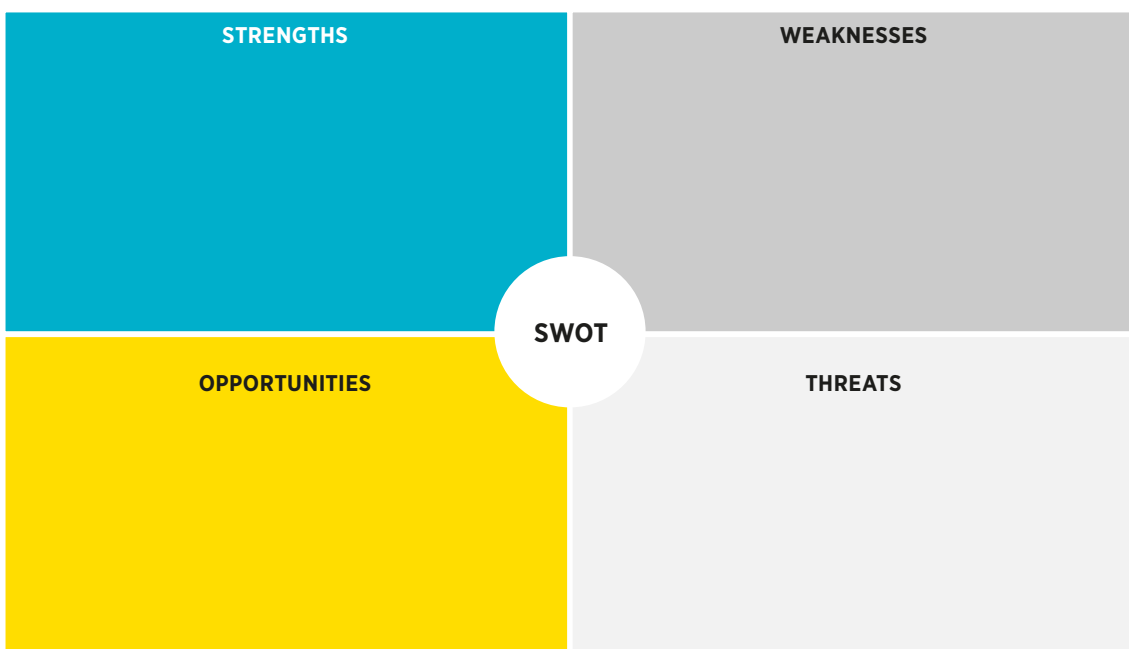


Know-how is not just knowledge and skills. At its best, it is built out of knowledge, skills, motivation, experience and contacts.

## EXERCISE

### SWOT ANALYSIS

For assessing work, career and life situations



The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to help actors describe their current situation and define their objectives in concrete terms.

In the matrix, you identify your internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats related to work, career or your current life situation in general. You can then choose which area you want to focus on in mentoring. You should complete the SWOT analysis again at the end of the mentoring process to identify what has changed during the process.

Mentors can also benefit from the SWOT analysis. With it, mentors can describe their expertise and thus offer their actors new perspectives on how to use mentoring and what topics to cover.

## LAYING DOWN GROUND RULES

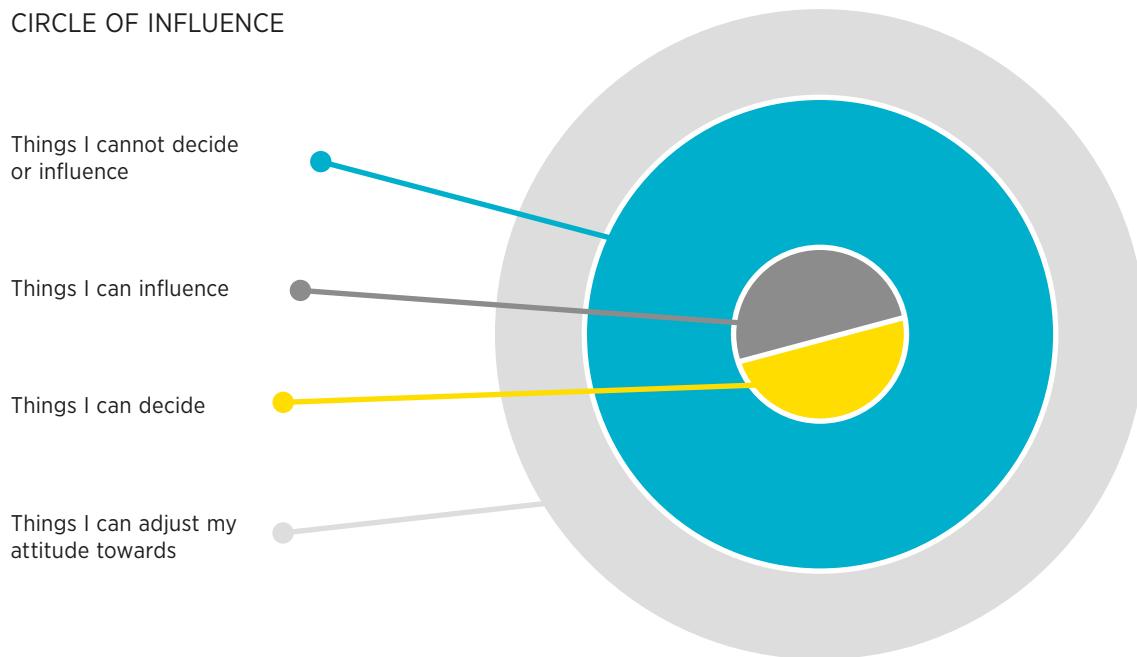
For the mentoring relationship to be effective for everyone, you should not only define objectives together, but also discuss ground rules and practices. This can be done either in writing or orally as long as everyone is clear on the rules.

