

## Mentoring Guidelines

**The Resilience Programme** is a new mentoring initiative to help and support makers navigate these particularly challenging times. There is an enormous amount of collective knowledge and experience in the craft community and the pandemic has forced makers to be even more innovative, to reinvent their ways of working and rapidly learn new skills. The Resilience Programme will help makers tap into this collective wisdom to gain new perspectives, take valuable and supported time to reflect and develop the resilience required to re-energise and revitalise their practice.

**The Resilience Programme** has two strands

1. Peer to Peer co-mentoring which will bring pairs of makers together to support one another by taking it in turns to be the mentee and the mentor.
2. Mentee /Mentor pairings where the roles are fixed but the mentor may be from a different background or creative practice.

Whichever strand of the programme interests you, or if you simply want to learn more about good mentoring practice, we have created this guide to help you understand how mentoring works and the roles of both mentor and mentee.

## What is mentoring?

*“Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”*

***Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring***

As the definition above explains, effective mentoring offers structured time for discussion, with the mentor listening and questioning the mentee to help them form their own plan.

## The Role of a Mentor

There can be confusion over what differentiates mentoring from teaching, coaching or advising, and they can overlap. However the definition above is useful in reinforcing the message that successful mentoring is not simply telling the mentee how to do things, as done in teaching or advising, but rather offering them a secure and safe place to explore their ideas and test concepts.

**Mentors don't tell mentees what to do** - Sometimes mentees think they want the mentor to tell them what to do. However we all learn more effectively through a process of reflection to draw our own conclusions. Most of us actually don't enjoy being told what to do, so the role of mentor is to listen carefully, ask questions and support their mentee to work through their own ideas.

**Providing answers** - There may be occasions when there is a correct way of doing things, such as following legal or professional guidelines. In this situation mentors may need and want to provide answers, but it is really important to draw a distinction between a mentoring role and what should be a paid for service such as accounting or legal advice. Mentors need to consider in advance the level of information they are comfortable offering.

**Mentors don't know everything** - There can be an expectation that mentoring will solve every problem, when in fact the time available may only permit an in-depth exploration of one main topic. It's also important to recognise that no mentor will be able to know everything, so agreeing where you can most productively work together is a vital first step.

**Setting and moving goals** - At the start of any mentoring relationship it is important to agree a set of goals to shape your activity together. This helps you both clarify the parameters of your work and manage expectations. However setting a goal doesn't necessarily mean that it will be achieved, and in your work together the goals may even shift. Don't worry, that happens a lot. The mentoring process has still been highly effective, and has given the mentee a valuable opportunity to rethink the pace or direction of their personal or business development.

**It's not all about the mentee** - Although mentoring is primarily for the benefit of the mentee, the mentor will also get an enormous amount out of the experience. There is great satisfaction in giving something back, but also in the opportunity to reflect and to hone listening and questioning skills. Mentoring is a two-way exchange.

## The Role of a Mentee

As you will see from the description of the mentor's role above, a successful mentoring process is very much about listening, questioning and offering space for reflection.

**Taking control** - As the main beneficiary of the relationship, the mentee should be proactive rather than passive. Take the initiative, set the agenda and be active in shaping meetings.

**Put in the work** - The more ground work the mentee does the more they will get out of the mentoring relationship. It can be really useful to set action points at the end of each meeting to give focus and a timetable for activity between meetings. Often it's the structure and accountability to the mentor that gives the mentee the impetus to move things along.

**Luxury and Privilege** - Often the people we speak to about our plans are our friends and family and while the intention may be to support us, those conversations are not always objective or based on experience. So having another professional fully focus their time on you, your plans, ambitions and challenges is a luxury and a privilege. Enjoy every minute!

## Practical Arrangements

**First Meeting** - It is very useful to take time in the first meeting to get to know your mentee or mentor. Together you can explore the work you will undertake then agree and set realistic goals.

**Contract** - To ensure things run smoothly the expectations of the mentoring relationship should be clear to both parties from the start, and to help that process we are providing a mentoring agreement template to prompt your thinking and help you with practical arrangements. This includes where and how often you meet, how you maintain communication and importantly how you make arrangements for any cancellation. Time is precious so professionalism and mutual respect are vital.

**If it just doesn't work** - We hope you get along very well and have a lot of common ground, but we also understand that sometimes the chemistry just doesn't work. Please do come back to tell us if you feel the relationship won't work and we will handle bringing it to an end.

**Professionalism** - One of the golden rules of mentoring is confidentiality and discretion. If you are sharing sensitive information you want to feel confident that this will not be divulged any further. This includes intellectual property, trade secrets or any other new ideas. We have written a confidentiality clause into the mentor agreement to ensure it is acknowledged and agreed by both parties, but if you have any specific concerns you can either decide simply not to share sensitive

information, or you can create a separate non disclosure agreement. There are a number of free templates available online.

Although this is a professional working relationship you may still be working with someone you haven't met before, so please always ensure you feel safe and comfortable in any meeting arrangements and remain sensitive to the other persons needs.

**Clarity of role** - While you are in a mentoring relationship with a fixed time frame and agreed set of activities it is best practice to maintain those roles until the end of your agreement. For example you may find that your mentoring partner has experience or skills that would be useful in a project and you would want to invite them to work with you. However this can cause problems and greatly confuses each of your roles and responsibilities. So it is really important to complete the mentoring contract before entering into any other professional relationship together.

## Useful Mentoring Tools

The trick in being an effective mentor is asking very good questions. By good questions we mean those that stop someone in their tracks as they consider their answer. Good questions are precise and ask for evidence or specific quantities or dates. How will you know when you have achieved that? How many of those will you need to produce? By what date will you have completed that? You will be doing your mentee a great favour if you ask them the very questions they dread, it's really important that they wrestle with the answers. And don't be afraid to leave a silence to allow your mentee space to contemplate.

The following models might be useful in helping shape the structure of your mentoring meetings.

### GROW model

The GROW model is a simple check list to keep your mentoring meetings on track and help you make sure you are covering key areas. Use it as a meeting agenda or just as a check list to have in the background.

**G** – What are the **goals**?

**R** – What is the **reality** of current situation?

**O** – What are the **options**?

**W** – How **willing** is the mentee to effect change?

### Outcome Frame

The outcome frame is 9 powerful and focussed question sets to give clarity to thinking, establish motivation and assist in identifying exactly what is needed to reach a particular goal. The questions also encourage the identification of barriers to making changes and explore the wider implications of a chosen course of actions.

These questions are not easy, and their power lies in the reflection required to answer them. Take time to explore the questions, it's the process behind them that counts.

1. What do you want to get from..... your business, your project, the mentoring relationship?
2. How will you know when you have achieved it? What will it look like, how will it feel?
3. Who do you want to be working with or for? Can you be specific?

4. Which personal or business need will you be meeting when you achieve this? For example autonomy, respect, security, adventure, connection, meaning.....?
5. What, if anything, do you get out of what you are doing now?
6. How will your new outcome effect your working or personal life?
7. Under what circumstances would you not implement your goal?
8. What, if anything, stops you achieving your goal now?
9. What specifically are you now going to do? What, when, how and with whom?