

Understanding Mentoring

**What can mentoring do for me
....and how do I make it work?**

A Workshop for Technical Officers
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The Conway Institute, UCD



Objectives

A clear understanding of mentoring

- definitions of mentoring,
- what mentoring isn't!
- benefits for the various stakeholders,

Tips on how to set up successful mentoring relationships

- how to be a good mentor/ mentee
- creating rapport and agreeing ground rules
- what can go wrong and how to deal with it.

An opportunity to learn and practice the key mentoring skills

- mentoring styles
- positive listening and helpful questioning
- useful structure for a mentoring session



Introductions

- Find someone you don't know very well
- Find out:
 - Their name
 - Where they work
 - Something about them that most other work colleagues wouldn't know
 - What interests them about mentoring?
 - What would they most like to learn about mentoring this morning?



Introductions

- My name is Helen Stanton

- Executive coaching
 - My clients include Trinity, Dundalk IT, Intel, Eircom, Bulmers, Folens, Clann Credo, The Wheel, and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.

- Launching in-house mentoring programmes
 - Clients are DCU, Trinity and Dundalk IT. I am very glad to add UCD, my own college, to this list.



What is mentoring?

- Staff mentoring new staff as part of induction
- Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Boards run business mentoring for businesses
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland form mentoring relationships between 5th years and 1st years in schools
- Mentoring programme for women in Eircom
- X-Factor!



Possible mentoring topics

- Learn a new skill/technique or about a new instrument
- Get more recognition for what I do
- Influence a person or a group to
- Reduce my hours for family/study reasons and I wonder how that will affect my career here
- Find out more about work done in another department
- Make undergrad lab experiments work better
- Be more assertive
- Get more satisfaction from my daily working life
- Get some support to help me deal constructively with the changes around here
- Know more about facilitating diversity in the university
- Learn some tips to manage research accounts easily



What is mentoring?

- Mentoring is a complex, interactive process occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates **interpersonal or psychosocial development, career and/or educational development, and socialisation functions into the relationship** (Carmin, 1988)
- Mentoring involves **carefully planned activities** to encourage mentees to analyse and reflect on their work performance, and to review the proposed next step in their personal **career management** programme (Garrick and Alexander, 1994)



What is mentoring?

- Mentoring facilitates the **learning to learn** of their employees, contributes to the process of meaning-making in the organisation and hence to its responsiveness to its environment, while meeting the developmental needs of employees. (Beardwell and Holden, 1994)
- Mentoring involves teaching proteges how to advance in the organisation, promoting their careers by **advocating their ability and gaining them exposure** and visibility, and serving as a counsellor. (Smith, 1998)



What is mentoring?

- Mentoring is a partnership between a more experienced person and **someone new to a role or the organisation**. It involves teaching, counselling, providing psychological support and motivation (Lacey, 1999)
- Mentoring is a process of **empowering individuals** by helping them capitalise on their personal and professional strengths, giving them the support and guidance to challenge themselves and take risks, and helping them to find an appropriate and rewarding career path. (Applebaum, 2000)

**The definition of a mentor is
elusive and varies according to
the view of the author
(Dodgson, 1986)**



What is mentoring?

- A relationship between two people shaped by the development needs of the mentee which results in a wide range of benefits
- Usually the mentor is more experienced
- It provides a space where knowledge, advice and perspective is shared and ideas and possibilities can be discussed.
- The mentoring relationship flourishes and provides the most benefit where there is mutual trust, respect and positive expectation
- It can last for a few meetings or for an entire career- most typical is around six months to a year

The nature of mentoring seems to be changing over time – possibly related to changes in attitudes to authority

Two aspects of mentoring

Sharing knowledge

- ▶ There is a correct answer
e.g. how do I perform this lab technique?
- ▶ The mentor talks more, explaining what to do and how to do it
- ▶ Typically meet every week for half an hour for a month or two
- ▶ Output: New knowledge

Discussing ideas & possibilities

- ▶ There is no clear answer
e.g. how do I get more responsibility? recognition?
- ▶ The mentee talks more – the mentor asks questions and listens
- ▶ Typically meet every month for an hour (or every 2 months for 2 hours) for 6 to 12 months
- ▶ Output: New behaviour/action



What mentoring isn't!

