



Frequently Asked Questions for Mentors and Mentees

QUESTION	ANSWER
Do I have to like my mentor/mentee?	Respect is critical, but liking is optional! You don't have to have a personal relationship with the person. Chemistry sometimes feels awkward at first, but after a few meetings the ice may thaw and you can enjoy one another's company. If your values are so out of alignment that you actively dislike the person, it may be worth considering another match.
Can you combine the roles of mentor and line manager?	This does not always work for several reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's difficult to be totally honest with your boss, even if you get on well with them.• It's equally hard for the boss to be totally open and honest with direct reports – there may be lots of knowledge he or she is constrained from passing on.• Managers can't normally be a mentor to everyone in their team (and if they try, some people get more mentoring than others), so this creates divisions within the team.
Why do participants need to be trained?	Even experienced managers are not always good mentors. Untrained, they tend to spend far too much time talking and not enough time listening. Broadly speaking, where neither mentor nor mentee is trained in their roles, only about 30% of relationships deliver significant learning. Training both partners significantly increases mentoring effectiveness: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It ensures expectations of both parties are aligned.• It helps mentor and mentee focus on what they need to do to maximise the mentoring outcomes.
Can I have more than one mentor or mentee?	Yes, and many people do! Just make sure you have enough time to commit to those mentoring relationships.



QUESTION	ANSWER
I am a senior manager. Am I too experienced to have a mentor?	Only if you have nothing more to learn.
I am a senior manager. Can't I skip the training?	Only if you can manage to use your ears and mouth in the right proportions. See answer on training.
What should we tell other people about the mentoring relationship?	The content of your mentoring relationship is private, but the existence of the relationship does not need to be secret. Bosses may ask for information about your mentoring conversations. The appropriate response is normally a polite refusal to reveal specifics about what you discuss, unless mentor and mentee have agreed beforehand that specific information can be shared.
What do we do if it's not working?	<p>The first thing to do is be open with each other. It's good practice to review the relationship every few meetings, and certainly after the first two meetings. If you decide the match is wrong, that's OK – in a small proportion of pairs, either the chemistry isn't right or the mentor's experience doesn't match what the mentee needs.</p> <p>If you are not sure about chemistry, make sure you don't throw in the towel before you have met a couple of times, as it sometimes takes time to build rapport.</p>
How often should we meet?	<p>The critical question to ask yourself in a mentoring relationship is: are we meeting enough to maintain a sense of purpose? As a general rule of thumb, we recommend that for a short term mentoring program lasting 6 months, meetings should be scheduled every 2 to 3 weeks.</p> <p>Where timetables and geography make this difficult, some meetings can be conducted on the telephone, by Skype or email. Where the mentoring relationship is longer term, stretching to a year or beyond, it is usually sufficient to meet every 4 to 6 weeks. Pairs who meet less often can quickly lose momentum, and report that they find it hard to get their relationship off the ground.</p>