

Mentoring during the ToP Trainer's Journey



1. Introduction

During the review of the ToP Trainer's Journey in 2019, it was agreed that we should establish a mentoring relationship for each person on the trainer's journey. It is envisaged that each trainee will *"be supported by a named mentor, who will be an experienced ToP trainer who will remain a point of reference and support for you. They will also play the role of being an Assessor, providing feedback on areas for improvement. Rarely do people "fail" but there may be a mutual decision not to continue with the journey. You will agree who you would like as mentor at the beginning of your journey, and you will be able to arrange with them how often you check in, look at your progress, etc."*

These guidelines have been developed to support and guide both mentor and mentee on this journey. They draw on both the REFLECT guide to co-mentoring, developed at The Sage Gateshead and on the International Association of Facilitators Guide to Mentorship.

2. What is mentoring in this context?

This document sets out the values and principles which we believe should define the relationship between mentor and mentee and how they work together.

For us, mentoring is a developmental process, including elements of coaching, facilitating and counselling, aimed at sharing knowledge and encouraging individual development. It is designed to foster personal growth and to help an individual progress through the Trainer's Journey while upholding the underlying values and principles. Mentoring in this context also includes an element of assessment, judging whether the trainee has achieved enough to progress to the next stage of the journey or, ultimately to determine whether they have achieved Lead Trainer status.

3. What are the characteristics of a good mentoring relationship?

- a) It is based on an understanding developed at the beginning of the relationship which sets out the intention, defines boundaries, agrees communications, responsibilities, etc.

- b) It is a time limited relationship with a clear, agreed focus
- c) It is a dynamic, collaborative learning process for both mentor and mentee, exchanging knowledge, skills and experience and requiring commitment and openness from both parties
- d) It is a non-judgmental, confidential, non-threatening working relationship based on empathy, trust and mutual respect
- e) It should create conditions that encourage openness, honesty, informality and risk-taking

4. How the Relationship can be established- practical steps

3.1 A good mentoring relationship starts with preparation by both parties.

The first meeting should be structured with an agreed-upon agenda. The Mentee at this point should already have clear objectives to discuss with the Mentor, opportunities for growth and be prepared to discuss what is needed to further develop his/her journey. Completing the self-assessment form on the Trainers Competencies will be a key input.

3.2 The first meeting should allow for the Mentor and Mentee to get comfortable with one another. It is also an ideal time to discuss what is expected of each party. This includes the frequency of meetings, locations (phone, in person, Skype, etc.), length and any other details of future meet-ups. Prior to meeting with your Mentor/Mentee, outline the items in advance that you would like to discuss with them. Potential topics could include:

- Specific short term and long-term objectives for the relationship
- Specific short term and long-term objectives for the Mentee
- Strengths and areas for improvement
- Expectations that both parties have for the relationship
- Contributions that both parties must make so this mentorship is both efficient and beneficial
- Schedule for meetings, moving forward
- Limitation on the mentorship (e.g. focus, frequency of meetings, duration of each meeting, method of discussion)

3.3 Progress through the Journey

Throughout the journey, it is important for both mentor and mentee to track progress and learnings. Although the overall goal of the mentorship (achievement of Lead Trainer status) is unlikely to change, it may well be that new milestones will emerge as you learn, develop and strengthen your skills and knowledge. It should also be recognised that the pace of progress through the journey may be impacted by the frequency of courses offered by ICA and the opportunities available to practice, calling for commitment and patience. The following are suggestions and tips on how to make the most of the relationship.

- Consider which Lead Trainers the mentee could work with in order for them to maximize their learning. Each experience should be debriefed and lessons drawn out.
- Decide when you want to meet and keep to the schedule (unless there is mutual agreement to change it).
- Don't take each other's time for granted. It is a big commitment to be part of a successful mentorship program and it is important to show your appreciation for the time being committed.

3.4 Potential Issues

Both Mentors and Mentees should feel able to speak up if they feel that there is a mismatch. It is better to end a relationship early in the journey than to struggle to maintain a relationship that has little value to either the Mentor or the Mentee. If either party feels that there is an issue that cannot be resolved, please contact the ICA:UK Director or another Lead Trainer.

Annex: Additional Information/Ideas that may help

In the context of the ToP trainer's journey, we envisage the main topic being the Trainer's competencies and the extent to which the trainee has progressed towards achieving them. Within that context, there may be the need or opportunity to explore deeper issues through Reflective Practice or Reflexive Practice

4. Reflective practice

A key aspect of the trainer's journey is for the trainee to be exposed to a range of different training styles, but ultimately to develop their own. The application of "Reflective practice" or 'reflection-on-action' will help with this. The approach entails adopting a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences of what we do in different contexts. By focusing on the why rather than the how, this process of self-observation and self-review, rooted in evidence and experience drawn from their practice, enables each person to evaluate their starting point and to redefine their future actions. A reflective conversation helps each person to shift their perspective, change their behaviour and develop a sense of responsibility and authorship of their professional practice in a wide range of social and cultural contexts.