**The mentoring agreement or plan can include the following (see Appendix, page 54):**

1. Mentoring objectives
2. Topics and themes, including what will not be covered
3. Confidentiality: What can and cannot be discussed with others
4. Duration: The beginning and end of the mentoring process (the recommended duration is 6–12 months)
5. The time and place for meetings and practices for rescheduling or cancelling meetings (the recommended meeting interval is roughly one month)
6. Communication during mentoring, including channels and means
7. Preparing for meetings (Responsibilities: What is expected of each party)
8. Giving up mentoring mid-process and what to do if this happens.

You can do the circle of influence exercise together to help define your mentoring objectives and themes. This exercise can help identify topics and themes you can influence through mentoring and rule out topics mentoring cannot influence. You can redo the exercise, if you later need to discuss how you want to use your meeting time and whether or not you are working towards the mutually defined objectives.

#### CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE



In group mentoring, it is especially important to discuss the working methods to ensure that the process is productive for everyone and that the group achieves its objectives. It is crucial that everyone can participate in defining the group's objectives and that everyone's wishes are taken into consideration. In group meetings, the mentor must ensure that all members get to participate in the discussion and that nobody dominates the conversation too much. The mentor should encourage the more silent members to ask questions and openly express their thoughts.

Groups should discuss conversation rules in advance. You can use the following exercises and methods:

- Timed speaking turns to ensure that everyone gets the floor equally; for example, a two-minute catch-up round at the beginning of the meeting
- A limited number of speaking turns; for example, each group member has a certain number of "cards" they can use during the conversation
- The use of different conversation roles (e.g. narrator, listener, observer, critic, enthusiast, etc.) and rotation of these roles
- Breaking up of large groups into pairs for discussion.

Scheduling meeting times can be difficult in a group, so it is best to schedule as many meetings beforehand as possible because finding suitable times on short notice is particularly challenging. The group should also discuss what to do if one or more members has to cancel: if the meeting will be rescheduled or if it will be held according to plan, with fewer members.

# MENTORING THEMES

Mentoring is often called for in times of change. Those in the labour market may need support after moving to a new professional role, and those studying may often need help strengthening their professional identity and finding work after graduation. Even experienced professionals may need support in making career transitions. In our experience, the following themes are common in mentoring:

- Professional growth and career development
- Wellbeing and coping
- Changes and transitions

Mentoring themes can cover almost anything, but they should always be dictated by the actor's situation. The actor's objectives determine the themes discussed in mentoring; each theme is a step towards the objective.

This section discusses the above-mentioned themes, introduces exercises to support the mentoring process, and offers concrete tools for discussing the themes. Using the exercises is not an end in itself: you should always determine together if an exercise fits your objectives and situation and serves your or the group's purposes.

## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In our careers, we often find ourselves in situations that require us to weigh different solutions and options in relation to the future.

Professional growth requires not only knowing yourself, but also knowing your options and opportunities and the requirements of working life. When you are clear on these, you can make informed choices and plan your career. Mentoring often covers practical issues in finding work, but it is important to remember that a successful job hunt requires a solid basis in career planning (including an understanding of your goals, strengths and options).



*The career skills model of the University of Helsinki  
Adapted from Sampson J. et al. (2004) and the DOTS model of A.G. Watts.  
(Source: Carver, Itkonen & Kannainen 2014)*



## Recognising your strengths and competences

Self-assessment in career planning involves recognising your strengths and competences, knowing what motivates you, defining your goals, and being aware of the kinds of values and ends you want to promote through work. Recognising your competences can be difficult, and it is indeed a topic much discussed in mentoring. For you to credibly communicate your competence – your knowledge, understanding and practical skills – you need to be first able to recognise and verbalise it. In addition to competences, we all have our personal strengths: qualities, characteristics and courses of action that we bring to work. You can use the following exercise to identify your strengths and transferable skills.



## Transferable skills

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR **ACTORS**:

Think of a situation in which you did exceptionally well and were proud of yourself. It may have been a particularly challenging situation in which you surpassed yourself in your studies, work or life in general. What happened in that situation? What did you do?

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR **MENTORS**:

Listen to your actor's story carefully. As you are listening, identify and write down the strengths, skills and courses of action your actor used in that situation. Give your actor feedback and share the strengths you identified in his or her story.

You can also use this exercise in groups of two or three. In a group, members take turns recounting their situations, while others write down their strengths to share at the end.



## Clarifying career objectives

At the beginning of your career, career objectives can feel very vague. As you move forward, career objectives often become clearer simply because with experience, it is easier to identify the kinds of tasks you like the best and the things that motivate you at work. On the other hand, stopping to think about your career objectives can be useful even if you already have had a long career.

