Mentoring Framework: Guide for Mentees in Further Education

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"My mentor was reliable. She always had my back. It wasn't just about doing as she did. I was able to experiment."

Annie,
mentee,
Health & Social Care

Introduction

Whether you are an early career practitioner, or already have years of experience behind you, mentoring can support you to develop and grow *throughout* your career. This guide will enable you to get the most from your mentoring relationship. Like other kinds of teaching and learning, mentoring should be **a learning conversation**. Therefore, as a mentee you can strongly influence how you experience mentoring.

Introduction and overview

Mentoring framework and guides

This guide is part of a suite of resources commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and funded by the Department for Education. It includes a framework for the mentoring of practitioners in the FE sector, with three guides for mentors, mentees and leaders in FE organisations. The framework and guides are complementary to each other and have been developed with the aim of establishing a shared understanding of mentoring for practitioners and trainers that will improve the provision and quality of mentoring and lead to enhanced self-efficacy of mentors and mentees alike.

We developed these resources following consultation with stakeholders from across the sector and research into the impact of effective mentoring to ensure that they are relevant and relatable to all types of FE organisations, easy to use, and therefore likely to lead to improvement in the provision and quality of mentoring.

The **mentoring framework and accompanying guides** are not prescriptive. They are designed to support and inform your thinking and approaches.

The ETF are also offering a range of free CPD activities and resources for leaders, mentoring coodinators, mentors and mentees. Please visit our **website** for the latest information.

 At the end of this guide, you will find a list of suggested next steps so you can take your mentoring to the next level!

If you have not yet completed the self-assessment exercise at the end of the ETF mentoring framework, we recommend you have a look at this now and revisit it when you reach the end of this guide.
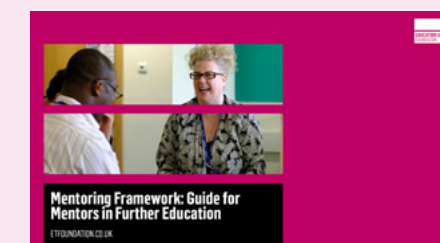
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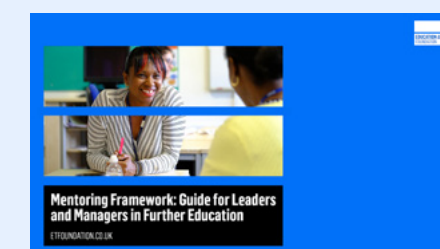
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Guide for Leaders and Managers in Further Education

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Guide for Mentors in Further Education

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Introduction and overview

An overview of this guide

This guide broadly follows a chronological approach from the beginning to the end of your mentee-mentor relationship. You can use it in different ways: you could read it in a single sitting or you can dip in and out according to your needs at any given time. Each chapter will begin with a series of reflective questions and end with some key recommendations for you to try.

Defining the mentor-mentee relationship

There are many different definitions of mentoring and coaching. Contrary to what some people say, there is no one 'correct' definition of mentoring or coaching. These terms are used across the world and their meanings can vary (a lot) depending on the context. You might already hold a firm view of what mentoring means and what coaching means. However, from time to time, you are likely to encounter people who hold a different and, perhaps, even a contrasting view to yours, and that's OK! The most important thing when establishing a mentoring programme is to define your terms upfront so everyone is clear about what to expect.

In the ETF's mentoring framework and accompanying guides, mentoring is considered to be a process that involves:

> "teachers and trainers supporting colleagues on a one-to-one basis, over a sustained period, to bring about professional learning and development."

Whilst some people draw a clear distinction between mentoring and coaching, at the ETF we use the term mentoring in a broad sense, which *includes* coaching.[1] In other words, we consider that a trained and skilful mentor is able to adopt a wide range of helping techniques, including both mentoring and coaching activities, which they draw on in dynamic response to the individual needs of the mentee.[2]

If you want your mentor to give you advice or observe you teach, that's for you to decide. It's likely though, that your mentor will be the 'go-to' person when you need help.

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1   These definitions of mentoring are based on ideas presented in Hobson and Maxwell 2020

2   For these reasons, from here on in, the terms mentoring and mentor are used in their broadest sense to include coaching and other helping roles.

Introduction and overview

ONSIDE mentoring

The model of mentoring that this guide is based on comes from research in the sector. ONSIDE mentoring is a holistic mentoring framework that was developed to effectively support the professional learning, development and wellbeing of practitioners like you in FE organisations.[3] This approach to mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on mentees, mentors and their organisations.

What is ONSIDE mentoring and what does it mean for you, as a mentee?

The key features of ONSIDE mentoring are listed in the diagram to the right:

> Watch our video summarising ONSIDE mentoring
>
> ▶ Watch

ONSIDE describes effective mentoring as developmental and collaborative. It highlights the benefits of *supporting* mentees' individual needs on an ongoing basis rather than adopting an evaluative, performance-related approach. If your organisation has yet to introduce this research-based model of mentoring, perhaps you can be the catalyst to make that happen!

"My mentor gave me reassurance and put me at my ease. We had lots of informal discussions and she kept me thinking in terms of my potential."

Julie, mentee, FE College

O **ff-line** (separated from line management and supervision) and non-hierarchical

N **on-judgmental** and non-evaluative

S **upportive** of mentees' psycho-social needs and wellbeing.

I **ndividualised** – tailored to the specific and changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee

D **evelopmental** and growth-oriented – seeking to promote mentees' learnacy and to provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge

E **mpowering** – progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous and agentic

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3   Hobson 2016.

Chapter One:
Beginning your mentoring journey

Reflective questions:

1. How ready are you for mentoring?
2. Do you have a mentoring mindset?
3. What have you identified as your key developmental needs as a practitioner?

The aim of this chapter is to help you think about the process of being mentored and your role in it. Your mentee experience will be heavily dependent upon your ability to reflect and, importantly, your openness to development, regardless of the stage of your career. Research suggests that, in addition to your ability to think about, discuss and develop your practice, your effectiveness as a practitioner is not down to experience and age, but rather to your professional life phases, sense of professional identity, commitment and resilience.[4] Therefore, it is important to continually assess your readiness for development. This means identifying your strengths and, importantly, being aware of the gaps in your knowledge and skills, so that you can target your development where required.

