



REVERSE & RECIROCAL MENTORING WEBINAR QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. Is peer mentoring also considered to be reciprocal mentoring?

A. We would see peer mentoring as being people of similar seniority/experience, but reciprocal we use to describe mutual mentoring of a traditionally different mentoring pair. It would depend on the purpose of your program, as to what would achieve the intended outcomes for participants.

Q. I'm looking at setting up a reciprocal peer mentoring programme for teachers as similar level. Any tips for initial training would be great.

A. The same as for traditional mentoring, peer mentoring partners need to enter with shared expectations about the way the relationship will work (confidentiality, openness, responsibilities, ground rules, boundaries, and expectations) and practice the skills of active, non-judgemental listening, reflection, and challenge where appropriate.

Q. How do you get the relationship back on track when the mentoring arrangement has not started well?

A. As we discussed, the important thing is to raise it with the mentoring partner; it is uncomfortable, but:

- review expectations and ground rules (have they been broken?)
- have a meeting, with this on the agenda.
- share clear feedback, with examples.
- maintain a "no-fault" attitude.

Q. Does reciprocal mentoring need to include a senior and junior match or relationship? There are also benefits in matching similar levels and likeminded people.

A. There is definitely a place for similar/like-minded people to work together (we would call this peer mentoring).

Q. We prepare interested mentor and mentees with mentor/mentee training before they start the mentoring program. What other effective preparation approach have you tried/observed?

A. This is the essential one - setting expectations and shared language. Sharing articles might be useful.





Q. What about training for the mentor to better handle emotional break downs? Some mentors might be managers or skilled in handling this, some mentors might not.

A. If what you mean by emotional breakdown is that the mentee is debilitated with a mental health episode then we would advise that the mentee needs to be assisted to seek help from a medical professional. Mentors can be given information about where the mentee can seek help, to pass on. If you are referring to more everyday displays of emotion (e.g., Crying) then the best thing a mentor can do it is to sit patiently, let the mentee express themselves and show empathy for whatever has caused the strong emotional reaction. Then, when the mentee has collected themselves and can think more clearly, help them troubleshoot the issues and work out a clear course of action, if required. Education of this kind can be incorporated into mentor training.

Q. Do you think it works better if the 'pair' knew each from before, or connecting two people who have not met before works better? Thanks

A. It is certainly better if the pair don't have any assumptions about each other going into the relationship, so familiarity can be an issue.

Q. Do participants in your program sign mentorship agreements that outline goals, code of conduct, etc.?

A. We provide a template mentoring agreement and code of conduct. They must agree to the code when they apply. We ask them to discuss the Mentoring Agreement between them at their first meeting - they are free to modify it on agreement, and there is a space to sign it. We don't ask them to return it to us; as adults and professionals they can manage this themselves.

Q. Mentoring relationships, are they always focussed on career development?

A. Definitely not. They can be about anything that the mentee feels they need to address around their career or life-career interaction. During 2020 we've seen lots of relationships focussed on surviving career disruption, on pivoting, on understanding what the Covid-19 consequences mean to personal and professional identity.

Q. How do you stop the launch from being the same as the briefing?

A. We don't conduct a "briefing" as such - we typically have an information session to enable interested people to learn enough to decide whether or not to apply, then the launch gives them the key program information, principles of mentoring, points everyone to resources, and layout the first steps. Learning "how to" be an effective mentor or mentee comes from the (online, in our case) training.





Q. Our mentoring program always has more apply to be mentees than mentors. Is there a way to add reciprocal mentoring to our traditional program so we don't need to reject people from the program because we don't have enough mentors?

A. That depends upon the purpose of your program. Also, we'd probably call it "peer-mentoring" if the two people are of similar level of seniority and experience. There is a place for peer mentoring, but it won't be as effective if your program's purpose is to prepare emerging leaders to move up in the organisation, for example. Peer mentoring might provide mutual support in tough times like Covid-19, for example.

Q. We have mentoring only within our department. I believe that we should encourage external mentors to the organisation. Do you agree?

A. Mentoring works best when there is no line relationship, and no baggage between Mentor and Mentee, and no "consequences" of the discussions. Otherwise, the Mentee cannot feel safe and in confidence!

Q. What about reverse mentoring for minorities mentoring majority?

A. We have seen this applied with great effect to indigenous mentoring, so yes, that is a very good application of reverse/reciprocal mentoring.

We hope this has been a valuable webinar for you and have answered some great questions. If you had a question that was not answered, we have kept our responses relevant to the scope of discussion in this webinar and we encourage you all to continue attending our webinars.