You can use the following exercise of remembering the future, for example, as a written exercise between meetings or as a preliminary exercise before the mentoring process to lead you into the theme of professional growth.

In this exercise, the future is seen as an environment in which all key issues have been solved. Current concerns are approached through thinking back on them from a future perspective, thus making visible possible solutions.

## Becoming an academic expert: An exercise in remembering in the future

Imagine yourself in the future, for example, three years from now. You are in a position that you like. *“My job is significant and meaningful to me. In my role, I can put my skills and knowledge to full use and develop myself. At times, my work has stressful periods and boring days, but I mostly enjoy what I do. My colleagues offer me constructive and encouraging feedback.”*

### EXERCISE

When you imagine yourself in this situation, think of the following:

What is your job and role? Where do you work? Or are you perhaps running your own business?

What in your work gives you particular pleasure?

What were the key moments that kick-started your career? What happened then?

What did you do, and where did you get help?

Did you have concerns about realising your plans? If yes, what helped solve those concerns?

Are some things still unfinished? What will you do next?

## Knowing your career options

Different career options and the needs and demands of working life can often cause uncertainty. Especially when you are studying, it may be difficult to know what doors your degree and knowledge can open, what your options are, what different roles really involve and how you can make your way into those roles. Even if you already have work experience, major career changes may force you to reconsider your options.

Discussing various career paths and professional roles with others – or discussing future plans and career options among fellow students – can broaden your perspective considerably. Students find group mentoring and the peer support provided by the group very enlightening.

In addition to discussion, you can use various exercises to help improve your understanding of your career options.

### Informational interviews

Interview people working in roles or organisations relevant to your career plans either alone or in pairs. The purpose of the interview is not to find work but to learn more about different positions. You can ask about the interviewee's

- ▶ Studies and work experience
- ▶ Current role and the tasks, challenges and competences it involves
- ▶ Organisation and its prospects and recruitment practices

Mentoring groups have also visited organisations that interest group members. These visits are an excellent way to introduce actors to different workplaces and practice networking. However, the visited organisations should always be relevant to actors. It is therefore best that actors choose the organisations, organise the visits and prepare the conversation topics for the visit.

## WELLBEING AND COPING

Wellbeing at work and combining work and family life are themes that often arise when people talk about work – and mentoring is no exception. Changes in working life, increasingly limited resources, recurring employee cooperation negotiations and the blurred line between work and free time caused by mobile work increase the pressure to draw boundaries on the time and energy you use for work. In today's job interviews, almost all candidates are asked about their ability to work under pressure and manage stress. Self-management, work organisation, prioritisation and time management are all important skills in modern work. Moreover, wellbeing is a fundamental prerequisite for being able to work until retirement. In this area, mentors can often have plenty of valuable experience and advice for their less experienced actors.

Use the following exercises as conversation pieces or to evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses in this area.

## Time management

By monitoring your time use, you can often greatly increase your sense of control. The time thieves exercise can help you pinpoint your weak points in time management. Mentors can also ask actors to keep track of their time for one week and make observations based on this.

### EXERCISE

#### TIME USE: THE TIME THIEVES EXERCISE

Use this exercise to evaluate your use of time. Which of the following steal your time the most? Be honest.

I'm not sure what is expected of me.	I take calls that are not my responsibility.	I don't plan my workday or my work.
I do the wrong things.	My work is often interrupted.	I'm not organised.
My organisation's responsibilities are unclear.	I can't say no.	I have too much work.
I have trouble prioritising.	I'm involved in too many things.	I jump from one thing to another.
I don't follow my priorities.	I can't make decisions.	I let incoming emails interrupt my work.
I attend unnecessary meetings.	I get involved in other people's work.	My door is always open.
I attend meetings unprepared.	My workstation is untidy.	I want to be available for everyone in my organisation.
I do other people's tasks.	My work isn't meaningful.	I want people to think I'm busy.
I have trouble delegating work.	I'm not motivated.	I do things too well.
My work mainly involves "putting out fires".		

- ▶ Would my colleagues or employees agree?
- ▶ Which factors are the most critical?
- ▶ What do I start removing?
- ▶ Which of these can I influence?

## Prioritisation

When you have more work than you can do and your desk is never empty, prioritisation becomes a very important skill. When prioritising, you should consider your organisation's goals, strategies and "the big picture", but also your own life goals and principles. You can use the following six-step weekly plan to help you direct your energy into the right things. This exercise is excellent especially if your mentoring themes include time management, prioritisation and a plan to work towards your objectives.

### EXERCISE

#### THE SIX-STEP WEEKLY PLAN

1. Visualise your long-term goals. What do you want your life to be like in three or five years? You are allowed to dream big, so let go of any restrictions.
  
2. Celebrate the past week. What made you proud? What moments were important? What did you finish? Write down at least ten successes, big and small.
  
3. What could have gone better last week? What did you learn from this? What could you do differently in the future? Write down one to three things.