- It is not for dealing with bullying or harassment as there are established procedures for that
- It is not for dealing with personal problems as that is too much to ask of the mentor
- It is not related to performance management
- It is not for discussing the past at length
- The mentor doesn't take on the problems or the work of the mentee or champion/sponsor them in any way.
- A place to just moan!



Benefits for the mentee

- Knowledge, skills and competence
- Confidence and sense of capability
- Performance, productivity and recognition
- Reducing isolation and stress
- Better life balance
- Understanding work environment – unwritten expectations and culture
- Wider perspective
- More satisfying connection to work and sense of ownership



Benefits for mentor

- Satisfaction of helping someone else and seeing them grow
- Realising how much they know
- Learning from the mentee - engaging with a different perspective, department or generation
- Stimulates own reflection
- Improved communication and leadership skills
- Increased confidence and motivation



Benefits for the community/organisation

- Transfer of valuable knowledge, skills and competence – increases the value of other training and development initiatives
- Improved flow of communication and networking
- Reduced isolation and stress
- Increased resilience in times of change
- Increased satisfaction, commitment and productivity of staff

Any questions?

Close your eyes!

Think of someone in your past
who got the best out of you



How to be a good mentee

- Mentee makes sure the mentoring sessions happen
- The mentee communicates what they want
 - From the mentoring process as a whole
 - From each mentoring session
- Mentee gives feedback to the mentor
 - Tells them about the impact of the mentoring on them i.e. what they are doing differently
 - Tells them if something needs to change about the mentoring process to suit them better



Building rapport

- Trust: Can you both speak openly? Are you both willing to share some of your fears, weaknesses and mistakes?
- Respect: Do you both try to see, understand and value each other's perspective and experience? Do you value each other's commitment to this developmental exercise?
- Positive expectation: Does the mentor "see something in the mentee that they don't even see in themselves yet"
- It helps if there are shared values/interests – the decision to give/receive mentoring probably reflects some level of this already.



Ground rules and practicalities

- Both need to commit to confidentiality: Usually everything is confidential except for an intention to break the law or harm themselves or others
 - Check with each other about whether it is okay to take notes during sessions.
- Clarify overall goal for mentoring.
 - How will we know that the goal has been reached? What will success look like for the mentee? mentor?
 - When will we review this?
 - How will we decide to end the mentoring process?



Ground rules and practicalities

- Set reasonable and sustainable expectations of each other.
 - How often will we meet and for how long?
 - How and how often do we contact each other? (Good idea to diary in two meetings at a time)
 - Where will we meet? What environment will facilitate a good quality conversation?
 - What else do we need to talk about that will make mentoring work very well for us?
 - How will we deal with it if either of us feel that the mentoring isn't working?



Ground rules and practicalities

- It is very helpful if the mentor asks for feedback at the end of every mentoring session: “Could you tell me the one thing that you found most helpful about the session and one thing that I could have done differently to make the session more effective for you”
- When you review the progress towards the mentoring goal, also take some time to review the ground rules and check in with each other if something about the mentoring process needs to change



Good first meeting

- Particularly at this first meeting, remember to build rapport as well as exchange information
- Meet over a coffee
- Have exchanged some bio/career plan material in advance and spend some time discussing it
- Discuss and agree overall goal of mentoring and how often to meet – diary in 2 meetings
- Perhaps leave review of ground rules until the start of the second session



Typical mentoring session

- Review of any actions/progress from last session
- Mentee communicates what they would like to get from this session
- Mentor provides information and helps draw out the mentees own thoughts and ideas
- Feedback about the session



What can go wrong?

- Mentee doesn't make the most of the learning opportunity
 - doesn't arrange meetings
 - doesn't listen attentively
 - doesn't do anything to change or consolidate learning between sessions
- Mentee expects too much from the mentor
 - takes too much time/gets in contact too frequently
 - asks mentor to, effectively, do their work or represent their interests somehow



What can go wrong?