In order to engage fully with the mentoring process, you need to develop a mentoring mindset.[5] Take the quiz (on the right) to find out how ready you are to take on this role.

If you have been able to answer *"That's a big YES"* to all or most of these statements, then you are ready to get the best out of your mentoring. If you find yourself answering "not so much" to any of the statements, then this offers you a great opportunity to reflect upon your own development and the following sections will help you to focus on how you might go about this. If you find yourself in the middle – "sometimes" – now is the time to cultivate that eagerness to learn and develop.

_____

4   Day et al. 2006
5   Searby 2013

	Not so much	Sometimes	That's a big YES!
I am a self-starter. I always take the initiative.			
I always want to learn new things. I am curious.			
I am happy to receive feedback.			
I believe that I do not know everything.			
I hold a good grasp of professional development concepts.			
I am able to develop myself.			
I focus on long- and short-term goals.			
I am a good communicator. I am an active listener.			
I have good people skills.			
I am sensitive to the needs of others.			
I am reflective. I value knowing about myself.			
I am trustworthy. I am honest in my professional relationships.			
I am positive. I look forward to being mentored.			

Being mentored offers an amazing opportunity to work on these areas of development, but it is imperative that you enter into this relationship as an **active participant**. This means thinking ahead of that first meeting, considering your needs and ensuring that you make the most of the time and support you will receive from your mentor. It is useful to first consider the key features of an effective mentor-mentee relationship, and then use these to set up your first meeting.

Chapter One:
Beginning your mentoring journey

ONSIDE: From the position of the mentee

What **YOU** need to know. Let's consider the ONSIDE mentoring framework[6] from your position as a mentee.

Off-line (separated from line management and supervision) and non-hierarchical

It is worth remembering that the person taking the role of your mentor is there to support your professional development, and ideally should be distinct and different from line management and supervision.

Non-judgmental and non-evaluative

Whilst you may be subjected to assessed observations or a period of review following organisation policy, ideally the mentoring relationship should not form part of these formal quality assurance processes. Your mentor then can focus on supporting you with your broader professional development goals. You can have learning conversations and collaborate with your mentor. The mentoring should not be focused on evaluations of your performance.

Supportive of mentees' psycho-social needs and wellbeing

In order for mentoring to be effective, it is important that you are aware of your own personal needs and wellbeing. By being aware of these, you will be better positioned to discuss your needs with your mentor. If you hide these from your mentor, perhaps feeling that they show a weakness or lack of focus, they will not be able to guide and support you as effectively.

Individualised – tailored to the specific and changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee

If you think back to every practitioner that you have been taught by, or worked with, you will notice they are all unique. It is rare to meet two practitioners exactly the same. With this in mind, your mentor is not looking to develop a 'mini-me' version of themselves. Therefore, do not aim to replicate the work of your mentor. Remember you are unique and so the support you receive should be tailored to you and your needs.

Developmental and growth-oriented – seeking to promote mentees' learnacy and provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge

Your mentor will expect you to want to make changes to your practice. They may encourage you to think in new ways and to try out new ideas. To get the most out of mentoring is important that you are ready to grow and evolve. This requires you to take an *active* role in developing your skills and knowledge and having open dialogue with your mentor.

Empowering – progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous and agentic

A benefit of entering into a mentoring relationship is that you, regardless of your experience, are able to learn within your role, within your working environment. Non-directive mentoring avoids mentors setting the agenda of a meeting and taking the lead in discussions. This allows you to take responsibility for your meetings and development.

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6   Hobson 2016

Chapter One:
Beginning your mentoring journey

First meeting: setting expectations

Once you have considered the various aspects of an effective mentor-mentee relationship, it is time to consider your first meeting. Being prepared for this meeting ensures that you are taking control of your own development, and working together with your mentor as active players in a relationship that will form over time.

Organise a regular meeting slot with your mentor

Don't just book a meeting for the coming month; establish a slot and write it in your diary across the year. Talk to your mentor about how frequently you will meet. Once a week may be ideal for a trainee, yes, but not necessarily for an experienced practitioner. It is important to meet regularly because these meetings will help you reflect and self-evaluate.

Key recommendations for your first mentoring meeting:

1. Ensure you identify a comfortable space for your first meeting, where you will not be disturbed and will feel able to discuss your development needs in private.

2. Set an agenda for your first mentoring meeting.

3. Establish how you will work with your mentor, including when and how often you will meet, and how you will communicate with each other.

4. Draw up a mentoring agreement.

5. Discuss potential areas for development or improvement, considering learning outcomes that might be achieved during your work together.

6. Feel confident in explaining any special needs or support you might require.

7. Share expectations with your mentor.

8. Identify learning opportunities you'd like to take advantage of.

9. Identify your initial goals for a mentoring relationship.

10. Help your mentor understand you and your priorities.

11. Identify and share the biggest challenge you are currently facing.

12. Discuss different ways your mentor can help you.

13. Ask your mentor if there's anything else they need from you.

Chapter Two:
Helpful mentee behaviours

So, how can you get the best out of being mentored?

Be proactive: One way that you might do this is by taking the lead in identifying the agenda of your own development. Identify what to discuss and explore in the mentoring partnership.

Show respect: Valuing the opinions and experience of your mentor is important. Your mentor is there to support you, so show them the respect that you would expect them to offer you in this collegial relationship. Sometimes, the mentee role can become quite insular, often feeling that it is all about 'me'. Being aware of this feeling will return your mind to your built-in respect, what Rogers[7] terms "unconditional positive regard".

Communicate: This involves both listening and contributing to the discussions around your development. Remember to disclose information as well as to take on board what is being presented to you.

Be open to change: Don't be afraid to experiment with new ideas and try something new. Explore your development through the many different lenses that are available to you.

Accept feedback: You might decide to ask your mentor for feedback. If you do, work with your mentor to put it into action. Using feedback with a critically reflective mindset will help you to develop even faster.

Demonstrate empathy: As the focus of the mentor-mentee relationship is based around you and your progression, it is also important to recognise that the mentor is working within the same context/environment as you. This means that just as they are helping to develop your needs, so are you helping them to develop their own skills and knowledge.