## EXERCISE

4. Write down no more than six tasks that help you best move towards your long-term goals. Then circle the most important, the one that supports all the others. Make sure that your tasks are small enough for you to succeed in them.
5. Schedule these six tasks in your diary for this week. Dedicate your most efficient time of the day for these tasks. Schedule these tasks early on in the week, and make sure you have enough time to do them. Plan all other activities for the week around them, and write them down in your diary.
6. Who could help you realise these tasks? Who could you help this week? Let key people know your schedules, and also tell them what you expect of them.

*Source: Merja Takamäki*



## Stress management

We all have tasks that are meaningful to us and that fall in our comfort zone. Likewise, we all have tasks that stress us out, put pressure on us and drain our energy. In some situations, we can influence our tasks and thus use more time on the tasks that inspire and reward us, and less time on the tasks that eat up our energy. However, this is not always possible, so it is good to learn to recognise tasks in each category and find ways to create practices that do not let stress get the better of you.

### EXERCISE

In this energy thieves exercise, write down the following in different colours:

In green: The things that give you joy, inspiration, flow, a sense of control or peace of mind

In red: The things that increase negative stress and tension or that take you out of your comfort zone

In addition, write down the things outside of work that improve your wellbeing and ability to work and the things that lessen these.

Finally, look at what you wrote in red and green. Are there more greens than reds? Can you increase the greens and/or reduce the reds? If not, can you spread out the reds in your diary so that they don't stress you out continuously? What things or thought patterns could you use to help you better deal with the reds? What could you do in your free time to reduce work stress and improve your wellbeing?

## CHANGES AND TRANSITIONS

In times of change, we require more support. Mentoring can offer this support in times of change and transition, whether it is about a student transferring to work, a person moving to a different position, an organisation changing or a person moving to another place or undergoing some other life change.

These changes can be externally forced on you or actively brought about by you. In either case, they force you to actively consider different options and your chances of making these options happen. At its best, change can help you grow and pause to reflect on your past, present and future. Change offers us a chance to become more aware of our needs, strengths, motivations and wishes.

### Future goals

In our everyday lives, we rarely stop to dream or consider our future goals. It can feel as if we are simply fulfilling our purpose in life like a steam engine chugging along, never stopping to consider where we are headed and why. Mentoring can offer us a chance to improve our self-knowledge and become more aware of our hopes and thoughts concerning the future, for example, through the following exercise.

**BHAG:** My big, hairy, audacious goal. Your BHAG should exceed your wildest dreams. It is a vision of your situation in ten or twenty years, a situation in which everything is as well as it possibly can be – and better. BHAG is in no way tied to realities; the likelihood of it happening is perhaps 30–70%. This exercise is for your own purposes only: you do not have to share your BHAG with anyone.

#### EXERCISE

What is your BHAG like? Use the following questions to envision it in as concrete terms as possible:


Where are you when you wake up in the morning? What do you see around you? What do you hear? How do you feel? What do you smell? What is the first thing you do? What do you do during the day? Who is with you? What kind of environment are you in? In your mind, take a snapshot that encapsulates a feeling or state of matters central to your BHAG.



## Intrinsic motivation and values

Motivation plays a significant role in our work. For our work to make us happy, get us out of bed in the morning, inspire us and make us want to improve it, it has to do with things that we truly care about. For this reason, it is also important for employers to find truly motivated employees.

Ideally, our work should promote values important to us. Our organisation's values – both those stated in public and those realised in everyday work – should reflect our personal values. In addition to values, several other elements are more or less important to us at work. The following exercise helps you recognise what you value at work. You can pick the three most important things or put all items in order of importance. If there is an important element missing from the list, what is it?

- 
- ▶ Helping others
  - ▶ Societal impact
  - ▶ Artistic expression and aesthetics
  - ▶ Expertise
  - ▶ Work involving other people
  - ▶ Independence and freedom
  - ▶ Good pay
  - ▶ Work that promotes my values
  - ▶ Work environment and location
  - ▶ Excitement and risk-taking
  - ▶ Challenging and developing myself
  - ▶ Well-defined job description and working practices
  - ▶ Success and respect
  - ▶ Interesting and inspiring job
  - ▶ Internationality
  - ▶ Stability and security
  - ▶ Environment and sustainability
  - ▶ A good balance between different areas of life
  - ▶ Making something new
  - ▶ Creativity
  - ▶ Variation and versatility
  - ▶ Authority and decision-making
  - ▶ Solidarity and team spirit
  - ▶ Tempo
  - ▶ Functionality

## Networks

Most of us recognise the importance of networks. Few of us, however, seem to know how to use our networks effectively or know the best ways to network. Networking can sometimes also involve negative associations. People can think that networking means forcing yourself on others or only getting to know people in order to gain something from them.

Most of us grow our networks organically over time. It is important to understand that networking does not have to involve bothering others or seeking your own interests. At its best, networking is about reciprocity: when you help someone, someone will help you. Moreover, when you share an interest with someone, exchanging thoughts and ideas is rewarding for both of you. Many people are surprisingly eager to help, if you can only muster up the courage to ask.

Social media channels provide extremely useful networks and offer us new opportunities to use our networks for various purposes.

## EXERCISE

Use the following questions to evaluate your own networks:

Who is already included in my network?

