ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

The Mentor Toolkit

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The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) is the Union representing 55,000 registered nurses and allied health professionals and more than 12,000 students working in hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics and industry.

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The Mentor Toolkit

ONA defines mentoring as ***a formal or informal relationship that enhances insight, decision making, planning and performance.***

The relationship lasts for a defined period of time and enables members/leaders to develop skills and knowledge of the work that falls within their accountabilities, with the assistance of experienced leaders.

It is important to establish from the outset of your mentoring relationship what each of your roles and responsibilities (that of mentor and that of mentee) will be.

Mentee Roles and Responsibilities:
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Initiate contact.
- Set the agenda.
- Approach the mentor when necessary to discuss issues or ideas.
- Ask for feedback and advice.
- Take the opportunity during connects to speak thoughts out loud.
- Consider other perspectives and options.
- Review and reflect upon actions and plans that have already occurred.
- Make decisions and take actions.
- Take responsibility for the decisions and actions taken.
- Achieve self-determined goals.

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be accessible.
- Listen.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Assist with exploration of options.
- Refer mentee to resources.
- May choose to share own experiences.
- When asked – give advice.
- Identify skills that could be developed. As a method of assisting with the development of skills, a mentor may coach their partner and give her/him the opportunity to practice and then provide feedback.
- Act as a sounding board for the mentoring partner's problems, ideas or plans for advancement within the Union.
- Ask questions to facilitate full exploration of an identified issue.
- Where appropriate challenge the mentee's thinking.
- Explore options.
- Be motivating and supportive in the mentees achievement of goals.
- Making referrals to additional resources when appropriate.
- Act as a role model, living ONA's vision by caring for members in a strong, united respectful manner.

Remember: It is not a mentor's job to solve your problems but rather you are to be a collaborator in the problem solving process.

Mentoring is/Is Not

Mentoring Is

- About being trustworthy.
- Helping another person become what that person aspires to be.
- Helping the mentee to realize her potential.
- Getting and giving feedback.
- Sharing experiences good and bad.
- Helping another person to become familiar with the organization.
- About support and development.
- About increasing knowledge and skills.
- About understanding different and conflicting ideas.
- About being listened to and listening.
- About being a sounding board.
- Having clear expectations.
- About having difficult conversations if necessary with the mentee.

Mentoring Is Not

- About dishonest communication and feedback.
- About imposing views onto the mentee.
- Formal (each mentee/mentor relationship will likely look different).
- About being given answers to problems.
- About being told what to do.
- Founded on a lack of commitment.
- About having the same personal values.
- About avoiding issues/barriers that may be impeding the relationship or the ability of the mentor partner to move towards the achievement of goals.

Positive mentoring

- Identify: Gifts, needs.
- Encourage: Sharing of gifts, self-examination, self-clarification.
- Promote: Appropriate placement on committees, introductions to helpful people, appropriate workshops.

Questions to Ask a Mentee Worksheet

In the role of mentor, it is a mistake to constantly tell mentees what to do. Certainly some advice is warranted, but real success happens when mentees are engaged in a way that helps them come up with their own ideas.

So, rather than telling mentees what to do, mentors should ask questions.

In discussions with your mentee remember to:
- Move from general to specific questions.
- Challenge assumptions and generalizations
- Don't be afraid of silence

The following is a list of questions that may be used by the mentor during an initial meeting with a potential mentee:

- ❑ What are your goals with regard to becoming involved/more involved within the Union?
- ❑ Is there a position within the Union you are interested in pursuing?
- ❑ What are the skills that you need to develop in order to become more involved?
- ❑ Do you or have you done any other type of volunteer work?
- ❑ What skills did you gain in that work that would be transferrable to the work you are interested in within the Union?
- ❑ If you have a particular position within the Union you are interested in, what are the skills that you need to develop in order to meet the accountabilities of that position?
- ❑ What potential constraints must you take into account when planning the work involved in taking on the role/pursuing the role of _____?
- ❑ How can I assist you in achieving your goals?
- ❑ Who might assist you in developing some of the skills that you identified?
- ❑ What other resources are available to you to assist you in achieving your goals?
- ❑ Education: ONA
  Other
- ❑ Union written resource materials.
- ❑ Union website.
- ❑ Journals.
- ❑ Other members within the Union.
- ❑ Other people outside of the Union.

- ❑ Is there anything preventing you from achieving the goals you have identified?
  Time
  Financial
  Personal
  Professional

- ❑ How often will we meet? Weekly? Biweekly?

- ❑ How long will our meetings be?

- ❑ Where will we meet?

- ❑ Will all our meetings be face-to-face?

- ❑ Will we use other methods of communicating? Phone? E-mail? Skype?

- ❑ Do you have a preference for how we meet?

- ❑ What ground rules do we need to establish in order to ensure we maintain a strong, respectful relationship?

- ❑ What will the scope of our relationship be? (i.e. what topics will we be limited to discussing?)