Show commitment: It's important to show that you have a positive attitude within the mentoring relationship, that you are open to change, take feedback on board and come prepared to your mentoring meetings.
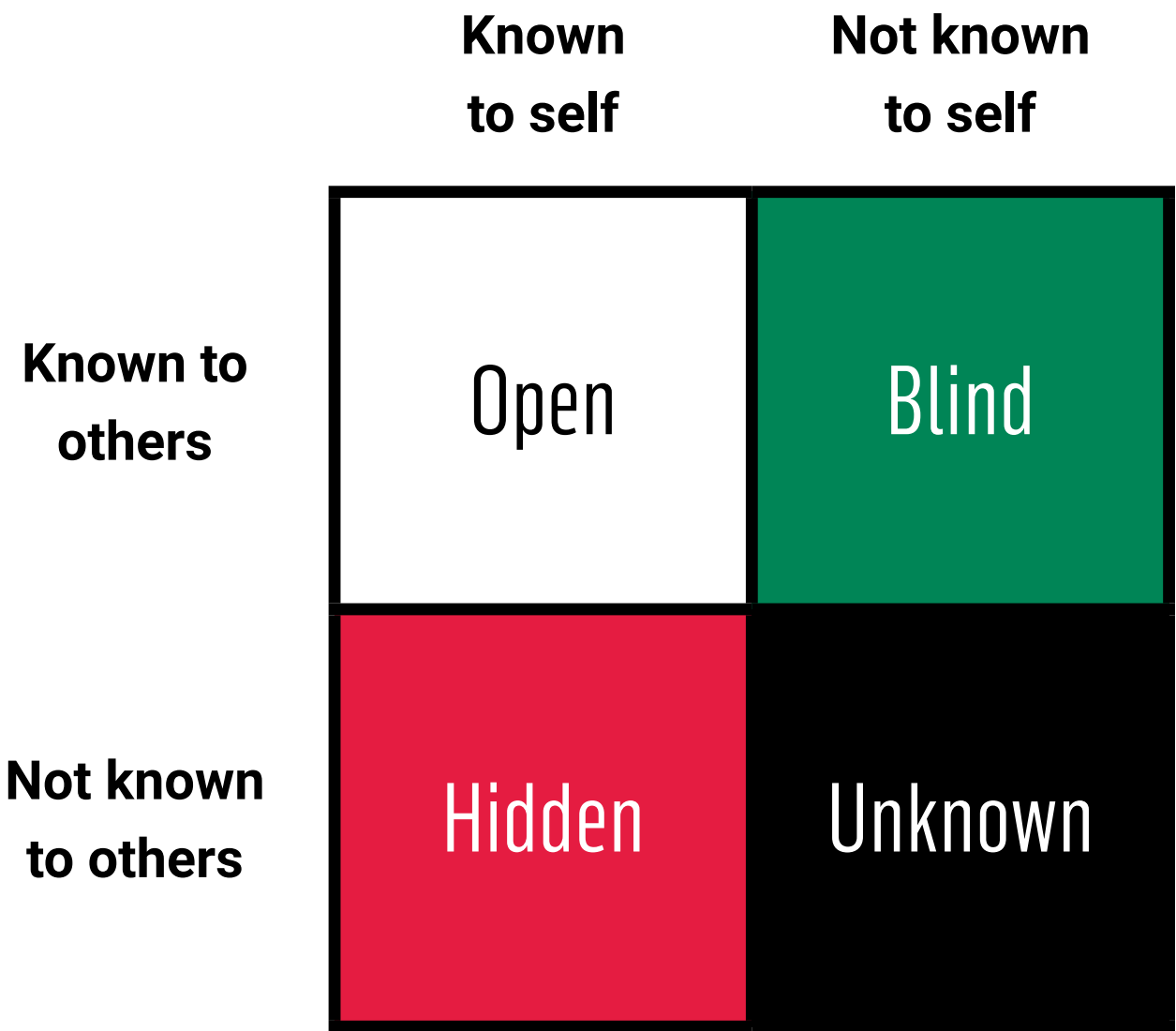
7   Rogers 1979

8   Luft and Ingham 1955 as cited by Business Balls 2017

Be self-aware: This allows you to recognise the positive changes you have made and acknowledge those areas that require further support and development. In order to recognise these needs, or to be more self-aware, it might be useful to consider the Johari window (below) as a method to identify what you know and what you don't know about yourself.

Understand what you know and what you don't know

Using the Johari window[8] as a base to consider those aspects of our knowledge and gaps in awareness, it is useful to recognise that there will be aspects that are apparent to you alone, and other aspects of yourself that you do not know about. The Johari window sets these out as follows:

- ▸ **Known Self** – Things we know about ourselves and that others know about us.
- ▸ **Hidden Self** – Things we know about ourselves that others do not know.
- ▸ **Blind Self** – Things that others know about us that we do not know.
- ▸ **Unknown Self** – Things neither we nor others know about us.

	Known to self	**Not known to self**
Known to others	Open	Blind
Not known to others	Hidden	Unknown

Chapter Two:
Helpful mentee behaviours

So why are these important in your ongoing development?

What makes a mentoring relationship effective, beyond those points raised in Chapter one, is a continued focus on a range of skills and activities that both you and your mentor engage with. It is important to recognise this as a two-way process.

In considering the expectations above, it is perhaps time to once more reflect on your 'preparedness' or readiness to begin and, importantly, continue this focus on professional development.

In order to do this, consider how *you* can positively influence the way your mentoring meetings go. Where you feel uncomfortable or inexperienced at using the 'helpful approaches' consider how you might improve in this area. This allows you to map your dual professionalism (pedagogy, subject knowledge and continuing development) from a range of sources, in order to apply them to the ongoing mentoring process.

Developmental task:

Using the mentoring framework and this guide, draw up an agenda for your next mentoring meeting. Consider how you can demonstrate the behaviours and approaches listed to the right.