Family and relatives

Friends and acquaintances

Current and former fellow students and colleagues

People I know through hobbies or other free-time activities

Others?

What kind of people would I like more of in my network?

How can I grow my network?

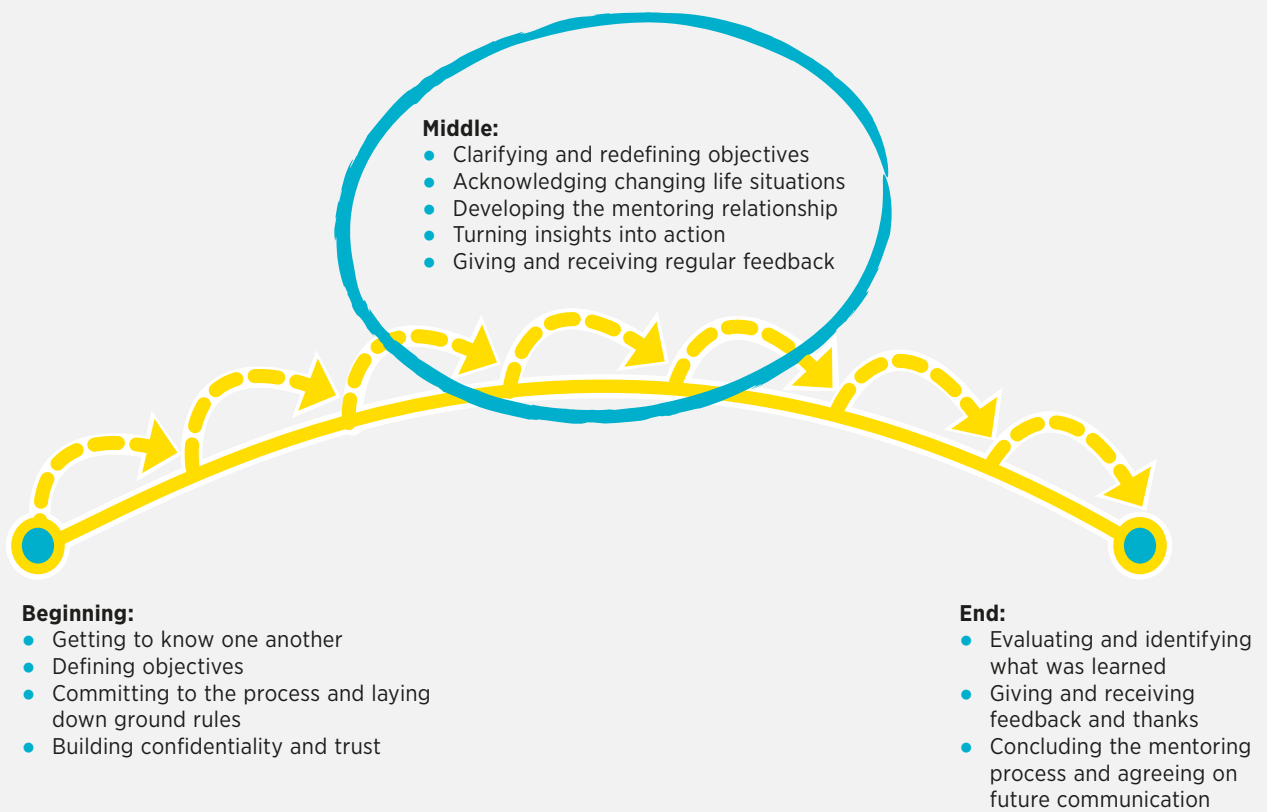
Can I join a community?

Can I contact some people directly (see instructions for conducting informational interviews above)?

How could I use my social media channels to grow my network?

What can I offer to people in my network?

How can people in my network help me?



## PROGRESSING WITH MENTORING

The mentoring process can last up to a year, so it is only natural for it to have different stages. An enthusiastic start can be followed by a quieter period, in which motivation and commitment are temporarily put to the test. During this time, meetings may be cancelled or held more infrequently, the mentor and actor may have communication problems, or the mentoring objectives can change. These challenges can, however, be overcome.

### CLARIFYING AND REDEFINING OBJECTIVES

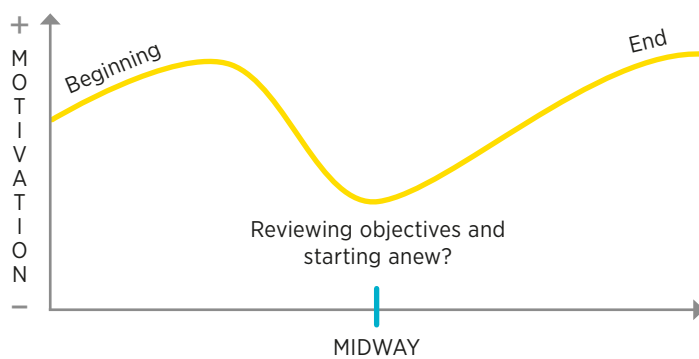
To start with, you may not be sure what to focus on in mentoring, which is why the original objectives may change along the way. You may also become aware of new perspectives that redefine your original objectives. Your situation in life can also change – changing your mentoring objectives with it. It is therefore a good idea to review the original objectives mid-way through the mentoring process.



