**Why Mentoring?**

Women who have a mentor can advance more quickly, and to higher levels, than those who are not supported.¹

Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, and short or long term.

Formal relationships are often arranged by an organisation or workplace, have pre-articulated expectations, and often include launches, wrap-ups, and socials to normalize expectations. Formal mentorships create an environment where it is easy to get involved, but may cause concerns of time commitment and how “visible” the relationships are.

Informal mentoring is often arranged by individuals, so expectations are not always pre-determined and must be set by the mentor and mentee. They often focus on a specific need. Time commitments are more flexible, and informal mentorship is less “visible.” Difficulty establishing connections can make it challenging to become involved.

Short term mentoring formats include speed mentoring, project-specific mentors, shadowing, or transition mentors.

Long term mentoring may include regular or ad-hoc meetings, peer mentors, and most mentoring programs.

Online mentoring may use either format.

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**What is Mentoring?**²,³

Women who have a mentor can advance more quickly, and to higher levels, than those who are not supported. One can either seek a mentor on their own or be assigned one through their work or organization. Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, and short or long term.

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**Types of Mentoring**

- **Triads**
- **Team**
- **Group**
- **Peer**
- **Virtual Mentoring**
- **1 on 1**
- **Speed Mentoring**
In a mentoring relationship, how you respond affects how the other person responds. Choosing a response is context and relationship dependent.

Types of Questions

Effective:
- Are person-centred
- Are open
- Ask “why” (without being intimidating)

Ineffective:
- Completely change the focus
- Are binding
- Solicit agreement
- Force choices
- Have “no good answer”
- Are yes/no

Facilitative Conditions1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitative Conditions</th>
<th>Friendliness</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Caring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing mutual interests</td>
<td>Genuine warmth</td>
<td>Perceive and acknowledge their experiences</td>
<td>Personally commit to the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Right to express their own ideas and feelings</td>
<td>Personally care about their well-being</td>
<td>Right to shape their own lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Accept who they are</td>
<td>Respect the personal worth and dignity of a person</td>
<td>Confidentiality and security in relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 conditions must be met to create a relationship in which a person feels comfortable to self-disclose.1 In a mentorship, this relationship is reciprocal.

Ranked Facilitative Responses2

- Reflecting & Understanding Feelings: Conveys you have heard and understood their emotional experience
- Clarifying & Summarizing: Focuses the discussion; indicates accurate hearing & understanding
- Questioning: Indicates a desire to be accurate in communication
- Reassuring & Supporting: Indicates a belief in their feelings
- Trustworthiness: May dismiss the person’s feelings (negative)
- Acceptance: Trying to explain behaviours or feelings
- Analyzing & Interpreting: Judges what you do or feel
- Advising: Right to shape their own lives
- Evaluating: Right to express their own ideas and feelings

In a mentoring relationship, how you respond affects how the other person responds. Choosing a response is context and relationship dependent.

Mentoring at Work

Increasing workplace diversity, especially at the mid- and upper levels, can be supported through diversity mentoring programs. Organisations should also consider how to promote and support a variety of forms of mentoring, and reduce barriers to employees’ participation.

Often, individuals who need mentoring the most are unable to find mentors because they are afraid to ask, or are searching for the “perfect fit” mentor. Informal mentoring can help resolve this. Peer mentoring is also beneficial; individuals with similar levels of experience act as both mentees and mentors to each other; offering advice and support in navigating the workplace and decisions making.

Finding mentors outside of the workplace can address individuals’ life satisfaction levels, and provide outsider perspectives on work-related issues. Participating in multiple types of mentorship (peer, seniority-based, non-work, etc.) provides more opportunities for an individual’s holistic personal development.

Facilitative responses should be used as tools for strengthening relationships, and ensuring individuals feel comfortable self-disclosing. Setting expectations is key in ensuring a successful mentoring relationship.

Tools for Mentoring4,5

Preparing for Mentoring
- Decide what you want to get from this experience
- Determine what you can give (time, knowledge)
- Know your own values
- Review the facilitative responses
- Decide on 3 questions you want to ask

Setting Expectations
- Discuss any limitations to the relationship, confidentiality
- Set & communicate expectations (meetings, forms of communication, etc.)
- What to do if one person wants to end the relationship
- Leave the workplace — go for a walk, or for coffee
- Open questions & positive body language
- Use facilitative responses

Building the Facilitative Conditions
- Find common ground (personal, professional interests)
- Identify what you can give
- Share information and ideas
- Find the facilitative responses
- Discuss the facilitative responses
- Decide on how you want to ask

Tools to Explore
- Choose a specific topic to focus on for each individual session
- Have the mentee create a pie chart of what is important in their life, then create one of what they spend their time on — compare & discuss
- Approach issues with PEST analysis: Political, Economic, Social, Technology

Tools to Reflect
- Review highlights from the meeting at the end
- At home, spend 15 minutes writing about what you learned, what was helpful, what you’d like to do next time
- At the end of the mentoring relationship, or yearly, reflect on how it has contributed to your growth and development
References


Recommended Readings


About WWEST 2015-2020

Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (WWEST) is the operating name for the 2015-2020 NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Technology (CWSE), BC and Yukon Region. Our mission is to promote science and to engage students, industry, and the community to increase the awareness and participation of women and other under-represented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). WWEST works locally and, in conjunction with the other CWSE Chairs, nationally on policy, research, advocacy, facilitation, and pilot programs that support women in science and engineering.

About the 2015-2020 WWEST Chairholder

Dr. Lesley Shannon PEng is an Associate Professor and Chair for the Computer Engineering Option in the School of Engineering Science at Simon Fraser University. Dr. Shannon studies computer systems design. She works in a rapidly growing field that combines custom computing hardware and software to design and implement application-specific computer systems for applications in a wide range of areas including robotics, machine learning, aerospace and biomedical systems, multimedia applications, and cloud computing. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate students in the area of Computer Engineering; she received the 2014 APEGBC Teaching Award of Excellence in recognition of her classroom and out-of-class mentoring activities and her contributions in leading a redesign of the School’s undergraduate curriculum at SFU. Dr. Shannon has long been an advocate of increasing the diversity of students and workers in science- and engineering-related fields and was instrumental in developing programs to support a successful transition from high school into university.