

Mentor Skills Toolkit

Be your best as a mentor.



Overview

If you are undertaking the role of a mentor, either in a formal program or within an informal arrangement, it's useful to reflect on the types of skills and strategies that will assist you in this role. Chances are, you already have many if not all of the skills required to be a mentor. However, in our time-driven, performance based society, it's important to take the time to review how you use the leadership, skills and competencies in your personal and professional roles, and apply these to your mentoring relationship.



Before you use the Mentor Skills Toolkit, pause and reflect on what you consider are the most important skills that you need as a mentor.

The **Mentor Skills Toolkit** includes information, tips, activities and opportunities for reflection across these areas:

- Mentoring as a **leadership role**
- **Listening actively** in a mentoring conversation
- **Asking good questions** to promote conversation
- **Reflective practice** in mentoring
- **Empathy**—in the mentoring conversation
- **Goal setting**, strategies for **conversation** and giving **feedback**
- **Emotional intelligence**
- The **mentoring conversation**
- **Helping** in the context of mentoring
- **Worked mentoring goal** example.

Finally, there's also a selection of practice exercises to help you practise and gain more confidence as you undertake the role of mentor. Your **Mentoring Partnership Journal** also includes sections to help you as a mentor including:

- **Useful meeting agenda guides** - use these guides to craft your key mentoring conversations
- **Meeting planner and journal** - use this section to document your partnership

We encourage you to review the Mentor Skills Toolkit in full and keep it handy as you undertake the mentoring role.



Did you know that many mentees often just want a forum to 'talk it out'?

Some mentors that are focussed on a task or outcome orientated approach may feel unsettled by the mentoring conversation, as there is often a feeling of: 'I'm not doing very much' if they don't add to the conversation with how they handled a similar situation or see an immediate outcome. And this is a great place to start as you consider the skills for a mentor. The mentoring conversation is mentee centred, and as a mentor it's important to ask yourself regularly: *'For whose benefit am I providing this information?'*



Mentoring as a leadership activity

Mentoring is a leadership activity. But you don't have to hold the title of 'leader' to be a mentor. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner are responsible for the creation of The Leadership Challenge Model. This model has been embraced by more than 1 million people around the world and is formed through their research into the practices that are common to leaders who make extraordinary things happen. These practices are known as the **Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership**. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership form a wonderful basis upon which to build your practice as a mentor. Take a moment to review each practice and consider how you might adapt these to your role as a mentor.

Model the Way

In their research, Kouzes and Posner say that leaders 'create opportunities for victory'. This may be through activities such as setting interim goals for a team to achieve small wins as they work toward larger objectives. It's also about setting an example for others. As a mentor – how could you model the way for your mentee?

Inspire a Shared Vision

When asked what their mentors have done for them, mentees often comment: 'They helped me to see the possibilities – they saw something in me that I couldn't'. Inspiring a shared vision as a mentor, like a leader, is about helping others to see the possibilities – to envision a future – and then to help and support to achieve a shared vision. How can you help your mentee achieve their vision? (or find their vision?)

Challenge the Process

This practice is about 'searching for opportunities to challenge the status quo.' Kouzes and Posner say of leaders: 'they look for innovative ways to improve the organisation ... they experiment and take risks.' As a mentor, how can you help your mentee to challenge their own status quo? Take the time to get to know your mentee – find out what their road-blocks are and how you can help to 'sign-post' a new route.

Enable Others to Act

Stephen Covey has a great line: 'Listen with the intent to understand rather than with the intent to respond.' When you use this type of listening approach, you're more likely to be helping the other person to act. Tune into how much time you spend talking as a mentor – remember, it's about helping your mentee to help themselves - use your experience to ask good questions.

Encourage the Heart

Often mentees cite the wonderful emotional support their mentors have provided. When asked, many mentees identify the encouragement, motivation and self-belief that their mentor has provided as being one of the most powerful benefits of the relationship. Sometimes – just being a sounding board and cheering your mentee on is the most important role you can play.



What leadership competencies can you contribute to your role as a mentor?