- Mentor takes on too much
 - Allows conversations to go into areas other than the mentoring goal
 - Starts to do work outside the mentoring conversations on the mentees behalf
- Mentor tends to give advice rather than listening or discussing
- Rapport doesn't develop and conversations remain relatively formal



What to do about it?

- Honest communication between adults about what is working and what is not working
- Ask for feedback at the end of each session
- Try to take feedback as constructively as possible
- Where it doesn't work out, acknowledge what has been achieved and try again with someone else



Giving feedback effectively

- Describe a specific, recent example of a particular behaviour and the impact of that behaviour on you
- If this was a negative behaviour, describe specifically how you would like them to behave in the same situation in future
- When delivering negative feedback, try to balance it with some good feedback
- The feedback will be more likely to be heard as constructive by the recipient if you genuinely have the attitude that “having this feedback will help this person in the future”

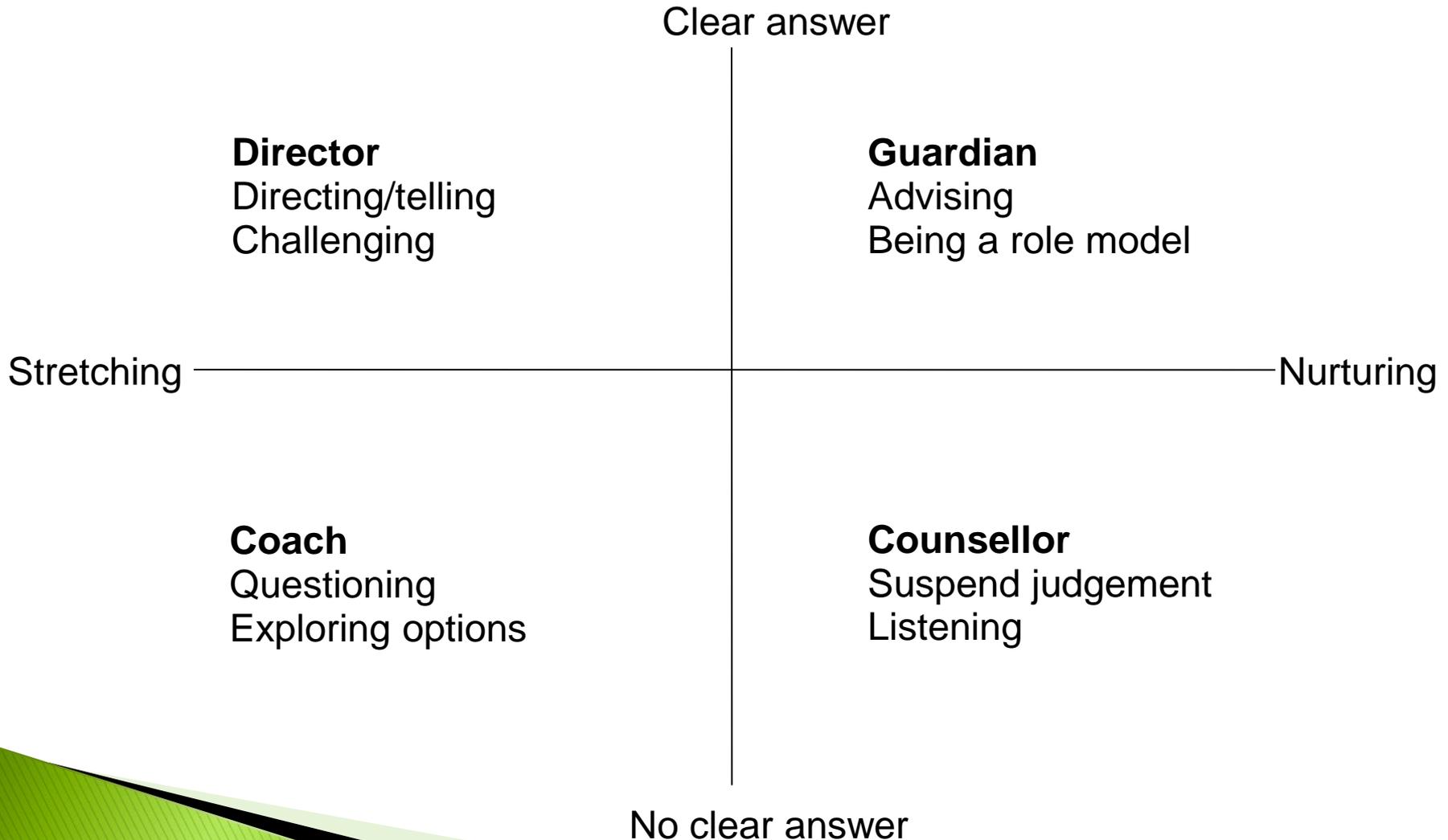
Any questions?