Helpful approaches	Not so helpful
Arrive at your mentoring meetings having carried out a full self-evaluation of progress and areas to develop.	Expect your mentor to 'run' the meetings and arrive unprepared.
Start with the meeting by talking about how things are generally before moving onto specific teaching and learning issues.	Keep the discussion focused narrowly on very specific incidents that you want 'answers' for.
Acknowledge your mentor's workload and energy levels. Express gratitude for their support.	Over-rely on your mentor to help you out with minor tasks that you could undertake by yourself.
Be frank about your feelings as a precursor to identifying how to move forward.	Hide your feelings and don't show weakness. Hide any doubts and fears you may have.
Be respectful, discrete and professional when discussing the conduct of learners and staff.	Gossip about learners or staff and invite your mentor to join in.
Show initiative in finding out about everyday procedures.	Rely on your mentor to solve straightforward and everyday issues.
Acknowledge areas that need development as well saying what you were happy about.	Be evasive and react defensively if any weaknesses are raised.
Ask for ideas and opinions and a range of options (not solutions) when planning ahead.	Expect a silver-bullet, foolproof solution.
Listen carefully to suggestions and advice, talk through how they could be applied.	Dismiss suggestions that you think won't work.
See new tasks and challenges suggested by your mentor as a vote of confidence.	See new tasks as an additional burden that you may be incapable of carrying.
Set a date and time for the next meeting.	Express doubts about the point of mentor meetings.

Chapter Three:
Getting to know your FE organisation

Reflective questions:

1. Are there activities or approaches you have observed in other teachers' lessons that you can discuss with your mentor before trying them out?
2. How would you need to adapt these in order to use them?
3. What aspects of the lessons you observed worked less well?
4. What steps can you take to minimise these aspects in your own lessons?

Taking the temperature of your working environment

This chapter will support you to think about your development as a practitioner: whether you work in a college, a private training provider or any other FE organisation. Alongside establishing a relationship with your mentor, you can build your understanding of your working environment. This will help you understand the different demands and pressures that practitioners face in further education (including your mentor!) and help you to gain maximum benefit from being mentored.

Context-sensing is an important element in an educator's skill set and every FE organisation has its own culture and established range of practices and systems that some call an 'institutional habitus'.[9] [10]

Developmental task:

Ask a range of colleagues how they would describe the culture in your organisation and what they consider to be the main successes and challenges.

Many of these practices and processes will shape your work as a practitioner. Other aspects of this habitus might operate at the departmental level and be connected to your subject specialism. There may be more low-level but equally important protocols, like standard times for returning marked work to students.

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9 Hannagan 2006
10 Reay 1998

Chapter Three:
Getting to know your FE organisation

Expansive and restrictive organisational cultures

Research has found that organisations can have highly variable cultures. Fuller and Unwin suggest that workplaces can be viewed on a sliding scale with 'expansive' at one end and 'restrictive' at the other.

According to this research, an expansive environment will create 'a stronger and richer learning environment', while a restrictive environment will limit opportunities for professional learning.[11] You need to develop a sense of the culture of your organisation and the kind of relationships that flourish. Understanding your organisation will help you get the best from your mentoring. We explore this further below.

Key recommendations for making the most of mentoring:

1. Keep your mentor updated on how well you are managing and if you need additional support.

2. Work on time management: establish the rhythm of your week and build a routine.

3. Make time for informal socialising with your colleagues or friends and make sure you get good quality 'down-time' when you are not doing, talking or thinking about work.

Understanding how mentoring fits into the professional learning community within the organisation

Mentoring is just one aspect of a range of activities that might be taking place within your organisation as part of an ongoing cycle of self-assessment and improvement. Your mentor is not the only person who can help you develop your teaching.

Identifying staff who can assist you to develop your pedagogy

Reflect on these questions:

1. **Does your organisation have in-house teacher education/ training?**

   If so, identify the lead tutors. How well do you know them? Are there experienced mentors who are able to offer support and guidance?

2. **Does your organisation have staff who oversee continuing professional development (CPD)?**

   If so, make contact with them. What CPD events and activities are planned?

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11   Fuller and Unwin 2003:132

Chapter Three:
Getting to know your FE organisation

Organisational pressures and developing a mutually supportive relationship with your mentor

Having a sense of the way your organisation is structured is important for understanding where your department fits.

It's worth spending time finding out who has responsibility for what. Without knowing that, you won't necessarily understand the pressures different people are dealing with. A structural diagram can sometimes help. Talk to your mentor but also to long-standing members of staff if you get the chance.

Developmental task:

In conversation with your mentor, identify existing key roles and practices related to improvement and quality assurance. Make sure you are clear on your responsibilities.

Your mentor will have their opinions on these processes, but it is still important for you to form a judgment based on your own experience more broadly.

As we have already noted, all organisations are on their own journey with regards to cycles of improvement and establishing themselves as communities of learning. Whatever your organisation's approach to the improvement of teaching and learning, and whatever status mentoring has within that, it can still play an important role in your development. Consider how *you* can positively influence the way your mentoring meetings go.

Observing different practitioners teaching different subjects

Informally observing other practitioners and discussing teaching and learning with them is a great way to learn more about the organisation.

Formal observations can feel nerve-racking and risk turning the teaching being observed into a performance, but along with team-teaching (see **Chapter five**), practitioners observing their peers is one of the most valuable learning experiences you can have. Apart from being a powerful way of sharing ideas and practices, informally observing other practitioners teach is about developing a collegial attitude among professionals. The main value of both these activities is that teaching should be a shared rather than an isolating experience. Learning to teach and teach better is something you do within a learning community, so be sure to factor in some time for a conversation after you have been in a colleague's classroom. A supportive post-observation discussion can be a valuable opportunity to talk through what you observed, ask questions and explore how you might implement some of the ideas yourself. Such a discussion is the same kind of reflective dialogue that should sit at the heart of your mentoring sessions.

"I learnt in the classroom. First by observing other teachers, then by teaching myself. It took time!"

Kate
Maths Teacher

Developmental task:

Find out how you can observe other practitioners in other departments and subject areas in your organisation. This will help you to build your knowledge of the organisation as well as giving you access to a range of different techniques, approaches and strategies you can use in your own teaching.