Listening actively

We hear and listen on a daily basis. In the mentoring context, you are encouraged to *listen with the intent to understand rather than respond* (in the first instance anyway). To begin with, how aware are you of your listening style? You don't need to learn about active listening - but it's a good opportunity to re-engage with your approach to listening and 'being present' in the conversation.



How would you describe your listening skills?

Before you read on, take a moment to reflect on your approach to active listening.

Now - consider these five questions in light of your approach to listening:

- Do you listen with the answer in mind before the person has finished speaking?
- Do you interrupt – wanting to either share your stories about similar experiences or advice?
- Do you offer advice or corrections? Well meaning though it might be – but unasked for?
- Do you have your computer screen and email going (tapping silently away) while on a phone meeting or call?
- Do you have gestures that you use to make a speaker 'hurry up' and finish?

It's likely that you said 'yes' to some of the above. That's no problem – it's just a matter of being aware of your own style and how this can impact on another. For example, let's take the 'jumping in' listening style. From your perspective you may view this as showing that you're interested, excited and keen to share information. However, from the speaker's point of view, they may see this as you being impatient for them to finish and more interested in what you have to say, rather than what they have to say. The bottom line is that actively listening to another person is an activity that requires commitment, focus and awareness of one's style. However, given that many mentees list 'sounding board' as a mentor attribute they are looking for, it's a key part to the role of a mentor – whether you are listening in a face-to-face environment or by telephone.

Here are a few tips to help you hone your listening skills:

- **Focus on what the speaker is saying** – NOT – what you are planning to say next
- **Keep an open mind** – let the speaker finish before you disagree/make assumptions – get the whole story
- **Engage yourself** – ask questions for clarification (after they have finished) – paraphrase
- **Avoid letting the speaker know how you handled a similar situation** – unless they specifically ask for this – assume that they just need to 'talk it out'
- **Respond appropriately to show that you understand** – nod, use prompting questions: 'What did you do next?'
- **Minimise distractions – internal and external** - take the phone off the hook, put your mobile to silencer, turn off your monitor screen.

There is power in active listening – both from the mentee's and mentor's point of view. For the mentee it means that you're willing to 'be there' and focus in on their message. For the mentor, it means that you can take time to hear the whole message and then dig into your 'tool kit' and select the best method of supporting your mentee.



Asking good questions

Alongside active listening, asking good questions is a key strategy in the mentoring conversation. This is an opportunity to review your understanding of the types of questions and the different approaches that could support your mentoring conversations.

Two traditional ‘types’ of questions are open and closed questions. Examples of each include:

- Have you tried any other approaches? (**Closed** – answer is either ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
- What other approaches have you tried? (**Open** – answer will be longer – more detailed)

Here are some **other questions styles (with their use and samples)** that you might like to consider using:

Question Style	Use	Sample Question
Probing	Clarifying	Can you provide more detail/an example to illustrate that?
	Creating insight	What has led you to this view/position etc?
	Setting goals	What are you aiming to achieve?
Challenging	Opening horizons	What would success look like? Feel like?
	Unfreezing assumptions	What are the assumptions underlying that viewpoint?
	Exploring opportunities	What are the ways in which you could go about achieving this? What are the pros/cons of each way?
Focusing	Pulling thoughts together	What are the one or two top priorities for change action?
	Checking reality	How will this work in real life? Your current situation?
	Setting boundaries	What are the constraints/limits that are or need to be in place here?
Confirming	Building confidence	How will you feel when this goal is achieved?
	Agreeing action	What have we agreed to move forward on?
	Will to succeed	How can you maintain the drive and will to succeed?

As a mentor, your aim is to use a selection of questions which will assist your mentee to either determine the answer for themselves, or to guide them along a discussion path where they will take responsibility. What you don’t want to have is a scenario where you provide the answers straight up every time – as this can lead to a co-dependent relationship – something to avoid in mentoring.

Just remember:

- Aim to listen first
- Consider the questions which will help you to understand more about the mentee and their needs
- Active listening and good questions = conversation!

But what about my experience? Instead of making the conversation about you – use your experience to ask better questions and to listen more. Your experience does not always have to be the topic of conversation—your experience can help you to guide your mentee.