“The mentor and actor should review their **objectives** mid-mentoring.”

The original objectives can also sometimes get lost or become clouded, especially if your meetings are structured spontaneously. If the meetings do not seem to promote the mutually agreed objectives, this can have a negative effect on both parties' motivation. It is indeed common for both parties to have a decrease in motivation mid-way in the process. To recover focus, the mentor and actor should review their objectives mid-mentoring.

MOTIVATION CURVE



## EXERCISE

The simplest way for you to review your objectives is to discuss what the original objectives were, whether you have made progress with these objectives and whether the objectives have changed.

PRESENT:  
What have we discussed  
in mentoring?

FUTURE:  
What are my objectives  
and hopes?

HOW CAN  
I REACH MY  
OBJECTIVES?

In addition to reviewing the objectives, you should check how well your working methods (e.g., the meeting structure, the methods used, the level of discussion and preparation) serve your objectives. If it feels like you are spending too much time discussing things that neither of you can influence, you can retake the circle of influence exercise described above (p. 23).

If your mentoring themes include many things that you cannot directly influence but nevertheless consider problematic, it may be useful for you to consider changing your perspective using the following exercise.

## MANAGING YOUR ENERGY: A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

This exercise has two parts:

- 1) Choose a theme: Which themes do you want to cover in mentoring?
  - Choose one theme with your mentor for further discussion (e.g., time management).
  - Discuss the theme through the circle of influence exercise (p. 23):
    - ▶ What can you influence?
    - ▶ What can you decide?
    - ▶ What could be the next small step that brings you closer to change?
  
- 2) Change your perspective
  - Together with your mentor, choose a theme related to the previous theme that you cannot influence and that you find challenging.
  - Start unpacking the challenging theme through the following questions:
    - ▶ How does this affect what you do? Describe this in as concrete terms as possible.
    - ▶ How do you usually react to this? What is the typical outcome when you try to influence this?
    - ▶ How do you explain why it is like it is?
    - ▶ What possible (positive) explanations could there be?
    - ▶ How would you react differently (using one of the positive explanations)?
    - ▶ How could you change what you do or say?



## CHANGING SITUATIONS IN LIFE

If either party's situation in life changes so that it affects the mentoring process, you should discuss this as openly as possible. If you feel like you simply do not have the time and energy for the mentoring process, it may be best to terminate it or put it on hold. If you decide to continue with mentoring, the changing situation may change your mentoring objectives.

If, for example, one of you suddenly starts cancelling meetings, you should take this up. Discuss the possible challenges or changes in the situation so that you can decide if you can continue the mentoring process and whether you should make changes to the process.

### **You can use the following questions to prepare for bringing up difficult matters:**

- ▶ What worries you in the other party's actions?
- ▶ What consequences might there be if you don't bring the matter up?
- ▶ When and where could you bring the matter up?
- ▶ How can you express that you would like to talk?
- ▶ How do you begin the conversation?
- ▶ What do you want to find out?
- ▶ What do you want to agree on?
- ▶ What are you prepared to do to solve the matter?

### **You can use the following pattern in the actual situation in which you bring up the difficult matter:**

- ▶ Explain why you want to talk.
- ▶ Express your concern and your motivation to discuss the matter.
- ▶ Explain the matter as concretely as possible, using examples.
- ▶ Listen to the other party's point of view.
- ▶ Ask questions.
- ▶ Express that you have heard the other person's views and explain your side.
- ▶ Together, come up with a solution or solutions to solve this matter.
- ▶ Ensure you share a clear view of the solutions.
- ▶ (Pick a time to continue discussing the matter.)

## DEVELOPING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring pairs can be formed on very different grounds. Sometimes actors find suitable mentors for themselves, and sometimes suitable actors are sought for mentors. In group mentoring, the group can form, for example, around the actors' career interests or other mutual themes of interest, or around a specific mentor.

The match is not always perfect. You can and should nevertheless develop the relationship: as long as you are willing to learn to know one another, your relationship can become excellent. You do not have to agree on everything. In fact, the most important insights are often the result of a meeting of two viewpoints. If you give the relationship a chance to develop, both of you can learn a lot from it.

Your role can change as the mentoring process progresses. The mentor's role can evolve from an experienced advisor to a coach who supports the actor's thinking. Your roles can also approach each other; at the later stages of the mentoring process, the relationship can start to resemble peer mentoring.

Interaction is effective when both or all parties are truly present and genuinely listening to each other. When you think together and construct a shared reality, your discussion becomes a dialogue between equals. This can result in new thought constructs where it is impossible to tell who first came up with a certain idea because you created it together. Genuine interaction is challenging, but it can be learned.

“You **do not have to agree**  
on everything.”

## How can you promote genuine interaction?

### 1. Listen

A person who truly listens is present and focused on hearing what the other person is saying. The listener puts aside his or her own opinions, perspectives or ideas, and focuses entirely on what the speaker is saying. At the same time, the listener observes what reactions the speaker's words cause in himself or herself. When you truly listen to someone, you try to understand the speaker's perspective. This does not mean, however, that you should accept it as such.