Chapter Four:
Managing your time and managing your development

Reflective questions:

1. How good are you at staying organised by planning a schedule of activities and sticking to it?

2. Consider where you want to be in your career in five years. Think about the steps needed to get there and involve your mentor in the discussion.

3. What are your key longer term areas for development as a practitioner? How can your mentor help you address these effectively?

This chapter will help you identify specific goals and 'milestones'. Mapping your progress and looking ahead to guide your next steps is important at any point in your career and your mentor can help you with this. You need to know that you are doing the best you can and are using your experience to learn. In addition to that, celebrating your achievements will keep your motivated. As you gain confidence and experience as an FE professional, you need to keep prioritising to ensure that your short-term and long-term development needs are addressed.

Prioritising daily, weekly and monthly tasks is a particular skill that takes time to learn. You probably already have a method but think about how you could formalise your approach. For example, maybe you're a list maker. Writing lists and ticking off each task as it is completed is a simple and effective way of managing a demanding working week. Remember that teaching weeks settle into a rhythm once term is under way. The cycle of lesson preparation and marking work quickly becomes predictable in the demands it makes on your time – but even so, FE is so busy, staying organised and planning ahead can be a real challenge. Your mentor can advise you on this!

"You are on your own learning curve and you will learn in your own time. My mentor got that."

Colin
Mentee
Art and Design

Chapter Four:
Managing your time and managing your development

Practical tips: timelines

Having a series of timelines can help you plan. Start by drawing up a weekly timeline. Include lesson preparation, the best times for marking, suitable times for meeting with your mentor and/or other colleagues.

Next draw up an annual timeline. This may include different strands related to each course or subject area that you teach on. Include assessment points key milestones in the syllabus, exam entry dates, mock exam times, etc. Also include any key developmental areas identified through discussions with your mentor. Remember that for any new classes you take on, the first year is the toughest and most intensive. That's when you organise your schemes of work and sort out lesson materials for the first time. The first year of any course is when you lay the foundations that you can build on and refine in following years.

Beyond timetabling

Your teaching timetable provides a structure for your working week. But plan beyond that, when are the best times for planning? When are the best times for marking learners' work? Which tasks are best completed at work and which at home? Remember to leave yourself time to relax and unwind.

Developmental task:

In conversation with your mentor, draw up a five-year career plan. Include on it long-term goals: courses you want to teach on, responsibilities you would like to take on. This should be a 'live' document that you revisit and amend as your knowledge of the organisation and the opportunities it offers grows.

12 Tripp 1994
13 Hobson and Maxwell 2020

Managing your development by learning from critical incidents

A **critical incident**[12] is an episode or experience – good or bad - that you consider to be important. It may have made you question your practice or left you feeling pleasantly surprised. In other words, critical incidents offer opportunities for learning. Discussions about critical incidents from your classes may often be the main focus of your mentoring meetings. Your mentor should be a good listener and the private mentoring space can help you deal with any emotions that have been triggered. Then you need to move on to thinking about how you can use them to enhance your practice in future.

Research[13] has identified that informal interactions can be as important as formal meetings between mentees and their mentors. In fact, mentees valued informal discussions after class and in lunch breaks above the formal mentoring meetings. Chatting about critical incidents informally with other staff can be valuable but be wary of just 'offloading' emotionally as this can descend into complaining about individual learners or classes without helping you develop your practice.

If part of your lesson goes pear-shaped, calling it a 'critical incident' is the first step in taking 'blame' out of it and turning it into something you can learn from.

Developmental task:

Ask your mentor if you can take it in turns to discuss critical incidents from your practice. Whilst the mentoring should focus on your development, you may from time to time find it helpful to learn about how your mentor learns and grows. Make sure that discussions of critical incidents with your mentor conclude by writing down some development aims and one or two areas of focus. Return to these at the next mentoring meeting.

Chapter Five: Dealing with the day-to-day and extending your professional network

Reflective questions:

1. How can you develop contacts from your subject area in other organisations?
2. What subject specialist organisations could you become a member of?

The aim of this chapter is to help you to think about and plan how to broaden your opportunities for development and support from the wider network of your organisation.

As a busy practitioner, it is important to extend your support network as widely as you can. If you only learn with your mentor, then you will only gain the insights of one individual. So don't limit your opportunities for learning. For adults as well as children, learning is a dialogical process, so the more experienced practitioners you are in dialogue with, the greater the scope for learning.

Chapter Five: Dealing with the day-to-day and extending your professional network

Map your support network

You might find the table to the right useful for helping you develop your support network. People who have already offered you support (apart from your mentor) should be at the top of each list.

To think about how you could strengthen and build on your network, you might find it useful to start with the colleagues you find most approachable. Ask them informally if you could sit in one of their classes and talk about teaching with them. Ask if they would be happy to sit in on one of yours as well. The approach you're taking is about sharing ideas with a view to making your lessons more interesting for your learners and more fun for you to teach – while still covering the necessary ground.

The whole point is that you have started an ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning. But it's also bigger than that. Building friendships and supportive relations with colleagues is vital. It's part of building the supportive working environment all practitioners have to have so that they can focus on meeting learners' needs whilst also looking after their own wellbeing.

Colleagues
Who do you have a good working relationship with in your subject area/dept?
Who do you have a good working relationship with in other subject areas?
Who are the people you can contact for subject specific support?
Who can you contact for general teaching support?
Who can you contact for support around organisational procedures and practices (for example, administrative tasks, etc.)?

Chapter Five: Dealing with the day-to-day and extending your professional network

Team teaching to develop your teaching

"Properly conducted, team teaching involves all members of the team planning the course; writing the syllabus; specifying learning objectives; planning, conducting and debriefing the class; and evaluating student work."[14]

Team teaching is, hands down, one of the best ways of learning more as a practitioner, sharing ideas and improving your practice. The quotation from Stephen Brookfield above illustrates though that there are important conditions; you can't simply team teach with anyone and expect it to automatically go well.

Using **the support network table** (on p20) will help you find the best partner to start with. It needs to be an arrangement that you both think will have benefits. According to Brookfield, 'real' team teaching is not just about you rolling up to a class and chipping in or being an extra pair of hands in the classroom. Rather, it means being involved in planning at course and lesson level, teaching together and evaluating and assessing learners together.