Six Thinking Hats—Reflective Conversations

One strategy to use during the mentoring conversation is Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats. Six Thinking Hats is a technique to look or reflect upon situations from a number of perspectives. Using the Six Thinking Hats as part of a learning reflection in a mentoring conversation can be very useful. **So – how do you use this method as a reflective practice strategy in a mentoring conversation?**

Let's look at this in two ways: firstly – an overview of what the Six Thinking Hats method is, and secondly – an overview of how you could use this strategy as a mentor.

Six Thinking Hats – what do they stand for?

In short, each 'hat' (virtual hat that is folks!) stands for a way of looking at a situation. The six hats and their corresponding approach are:

- **White Hat** – focus is on the facts and data available
- **Red Hat** – focus is on the emotions and intuition
- **Black Hat** – focus is on the risks and challenges
- **Yellow Hat** – focus is on the positive – the optimistic
- **Green Hat** – focus is on creativity – new ideas – brainstorming
- **Blue Hat** – focus is on process control – this 'hat' put the other hats into play (note – in a meeting situation, the Chair of the meeting will 'wear' the Blue Hat and direct the process of hat thinking and conversation).

The Six Thinking Hats methodology harness the power of 'parallel thinking', that is all thinking along the same lines at the same time.

Six Thinking Hats – how can I use them as a mentor?

The essence of reflective practice is to reflect on situations and analyse them. The Six Thinking Hats approach to reflective practice provides mentoring relationships with a framework in which to do this.

Let's take for example a mentee who has a key career decision to make. They may have done copious amounts of research (white hat) but may but have given little thought to the 'whole picture'. By using the Six Thinking Hats approach, you could ask questions such as:

- How do you feel about making the career change? (emotions – red hat)
- What are the risks about moving in this career direction? (risks – black hat)
- What will be the benefits of this to your long-term career goals? (positive – yellow hat)
- Are there any other options you could consider? (new ideas/options – green hat).

Understanding the Six Thinking Hats gives you a ready-made question toolkit to review any and all situations or decisions that your mentee may be undertaking. You can use the technique very subtly in your conversation, just by having a 'hat' focus for your questions.



Tip:

You could also share this strategy with your mentee so that you can both 'call' the strategy at any time. Plus – it's a great strategy to use individually anytime you have something to analyse or review, or to use within a meeting scenario to encourage all meeting participants to think along the same process at the same time, harnessing the power of parallel thinking and ensuring that everyone's needs are met throughout the meeting.



Empathy—Seeing it Through Their Eyes

'Good listener - doesn't make 'it' about them. Good empathy and can see things from other's perspectives, easy to approach, non-judgemental. Someone that I can actually learn from and help change certain thinking processes.' (Mentee - in response to 'What are you looking for in a mentor?')

This quote from a mentee provides insight into a critical skill for mentors—empathy and the ability to see the situation through the eyes of another person. Often, we are very quick to wade into a conversation with:

- *In my day—we did it like this ...*
- *I would advise you to do this ...*
- *I understand what you are saying but ...*
- *Yes—I've had a similar situation that was much worse ...*

As a mentor, you can really help the conversation along if you are able to 'park' your own experiences and not make the conversation about you (unless you and the mentee agree it is beneficial for your direct story to 'be on the table'). Even if you have had the direct experience, the aim of the mentoring conversation is to help the mentee grow and develop, not just for you to provide the answers each time. **You don't want to create a dependent relationship.** Here are some tips to help you listen and act with empathy during the mentoring conversation.

Listen first and ask questions. Use the Covey habit of 'listening with the intent to understand not respond'. When you listen with this approach, you are formulating questions instead of answers as you listen—and this is a very important strategy for the mentoring conversation. Use your experience to ask the good (great) questions to guide your mentee. Use your verbal and non-verbal cues to convey to the mentee that you are:

- Comfortable to let them run with the conversation—let their thoughts dominate the conversation
- Interested in what the mentee is saying and keen to know more
- Non judgemental in your listening
- Paying attention to what they are saying
- Understanding what they are saying by reflecting back to them.

Avoid rushing to:

- **Give the answer straight away**—use questions and conversation to help the mentee think it through themselves. But take a balanced approach on this front—if you can see your mentee needs something direct—support them. But just monitor this aspect of your conversation.
- **Provide examples of where you have had similar situations** UNLESS the mentee asks for it OR the conversation clearly demands it. As the mentee quote says above: 'Good listener—doesn't make it about them.' Sometimes what a mentee wants (and needs) is the opportunity to talk something through out aloud. If you are too quick to wade in with your own 'war stories', you run the risk of limiting the opportunity for the mentee to reflect and come to the decision themselves.

Remember—enable your mentee to be the one to act. Share your knowledge, expertise, ideas, wisdom, resources, networks in a way which empowers the mentee to develop. What you'll find is that along the way, using empathy and tackling situations from your mentee's perspective will help you too!



And finally—you can help to improve your mentoring practice through 'observing yourself in action'. As you listen, converse and work with your mentee—take time after a mentoring conversation to reflect on your own progress.

Setting and achieving objectives/goals

Unlike other workplace activities (such as training and coaching) where the results may be critical to competency or job performance, the 'journey' of mentoring is also important. It's easy to either not set any goals in a mentoring relationship and just 'see what happens' or to be so focussed on meeting and achieving goals that you miss the mentoring journey.

The key to objectives and goals in a mentoring partnership is to ensure that your partnership has a modicum of focus where both you and the mentee are able to measure your progress. A good starting point is to discuss the general 'areas of focus' that a mentee may want support in or to develop. From there, you can then work towards setting some more solid objectives or goals. To help your mentee when they are setting a focus and goals— consider this approach:

- **Phase 1:** During the early stages of your relationship (Preparation and Agreement) focus on the general areas of focus and agree that you will set a few more specific goals for each area of focus.
- **Phase 2:** At the three-four month mark, reconnect with your mentee on their original mentoring goals and see if these still stand. If not – change them to be more connected to where the mentee is now heading.

And remember – SMARTer goals are **S**pecific -- **M**easurable -- **A**chievable -- **R**ealistic/Relevant -- **T**ime Based.

See the p12 for a sample worked goal.



GROWing a conversation—Taking a Tip from Coaching

One of the strategies that you might use to enhance the mentoring conversation is the GROW model, which is often used in the coaching relationship. This is a helpful model to use, especially when perhaps a mentoring partnership reports difficulty in getting their conversations underway, or they are stuck in the 'social' conversation and only have passing reference to their intended mentoring content.

As a mentor you can subtly use the GROW model of conversation to guide your mentoring conversations, especially if your mentee is still relatively inexperienced and feeling a little unsure about how to start.

GROW stands for:

- **Goal** – what's the goal of our meeting? *What would you like to achieve today in our meeting?*
- **Reality** – what is the current situation? *Tell me more about what's happened since our last meeting on topic X.*
- **Options** – what's available? *Sounds like you've got a few options here. Which ones have you given some thought to and why?*
- **Way forward (will)** – what next? *So you're going to aim to complete X and Y before our next meeting. I'm looking forward to hearing more about that – how would you like me to support you?*

Like the Six Thinking Hats model – **GROW is just that – a framework for your conversation.** You might use all or some (or perhaps none) of it – but it does help to easily keep your mentoring conversations on track.

PLUS—look out for variations of the GROW model, as many organisations have enhanced the original GROW model with additional elements.



Giving feedback

Giving feedback as a mentor is unique as you are not acting in the capacity of a direct supervisor or line manager. So – you do need to be mindful of your role in the ‘feedback loop’. In the Agreement phase of your mentoring relationship, one of the areas to discuss is how your mentee likes to receive feedback.

As well as this discussion, consider these tips when giving feedback as mentor:

1. Clarify the purpose in giving the feedback
2. Be clear and specific – emphasise the positive
3. Focus on the behaviour not the person
4. Focus on behaviour that can be changed
5. Focus on descriptions rather than evaluations.

Sometimes mentors are described as ‘critical friends’ – someone who can provide the ‘hard’ feedback – but who does so with the mentee’s best interests at heart.



Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) attracts significant attention at all levels of management and leadership development. The aim in this Mentor Skills Toolkit is just to ‘flag’ emotional intelligence as a factor in the role of a mentor and as part of your self-awareness as a mentor.

One author who has written extensively in this area is Daniel Goleman. His best seller *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ* is acknowledged as one of the modern publications that have contributed to the momentum of EI. So – what do you need to be ‘tuned into’ as a mentor.

Goleman’s EI model outlines four main EI areas including:

- **Self-awareness** – the ability to read one’s emotions and recognise their impact
- **Self-management** – the ability to control one’s emotions and impulses and adapt to changing circumstances
- **Social awareness** – the ability to sense, understand and react to other people’s emotions while at the same time understanding the social networks at play
- **Relationship management** – the ability inspire, influence and develop others.

So – what does this mean in practical terms for you as a mentor? As you undertake this role be tuned into:

- **Your emotions and style** – and the impact this has on others (understand the potential for the ‘awe’ factor with a less experienced mentee)
- **Managing your emotions** – being able to put on your ‘mentor’s hat’ and step back a little - this is not the same role as your day-to-day role or manager role
- **Understanding the social dynamics of a workplace mentoring relationship** – be tuned into the other relationships in a mentee’s career such as their line manager and peers
- **Managing the relationship** – keeping focussed on developing your mentee – releasing the control and power base and supporting the development of another – for the good of it.

How much do you know about your EI? Your communication style? Have you completed a 360° feedback review? What is your ‘style’? Take time to reflect - what do you need to monitor as a mentor?

The Mentoring Conversation ...



The core of your mentoring relationship is the mentoring conversation. Sometimes the mentoring conversation happens in a more formal way with a pre-determined agenda or focus areas and at other times, the mentoring conversation is more reactive—dealing with conversation points that come up or come to light as a result of the general discussion. Additionally, the mentoring conversation may happen in ‘real time’ in a face to face meeting or telephone call, or over the course of a number of conversations by email.

There’s no one ‘blue print’ for the mentoring conversation; however, there are some strategies and tools that can help you to move beyond the social transactional conversation to a more meaningful and action-orientated conversation.

Let’s explore some activities that will help to strengthen your mentoring conversation.

Preparation

Prior to coming together in a mentoring conversation, it’s useful to have given some consideration to what you’d like to discuss. This helps you to use your time wisely and also allows for reflection and preparation on the part of both the mentee and the mentor. So—consider these tips:

- **Mentees:** Make contact with your mentor a few days prior to the planned conversation and identify two to three points that you’d like to discuss. This gives your mentor time to reflect on the topics and consider what resources they may be able to contribute. A simple email is a great way to do this.
- **Mentors:** If you **do hear from your mentee** (see point above) - then take the time to consider what information, expertise, knowledge, networks, resources or examples you may be able to bring forward to the conversation. If you **don’t hear from your mentee**—reach out and ask them what they would like to discuss. It helps you both to use your time productively.

Framework

It’s important not to be too prescriptive when it comes to the flow of conversation in your mentoring relationship. Remember—this is an offline relationship and conversation, not just another operational meeting. Having said that though, it is vital to remember that the formal mentoring relationship is about constructive and proactive development—not just a coffee, catch up and chat about the weekend or the football!

Techniques that can help to guide your conversation include:

- GROW a conversation (Mentor Skills Toolkit)
- 6 Thinking Hats (Mentor Skills Toolkit)
- Egans Helper Model (Mentor Skills Toolkit)
- Balancing the mentoring conversation between reactive and proactive conversations (Talking Mentoring Fact Sheet)

The aim of using a mentoring framework is to help the conversation be meaningful and productive—so that both you and the mentee consider you are making progress.

Podcast



Professor David Clutterbuck writes of the 7 Layers of Mentoring Dialogue/Conversation. In this model, he talks about how the mentoring conversation changes in its **depth of dialogue** from simple transaction related conversation (‘how are you today?’) through to a deeper level of conversation which may include self-insight, behaviour change and integrative embedding type responses. If you have an opportunity—listen to the podcast on this topic.



Helping in the *Context of Mentoring*

There are many definitions of mentoring, but at the core of a mentoring relationship is **'helping'**. It's about one person (the mentor) helping another person (the mentee) to grow and develop. Along the way, reciprocal growth and development is also there for the mentor. So how can you explore the concept of 'helping' in the context of mentoring?

Gerard Egan proposed **The Skilled Helper Model** which was essentially a road map 'that helps you know what to do in your interactions with clients'. While the basis of the books and model is essentially a **counseling approach**, the model itself does have merit for the mentoring discussions. Egan does say that one of the goals of the model is to *'help people become better at helping themselves in their everyday lives'* (Egan, G., 'The Skilled Helper', 1998, p7-8). And so, given that one of the aims of a the mentoring relationship is to help mentees become resilient and 'self helpers' the model may offer some insight to support the mentoring conversation. The Skilled Helper Model addresses three main questions. Let's take a quick 'journey' through each of the three questions (or stages) of the model. As you read these, reflect on the types of mentoring discussions that you're having now and consider how using the framework of discussion might help your mentoring conversation to move forward.

Stage 1: Current Scenario (What is going on?)

The first stage is about exploring the current scenario. From the mentor's perspective its about helping your mentee to explore three key aspects of the current scenario:

- *What's going on? Expanding the full story.*
- *What's really going on? Challenging the story by looking at any 'blind spots'?*
- *Where to from here? Focussing and moving forward—what's most important?*

Stage 2: Preferred Scenario (What do I want instead?)

The second stage is about exploring what the mentee really wants. It's a bit like Stephen Covey's *'Begin with the End in Mind'* - it's about visualising the new and preferred scenario. Very often we are quick to move from problem to solution—this stage helps the conversation to reflect on what the true preferred scenario is and to explore any opportunities that come with this. Key aspects to explore include:

- *What do you want instead? Explore the possibilities.*
- *What do you need to do to achieve this? Explore and set goals. Test the reality.*
- *Checking commitment? How real and achievable are the goals?*

Stage 3: Action Strategies (How might I get to what I want?)

The third stage is about possible strategies and actions to start moving towards the goals identified in Stage 2. Key aspects to explore include:

- *Brainstorming all the action options—what are all the possible actions a mentee could take?*
- *Which are the most appropriate for me? Checking on what's most realistic.*
- *Planning—what next and when? This is moving to action and being more specific.*

In summary—the Skilled Helper Model is just that—a model to guide your discussions. Why not try moving through each of the above stages next time the mentoring conversation turns to: *I'd like things to be different? I'm not sure how to approach this? Or even just—I'm not sure where or how to take my career forward.*



Sample Worked Mentoring Goal—In More Depth

Part of the mentor role is to assist your mentee in identifying the areas of focus they want to work on in the mentoring partnership and creating a set of mentoring objectives or goals. Having a set of goals helps the mentoring partnership to remain focussed, but at the same time, flexible to identify new opportunities.

Also—mentoring goals are apt to change. What we mean by this is that once you are underway in your mentoring partnership you might find some goals that you set at the beginning are not actually what the mentee wants to work on AND/OR they might want to add additional areas to work on. That's fine—remain flexible on both accounts—but keep a 'trackable' conversation focus.

So—here's a sample of a **Mentee** who has identified an area of focus for their development as **Next Career Steps**. The table below shows how this general area is then identified as a SMART goal, and some actions are identified to undertake with their mentor.

Area of Focus	Goal	Actions or Mentoring Conversation 'Prompts'
Next career steps	By the end of the mentoring program have a clearly identified action plan to guide the progress of my career over the next two years.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on career to date – how did I get here? 2. Gather personal and professional data – eg. 360, strengths/weakness. 3. Identify the type of organisation/position I want to work for and why – eg. Value fit. 4. Identify personal goals important to me eg. Work/life balance, wealth, job satisfaction, opportunities. 5. Meet people already in organisations or positions that I'm interested in – find out how they got there – build my network. 6. Identify any training or development gaps – what further education might I require? 7. Identify a timeline of activities to undertake to achieve progress in the next two years.

As you are working with your mentee on their goals—perhaps keep in mind the above example.



Other Ideas for Mentoring Outcomes (Mentee focus)

- **Create a personal reading library or folder** with articles and interesting information to guide your progress—keep adding to this as you go along
- **Identify useful books to read** that relate to your developmental goals—read and discuss with your mentor
- **Identify someone 'hard to meet'** - internal or external to your organisation. Enlist the support of your mentor to meet this person and then reflect on what you learnt in the discussion.
- **Build your network**—both personally and professionally.
- **Set up your professional online profile** using a tool such as LinkedIn.
- **Keep a reflective journal**—'*observe yourself in action*' and record your development.



Practical Exercises

OK - so it's great to have a bunch of 'theoretical skills'. But what about the application of these?

As you undertake the role of a mentor, here's a selection of practical (practice) activities on a range of skills that you might find useful to undertake. They are designed to be done at any time - perhaps as you start the mentoring partnership, as part of your reflective practice, or when considering how you can connect your mentoring experiences to your own professional development and application.

Activity 1: Active Listening

Working with another person, engage in conversation (on any topic of the other person's choice) for a period of 5-10 minutes. Challenge yourself to not provide any advice, answers, solutions, definitions, resources etc during this time. You may ask questions. If you need a physical reminder about not 'jumping' in with the answer or solution, sit on your hands (yes really!).

The aim of this activity is to practise the art of *listening with the intent to understand, rather than with the intent to respond* (or solve!).

Activity 2: Question and Answer

Working with another person, conduct a similar conversation to Activity 1; however, this time focus on the type of questions that you ask. Where possible, consider asking open-ended questions **only** in the first half of the conversation. You might also use an observer in this activity who actually notes down the questions that you ask, and as a small group you can then review what questions you asked and how the other person responded.

The aim of this activity is to focus on the types of questions that you ask. Open ended questions require help to keep the conversation flowing. They are also a good way to refocus the conversation on the mentee and not on your own experiences (at least in the beginning).

Activity 3: Six Hats

Reflect on a challenge you currently have. Use the Six Thinking Hats approach to develop five questions that you might ask yourself if you were using this strategy in a conversation. Ask these questions out aloud to yourself (and answer if you want to). Become comfortable with using a strategy for the conversation, and asking questions that are directly related to one of the six hats. Then, try it out with another person and then with your mentee. Again, use of the Six Thinking Hats method can be very subtle. **Hint:** you don't need to physically 'wear' any hats and watch out for any workshops that make you do this!

The aim of this activity is to practise using the Six Thinking Hats with yourself first so that you become comfortable in crafting questions that use this thinking strategy.

Activity 4: GROWing a Conversation

One time when you meet with your mentee, consciously use the GROW model. Note down four key prompting questions that you can use during the mentoring conversation such as:

1. What would make our meeting most useful to you today? (Goal)
2. What's happened since our last meeting? (Reality)
3. How have you progressed towards that developmental goal? (Options)
4. What's your next planned activity to undertake? (Way forward)

The aim of this activity is to practise **a.** Preparation for your mentoring conversation and **b.** Using a structured conversation framework that does not need to be all that 'visible' to the mentee, but which facilitates the mentoring conversation. **Hint:** you could also use this approach with team members that bring problems to you without solutions. It's a great way to help them think through the problem, options and solutions themselves, and to maintain 'ownership' of the challenge.

Reference List

Here are a few website links to further information on some of the items in the Mentor's Toolkit:

- **Leadership Challenge Model:** www.leadershipchallenge.com
- **Active Listening Skills:** '10 tips to effective and active listening skills' at www.iamnext.com/people/listen.html
- **Six Thinking Hats:** www.sixthinkinghats.com
- **Emotional Intelligence:** www.genos.com.au
- **Mind Tools:** www.mindtools.com
- **Business Balls:** www.businessballs.com (excellent range of free resources)
- **TED:** www.ted.com (great website for international, motivational and inspirational video content)

Additional Notes