- ❑ What boundaries will there be to the relationship? (i.e. can you contact me anytime or are there only specific times when contact will be made?)

Problem Solving- Decision Making

There are many approaches to problem solving, depending on the nature of the problem and the people involved in the problem. The more traditional approach is typically used and involves, e.g., clarifying description of the problem, analyzing causes, identifying alternatives, assessing each alternative, choosing one, implementing it and evaluating whether the problem was solved or not.

The process is only a guide for problem solving. It is useful to have a structure to follow to make sure that nothing is overlooked. Nothing here is likely to be brand new to anyone, but it is the pure acknowledgement and reminding of the process that can help the problems to be solved.

1. Problem Definition
The normal process for solving a problem will initially involve defining the problem your mentee wants to solve. Discuss the issue from the mentees perspective. Writing down the problem forces her/him to think about what she/he is actually trying to solve and how much she/he wants to achieve. The first part of the process not only involves writing down the problem to solve, but also checking that your mentee is answering the right problem. It is a check-step to ensure that she/he does not answer a side issue or only solve the part of the problem that is most easy to solve.

With your mentee explore these questions when attempting to define the problem.
1. Is it a question you must answer?
2. Is it an obstacle you must overcome?
3. Is it a person you must persuade?
4. Is it a decision you must make?
5. Is it a goal you must achieve?
6. Is it a goal you must set?
7. Has a problem been defined for you?

Remember to state the problem as factually as possible.

2. Problem Analysis
The next step in the process is often to check where we are, what the current situation is compared to the ideal place your mentee would like to be.

Explore these questions with your mentee. Is it your problem? Is it anyone else's problem? Is it a confidential problem? How will time affect the problem? Will the problem grow worse in time? Will the problem disappear in time? Is there a deadline for the solution? Is there any additional information that needs to be gathered?

3. Generating Possible Solutions
At this stage the mentor and mentee concentrate on generating many solutions and should not evaluate them at all. Mentoring creates synergy from processes like brainstorming options. Very often an idea, which would have been discarded immediately, when evaluated properly, can be developed into a superb solution. It is important not to jump to conclusions about any of the potential solutions that have been produced.

4. Analyzing the Solutions
This is where as a mentor you assist your mentee to investigate the various factors about each of the potential solutions. Talking about the pros and cons of each alternative allows the mentee to explore fully and think about the effort, benefits and potential consequences of any actions.

It is important to remember that the two of you are not evaluating the solution itself because overall one or the other of you think it will not work. Doing so risks not exploring the valid good points about that particular solution. However it might be discovered that by writing down the potential solutions that it has a totally unique advantage over some of the other options that have been identified.

5. Selecting the Best Solution(s)

This is the section your mentee decides which solutions to keep and which to disregard. She/he should be encouraged to look at the solution as a whole and use her/his judgment or intuition as to whether to use the solution or not. Remember that intuition is really a lifetimes experience and judgment compressed into a single decision.

6. Planning the Next Course of Action (Next Steps)

This section of the process is where the mentee writes down the best option for her/him. Now that she/he has a potential solution or solutions she/he needs to decide how to make the solution happen. This will involve people doing various things at various times in the future and then confirming that they have been carried out as planned. This stage ensures that the valuable thinking that has gone into solving the problem becomes reality. This series of Next Steps is the logical step to physically solving the problem.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving feedback
The goal of providing your mentee with feedback is to communicate, influence and motivate and is an important part of the mentoring process. It is a way of giving your mentee information about their behaviour in a given situation.

Positive feedback involves telling someone about accomplishments that have been achieved. Constructive feedback alerts your mentee to an area where their performance could improve. Constructive feedback is not criticism; it is descriptive and should always be directed to the action, not the person.

When giving feedback be direct, honest and also sensitive to your mentee's feelings. "Critical" feedback should focus on how to improve in the future rather than judging the mentee. How well feedback is received depends in part on how well feedback is given.

Mentoring is not one-way. Remember to be open to the fact that feedback may come back your way as well. Seek permission to provide the feedback.

When providing feedback, try to remember to consider the following:

Be Descriptive – rather than evaluative. By describing your own reaction, you leave your mentee free to use it or not to use it as she or he wants. Avoid evaluative language, as doing so will reduce the need for your mentee to react defensively. Describe your views. Don't say what you think your mentee should feel. Don't be emotionally manipulative: you are offering your considered, rational views which should have the characteristics described here; it is up to your mentee to accept or reject them as they sees fit.

Be Specific – rather than general. Generalizations are particularly unhelpful. Say what you mean. Don't wrap it up in circumlocution, fancy words or abstract language. The mentee should be given sufficient information to pinpoint the areas to which you are referring and have a clear idea of what is being said about those specific areas. For example, to be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as being told "just now when we were deciding on the issue, you did not listen to what others said, and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."

Consider Needs – Take into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only your needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.