So it's an arrangement that will extend over a number of lessons. Even then, remember that while you may be able to plan well together and to decide who presents which part of the lesson, for it to 'work' in the classroom depends on the chemistry between you and the colleague you are team teaching with. That's about reading body language, picking up on signals in the classroom and being ready to respond to them.

Again, doing team teaching is much more than a technical exercise. You can learn so much from watching a more experienced practitioner manage their classroom, from listening to how they differentiate to meet the needs of particular learners in the group and watching how the learners respond.

Developmental tasks:

Identify at least three practitioners that you can see yourself team teaching with. Raise the idea in conversation with your first choice and set a date to discuss a possible session you could work together on.

Key recommendations on dealing with the day-to-day and extending your professional network:

1. Map your support network and work on expanding it.
2. Involve yourself fully in the informal activities with colleagues.
3. Look for opportunities to team teach – but make sure this includes planning and assessment.

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14   Brookfield 2015: 141

Chapter Six:
Managing your mentoring relationship

The aim of this final chapter is to encourage critical analysis of your mentoring relationship.

Reflective questions:

Consider a critical incident from prior experience, reflecting on the signs of discord these presented (use the prompts from Gibbs' cycle below to guide you).

‣ What steps can you take to avoid being cultivated as a 'mini-me' by your mentor?

‣ How can you best maintain awareness of any issues arising and the best ways of addressing them?

‣ If there is a potential for conflict in the mentoring relationship: how can you be diplomatic? What things can you both agree you need to be clear about? What are the things you can agree you both need consistency on?

‣ Can you produce a troubleshooting list of issues you can tackle together?

Chapter Six:
Managing your mentoring relationship

## When things go wrong – dealing with difficult situations

Scenario #1

Let's imagine your mentor has just observed you taking a class and a classroom management issue arose that you felt you handled badly. On this occasion, you have requested that your mentor gives you feedback. Your mentor stays behind after the classroom has emptied and sits down with their notebook open. Your mentor's face is expressionless, but you know they never have classroom management issues. You find yourself trying to read what has been written in the notebook and get ready to defend the way you handled the situation.

What is your first response to the above scenario? Take a few moments to decide how you would proceed if faced with this situation.

The first consideration is whether immediately after the class is the right time for you to receive feedback. Your emotions might still be running high. You might be feeling angry, embarrassed, exhausted, or all three! In other words, it might be best to reschedule the feedback. This would give you time to recover, to process the incident, and how you might avoid a similar incident in future.

Remember, you are one half of the mentoring relationship. Whatever the pressure of time, it is in your gift to explain that you want to reschedule your feedback.
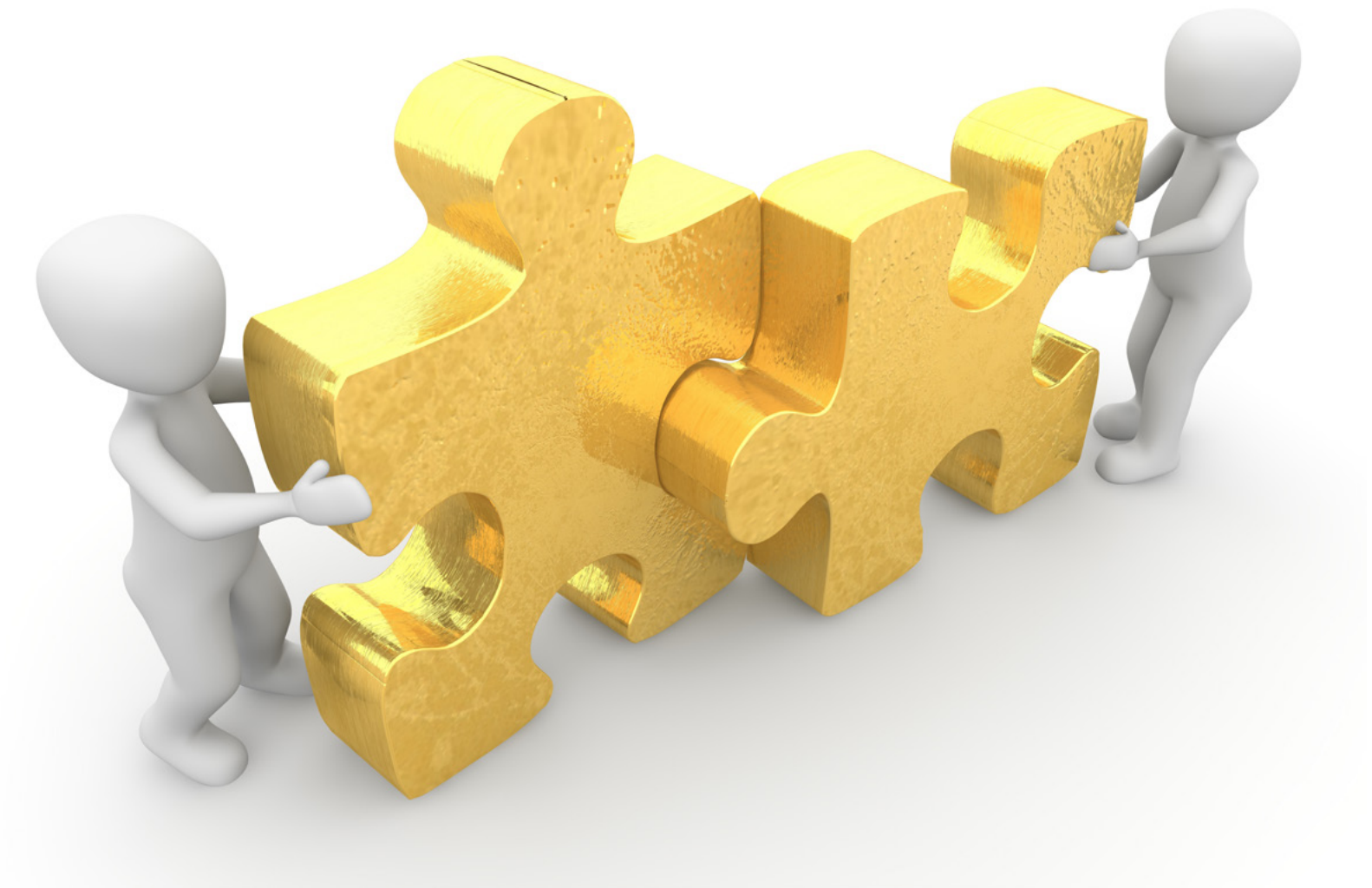
The typical reflective cycle involves dealing with the backwash of emotions we can feel when things don't go to well. It is only when the emotions have been expressed, once you've got them out of your system, that you can move on to thinking critically. There are many ways of doing this: walking the dog, doing some exercise, singing, yelling loudly as you drive home, talking it over with your partner or a friend. Dealing with the emotional fallout is the first stage. Only once you've done that will you be able to turn the incident into an opportunity for learning.