Varying Mentoring Style





Mentoring styles





Scenario 1

- Your mentee arrives into a mentoring session with you very angry about how they have been treated in a research meeting
- What style are you going to use?



Scenario 2

- Your mentee would like to discuss how they could influence their research group to a greater extent – you don't know this research group or the nature of the research
- What style do you use?



Scenario 3

- Your mentee is having difficulties with discipline in a particular group of undergrads – they are finding it demoralising and the situation is getting worse rapidly
- What style do you use?

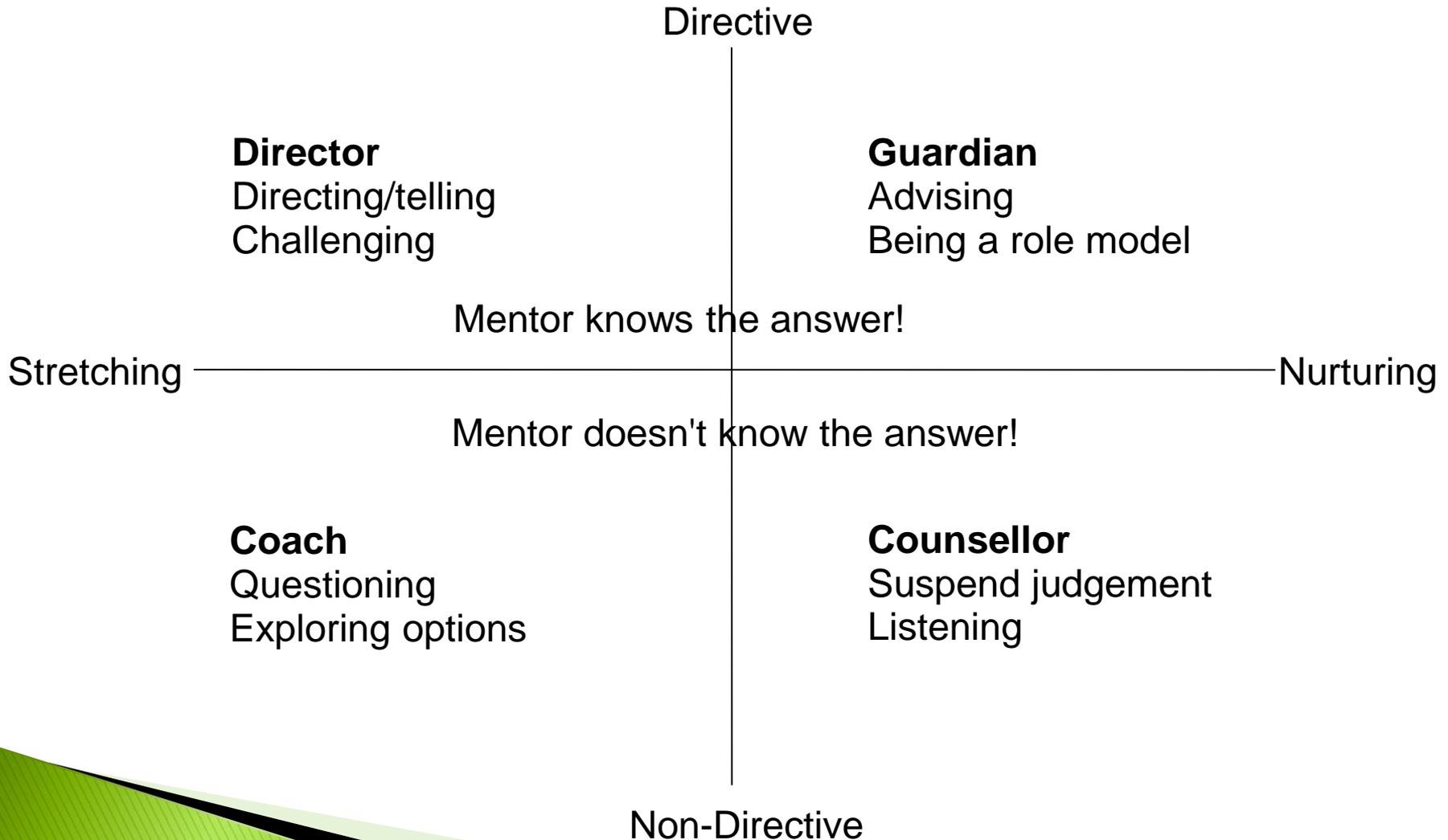


Scenario 4

- Your mentee is relatively new to their role and wants to understand more about what is expected of them
- What style do you use?



Mentoring styles





How do you know
someone is listening to you?



Behavioural listening skills

- maintain eye contact
- have attentive body language – they may even be mirroring my posture
- nod
- speak with an interested tone of voice
- show empathy, understanding and interest in our facial expression



Paraphrasing/Summarising

- Assures mentee that you are listening fully to them
- It is practical as it checks your own understanding
- Listening to your summary may give mentee new perspective/insight



Paraphrasing/Summarising

- “It sounds to me like what you are saying is....”
- “Let me try to summarise what you are saying....”
- “If I understand you correctly, then.....”

– “.....Is that right?”



Listening Exercise



Helpful questioning

- Open questions

- e.g. “What would you do differently this time?”
- Can't be answered by “yes” or “no”
- Useful for exploring issues and journeying into unknown territory
- Diverging

Closed questions

- e.g. “Did you raise this with your department head?”
- Can be answered by “yes” or “no”
- Useful for drilling down to specifics
- Converging



Open questions

- Encourages awareness and reflection
 - What....?
 - How?

 - Where.....?
 - When.....?
 - Who.....?

- Encourages analysis but often provokes defensiveness so best avoided
 - Why.....?



Beginning questions: Setting a specific goal for the session

- What outcome would you like from today's session?