Be Sensitive – to the goals of the mentee. Just because their contributions have not met your goals doesn't necessarily imply that something is wrong. This is not to say that you can't make comments from your own perspective but that you should be clear when you offer views in terms of your own goals and you should say that is what you are doing.

Realistic Request – Direct the feedback toward behaviour that the receiver, the mentee can do something about it. Frustration is only increased when she/he is reminded of some short-coming over which she/he has no control.

Solicited – Feedback should be solicited from the message sender (mentee) rather than imposed by the receiver (mentor).

Well-Timed – Consider timing. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behaviour or incident (depending on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.).

Clear Communication – Check to insure clear communication exists. One way of doing this is to ask your mentee to try to rephrase the feedback to see if it corresponds to what you had in mind.

Remember – Feedback is a way of giving help and serving as an opportunity for your mentee to learn how well their behavior matches their intentions. Feedback is a means for establishing one's identity for answering "Who am I?" It must be given in an environment that is appropriate and where confidentiality can be maintained. Lastly and most importantly remember it is a part of your role as a mentor to provide feedback.

Receiving feedback

As previously highlighted you may be asked by your mentee to provide feedback. As a mentor you will want to review with your mentee some helpful tips on how to receive feedback.

As a receiver of feedback:

Be explicit. Ask that your mentee make it clear what kind of feedback they are seeking. If necessary indicate what kinds of feedback they do not want to receive.

Be aware. Notice their reactions, both intellectual and emotional. Particularly notice any reactions of rejection or censorship on their part. If your viewpoint is at variance with their viewpoint resist dismissing it. Sometimes people find it useful to distance themselves this situation and act as if they were witnessing feedback being given to someone else.

Be silent. Refrain from making a response. Ask that they don't even begin to frame a response in their own mind until they have listened carefully to what has been said and have considered the implications. Ask that they not get distracted by the need to explain: if they really need to give an explanation, do it later after the feedback session.

There is no difference in principle between feedback given in written form and that in person. However, with written feedback there is normally no opportunity to resolve misunderstandings and it is necessary to be very explicit in specifying what types of feedback are desired and in formulating responses. In the written form more attention needs to be given to tone and style than would usually be the case in person.

Tips

- Schedule the feedback at less stressful times, when both of you are least likely to be rushed or called away.
- Begin by asking for your mentee's perspective on strengths, areas needing more work, etc.
- Do not overload your mentee with feedback.
- Be aware of some possible solutions to problems beforehand.
- Help your mentee turn negative feedback into constructive challenges.
- Verify your mentee's understanding by asking them to summarize what was covered in the session and add your own points of emphasis.
- Successful feedback describes actions or behavior your mentee can do something about.

As a mentor you can become effective at holding difficult conversations. Practice and these steps will help build your comfort level to hold difficult conversations. After all, a difficult conversation can make the difference between success and failure for a mentee. Care enough to hold the difficult conversation.

Key Elements of a Mentoring Relationship

Each mentoring relationship goes through phases.

The first stage is the **orientation phase** and involves:

- Getting to know each other. It is where you will share some of yourselves.
- Building rapport.
- Getting clear about roles and expectations happens. In this phase it is important for the pairings to establish the purpose and expected benefits of their mentoring journey.

The second phase is **relating** and involves:

- Mentoring partners identify more specific needs and goals and start working toward them.
- Figuring out how the two of you are going to work together.
- Developing outcomes.
- Reviewing and revising goals.
- Giving and receiving feedback.

The third phase is **parting** and involves:

- The mentoring relationship has achieved its ends.
- Some pairings may at this point choose to continue the relationship as colleagues and friends

The Mentoring Process – builds on the natural learning process we all use in everyday life. It is broken into four steps.

Step 1 – Insight

You know when you have that "ah-ha" moment, that sudden insight that comes like a blinding flash of the obvious. Sometimes it comes as a "flash" and other times it's a slower gradual dawning. Insight comes when a mentee looks back and learn from her/his experiences. Remember, there is no such thing as a mistake just a learning opportunity. Your mentee can and will learn from not only her/his successes but equally from her/his mistakes. Your role as mentor is to be a sounding board, someone who provides non-judgmental observation that can be a key to developing insight.

Step 2 – Knowledge

While insight is valuable, going beyond your mentee's own experiences extends and enhances her/his ability to make informed decisions. This knowledge can be gained through reading, doing research, or consulting with others who have expertise in the area she/he is attempting to expand our knowledge in.

Step 3 – Strategy Development

Knowledge is power but … it is what you do with that knowledge that is powerful. This stage involves turning the theoretical knowledge into practical strategies that can be used to solve a problem or gain a specified outcome. This is the goal setting and planning phase of mentoring.

Step 4 – Implementation

In this the final phase practical application occurs as the mentee takes action. This action then creates a new experience and with the facilitation of the mentor the mentee reflects on the experience and the mentoring process continues.

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