### 2. Express yourself as directly as possible

Direct speech is the most challenging part of genuine dialogue. It means expressing your true self regardless of other factors at play. To speak directly, you have to believe in yourself and in the value of your thoughts. The atmosphere must convey that everyone's opinions and ideas are valuable and that everyone's unique perspective is required to reach a mutual understanding.

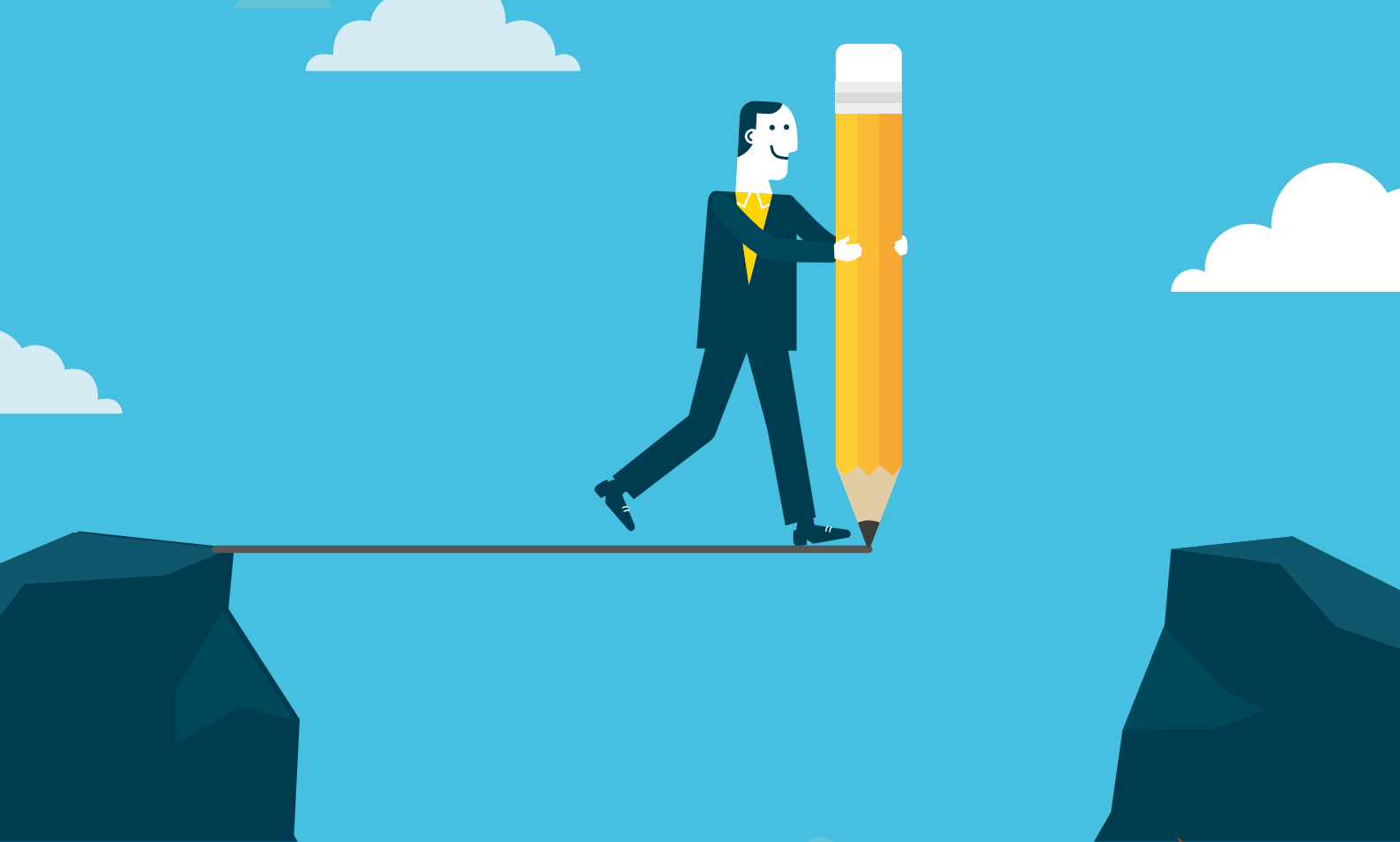
### 3. Be patient

In genuine interaction, patience is a virtue. You have to stop to consider ideas and thoughts and unpack self-evident truths. Reflecting on your own and other people's thoughts is the key to finding new perspectives and deconstructing fossilised assumptions.

### 4. Show respect

To respect other people, we have to understand that our own perspective is limited and that we can learn from others if we have the patience to listen to them. Our own opinions and perspectives are unique and so valuable that we, too, should be allowed to and dare to express them.

*(Source: Kupias, 2003)*



## TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

For mentoring to be useful, it is vital to turn the insights gained in the process into action. We learn when we compare new information against our thoughts and experiences, and mentoring offers us a chance to stop to reflect on two people's experiences and learn from them.

As an actor, your ability to reflect is crucial for learning, for being aware of how you act in different situations and for being able to evaluate your actions. Ideally, your mentor or the other actors in your group can act as mirrors that help you identify your strengths and development needs.