- How would you like to use our time today
- What exactly do you want to achieve (short / long term)?
- How can you break down the goal into manageable / realistic goals for this particular session
- What words would you use to describe (1) where you are now and (2) where you want to be?
- Which of these would you like to focus on now?
- Which is the most urgent or important right now?
- Of those issues, which is your top priority?



Middle questions:

Exploring the issue and related possibilities

- What is the present situation? What is its background?
- When does the problem occur?
- What would be the one thing you would change?
- Who else is involved and how do they see the situation?
- What feedback have you had about this issue already
- What obstacles are in your way?
- What have you tried already? What have you learned?
- What options do you have? What else could you do?
- What are the advantages / disadvantages of each option?
- How could you find out more about these options?
- What have you seen that works for others?
- Who do you most admire? What would they do?
- What are your strengths? How can you use them here?



End questions:

Designing an action

- As a result of this conversation, what are you going to do differently?
- What are your next steps? When, specifically, will you complete each of these steps?
- How will you know that you have been successful?
- What obstacles do you expect to meet?
- What support do you need? Who do you need to support you?
- Is there anything else you need from me?
- Are you satisfied that we have achieved your objective for this session?
- **What was good about this session and what could I do differently the next time to be more effective?**

Mentoring session!



Top three things to remember

- For a mentor:
 - The qualities of the person who got the best out of you
 - The power of just actively listening
 - Ask for feedback



Top three things to remember

- For a mentee:
 - It is up to you to make sure the meetings happen
 - Communicate clearly what you want to get out of each session
 - Give feedback to the mentor about how the process is going for you



**“Learn your theories as well as you can,
but put them aside when you touch
the miracle of a living soul”**

Carl Jung, 1945

Any questions?