Reflective conversations could include:

- Asking open questions – active listening – absorbing – rephrasing – reflecting – mirroring back – responding by leading and challenging each other in a non-directive way
- Drawing out and enabling each person to step outside and become a detached spectator on their own practice and on their own learning
- Empowering each person to take responsibility for their own learning and to seek out direct evidence from their practice and experience
- Encouraging each person to develop listening and analytical skills that help them to build up a strong sense of ownership of their practice in different contexts
- Deepening each person's awareness and conviction in what they are doing by fostering a greater understanding of context and place
- Strengthening each person's ability to challenge their preconceived views, to take risks, to make new connections and to shift their perspective
- Enabling each person to clarify the principles underpinning their work, thereby strengthening a sense of critical engagement based on a continuing review of evidence and experience
- Empowering each person by asking neutral, open questions that encourage critical self-reflection, curiosity and a sense of enquiry
- Encouraging each person to adopt a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences

of their practice. By focusing on the why rather than the how, this learning process is fundamental to their evaluation of what they do and helps to inform subsequent action

5. Reflexive practice

Reflexive practice or 'reflection-in-action' focuses on how the quality of each person's inner listening, attention and awareness can help them to clarify their main purpose and motivation. This inner reflexive conversation, which sometimes cannot easily be put into words, strengthens a person's sense of identity and deepens their self-awareness and understanding of how their personal motivation, values and emotions can affect their professional practice and learning. Being able to connect one's own inner listening to that of others is central to a sensitive mentoring relationship.

Reflexive conversations could cover:

- Helping each person to clarify their motivation and to identify their core purpose
- Enabling each person to find their own voice and to deepen their understanding of their role as a ToP trainer
- Encouraging each person to explore and verbally articulate the emotional interconnections between their identity, motivation and professional practice
- Helping each person to connect their self-awareness and sense of identity to their outer world – i.e. to the context in which they work and live
- Creating the possibility for each person to become more emotionally self-aware developing the ability to manage their emotions and feelings; understanding how to use emotions for the benefit of their self-motivation; recognising and responding to emotions in others through the use of empathy; strengthening their interpersonal skills and understanding

Effective mentoring conversations take into account the importance of the dynamic relationship between reflection and reflexivity, between the outer and inner thought processes of each co-mentor. By drawing out the interconnections between each individual's creative, personal and professional development, fundamental questions regarding identity, motivation, meaning and personal creativity become the heart of a continuing reflective and reflexive dialogue.

6. Characteristics of effective mentors

- Being willing to let go of ego, status and authority in order to understand the work of your mentee and to adopt a listening, supportive role.
- Using your empathy and interpersonal skills in order to ask appropriate questions regarding the personal development of your mentee
- Having the skills and insight to act as a sounding board for your mentee. This is central to any learning or developmental process aimed at enabling a person to clarify their sense of

direction, to identify their strengths and realise their potential

- Aiming to develop a flexible range of language registers in order to frame appropriate questions, respond to different personal narratives and communicate meaningfully, understanding where your mentee is coming from
- Learning to listen actively, including respecting silence, reading body language, focusing on the substance of the conversation and, where necessary, reframing and reinforcing what was said
- Developing the ability to be self-reflective and self-aware in order to nurture these qualities in others (e.g., questioning motivation; separating out professional from personal issues)
- Being open and non-judgmental in relation to your mentee's individual and professional context
- Being committed to the development of ICA:UK's capacity to deliver training, while recognizing that, for some mentors, this is increasing the competition to deliver a finite number of courses

7. What makes an effective mentee?

- Successful Mentees must have a willingness to learn from their Mentors. A mentoring relationship is interactive and requires the Mentee to be committed to setting goals and working toward specific learning objectives.
- Mentees should outline ahead of time the type of feedback to which they respond best. They should take into consideration that this relationship will require a lot of feedback from the Mentor, for them to grow.
- To receive feedback for them to improve upon most efficiently, Mentees should assess their skills objectively and evaluate potential opportunities for self-development. They should have a personal vision for their roles as a trainer. The more specific and clear the Mentee is with the vision, the more effectively the Mentor will be able to assist. With that being said, the Mentee must be willing to accept the feedback and guidance that the Mentor has to offer.
- Learning Style: Everyone has a unique way of learning. For example, some people can learn just by listening, others require visuals. Some people learn through verbalization, and others through reflection. Since this mentorship program is designed to be an education tool for the Mentees, it is important that they understand their learning style, so they can vocalize this information to their Mentor, to ensure this program is as effective and efficient as possible.
- Time: Building a mentoring relationship takes time. Good Mentees recognize that a Mentor's time is valuable to ensure that they adequately prepare for each meeting.

- Commitment and Building Trust: Mentees must be committed to achieving the objectives of their mentoring relationship. The more the Mentor can trust in the Mentee's ability and willingness, the more committed he/she will be to the partnership.
- Listening Actively: Active listening is an important skill for both Mentors and Mentees. When Mentees and Mentors listen well, they demonstrate that they are interested in, are respectful of and value the relationship.