Your mentor's role in this should be to facilitate you working through the experience. This is best done in a calm and safe space. You may want to start by talking about your feelings and opinions on how the session went. This will form the basis of the discussion that follows. A key point here is to avoid carrying the incident forward in a way that affects how you interact with that class or that individual from then on. So an important consideration in your reflection might be exactly what to say to the learners the next time you take the class. As a practitioner, part of your job is to manage the relationships with your learners, even (especially) when they don't behave to an acceptable standard.

Chapter Six:
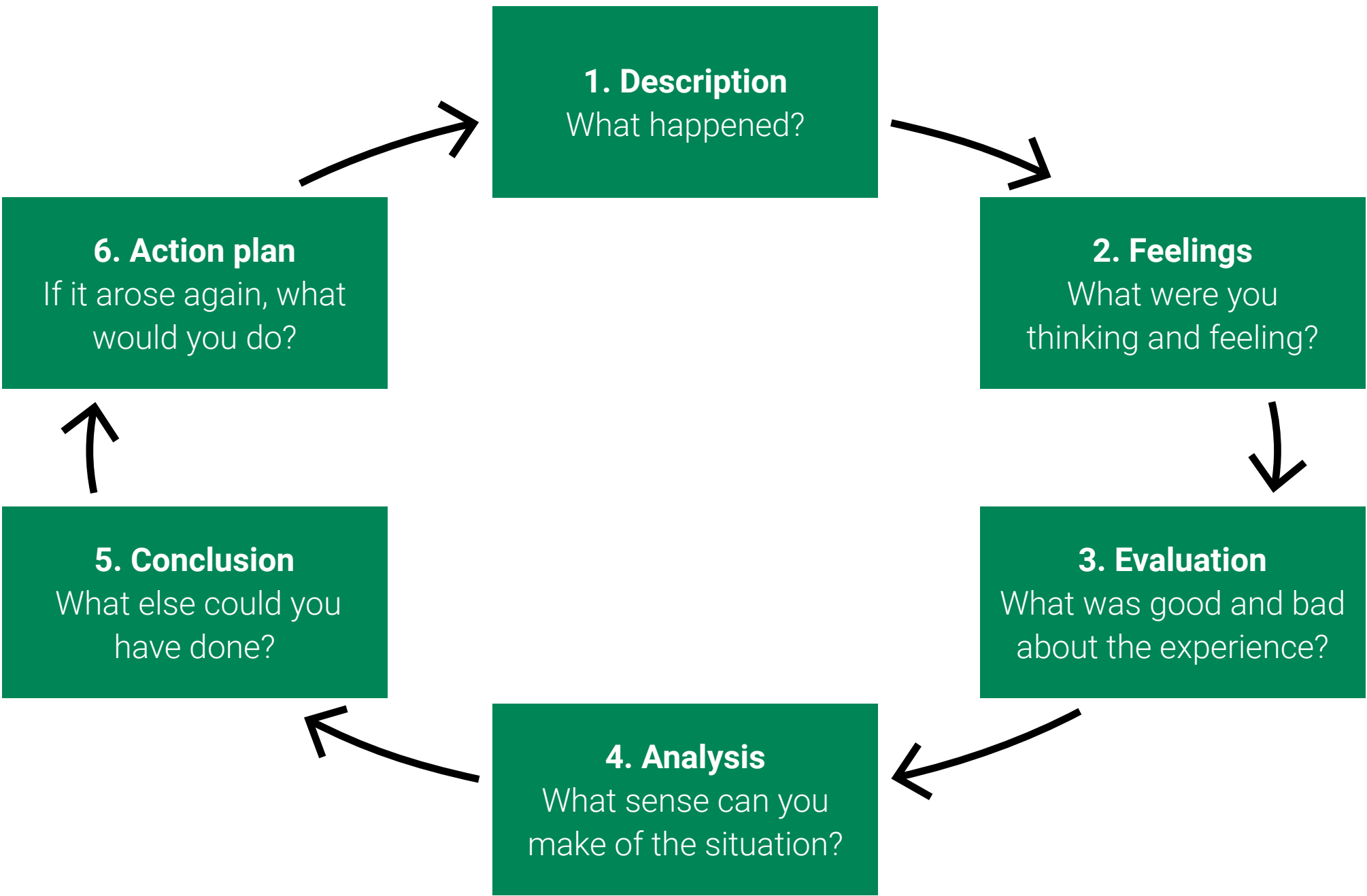# Managing your mentoring relationship

Scenario #2

This time, let's imagine that an incident occurs while your mentor is not observing your practice. Let's say, for example, that you have had a difficult encounter with a learner. The learner often causes issues in the classroom and disrupts other learners. You have tried different approaches, following organisation guidance and techniques you have developed over time. This might not be an area that has been identified as a focus for your development. You feel perhaps that you should be able to manage the environment better, but in admitting that you are running out of ideas makes you feel that you are not doing your job properly.

What is your first response to the above scenario? Take a few moments to decide how you would proceed if faced with this situation.

You may be feeling isolated, and even though you are engaged in a mentoring relationship, you think that this is something that you just need to sort out yourself. Take time to consider the situation, and if it helps, try to use a reflective model that you are familiar with. This might be Gibb's reflective cycle[15] (see right) as an example.

Imagine going through this process on your own, with the feeling that it is something that you should be able to deal with yourself. The key element of the mentoring relationship is that you are *not* alone in reflecting on this issue. By engaging in discussion with your mentor, using a reflective model will help you to discuss the issues that are affecting you. Consider your response to the first two elements of Gibbs' cycle, but then set up a discussion with your mentor to discuss the next few stages. It is important to recognise that you are bringing a situation to your mentor that has been experienced by many practitioners, probably including your mentor.

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15   Gibbs 1988.

1. Description
What happened?

2. Feelings
What were you thinking and feeling?

3. Evaluation
What was good and bad about the experience?

4. Analysis
What sense can you make of the situation?

5. Conclusion
What else could you have done?

6. Action plan
If it arose again, what would you do?

Reflect on some aspects of the issue before speaking with your mentor so that you have a clear focus on the issue for you and your mentor to discuss. Your mentor will need details beyond that of 'a difficult learner' in order to guide you and discuss potential outcomes for development.

By engaging in discussion, using your initial thoughts to expand on the situation, you are able to demonstrate the key elements that have been discussed throughout the previous chapters. You are demonstrating an active role in your development, you are opening yourself up to feedback and guidance and you are taking positive steps to deal with a situation that is affecting you. This means that you are not alone in resolving the issue, rather you are committing to the mentoring relationship that you set out at the beginning of this journey.

Chapter Six:
Managing your mentoring relationship

Key areas to consider

Making time

Make effective use of calendars, timetables and diaries in educational settings to help you identify and protect time to meet with your mentor and discuss the key issues that are present and ongoing at that time.

Environment

Ensure that you are able to find a quiet, private space for discussion that allows you to concentrate on the key issue, undisrupted by other issues.

Modelling development

Be explicit about how you learn best; demonstrate that you are acting on guidance. Your mentor might not have observed you teach, so give examples of practice so that they can see your development.

Review and reflect

Exercise your reflective muscle, perhaps through writing as thinking. Ensure that you record developments and concerns. This may be formally in a journal or informally as notes that you are able to reflect on during or even after your mentoring relationship has ended.

Setting goals

Build in achievement to motivate yourself: immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term. Discuss this with your mentor, but do not let this end after meetings, keep these goals to hand and reflect upon them regularly. This is part of being proactive and committing to the process.

Learning from experience

Let the dust settle, take account of emotions in order to be able to reflect effectively, acknowledge mistakes. Don't feel that you are alone, and don't feel that everyone else is perfect. All practitioners need time to develop, reflect and take action, and sometimes you need another voice to act on that reflection.

Communicate

Talk to your mentor. Use time with them constructively. Avoid 'navel gazing' or 'having a moan', instead focus on the issue and seek resolution.

Next steps

Thank you for reading this guide on being a mentee in the FE sector. Our goal is to raise the quality of mentoring for the benefit of mentors, mentees and their learners. We hope that you have found the ideas presented in this guide useful for developing your mentoring relationship.

We recommend that you now consider undertaking the following next steps:

1. Revisit the ETF's mentoring framework and self-assessment exercise.
2. Ensure that your colleagues have copies of the mentoring framework and accompanying guides shown to the right.
3. Visit our **website** to check out the ETF's training and CPD opportunities for mentees, mentors and leaders.

We wish you all the best with your mentoring relationship. Now you are familiar with the content of this guide, perhaps you will consider being a mentor to someone else in the future!


Mentoring Framework for Practitioners in Further Education
ETFOUNDATION.CO.UK

"This framework will help us enhance mentoring across our organisation."

⤓ Download Mentoring Framework

Mentoring Framework: Guide for Leaders and Managers in Further Education
ETFOUNDATION.CO.UK
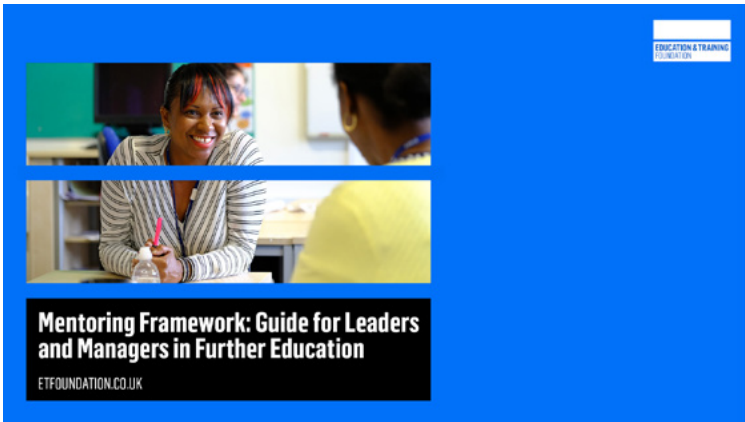
"I wish I'd had this when I was starting out in my leadership role, it would have been really helpful!"

⤓ Download Guide for Leaders and Managers

Mentoring Framework: Guide for Mentors in Further Education
ETFOUNDATION.CO.UK
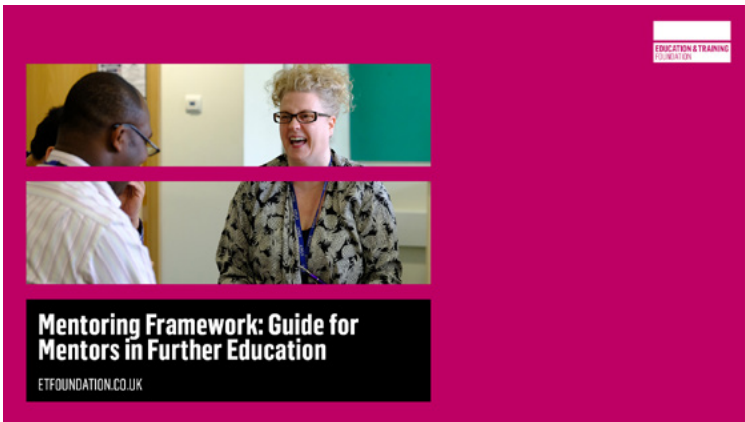
"The inclusion of references to established literature is really useful. It allows all involved in the mentoring relationship to widen their understanding of certain concepts and topics, and encourages them to delve deeper into things they find useful or interesting."

⤓ Download Guide for Mentors

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