Actors are responsible for their learning. Ideally, you should continuously apply to practice what you learn from observing your actions in and out of meetings, trying out new things and evaluating them with your mentor. Mentors can give their actors more responsibility by encouraging them to determine intermediate objectives.

Cycles of gaining insight, testing, evaluating and adopting new courses of action repeat in the course of mentoring. As the new courses of action become habits, it is easy to forget how they were born. To keep track of their development, actors should keep a learning diary.

## EXERCISE

After each meeting, write down the following:

What did we talk about today? What topics did we cover?

What thoughts did this evoke in me during the meeting?

What did I learn or understand?

How did our topics tie in with my objectives?

## CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

To nurture the mentoring relationship, both parties should give each other feedback throughout the process. Continuous feedback reduces the number of problems encountered in the relationship and helps correct things before they become issues.

If feedback is kept back to be given at the end of the process, issues cannot be dealt with and suggested improvements can feel like criticism. If, however, feedback is given openly and regularly, both parties will have the time to learn from it.

It is important to have clear, recurring practices for offering feedback. You can, for example, briefly review how you did today, what you and the other person succeeded in, and what you and the other person could do better at the end of each meeting. This way, the threshold for taking things up remains low. After every meeting, the mentor and actor(s) should have a feedback-discussion, e.g. using the questions on page 14.



**Middle:**

- Clarifying and redefining objectives
- Acknowledging changing life situations
- Developing the mentoring relationship
- Turning insights into action
- Giving and receiving regular feedback



**Beginning:**

- Getting to know one another
- Defining objectives
- Committing to the process and laying down ground rules
- Building confidentiality and trust

**End:**

- Evaluation and feedback
- What comes after mentoring?

# CONCLUDING THE MENTORING PROCESS

EXERCISE

## EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Mentoring is a shared journey that has a beginning and an end. When that journey comes to an end, you should stop to think about the following questions:

Where did our journey begin? What did we start with?

## EXERCISE

What happened during our journey? What do I know now that I did not know before this process?

Did our journey meet our expectations, or did we end up straying from our original objectives?

What did I gain from this? What will I take with me?



You should stand by your mutually agreed end date, because how you end the mentoring process is just as important as how you started it. When the process has a beginning and an end, the time you spend together is more productive. A mutually agreed end date also gives the mentoring process the ending it deserves.

You should cover three things in your final meeting: evaluating the process, giving and receiving feedback, and discussing possible future communication. Before the final meeting, both of you should prepare by reflecting on your insights and expectations. Actors should also review their original objectives and, if you have kept a learning diary, revisit your notes before the final meeting.

## EXERCISE

In the final meeting, evaluate the mentoring process with the help of the following questions. This is especially important for **actors**, but also for mentors.

How well did mentoring meet my expectations on a scale of one to ten?

How well did I meet my mentoring objectives on a scale of one to ten?

What grade would I give my pre-mentoring situation on a scale of one to ten?

What grade would I give my current situation on a scale of one to ten?

What did I gain from mentoring?

## EXERCISE

What were my most important insights?

How have I applied in practice what I learned and understood?


Giving feedback and offering thanks are ways of concluding the mentoring process that should not be forgotten. It is vital that both of you have the chance to give positive feedback and highlight each other's strengths.

Because mentoring involves a constant evaluation of the process, objectives and methods, suggested improvements can be covered quickly when concluding the process. In the final meeting, it is more important to offer positive feedback and highlight the other person's strengths. The actor and his or her development take centre stage in mentoring, but the mentor should also receive feedback at the end of the shared journey. In group mentoring, group members should offer each other feedback and highlight and verbalise each other's strengths.

## Growing wings

At the end of the mentoring process, write down each other's strengths and positive characteristics. You do not have to discuss this exercise together; instead, you can take the other person's greetings home with you.

Groups can also tape a piece of paper on each member's - including the mentor's - back. You can then write down positive qualities on each person's back for each group member to take home.



YOUR WINGS WILL CARRY YOU  
IN THE FUTURE, BECAUSE...



## WHAT COMES AFTER MENTORING?

Concluding the mentoring relationship is important for both of you to ascertain that you have done what you promised to do. After the mentoring process has ended, you have no obligations concerning the other party. If both of you so wish, you can continue to collaborate informally. In any case, the growth and development set in motion in the mentoring process will hopefully continue even after the mentoring journey ends.

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# APPENDIX

## **MENTORING AGREEMENT**

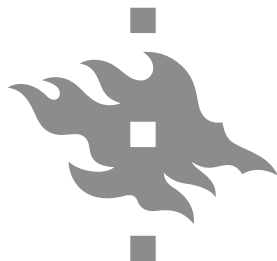
Mentoring objectives

1. Topics and themes, including what will not be covered
2. Confidentiality: What can and cannot be discussed with others
3. Duration: The beginning and end of the mentoring process (the recommended duration is 6-12 months)
4. Time and place for meetings and practices for rescheduling or cancelling meetings (the recommended meeting schedule is roughly once a month)
5. Communication during mentoring, including channels and means
6. Preparing for meetings (Responsibilities: What is expected of the actor and mentor)
7. What happens if either party wants to terminate the mentoring mid-process

Time and place

Signatures





HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO  
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET  
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI