

# Training the Mentors Handbook

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# Training the Mentors Handbook

## Executive Summary:

The [ACADIGIA Project](#) is funded under the Erasmus+ programme and is specifically designed to accelerate digital readiness of Polytechnic higher education institutions towards the sustainable adoption of more online and blended approaches.

ACADIGIA was founded amidst the Covid19 crisis, aiming to deepen in the role of the ‘New Academia’ which is leaning toward digital approaches, and target the transformation of the institutional staff into mentors who will animate and support peer2peer assisted groups of practitioners that take the online end blended teaching to the next level.

The IO2 is aimed at developing training support for unleashing the digital transformation of learning in the Educational Institutions (Polytechnic HEIs).

For this, tailored training is unfolded in this deliverable, which aims to prepare well-rounded Mentors to lead this transformation by working with teams of educators in their institutions.

The main purpose of the methodologies and techniques incorporated is to arm the mentors with the needed Theoretical and Technical knowledge and competencies about Mentoring, Digital skills and tools.

The training program for Mentors is based on the [DigCompEdu](#) and foresees the validation and improvement of these competences among educators.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The meaning of mentoring

The concept of mentoring doesn't have a unique definition, many researchers define the concept in different ways. Some definitions as perceptions are listed below:

Mentoring is a formal or informal professional relationship between an experienced researcher and a less experienced researcher. It is dyadic relationship, i.e. a committed relationship between two persons, usually characterized by institutional proximity and direct contact (Sambunjak & Marusic, 2009).

"A deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the less experienced person grow and develop specific competencies" (Murray, 1991, p. xiv).

"The term 'mentor' describes a knowledgeable, experienced, and highly proficient teacher who works with and alongside a new teacher or less experienced colleague – quite closely at first but this gradually diminishes as the new teacher becomes more capable and confident. A mentor is not an instructor and the mentee is not a student; they are both colleagues" (Northern Territory Department of Education, 2017, p. 6).

"Mentoring is a process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice, and continuing support that will help the people in their learning and development process" (Chand, 2014, p. n.d.).

These definitions have some aspects in common that we highlight, that are important for a mentor to have in mind and are principles related to mentoring. Mentoring, in general, is<sup>1</sup>:

- Consistent: reliable contact between mentor and mentee.
- Reciprocal: The experienced and new teacher work together in an equal professional relationship where they are both teachers and learners.
- Dynamic: Mentoring influences/changes the context; and the context shapes the relationship. The relationship is organic. An understanding of mentoring is needed to underpin the approach but a formula does not work.
- Reflective: The mentor facilitates reflection on the part of the beginning teacher to support the development of the beginning teacher's professional identity as a teacher; the mentor professionally challenges the beginning teacher in developing their theory of teaching, and sense of teacher efficacy. In doing this the mentor continuously reflects on their own practice and self-image as a teacher.
- Based on Professional Support: While personal support is inherent in a mentoring relationship, the emphasis is on professional support, in this case supporting the growth of teaching expertise.

<sup>1</sup> (Chand, 2014; *Characteristics of Mentoring Relationships* | Youth.Gov, n.d.; State of Victoria & Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010)



- Trustful: Mentoring requires a high degree of mutual trust between the mentor and the mentee.
- Communicative: Effective communication is the key to the mentoring programmes.
- Being available: Availability of the mentor involving predictability.
- Respectful: Mutual respect between each other is also required.

Also, given the theme of the project and the possibility for mentors to guide virtually their mentees, it's important to describe what is e-mentoring: "E-mentoring is a means of providing a guided mentoring relationship using online software or email. It allows participants to communicate at their own convenience and beyond time zones since it eliminates the need for them to be in the same physical location" (Dikilitas et al., 2018, p. 114).

After comprehending the diverse range of perceptions of what mentoring is, it should be underlined what shouldn't be considered mentoring:

What mentoring is not<sup>2 3</sup>:

- Cloning, or becoming a substitute parent, or acquiring a disciple, or an opportunity to prove how marvellous we are, or an opportunity to establish a power base.
- Giving advice - it's not the mentor's role to prescribe a path forward for the mentee. First, the mentor must recognize that the mentee's journey is their own, and what worked for the mentor may not apply in the case of the mentee. Second, if the mentor gives directive advice to the mentee, the mentee loses the opportunity to make their own decision and thus loses the opportunity to grow and develop.
- A therapy, an alternative to a counselling or confessional relationship - The goal of the relationship is not to rehash the mentee's childhood or other things that have happened in the past, but instead to focus on the future.
- About one person (the beginning teacher) becoming knowledgeable - it is about two people in a developmental relationship who are supporting mutual learning and growth.
- A job – it is a privilege and an opportunity.
- Coaching - while a coach might be paid directly for their work, a mentor participates for more altruistic reasons or for the benefits that the mentor receives from the relationship. Also, coaching tends to be more short-term and focused on a particular skills gap.

## 1.2 The role and profile of the Mentors

The Mentors are the ones that will lead the training in their institutions and be the "glue" of the teams. Through the sessions that will be implemented under the sequent IO3, it is expected that the mentors will support the educators' teams to dive deep into the blended learning approaches and the effective use of existing open educational tools with pedagogical value. Also, with the mentors' support, the educators will develop their ability to design new educational contracts with their students and shift to blended classes. Finally, a peer2peer support will be founded, and through personal "study case" projects continuous professional development will be implemented more autonomously as a group.

Regarding their profile, he/she must:

- a. be motivated / willing to be a mentor;
- b. be a user of digital tools in education, especially for blended learning;
- c. have the time / availability to explore digital tools and mentor their colleagues;

<sup>2</sup> (State of Victoria & Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010)

<sup>3</sup> (Nabine, n.d.)



d. have already a set of "soft skills" or personality traits that naturally make him/her the perfect candidate for the position (examples: positive humor, self-confident, flexible, calm, patient, active listener, communicative, resilient).

Figure 1 – ACADIGIA Mentor Persona (contributions of all consortium partners on Jamboard)

### Digital skills

Digital learning design	MOOCs	Digital awareness
Analytics (learning/education)	Online teaching	Edtech multimedia tools
Online/digital communication	Videocalls	Digital whiteboard
Online forums	Privacy/security	Digital educational resources
Digital awareness	Screen casting	Technical problem solving



### Mentorship skills

Collaborative (learning and brainstorm)	Creativity	Problem solving methodologies; problem solving skills; solution orientation.
Coach	Sensitivity to diversity	Conflict solving
Teaching experience	Flexibility	Facilitator
Providing corrective feedback and validation	Building trust	Engagement, encouragement, inspiring

## 1.3 The expected involvement of the mentors

Below is presented the future work of the Mentors with the teams. The content is divided in four activities, with different focus, and it's major objective is to empower the teams become autonomous in learning for digital tools and pedagogies. The mentors will be involved in the following activities of the ACADIGIA project:

- Establishing the teams;
- Carrying out the sessions;
- Developing demo lessons;
- Infiltrating the governance.

The ACADIGIA teams will be established in the Polytechnics Institutes partners with at least 4 educators each. Then, they will be part of an ignition event to start the work and during that, they will develop the Culture Manifestos of the team in each Polytechnic Institute. The dedicated mentors will be delivering the sessions to the ACADIGIA groups. The mentoring scheme will follow a format where every month will have a different focus and will be delivered in 2 sessions per month for 5 months, with an indicative structure as follows:

- Start at blending: #self evaluations #intro to frameworks;
- Tools specialization: #Digital literacy refresh #Tools cases;
- Group work scenarios: #Making examples of renewing the educational contract;
- Peer2peer development: #Peer presentations of tools use.



After this, demo blended lessons will be developed and implemented, with at least 2 examples of cases of blended teaching implemented in every institution.

The final activity of the project focuses on the development of the ACCELERATION model of the ACADIGIA and a POLICY BRIEF.

#### 1.4 The training of the mentors – goals and plan

The training of the Mentors is supposed to use the material of this guide and put things in practice during C1. The training activity, in line with this guide, **aims at building the capacity and nurturing Polytechnic HEIs staff into becoming fully capable Mentors that will be deployed to dynamically establish, follow and animate the support teams (the ACADIGIA groups) in their HEIs.**

This training methodology will merge theory with the realities of the Polytechnic environment and prepare the specialists not only in the theoretical foundations for online and blended education, but also in aspects as mentoring relationship process, collaborative partnerships, solution-oriented thinking and communication and interpersonal skills. It will focus also on the Educators pedagogic competences (DigCompEdu) on how to use and create Digital Resources, for Teaching and Learning, Assessment with a final focus on Empowering the Learners. Through mentorship we will encourage the integration of digital technologies, the innovation and expertise in digital education.

The short-term joint staff training event will take place in Porto, Portugal, at the premises of IPP, and its preparation will be led by INOVA+ with the strong support of UPT. For the delivery of the course, INOVA+, UPT and TCD will provide technical staff (2 from INOVA+ in presence, 1 From UPT in distance/online connection and 1 from TCD in distance/online connection).

The overall duration of this activity, including the preparation, implementation and closure is of 2 months (M12-M13) and the training event will consist of 5 days.

The course, will follow the structure of this guide and focus on the following topics ([Digital](#) / [Mentoring](#)):

PT time	Day 1 11 July	Day 2 12 July	Day 3 13 July	Day 4 14 July	Day 5 15 July
9h00-10h30	Presentations; Ice-break; Objectives and structure of the course	Open education resources, tools, practices	Stages of Mentoring Relationships	Bringing to life collaborative partnership / What is collaborative partnership and which are its benefits	Open discussion and brainstorming - What makes Mentoring Relationship Successful?
10h30-11h00	Coffee-break				
11h00-12h30	What is a mentoring relationship and types of mentorships?	Designing digitally enhanced learning and teaching	Active listening	Constructive feedback and validation	Discussions and Course evaluation
12h30-14h00	Lunch				





<b>14h00-15h30</b>	Integrating EU Digital Education Frameworks	Designing digitally enhanced evaluation and assessment	Building trust and empathy	What does 'solutions oriented' mean?	Next steps (IO3)
<b>15h30-16h00</b>	Coffee-break				
<b>16h00-17h00</b>	Digital Learning Resources	Designing digitally enhanced evaluation and assessment	Flexibility and Conflict management	Practical Approach to Being Solution-Oriented	Next steps (IO3)

# A1: Mentoring relationship process



# A1: Mentoring relationship process

## 2. Mentoring relationship process: theory

### 2.1. Introduction

Mentoring is a new way of teaching digital content in university environments and is the cornerstone of the ACADIGIA project. Two main concepts stand out for their relevance in the field, leadership and the idea of reverse mentoring. Reverse mentoring, although it will be discussed in more depth below, is the opportunity to harness the technological skills of young people to train more experienced workers.

Mentoring is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice, and continuing support that will help the people in their learning and development process.

The purpose of mentoring is to tap into the existing knowledge, skills, and experience of senior or high performing employees and transfer these skills to newer or less experienced employees in order to advance their careers.

Teaching others is the best way to learn yourself. In the same way, mentors become more competent as leaders and communicators as they guide and help rising talent (Norris, 2020).

The outline of this chapter is as follows:

1. **Section 1.2** presents the idea of team development and the four phases identified by Tuckman for a successful mentoring process. Each of these stages is further elaborated in sub-sections.
2. **Section 1.3** discusses the concept of leadership linked to mentoring. It discusses both the concept in general and leadership at each of the stages identified in the previous section.
3. **Section 1.4** refers to the most widespread types of mentoring and focuses on those most applicable to this project: group mentoring and reverse mentoring. The major advantages of these two approaches are highlighted as well as the relevance of reverse mentoring as an innovative concept for technology education.
4. **Section 1.5** includes all references that are mentioned in the chapter, including those introduced with the expression "read (...) to find out more" and a variety of complementary resources to get in-depth on the topic. Some interesting books are presented here, as well as the documents used to illustrate the examples and some interesting resources that can be found online, including links.



## 2.2. Team Development

In order to know the status of a team's developmental progression, in 1965 Bruce Tuckman identified four distinct stages through which all teams must pass in order to succeed. These stages are formation, storming, normalization and performance (Cosper, 2015).

A positive mentor-mentee relationship is established in the same way as any other human relationship. It requires both parties to have a genuine desire to understand the values and expectations of each other.

A mentoring relationship goes through four stages:

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing

Each stage is equally important to make a relationship successful and should be treated with the same priority. While the time spent in each phase differs from relationship to relationship, the progression is uniform.

To learn more about the concept of mentoring and the stages described below, see Chao (2009), Eby (2008) and Martin, Reed, Collins, & Cortez (2002).

Figure 2: Four Stages of Team Development (Consulting, 2016)



### 2.2.1. 1st Stage of a Mentor-Mentee Relationship: Forming

The second stage is the business stage of a mentor-mentee relationship. It is the stage where a mentor helps the mentee set learning goals. They also agree on their initial expectations and define the strategy to achieve the target. Besides, they talk about when and how they will meet, what will be the frequency of their meeting and accountability.

In this stage, members begin to share their opinions more openly and may struggle to agree on the team's purpose, direction, and identity. Morale and productivity can be low during this stage, but issues are being identified and worked out. It's not the most fun stage, but it is important. The key is not to get stuck here.



Although mentors and mentees work on setting goals and creating a work plan, the storming stage is not quite simple. It involves talking about soft issues in a relationship, establishing ground rules, confidentiality, boundaries, and shared responsibilities. These are the topics that are often left out of conversations because they are not very easy to talk about. Yet, these are critical topics that need to be discussed.

### 2.2.2. 2nd Stage of a Mentor-Mentee Relationship: Storming

The second stage is the business stage of a mentor-mentee relationship. It is the stage where a mentor helps the mentee set learning goals. They also agree on their initial expectations and define the strategy to achieve the target. Besides, they talk about when and how they will meet, what will be the frequency of their meeting and accountability.

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### 2.2.3. 3rd Stage of a Mentor-Mentee Relationship: Norming

Once the trust is built and the expectations are discussed, a mentoring relationship enters the third stage: norming. At this stage, the mentoring partners start working towards the goals that were set. This stage offers the greatest opportunity for learning and development.

During this stage, members begin to accept their roles on the team with their scaling up job scorecard, defences are lowered and relationships begin to deepen. Trust is being built and individuals will acknowledge their own weaknesses and ask for help. The team gains focus and begin to make progress, demonstrating alignment and acting as a real team for the first time.

The mentor's responsibilities at this stage are to help the mentee with various mentoring resources for their development. They share knowledge and experience through storytelling. They help mentees overcome challenges; and gradually a mentor becomes a guide, adviser, and friend to the mentee.

Another key responsibility of a mentor is to provide honest, candid, yet constructive feedback to the mentee. Because feedback is the most important part of a mentoring relationship. It allows mentors to acknowledge the mentee's strengths and help them identify their weaknesses, which is crucial for mentees' growth.

During this phase, both the partners monitor the learning process and progress to ensure the goals are being met.



#### 2.2.4. 4th Stage of a Mentor-Mentee Relationship: Performing

At the fourth stage the team finally starts to thrive, in both results and in team spirit. Members are loyal and committed to the team's results. They are able to balance individual needs and team requirements, and disagreements and differing opinions quickly surface and are handled.

Productivity is high, deadlines are met and information flows easily so the goals are accomplished. Still, this stage is more than simply marking an end to the relationship. It is an opportunity for the mentoring pair to recognize and celebrate their success.

Both mentor and mentee benefit from closure. It is an opportunity to harvest the learning and apply it in real-life situations.

Any mentoring relationship moves through these four phases. Yet, there is no specific formula to create a successful relationship. It takes effort from both partners to make it work. And if at any stage, the relationship experiences hardship, communication is the main solution.

#### 2.3. Leadership in mentoring

Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal. Leadership captures the essentials of being able and prepared to inspire others. Effective leadership is based upon ideas that are effectively communicated to others in a way that engages them enough to act as the leader wants them to act.

A leader inspires others to act while simultaneously directing the way that they act. They must be personable enough for others to follow their guidance, and they must have the critical thinking skills to know the best way to use the resources at an organization's disposal.

While there are people who seem to be naturally endowed with more leadership abilities than others, anyone can learn to become a leader by improving particular skills. History is full of people who, while having no previous leadership experience, have stepped to the fore in crises and persuaded others to follow their suggested course of action. They possessed traits and qualities that helped them to step into roles of leadership (Ward, 2020).

**Mentorship is the most effective way to build leadership skills.** For anyone working within an organization with aspirations of becoming a leader, the path can seem frustrating at times. The skills acquired along the way don't always reflect the job they want to do. For many employees, training comes in the form of online courses and classroom-style learning with endless paperwork, tick boxes and reading. While this kind of training can teach someone how to do the basics to manage a team, or looking after systems, it does not teach somebody how to be a great leader. To learn more about the general concept of leadership, read MindTools (2020).

Mentoring, on the other hand, is effective at building leadership skills because the mentor is a role model and a teacher. Through active conversations, mentees uncover areas where they need to improve their leadership skills. With the help of their mentor, they can identify how to grow these skills and follow their footsteps.

Being a leader in an organization requires a mix of know-how, hard and soft skills, like emotional intelligence. While some of these skills take time and require on-the-job experience, others can be taught in leadership training programs. To find out more about studies on what makes great leaders tick and how to teach others those skills, please see Boston Consulting Group's Roselinde Torres (2021).

It is considered vitally important that leaders in training acquire the following soft skills:



- **How to communicate effectively.** A LinkedIn Learning report (LinkedIn Learning, 2018) found that communication was one of the most important leadership skills for employees to learn. Seventy-four percent of talent developers thought it was a vital skill to learn. Mastering the art of communication means excelling at different ways of sharing a message with others, including presentations, phone calls, emails and one-on-one conversations. A leadership mentoring program presents an ideal space for employees to practice these skills.
- **How to hold others accountable.** While being responsible for individual performance is one aspect of accountability, it also means being accountable for the team. Leaders need to know how to encourage a team and motivate them towards success. Having a mentor allows mentees to gain more wisdom about problem-solving. It also helps them be accountable for their role in the mentorship.
- **How to grow your network.** Not everyone is a born networker. Some need more guidance than others, and a mentor can help in this respect. Mentors can open the door to other connections for mentees. Additionally, mentees gain confidence through mentorship as they see their own skills and abilities develop. This confidence can help them reach out to others and get to know people, expanding their network.
- **How to actively listen to others.** Hearing and understanding what others are saying is a crucial skill for leaders. Successful mentorships require good listening skills so that mentees can fully benefit from the experience and the advice offered.
- **How to strategically solve problems.** Finding workable solutions is a trait of an effective leader. Employees can learn how to find answers through the guidance, encouragement and advice of mentors.
- **How to guide others.** Good mentors have a lot of things to teach, but they can only impart their knowledge if they know how to guide others effectively. Mentorship is not so much about telling a mentee what actions to take, but rather guiding them on their journey to make the best possible choices.

The close relationship between mentoring and leadership is well known. That is why some leadership tips for each stage are included below (Cosper, 2015):

- **Leading while Forming:** During this stage, the team is very dependent on the leader. It's important that you take the lead in developing agendas, gathering information and solving problems. Try to involve as many members as you can in conversations and decisions but know that the ultimate responsibility lies with you.
- **Leading while Storming:** It's important to ask a lot of questions during this stage. Seek first to understand and encourage everyone on the team to take the same approach. Act as a sounding board and allow any hidden agendas to surface. Provide information and suggest alternative solutions to roadblocks. It's important to demonstrate the skills you want the team to develop. You are still responsible for the team's health and results.
- **Leading while Norming:** Finally, you are able to begin sharing responsibility with other team members. You are participating in the discussions instead of leading them all, and the team begins to solve problems jointly. It's important to step back a little during this stage and allow the team to succeed without you where possible. Your contribution becomes more focused on your specialized knowledge and expertise than your ability to hold the team together.
- **Leading while Performing:** Your role here is to act as the team's champion, securing resources and minimizing roadblocks in the organization. Your participation should be much more focused on how the team is tackling problems rather than solving the problems for them. You will still raise issues, ask questions, and challenge approaches, but more to validate the team's conclusion than to drive it. Leadership belongs to everyone on the team, and the team owns its results.



Your role as a leader is different, but no less important through all four stages. The key is understanding where your team is and providing the right kind of leadership at each stage. If you feel your team is stuck, share this information with them and ask them to self-diagnose where they think they are and what they need to do to move on to the next stage. Understanding that each stage is normal and expected can relieve a lot of tension and free the team up to break through and move on.

## 2.4. Types of mentorship

Most people are familiar with the one-on-one mentoring approach and its benefits. A senior leader or expert takes a more junior employee under their wing and treats them as their protegee. They share advice and guidance to help them with their career.

Figure 2: Types of mentorship (Carruthers, 2021)



However, this is not the only form of mentoring and in this case we will focus on two updated forms of mentoring that we believe are better suited to our approach:

- Group Mentorship
- Reverse Mentorship

### 2.3.1 Group Mentoring

Group mentoring is a flexible derivative of traditional mentoring, with added benefits. It can be defined as multiple mentees and one or more mentors working towards employee development together. These participants are also able to act as the mentee to a mentor, but a mentor to a different mentee simultaneously.

In traditional mentoring, the mentor and mentee are usually matched by similar background or career paths. In group mentoring, the mentee pool can be more diverse in terms of widespread backgrounds. They can also be exposed to several experienced, well-established members of their profession who can fulfil various mentor roles.

The primary use of these mentorships are short-term transitions when the required number of mentors is not available. Group mentoring can also be used when one mentor has critical knowledge that many individuals need, or during onboarding.

Group mentoring is a process where peers and leaders are brought together to engage in discussion around common challenges, goals, and ideas. Their combined knowledge and different areas of





expertise help each member solve problems and come up with new ideas. Instead of two heads being better than one, there are several (Together Platform, 2021).

That's the essence of group mentorship. But there are three ways to organize a group mentoring program:

- One mentor with multiple mentees: One mentor who is usually a senior employee or executive leads mentoring sessions with multiple mentees.
- Multiple mentors and mentees: Typically, larger groups of people to discuss goals for the organization or run ideas past executives.
- Peer mentoring: Different teams at similar seniority levels come together and help each other grow by coaching and mentoring one another.

### Benefits of Group Mentoring

Like traditional mentoring relationships, group mentoring gives benefits to not only the organization, but the mentors and mentees as well. They both give participating mentees new skill sets and knowledge, but there are additional benefits specific to team mentoring (Insala, 2019).

Group mentoring brings together individuals that may or may not have connections and let them learn together. They will be able to support and help one another to become the best individual, fostering a sense of community on top of employee development. The true group situation provides an incredibly supportive environment in which to share knowledge and experience through mentoring.

Unlike the one-on-one mentoring relationship, group mentoring will involve a diverse group including experienced, well-established people as well as newcomers. Newcomers have the opportunity to gain access to a network that will offer support, important information, and contacts.

This group helps socialize newcomers to the corporate culture, on top of developing their skills and knowledge. This dynamic may be especially useful to mentoring for onboarding (Insala, 2021). During onboarding, you can form groups of new-hire mentees to learn the company culture from a single mentor. This will result in quicker time-to-productivity and a better overall employee experience.

### 2.2.3. Reverse Mentoring

Reverse mentoring is defined by more junior employees acting as a mentor to senior leaders or executives. For many organizations, reverse mentorship's purpose is to give leaders a fresh perspective on rising trends in areas of technology or the future of work (Together Platform, 2021).

Reverse mentoring is also a great way to increase the visibility of minority employees for future leadership opportunities, thus supporting diversity initiatives. In this way, each participant plays an active mentoring role. The less experienced will help build the skills of senior leaders in the organization. In turn, senior leaders gain fresh perspectives into the next generation of talent.

Reverse mentoring is a good approach to leadership development. In these scenarios, senior leaders need to listen to employees and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Doing this validates the young employee and creates a foundation of trust that is essential for successful mentoring. To learn more about the concept of reverse mentoring, see Jordan & Sorell (2019) and Wooll (2022).



Developing a reverse mentorship program within an organization offers a different avenue of learning and development for employees at any level. A reverse mentoring relationship provides benefits for all participants (Gordon, 2021), including:

- **Retention of younger workers, particularly Millennials.** Research by the Harvard Business Review found that reverse mentoring fulfils Millennials' desires for recognition in the workplace.
- **Expand digital skills competency among employees.** Younger workers have a lot to offer to senior leaders when it comes to understanding and integrating technology into workplaces. While many senior employees have had to learn social media, Millennials have a much more intuitive understanding of platforms and how to leverage them.
- **Leadership development.** Even if the goal of your reverse mentoring program is to have younger workers teach senior employees, learning will be a two-way street. Millennials can benefit by improving skills that will make them great future leaders, such as communication.
- **Improve diversity.** Learning to understand and respect differences is a key element to mentorships, including reverse mentoring. Patrice Gordon, an executive coach, did a TedTalk (Boston Consulting Group's Roselinde Torres, 2021) on reverse mentoring and how it's an effective way to champion employee diversity and inclusive leadership.

Some examples of reverse mentoring are listed below:

**Caterpillar** - The organization has had success with their mentoring programs and have added a reverse mentoring component in the form of ERGs. Vice President of Caterpillar's Large Power Systems Division, Tana Utley, said that Millennials see the work world differently than other generations, which is vital for senior leaders to understand.

**PwC** - With a focus on diversity and inclusivity, PwC has been creating reverse mentoring programs at its international locations. Participants have said it has positively impacted inclusivity, skills development, and a culture of learning within the company.

**Heineken** - Heineken has been running a reverse mentoring program through Together's platform since April 2021. The results have been amazing. When surveyed, 86% of mentees—who are senior leaders—wanted to connect with more junior employees to gain new skills and experiences from the next generation of talent. One participant shared that their meeting “was incredibly useful [for] learning about the processes at Heineken to progress through the business. We had a very open and honest conversation and I received a lot of direction and support on how to achieve my goals and ambitions within Heineken.”

### 3. Mentoring Relationship process: exercises

#### 3.1. 'Introducing Each Other'

This is an exercise to get participants to know each other so that they find themselves in a friendly environment. Participants can do this activity either before the mentoring sessions, in their own time, or during the sessions.

#### Instructions

1. Pair up participants in twos.
2. Give them a list of questions to ask each other. Some examples [here](#).
3. Ask each pair to interview each other, either via email or in breakout rooms.



4. When all the participants convene together in the same virtual room, each participant will introduce the participant they interviewed.

### Online tools you can use

- Breakout rooms
- Email
- Chats

## 3.2. Get creative

Start a Google Doc (or similar) and get creative with your mentee using one of these writing scenarios (exercise 2.2.1. or 2.2.2).

### 3.2.1 - A Big Decision

You make decisions every day that affect your life in different ways. Some decisions, such as which movie to watch or where to go on your morning jog, have a small impact, while others, such as which job offer to accept or whether to get married or not, have life-changing implications.

Look back on a past choice that falls into the life-changing category and use the experience as a reflective journal prompt.

1. Think of a specific time when you were at a crossroads and had a significant decision to make. Free-write one page in your personal journal, keeping these questions in mind:

- When was this? How old were you?
- What was the context in which you were making this decision? What other factors were important?
- Why did the decision seem significant at the time? Do you still think it's important for the same reasons?

2. Consider the consequences of your past decision. Knowing what you know now, would you make the same choice? Free-write another page, using these questions as a starting point:

- How did this decision change your life for the better?
- How did it create challenges or heartache?
- Why would you stand by your decision, or why would you choose to go in a different direction?
- What do you think would have happened if you had taken another path? What consequences do you think would have resulted from that option?

Sum up what this past experience taught you in a short paragraph. Have you used these lessons to make other big decisions? Did you create a “what not to do” script for yourself for future situations? Tell your personal journal all about it.



### 3.3. Alphabet Story

Let's write a short story together. You must communicate through an online tool. The mentor will explain the rules to the mentee and guide him on the task.

A short story that is exactly 26 sentences long! Each sentence should begin with the next letter of the alphabet. You can begin with a name like "Bill"; an adverb (like "recently" or "often"); a conjunction (like "however" or "since"); an onomatopoeia (a sound word, like "clunk" or "bang") or a prepositional phrase (like "at her sister's house" or "during summer vacation").

You may choose any theme you would like, but your story must include:

- A setting (time and place)
- Characters
- Dialogue
- Conflict (this character wants "X", but ..... so.....)
- A Beginning, Middle and End

### 3.4. Role Playing

In this activity, participants will witness different leadership styles (examples [here](#)) and the impact on employees or mentees. During an online meeting, ask a few volunteers to role-play. One participant will play the role of an employee or mentee who made a mistake. For example, missed deadlines or lost clients. Two or three other teammates will assume the roles of different leadership styles and respond to the initial volunteer. After each leadership style has responded to the employee or mentee, allow time for the whole group to analyse which style was most effective. Team members can decide what an "ideal" leadership style should look like (using a digital whiteboard, for example).

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# A2: Collaborative partnership



## A2: Collaborative partnership

### 5. Collaborative partnership: theory

#### 5.1. Introduction

Within the ACADIGIA project and the use of digital tools for teaching and learning, mentoring plays a fundamental role. In order to develop its function correctly, one of its fundamental aspects is to create collaborative partnerships between mentor(s) and mentee(s). The partnership established between mentor(s) and mentee(s) should always be based upon collaboration. This is the only possible way to create a lasting partnership based on confidence and mutual respect.

In this section, some of the basic concepts regarding this collaborative partnership will be presented, also mentioning some examples and some successful case studies in which this collaboration has been an important aspect.

The outline of this chapter is as follows:

- **Section 1.2** presents the idea behind the concept of a collaborative partnership between mentor and mentee. It also includes the definition of certain keywords in this field, including new concepts that are emerging as this idea is incorporated in different scenarios related to the world of education.
- **Section 1.3** includes the benefits for each of the profiles involved in this partnership. This collaboration is mutually satisfying and both mentors and mentees can learn from it.
- **Section 1.4** provides some useful information regarding how collaborative partnership can be adapted to today's virtual era. The same ideas of traditional collaboration are still valid, but new technologies and the possibility of online meetings, among other elements, present new possibilities that need to be explored.
- **Section 1.5** explains some case studies where such collaborative partnership between mentor and mentee has already been established. Only a few examples have been included that have been considered of interest because of their originality, but there are many published reports and articles on the subject. By exploring these case studies, it is possible to gain ideas on how to incorporate such a collaborative partnership idea in new contexts.
- **Section 1.6** includes all references that are mentioned in the chapter, including those introduced by with the expression "to find out more, read..." and a variety of complementary resources to get in-depth of the topic. Some interesting books are presented here, as well as the documents used to illustrate the examples and some interesting resources that can be found online, including links to Youtube or TedTalks videos.

#### 5.2. The idea and some keywords behind the concept "collaborative partnerships between mentors and mentees"

The concept of **collaboration** is deeply rooted in learning and teamwork. When several people collaborate, they help each other and share their knowledge and experience in order to achieve a



common goal. In this way, different people can collaborate with their knowledge and benefit from each other's skills, while all of them pursue the same goal.

To find out more about collaboration, its different types and why the current time is a good time to collaborate, this TedTalk [Why Collaborate? Why now? by Seth Starner](#) is recommended as an additional resource.

When establishing a partnership between mentors and mentees, the concept of collaboration must be considered in the mentoring process. The different people involved in the mentoring process should collaborate with each other in order to improve and learn respectively from each other's strengths.

**Collaborative Mentoring** is a process and relationship between a number of experienced businessperson(s)/mentor(s) serving as trusted confidante(s) to business owner(s)/mentee(s) who come together over a specified period of time on a mutually defined purpose or mission through mentoring and a mentoring program (Digital Change Makers Erasmus Project, 2022).

In this collaborative mentoring, the aim is for each of the people involved to bring the best of themselves to others. In the case of more experienced people, one of their greatest strengths will be the knowledge they have acquired along the way, as well as lessons learned with their experience.

On the other hand, in the case of less experienced participants, their greatest strengths will be enthusiasm, agility and dynamism. Each participant will have their own interests, but a balance of reciprocal collaboration between all participants must be mutually agreed upon, in order to make their collaborative partnership last over time.

There are several keywords that make it easy to explain the idea behind collaborative mentoring. The following image shows all these keywords. At the top, the inputs of the mentoring process can be seen and, at the bottom, the outputs that are achieved, if the process is successfully developed over time.

Image 3. Keywords for describing the inputs and outputs of a collaborative mentoring process (created by UPM partner).



In any mentoring process, **training** is fundamental. Mentors teach their mentees what they have learned from their experience and give them a series of tips. The mentee, on the other hand, can also contribute with their digital skills and their own vision based on their experience and training.





Both mentors and mentees must be creative and willing to express their **ideas** with the rest of the participants. The basis of the whole process is a common goal or **target** shared by both mentors and mentees.

All the participants in the mentoring process should be open to dialogue and **exchange** knowledge, ideas and opinions. These exchanges should always be constructive and respectful. It should never be lost sight of the fact that, although there may be different visions, the common goal is shared. To find out more about the ideal soft skills to participate in these collaborative mentoring projects, please read Digital Change Makers Erasmus Project (2022).

All the concepts mentioned so far are inputs to the collaborative mentoring process. They are preconditions, necessary for the process to run smoothly. If this training, creativity and exchange of ideas are successfully directed towards the common goal, a series of outputs will be achieved that will allow all participants to grow and improve.

Firstly, a **partnership** is created between the different participants. Moreover, this partnership is based on **trust**, because each person has been able to expose and share with the others his or her ideas and opinions.

Normally, in the professional world, the fact of establishing a network of contacts with whom to collaborate is called 'networking'. In the mentoring framework, this term is being replaced by '**knot-working**'.

This term has been coined by Engeström, a teacher and researcher with a great experience in this field. The idea behind this concept is that, in the author's opinion, both the shape and form of future teams will be malleable, transient and self-governing (Engeström, 2008 , cit. Smith, 2010).

This idea is associated with dynamism, as knots can be created formally or informally and wherever they are needed. This invites us to think of a dynamic way of working in teams within different organisations. To find out more about 'knot-working' and all the theory that goes with it, the book "From Teams to Knots: Activity-Theoretical Studies of Collaboration and Learning at Work" by Yrjö Engeström is recommended.

The process of collaborative mentoring leads to a sense of **success**, as different views and opinions are balanced to achieve a common goal. In the same way, all participants are **motivated** to continue participating in this type of process or, depending on the case, to replicate it in a scaled-up way in their own teams and organisations. To find out more, [this series of videos](#) from the Mentor-Youtube Channel is highly recommended. They cover different topics included in the webinars on Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series.

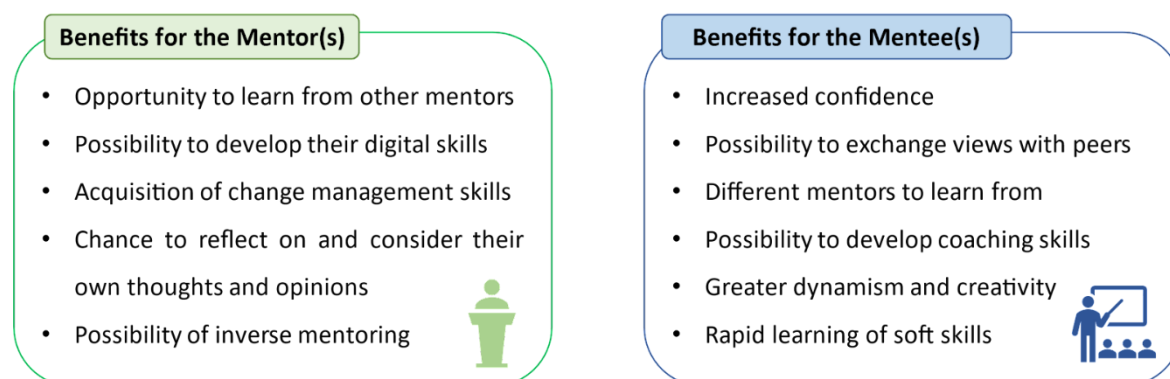
### 5.3. Collaborative partnerships between mentors and mentees: benefits for each of the profiles

Both mentors and mentees can take advantage of this collaborative partnerships. For sure, the general benefits of a mentoring process are also valid in this new approach. To find out more about the general mentoring benefits, read the reference of University of Southampton (2022).

By establishing collaborative partnerships between mentors and mentees, some of these benefits are reinforced. Although the specific benefits depend on the implementation scenario, the following image summarises some of the most outstanding ones.



Image 4. Benefits for mentors and mentees from collaborative partnerships (created by UPM partner)



In collaborative partnerships, mentoring is not limited to the mentor and the mentee. There are other people involved in the mentoring process.

This allows mentors to teach their mentees, but also to **learn from the advice and experience of other mentors**.

Similarly, partly due to the development of technology and the ease of younger professional profiles, who have no problem working with technology and working online, **mentors can develop some digital skills**, also learning from the creativity of their peers and mentees.

This new adaptation to digital media, together with the ability to learn from different ideas and the management of different opinions to achieve a common goal, helps them to **acquire or reinforce their change management skills**.

When explaining certain ideas to a group of mentees and participating in their discussion and exchange of opinions, **mentors themselves may rethink their views or certain lessons learned**.

The sum of all of the above means that mentors can also be mentored in some way by their mentees, which translates into **reverse mentoring**.

For mentees, the establishment of collaborative partnerships also brings several additional advantages.

Firstly, being able to defend their ideas and exchange views with mentors over a sustained period of time, helps them **gain confidence** in expressing their opinions.

Moreover, in case various mentees are working in the same group, **they have the possibility to exchange views with peers**, which also allows them to establish contact with other people with similar personal and professional characteristics.

The fact that they **can exchange views with different mentor profiles** also helps them to learn different lessons from different mentors' experiences.

By expressing their ideas and opinions to both mentors and peers, mentees can **develop coaching and leadership skills**.

The fact that all opinions are considered helps mentees to be **more creative and dynamic**, as the environment in which they work is more fluid. In general, this also allows them to **acquire a variety of soft skills much more quickly** than if they did not participate in the mentoring process.



#### 5.4. Bringing collaborative partnerships into the 21st century: virtual collaboration

The outbreak of the pandemic has abruptly changed the role played by technology. The implemented restrictions made it necessary to suspend activities that had traditionally been understood only as face-to-face and to adapt them to online contexts, either using digital platforms, webinars, video tutorials, etc.

However, it would be a mistake to think that ideas such as virtual collaboration or online mentoring have arisen because of the pandemic. These hybrid or fully online models had already been studied and successful cases of implementation analysed long before covid-19 brutally changed the lives of millions of people around the world.

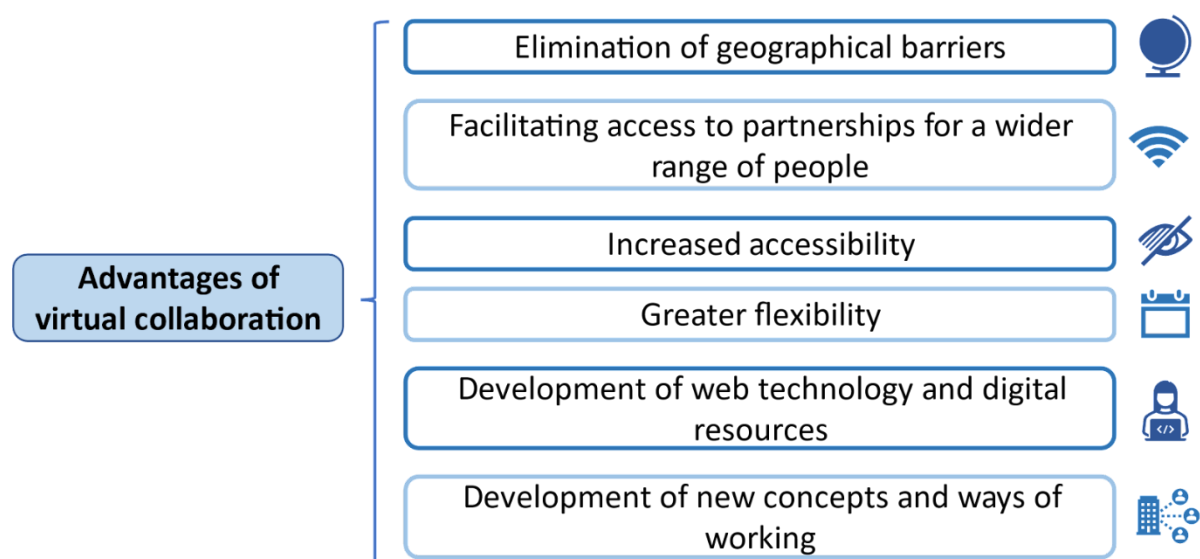
As an example, to find out more, read Seabrooks & Kenney (2006) and Fong, Mansor, Zakaria, Sharif, & Nordin (2012) for some examples of the use of collaboration and virtual mentoring over the last fifteen years.

Depending on the situation and the activities to be undertaken, a decision should be made whether to choose online or face-to-face models (or even a combination of both).

According to different authors, a combination of both is probably the best option. To find out more about the advantages and disadvantages of organising conferences in the two different formats, read Moss, et al. (2021).

Including virtual collaboration in the establishment of collaborative partnerships can have several advantages for both mentors and mentees. In a schematic way, some of the most important advantages are highlighted in the following image:

Image 5. Advantages of virtual collaboration (created by UPM partner)





The first advantage of virtual collaboration is that it connects people in different parts of the world. In other words, **it removes geographical barriers**.

The above factor, together with reducing the need to travel, allows **access to the partnership for others who would otherwise not be able to access it**. For example, mentors with a very busy schedule who cannot participate regularly, people living in remote areas, participants from different countries, etc.

**Accessibility** is another major advantage of virtual collaboration. Transcripts of events or subtitles of conferences can be produced. In the same way, there are different web or digital applications where accessibility is a maximum and can be easily included in the activities carried out.

Just as teleworking offers greater **flexibility** for workers who can work from home, remote collaboration has a similar advantage. Certain activities can be recorded so that they can be consulted by participants later, participants in mentoring activities can take part in these programmes from different locations, etc.

The global lockdown and restrictions imposed by the pandemic have led to a boom in new technologies, including collaborative working platforms, virtual meeting rooms and workplaces, webinars for training, etc. Presently is the time to take advantage of this boom in **digital tools and resources** and make the most of activities and events that can be easily organised online.

Due to the use of new technologies, different professionals have improved their digital skills, so that even if people are still doing the same job, they may have acquired new ways of doing it based on digital resources and tools.

Each of the participants in the collaborative partnership should integrate **these new concepts and ways of working** into the activities they do so that the whole group can learn and continue to improve.

### 5.5. Bringing collaboration into life: some successful case studies of collaborative partnerships

There are many examples where collaborative partnerships have been extended over time, far beyond the simple mentor-mentee or mentee-teacher relationship.

Three different examples have been selected to be presented in this chapter, all centred on the field of teaching and learning, but from different perspectives:

- In Reeve & Church (2013), there is a reference to a case study related to the School Library Media Preparation program developed by Longwood University. In this case, the aim is to train librarians. To achieve this goal, experienced librarians accompany their students in the first steps, training and teaching them all the necessary concepts. They also focus on teaching their students digital skills and integrating mentoring and collaborative activities between participants into the programme. The students are mostly adults and teachers who decide to become school librarians in order to increase their areas of expertise.

The title of the article 'Collaboration till the end of time' sums up perfectly the success of this initiative. After a few completely successful editions, the former students are now experts in their different areas and, in some cases, their former teachers turn to them to solve their doubts. Many of these alumni coincide in different events and have managed to create a network in different parts of the country. It has evolved from a traditional case of learning to a successful collaboration, where the different participants continue to collaborate with each other.



- In Adejare Aderibigbe, Colucci-Gray, & Gray (2014), another case study that took place in Scotland is explained in detail. This paper presents the results of the analysis of a collaborative partnership between senior teachers and junior teachers. In contrast to the traditional approach, in which the more experienced teacher teaches the less experienced, the analysis of the data collected in the study shows that more experienced teachers can also learn from collaboration with less experienced ones.  
Furthermore, it was found that collaboration appears to change some of the norms of status and power. Therefore, mentoring is recommended in this type of apprenticeship and training, as both types of profiles learn from each other.
- A third case of successful collaborative partnership took place in Norway (Brynildsen & Haugsbakken, 2021). In this case, the application scenario was a secondary school. The two collaborating groups were Teaching Educators (TEs) and high-school teachers. TEs are experienced in professional digital competence (PDC) and information and communication technologies (ICT). To collaborate, they worked on the design of lessons using the collaborative digital platforms of the school (Microsoft Teams and OneNote).  
The approach of this study was based on the collaborative principle. The TEs were not external observers but collaborated with the teachers.  
Overall, the TEs were able to gain field experience, which will help them in their future research. On the other hand, the teachers gained new digital competencies and increased knowledge of certain pedagogical terms used by the TEs. Overall, they all learned in the process by collaborating and exchanging ideas, experiences and opinions with their peers.

## 6. Exercises/practical activities

### 6.1. “Yes, and...”<sup>4</sup>

The principle of “Yes, and...” is the basis of all collaborative teamwork and group creativity. It is a fun exercise and allows team members to experience each other in a light, creative way. Players build a story one sentence at a time. Each sentence must begin with “Yes, and...”. Each sentence must refer to one statement from the previous sentence. For example, if I say “Once upon a time there was a blue rhinoceros”, then the next person might say “Yes, and the blue rhinoceros liked to drink tea (or wore reading glasses, or whatever)”. And the person after that could say something like “Yes, and that tea contained persimmons” and so on. Since you don't know what the person ahead of you will say, you can't plan. If someone forgets to start their sentence with “Yes, and...” then the group functions as a friendly human buzzer, saying “Buzzzz”. The person then just tries again this time beginning his/her sentence with “Yes, and...”. At any time, the participant has the choice to say “pass” if they get too stuck.

Because this is an exercise in accepting offers and building on them, these behaviours are to be avoided. It is best to alert the group to this No-Nos upfront:

- Do not argue with what was just added to the story. Example: “Yes, and it wasn't really a blue rhinoceros, it was a greenfly”. Arguers may say “Yes, and...” but they do not add, but instead block or deny the previous story addition. The group should be encouraged to Buzz an arguer to encourage them to try again with a true “Yes, and....” statement.

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<sup>4</sup> (Callen, n.d.)



- Do not question what was just added to the story: "Yes, and what kind of blue rhinoceros was it?". Questioning in this game is to be avoided. The moderator should encourage people to say the first thing on their minds, the sillier the better.
- Do not hesitate. The moderator should encourage people not to hesitate by trying to find the perfect thing to say. Jump in by saying "Yes, and..." then repeat an element and let the first thing that comes to mind come out to add to the story.
- The moderator begins the story by saying "Once upon a time there was a (talking truck tire, or whatever)". For best results, stay in the imaginary realm, not the business realm. The moderator can also assist by pointing at who is next and by encouraging people to speak up so others can hear. The moderator ends the story by saying "The End."

### The steps:

1. Moderator organizes colleagues in groups of 5-15 people.
2. Moderator explains the rules.
3. Moderator begins the story with "Once upon a time there was a (something imaginary)."
4. Each participant contributes a "Yes, and...(something)" sentence to the story.
5. Keep going around until the story finds a natural end.
6. Moderator ends the story by saying "The End" and encouraging applause.
7. Moderator asks players what they noticed. What was hard? What was easy? What worked? What didn't?
8. Moderator draws learning conclusions and ties the game back to the workplace.

"Yes, and..." teaches a mindset that improves group creativity. Saying "yes" to the ideas of others, instead of "no", and then building on those ideas, is more productive than brainstorming. The game forces you to stay present to the ideas of others and not think ahead or attempt to control things or appear smart. It teaches you that creativity can mean improving the ideas of others. And it dramatically demonstrates that group creativity can outperform individual creativity in terms of pushing the boundaries. The moderator can sum up by saying "I guarantee you that no one individual in this room could have come up with this story. "Yes, and..." is a great warm-up exercise for brainstorming or visioning meetings. It can also be used as a diagnostic tool to identify dominant types, rebels, show-offs, arguers, shy mousy non-contributors, etc.

## 6.2. Collaborative drawing

### Exercise 6.2.1.<sup>5</sup>

- Materials: For in-person groups, large pieces of flip-chart or butcher paper, colourful, fat markers or crayons; for online learning, some online tools and online whiteboards (example: [Jamboard](#), [Aggie.io](#), [Sketch Together](#)) for each breakout group.
- Facilitation Suggestions:
  - Divide participants into small groups or breakout groups online.

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<sup>5</sup> (Stanchfield, 2021)



- Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and a selection of colourful fat markers. For online learning, a Jamboard or another whiteboard app page for each breakout group.
- Ask them to reflect upon their day, class lesson, experience, or work together and create a pictorial or symbolic representation of their experience. This can be any kind of symbol, picture, or group of pictures that represents their time together. It is not meant to be an artistic masterpiece— it just should involve each group member's creative input in some way.
- Give them 5 to 10 minutes, so they work quickly and collaboratively and don't get too caught up in or intimidated by artistic detail.
- Invite each group to present their drawing to the larger group. This is where the laughter, celebration, and compelling metaphoric reflection dialogue come in.
- Often, participants take away photos of their group drawings.

### Exercise 6.2.2. <sup>6</sup>

**Objective:** This should illustrate how hard it is to give clear instructions as well as how hard it is to listen and can also show how things are easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. '

#### **Method:**

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Give one member of the pair a picture which must not be shown to their partner. Examples of pictures [here](#).
- The person with the picture must give instructions to their partner so that they can draw it, but must not say what it is, e.g., 'draw a circle, draw two more circles inside the circle about halfway up'. The person with the picture cannot watch the person draw it.
- Compare the drawing with the original.
- Hand out more pictures and ask participants to swap roles.
- The person with the picture can give instructions in a similar manner as in part 1 but this time the person drawing can ask yes/no questions and the person with the picture can watch as they draw. Half the group can begin by telling the person what the object is.

#### **Round 1**

- Why don't many of the pictures look like the original? (Interpretation: everyone has a different interpretation, directions were not clear, not able to give or get feedback).
- What were your frustrations as the source of the message (giving instructions), as the receiver of the message.

#### **Round 2**

- Did it help to be able to watch the person drawing?
- Did it help to be able to ask questions?

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<sup>6</sup> (Buren, 2016)





- Did it help to know what the object is ...your clear goal? Relate this process back to communicating with your employees. Is your message always clear? Is there a channel to give and receive feedback? What noise is present that affects the message?

## 7. Collaborative partnership: References and resources

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### Resources

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# A3: Solution Oriented-Thinking



## A.3. Solution Oriented Thinking

### 8. Theory: solution-oriented thinking

#### 8.1. What does “Solution Oriented” mean?

In order to be a successful mentor, it is important to adopt a positive attitude towards possible challenges and difficulties that may be faced through the mentorship and during classes. In this sense, to prepare the mentors and explain the importance of applying specific attitudes and thinking, this chapter will focus to define and deeply explain the meaning and the importance of the “Solution Oriented Thinking” approach.

As the name mention, **Solution Oriented thinking approach** is based on the action of looking past any problem and trying to find possible efficient solutions that may prevent the problem to happen again in the future (Rovva, nd). To achieve that, the person must understand and define the obstacles that are in the way of the specific situation and solve them with practical solutions, by focusing on the problem from a different perspective and on the existing solutions and not on how hard or complex the problem is, which is the tendency of most people.

In fact, in effort to explain Solution Oriented Thinking, it is also crucial to clarify what **problem-oriented thinking** is. According to Mueller (2020), the problem oriented approach is when people “focus on the problem or the reason why a problem emerged (...)”. In general, people that are problem-oriented tend to be more negative, hopeless and have the tendency to give up easily on things (Nze, 2015). However, those characteristics are exactly the opposite from what it is expected from mentors and mentees, and that’s the reason why comprehending and adopting the Solution Oriented Thinking approach is so relevant.

Image 5: Problem Oriented vs Solution Oriented (Nze, C. (2015). Problem vs. Solution-Oriented Thinking | LinkedIn.  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/problem-vs-solution-oriented-thinking-chidinma-ogbuaku/>)





With the definition of both perspectives, it is possible to comprehend that, in terms of leadership, the Solution-Oriented approach helps to keep people more motivated, goal-oriented and positive, while, with the problem-oriented approach, people tend to look backwards and get easily frustrated (Rovva, nd).

Following this perspective, Marek et al., (1994) explains that the “solution focused supervision” centers, above all, in the strengths and resources and not on the deficits and problems of the circumstances (de Shazer, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1991; Wetchler, 1990, cit. Marek et al., 1994). In light of that, this definition “include the belief that individuals have the resources and strengths to create solutions (...)” (Juhnke, 1996; Marek et al., 1994 cit. Golding, 2020, p. 48). Which means that, most people have the skills to find solutions and face the problem with a positive posture, instead of fearing the situation and/or giving up for thinking that there’s no solution for the existing problem. Indeed, that is what mentors should do in their daily lives, nevertheless, they should also incentive their students and mentees to do the same, by giving them complex exercises and activities that need to be presented with creative and innovative solutions.

It is important to highlight that the Solution Oriented Thinking can and should be used during classes and mentorships, but also during difficult situation in people’s lives, as a way to instigate them to act more positive, focus on how to lead with challenges, not to overthink and become anxious about the problem itself. As matter of fact, Mueller (2020) mentions that if we think about the two methods mentioned, “the majority of our decisions and our attitudes towards tasks, problems and upcoming situations will either be problem or solution oriented.” (Mueller, 2020). In other words, most of the times we adopt, consciously or not, one of the two approaches, but the goal with this chapter is to ensure that the mentor, the mentees and/or students will adopt and face situations using, from now on, Solution Oriented Thinking.

## 8.2. Characteristics of Solutions-Oriented Leaders

In general, people lead with problems and challenges in different ways, according with their personal experiences and their mindsets. When it comes to leaders, there’s a high expectation about how they will lead and face specific situation in their professional lives, particularly from people who admire them or work directly with them. Considering that, the purpose of this chapter is to list and define important characteristics that can help to build a successful Solution-Oriented Leader.

The first step to become Solution-Oriented is focusing on your mind. According to Nze (2015), “The mind is a powerful tool. When its full capacity is engaged, creative and innovative solutions can solve even the toughest problems. Sometimes, just changing the way you think about a situation is all the change you really need”. Which means that the initial phase is based on understanding the power of your mind and the impact of your thoughts in the way you will lead with any situation that occurs.

Following this perspective, Nze (2015) also mentions five main traits of solution-oriented thinkers: Positivity, Feeling Hopeful, Take responsibility, See problems as challenges that can be overcome and willing to hold on until a problem is solved. Based on this list, the next paragraphs will deeply describe what means each characteristic and why they are so relevant for Solution-Oriented Leaders.

In first Place, Nze (2015) mentions the relevance of **being positive** in your actions and thoughts but being optimistic is not always a first natural behaviour for people. Truth being said, people tend to be more negative and, normally, they end up focusing on aspects of life that they don’t like, leaning to complain to other people about it, until that affects their mood and the people around them (Howatt, 2018). On the opposite side, a positive person tend to find joy in simple things, by trying not



to focus so much on aspects and situations of life that they can't control, centring their attention only in what they actually can control (Howatt, 2018).

Furthermore, Howat in the article "Why it is positive to be a positive person" (2018), mentions that "positive people can inspire and influence others to reframe and to think about things differently. They can be infectious in a good way". In this perspective, it becomes understandable why is so important to be positive in order to be a Solution-Oriented Leader, because a leader/mentor has an important role in their mentee's lives, and his/her attitudes will not only influence others but will inspire their actions and the way they will face situations.

Similarly, Nze (2015) also refers the importance of **being hopeful**, which can be considered a complement to the positivity behaviour mentioned before, since a positive leader understands that life is far from perfect and that "there are ups and downs, but to enjoy the ups it's important to be aware of and acknowledge them. The general attitude of positive folks is that there's more good than bad in life, and you doesn't need to be perfect to enjoy it " (Howatt, 2018).

Another important trait is **taking responsibility**, an aspect that should be part of any leader and must be fostered among its students and mentees. For instance, planning steps to achieve goals or solve a problem help people to feel more empowered and ready to overcome any issue. In this sense, the leader or anyone that intends to be Solution-Oriented must make their own decisions and plan act towards its purposes, and, ultimately, take responsibility from what comes next (Ross, 2017), never expecting anyone else to do it.

Additionally, it is expected that a Leader must assume responsibility for its actions and decisions, even when they are not correct. Leading people is also about making mistakes and growing throughout rights and wrongs, showing that a leader is not perfect and don't need to be.

The last two main traits referred by Nze (2015) are complementary: **See problems as challenges that can be overcome and willing to hold on until a problem is solved**. In that matter, Ross (2017) advises people to avoid "(...) perceiving the problem to solution process like a cliff face to climb, steps make the problem seem much more resolvable". That is, the way that the problem is perceived affects the way that people will lead with them.

Accordingly, leaders must face problems as situations that need to be solved and elaborate solutions that will minimize the possibility of the same problems to happen again in the future. And this behaviour must also be implemented with their mentees and/or during a lesson. Finally, the focus on the solution need patience and dedication from people involved, and comprehension that giving up is not a plausible option.

To finalize, according to Traver (2019), there are three primary ways that solution-oriented people can act and add value to others:

- 1) Solution-oriented people always find a way;
- 2) Solution-oriented people use critical thinking;
- 3) Solution-oriented people answer the "why" question.

It is possible to conclude that there's no list of rules or a defined right way on how to be a Solution-Oriented leader, but there are a few thoughts, postures and perspectives that can be adopted that may help in the process. Also, it is important to underline that these actions should be present in classes and mentorships, where the students/mentees feel safe and motivated to be positive, have hope on the planification of existing solutions, take responsibility of their actions and see any problems as challenges that can be overcome with effort and patience.



### 8.3. Practical Approach to being Solution-Oriented

Previously we have clarified what is Solution-Oriented thinking, its relevance and important characteristics behind any successful Solution-Oriented Leaders. Next, we will focus on practical approaches that mentors need to take in consideration to become Solution-Oriented. It should be underlined that this is focused not only for mentor or leaders, but also for students, mentees and people interested in general.

It should be mentioned that there are many different perspectives on how to apply Solution-Oriented Thinking in practical terms, many specialists list different ways of doing it, but in general the ideas and the practices are very similar and complementary. In this sense, one of the perspectives that will be presented is based on the book “Solutions Oriented Leader” (2019), written by Dr Rick Goodman, who is a Team Building expert, author and entrepreneur on Leadership, Engagement and Business Growth. The author defined 5 main strategies to become solution-oriented:

#### 5 main strategies to become solution-oriented (Dr. Rick Goodman)

<b>1) You look at a problem and see the possible outcomes—the possible <i>future</i></b>	Goodman highlights that it is extremely important to separate your emotions from the problem. “Don’t dwell in the past; start building the future” (Goodman, 2019). Similarly, Jawardena (2022) also underlines that it is very important to identify key inputs to the problem and then, look forward to incorporate the outputs in a rational way. In addition, she also mentions that this should be instilled into the team or class you are part of.
<b>2) You think systematically and strategically.</b>	Dr. Goodman (2019) says that if “You’re at Point A. You need to get to Point B. A solutions-oriented mind immediately starts thinking about methods to close the gap and make that change”. In addition to this aspect, Jawardena (2022) mentions that strategic thinking is about ideas and the systematic review is directly related to the implementation itself.
<b>3) You have little time for excuses</b>	This step is related to the “take responsibility” practice, mentioned on the previous subchapter, because focuses on the importance of people taking responsibilities for their actions and not blaming others for existing problems (Jayawardena, 2022). In this matter, Dr Goodman (2019) says that “the solutions-oriented leader doesn’t care about whose fault it is so much as what can be done to make things right”.
<b>4) You resist problem-oriented questions</b>	When people face a difficulty or are trying to solve a problem, in personal, professional, or educative matters, there is a tendency to make distractive and unnecessary questions. For instance, questioning “why” the situation happened, etc. To reverse that, Goodman (2019) highlights: “The solutions-oriented leader fights these questions, though—because often,



	they just waste time. Focus less on why and more on what do we do now?”
<b>5) You take a collaborative approach</b>	It is safe to say that collaborative work, brainstorm, and dialogue with other people is efficient to find good solutions for any problem. Based on that, Dr. Goodman (2019) says that “the best way to do that [find a way forward] is to pull the whole team together into brainstorming and collaboration”.

Similarly, Amy Q. (2020) also establishes a few actions that are part of the Solution-Oriented initiatives and practices that are useful for leaders, mentees and students and that should be applied in their daily lives or in classrooms:

<b>How to apply Solution-Oriented Problem Solving? (Amy Q.)</b>	
<b>1) Embrace Problems as opportunities</b>	As mentioned on the first subchapter, one of the most important aspects related to Solution-Oriented approach is seeing the problem from other perspective, in order to find a good solution. In fact, it will be easier if the mentor and mentees observe the problem as an opportunity rather than a something dramatic. Based on that, Amy Q. (2020) mentions that “This is something all great leaders in every industry have; the drive to find a solution.”
<b>2) Separate emotions and Admit the Existence of A Problem</b>	On the previous board it was mentioned about the relevance of separating emotions from the problems. However, Amy Q. highlights the value of creating a safe space for people to admit that there’s a problem, or a challenge that needs to be faced. Usually, this kind of environments are created throughout transparency and honesty, two important aspects related to Solution-Oriented Approach (Q., 2020).

Besides the practices mentioned above, there also another important aspect that is extremely important to the practical Solution-Oriented approach, which is the **ability of thinking critically**. When a mentor or a mentee adopt a critical posture, he/she can evaluate, analyze and decide in a fast and clear manner, which is excellent for achieving solutions for different problems (Traver, 2019). Also, people with critical perspectives tend to deep analyze the situations and can easily help to identify the source of the problem, which is important for the elaboration of a useful response.

In a general perspective, the aspects, strategies, and traits mentioned during this chapter are based on specialists’ perspective on what are the necessary practices and mindset for the adoption of the Solution-Oriented approach. Most of the steps mentioned demand a strong mindset towards finding, no matter what, solutions for any situation, and declining the possibility of giving up by facing a hard or complex challenge. However, the indications are not mandatory or strict for the success of the process, but they may help anyone interested in becoming more positive, determined and solution-oriented instead of problem-oriented.



## 9. Examples/suggestions/tips

1)

**Problem:** I don't have enough budget for this event.

**Solution-Oriented thinking:** How can I find ways to make an event that fits my budget?

2)

**Problem:** We don't have enough room for the number of students that want to participate in this workshop. We have to limit the entrance.

**Solution:** How can we guarantee that everyone interested can participate?

3)

**Problem:** Why that only happens to me?

**Solution:** What can I learn from this situation?

4)

**Problem:** My students are failing in my class, they need to study more.

**Solution:** What can I do to help to raise their grades?

## 10. Exercises/practical activities

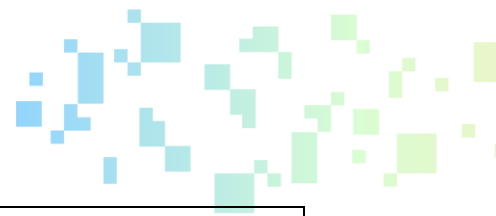
### 10.1. Case Studies:

- **MIRO** <https://miro.com/pt/index/>
- **Strategyzer** <https://www.strategyzer.com/>
- Other case studies and success stories by companies or schools.

### 10.2. Kanban Framework

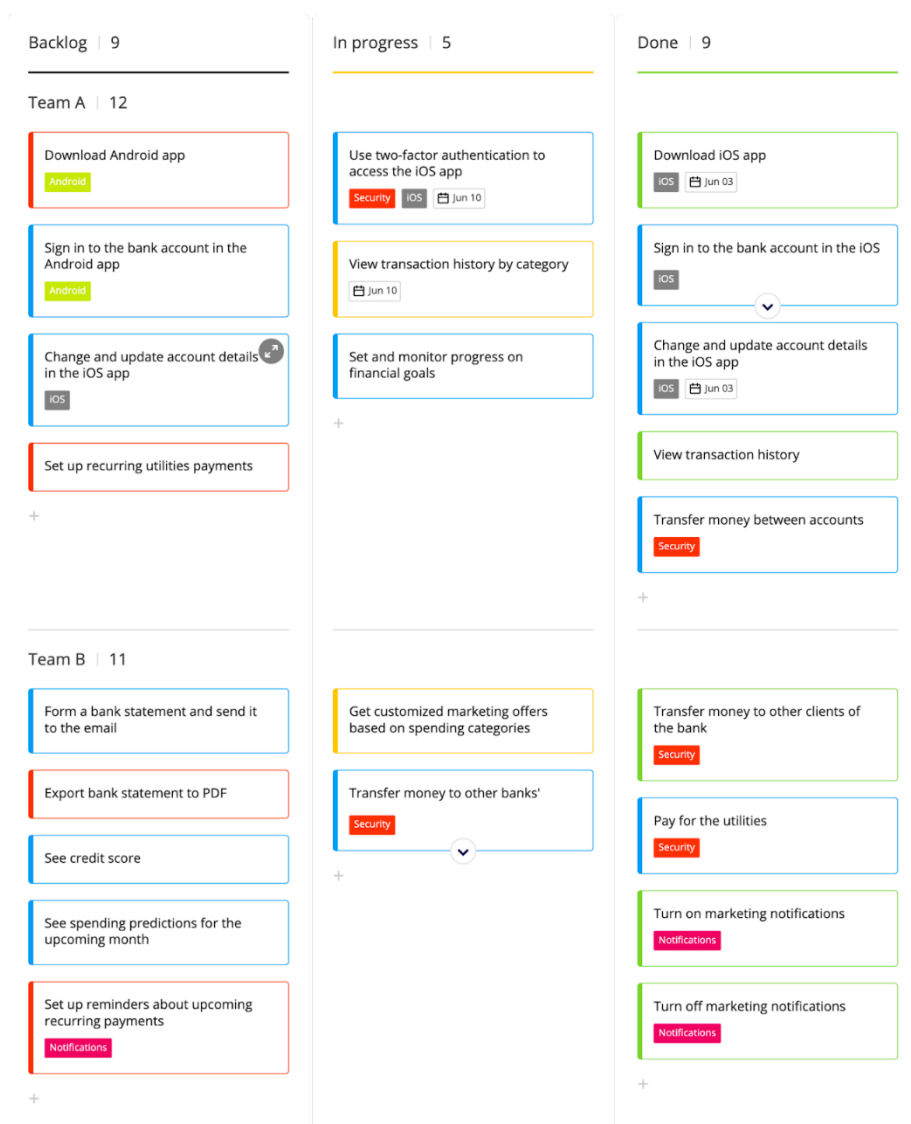
Kanban Framework	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes (after that, periodically, depending on deadlines established).
<b>Objectives</b>	Organize Team tasks in production or development of products/services. Every team member gets an overview of their tasks, responsibilities for a project or class.
<b>Guidance for the implementation</b>	





<b>Materials required</b>	Kanban Template
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start by defining the tasks to be done in a specific project/class. Every member can participate, either by brainstorming together what the tasks should be or individually adding them to the board.</li> <li>2. Assign a deadline to each task and a responsible person.</li> <li>3. Assign a team member to be in charge of keeping everything on track, and to lead the task completion.</li> <li>4. Review the board at every deadline.</li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	<p>Feedback according to the information.</p> <p>Metrics for Task completion, Respect Deadlines.</p>

Kanban Framework Example, Credits: MIRO <https://miro.com>



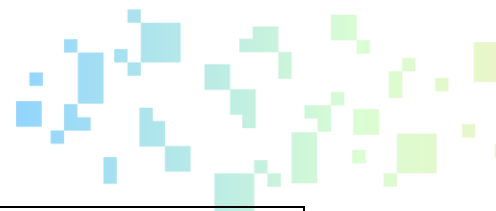
### 10.3. SMART Goals



SMART Goals Example, Credits: Positive Psychology <https://positivepsychology.com/>

(Template in Annex)

SMART Goals	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes (after that, periodically, depending on deadlines established).
<b>Objectives</b>	Organize Team tasks in production or development of products/services.  Every team member gets an overview of their tasks, responsibilities for a project or class.
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	SMART Goals Template
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p><b>1. Firstly, start out by defining answers to the questions below, as per indicated in the template in annex:</b></p> <p><b>S = M = A = R = T =</b>            Specific            Measurable            Attainable/ or Agreed Upon            Realistic            Timely - allowing enough time for achievement</p> <p><b>S</b> - This part of your goal will answer the “What, Why, and How?” of the goal. Ensure goal is an approach vs an avoidance.</p> <p><b>M</b> - Short term goal set to know when the goal has been attained.</p> <p><b>A</b> - Ensure that the goal is hopeful and attainable.</p> <p><b>R</b> - Ensure that the goal is within reach given current skills, resources, and time.</p> <p><b>T</b> - Ensure enough time to achieve the goal. Set smaller goals within the larger goal.</p> <p>+ Accountability - How will you be held accountable for this goal?</p> <p><b>2. Secondly, answer the questions below as part of a second stage of defining what you are doing, and what can you improve to meet your defined goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is my first step I’m willing to take toward my goal?</li> <li>• What am I willing to notice about what is going well? Where will I keep track of what I’m noticing?</li> </ul>



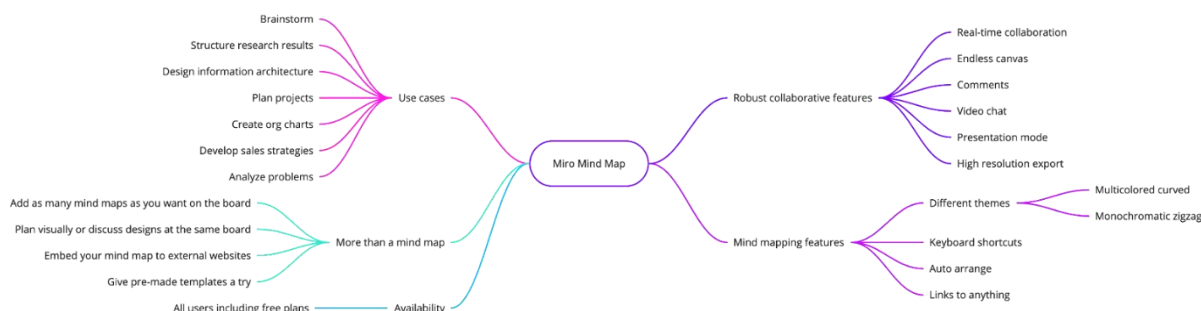
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What experiments am I willing to try?</li> <li>• Who will be my accountability buddy? (someone else in the team assigned to)</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Feedback according to the information. Metrics for Task completion, Respect Deadlines.

#### 10.4. Mind-Mapping

<b>Mind-Mapping</b>	
<b>Duration</b>	45 minutes.
<b>Objectives</b>	Organize visually Team or Individual concepts, ideas or methods.  Every team member gets an overview of their ideas, concepts for a project or class.
<b>Guidance for the implementation</b>	
<b>Materials required</b>	Canvas / Paper Different Coloured Pens Stickers or other office 2D supplies.
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>Mind-Mapping can be a solo, or a team exercise. It is best used, when trying to map out an initial concept or idea for a project, or simply to display visually your ideas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Firstly, start out by defining a main question or topic (in the centre), from which the ramifications of the mind-map can flow.</b></li> <li><b>2. Secondly, add each “branch” a new topic, with sub-topics if needed, and assign a specific colour and shape to it.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different colours can be used.</li> <li>• Different line thickness to indicate hierarchy.</li> <li>• Different visuals, like images, photographs, collages can be added.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Brainstorming together as a team is encouraged, as well as building on top of each other’s ideas.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Team Feedback according to the information.



**Mind-Map Template Example, Credits: MIRO <https://miro.com>**



### 10.5. Point A to Point B Game

Point A to Point B Game	
<b>Duration</b>	15 minutes.
<b>Objectives</b>	Build skills of rapid thinking and creativity. Instant problem solving skills.
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	Canvas / Paper Different Coloured Pens Stickers or other office 2D/3D supplies. Artefacts.
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>The game is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Take 5 minutes to brainstorm with the team or colleagues, an object or being, that needs to be moved from point A to point B. After choosing the object or being, define where exactly is point A and point B.</b> It can be a school, a home, a specific urban or nature place. Different variations of this exercise can be invented and adapted to specific classes or audiences.</li> <li><b>2. Each participant or pair of participants has 5 minutes to come up with as many ideas as possible in order to move said object/being, from point A to point B. You can sketch, roleplay, or even do quick 3D maquettes if you have the time. The goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible, even if they are a bit crazy and intangible.</b></li> <li><b>3. At the end, everyone presents their ideas for discussion in 5 minutes.</b></li> </ol> <p>This is a very fast game, and easy to do and prepare. It encourages people to think outside the box and don't worry too much about the feasibility and technical aspects of their ideas, but rather, prime for creativity and quantity of ideas.</p> <p>This activity is best used as an ice-breaker activity, or an initial stage project game.</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Team Feedback on the ideas presented, and critical analysis.



## 11. Solution oriented thinking: References and Resources:

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### Resources

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<https://blog.trello.com/characteristics-of-solution-oriented-leaders>

<https://www.rovva.com/en-gb/blog/efficiency/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-solutions-oriented>

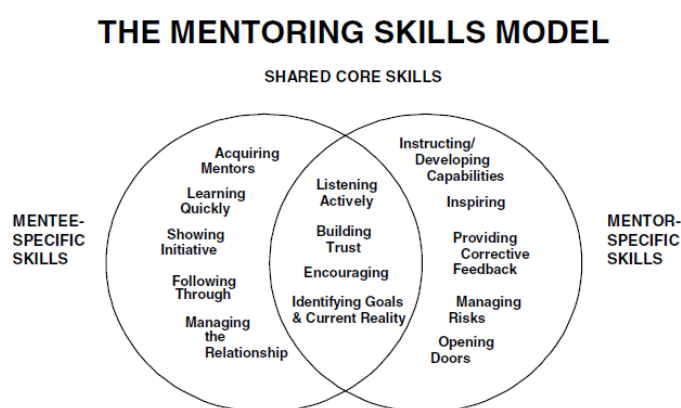
# A4: Communication and Interpersonal skills



## A.4. Communication and Interpersonal Skills

### 12. Communication and interpersonal skills

Image 6: The mentoring Skills model (Phillips-Jones, L. (2003). Skills for successful mentoring: Competencies of outstanding mentors and mentees).



#### 12.1. Active listening

Communication is a key factor for any relationship established between people, including mentors and mentees. What should be considered is that communication is much more than speaking and listening. According to Nordquist (2020), the definition of communication falls under the “exchange of information (a message) between two or more people. For communication to succeed, both parties must be able to exchange information and understand each other. If the flow of information is blocked for some reason or the parties cannot make themselves understood, then communication fails”.

Considering that, this chapter will focus on one of the most basic and important mentoring skills (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 2) and communication practices, that is “Active Listening”. In this stage, the concept of Active Listening will be deeply explained, and some important practices, tips and behaviours will be presented, in order to ensure that mentors improve their communication skills, specially while communicating with mentees and students.

Communicating and hearing what someone has to say may seem like a simple task. However, actively listening to a person demands more attention and engagement from the listener, especially because the human tendency is to hear another person’s thoughts and to apply the topic of conversation on their own lives and, then, reply with the goal of sharing their personal perspective (Linde, sem data). Based on that tendency, the author Phillips-Jones (2003), mentions the significance of resisting that impulse on turning the conversation about you and avoid trying always to find solutions to the problems presented.



It is crucial to comprehend that the basic aspect of Active Listening is to really pay attention to what is being said by the other person (mentee and/or student), with the aim to deeply understand the person's perspective, instead of reflecting your ideas and opinion on it.

Following the same point of view, Cuncic (2022) adds that Active listening is “the process of listening attentively while someone else speaks, paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said, and withholding judgment and advice”(2022). As a result, by adopting an active listening approach you will make the person feel heard and important, no matter the environment (Cuncic, 2022), and demonstrate that their concerns were heard and understood, making them feel accepted (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 2).

Different specialists and researchers have mentioned a set of actions that may help people to practice the Active Listening approach, and those actions can and should be applied during mentorships and even during classes. Accordingly, the list below is based on the some of the tips that Linde (nd) defined that can be helpful for people who are in a mentoring position to connect with their mentees:

- “Focus on what your mentees is saying”. Linde (nd), mentions the importance of not focusing on what to say next, but paying full attention to what the person is expressing, because the rest will happen naturally, including your words.
- “Avoid being judgmental”. Linde (nd) highlights that the mentor doesn't have to, and probably won't always agree with what the mentee is saying, and that is normal. Sometimes you don't have to advise them, just need to listen their point of view.
- “Work hard to build trust”. In this aspect, Linde focuses on the importance of the built of trust between mentors and mentees, to ensure that they can rely on each other, knowing that what they say won't be shared or exposed.
- Look at your mentee when he/she is speaking. In this case, even if the mentee does not look at you, it is important to always try to stablish eye contact with him/her

In parallel, Cuncic (2022) refers that, in order to be an Active Listener, the person needs to:

- “Be Patient”. Cuncic (2022) focuses on the relevance of not interrupting the other person while they are talking. Furthermore, the author also affirms that in active listening, the aim must be to understand what is being said and not on to give the best answer possible.
- “Reflect on what you hear. Paraphrase what the person has said, rather than offering unsolicited advice or opinions”(Cuncic, 2022). In other words, what the author is implying is that you should summarize out loud what you've heard, as a way to reflect what the person have stated, in order to confirm and validate what you understood and what they expressed.

In addition to what was mentioned, Philips-Jones (2003), listed some characteristics that may determine if you are a good listener or not, based on that, we highlight two main aspects. First, the importance of using suitable nonverbal communication, that goes beyond keeping eye contact, including also nodding, leaning toward them, and smiling when appropriate. Secondly, the author also highlights that the listener must demonstrate interest in what the person have said previously, (For instance “By the way, how did the meeting with your manager go?” (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 2)).

In general, active listening is considered, by the specialists, a basic skill for any mentor. Nevertheless, not everyone understands the concept and knows how to do it properly and/or how to avoid natural impulses of reflecting their own experiences and perspectives on what the other person says, which is exactly what this approach tends to avoid. In this sense, active listening is basically focusing 100% on what your mentee is saying, without thinking on what to say next, or how to react, and always providing answers that makes the person feel heard and validated. There are few actions,





mentioned in this chapter, that may support you to actively listen to your mentee, like looking into their eyes, be patient, don't judge and make them trust you, etc.,

## 12.2. Building trust and empathy

Becoming a mentor is an important task, that directly affects the life of the mentors and the mentees, and that is the reason why is so important to provide a few tools and tips that may support building a strong and trustable relationship between mentors and mentees. In point of fact, "the more that your mentors and mentees trust you, the more committed they'll be to your partnerships with them, and the more effective you'll be" (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 3). With this being said, the main goal of this chapter is to provide important information that will help you to build a trustful and empathic relationship with your mentee. In general, people take different times to build trust in relationships, and sometimes, with colleagues and mentors can be hard, due to how distant they may feel from the mentor. In order to facilitate that process among people and to make anyone more trustable, Phillips-Jones (2003) says that it is very important to put in practice the following actions:

- 1) Respect the boundaries established by the mentees;
  - 2) Admit and take responsibility for your mistakes;
  - 3) Keep confidences with some information shared from your mentors and mentees;
  - 4) Respect the promises you make to them;
  - 5) Tactfully share with them when you don't agree or feel uncomfortable with something.
- "Particularly with cross-difference (e.g., gender, culture, style, age) mentoring, trust building is crucial and has to be developed over time." (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 3).

Another important aspect that shouldn't be forgotten is to demonstrate empathy towards your mentee. According with the Cambridge Dictionary, empathy means "the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation" (Nd). In other words, it is trying to walk in someone shoes, understanding their point of view and how they are feeling, and that is considered, by Ariel Ervin (2020) a central component on effective mentoring relationships.

In the same perspective, Bohart et al., defends that "empathy expressed by mentors seemed to similarly illuminate and elevate youths' own strengths (...). Further, mentors' ability to take the youth's perspective and be responsive to their interests and needs may demonstrate to youth that their interests and preferences are important and deserving of respect." (Bohart et al., cit. Ervin, 2020). Although this is focused on young people, these rules can be applied for any mentor and mentees, no matter the age, because everyone have the need to feel understood and validated, particularly by their mentor.

Another aspect that should be considered and that Holyoak (2022) calls attention for is the fact that "everyone is facing new and unique situations", and that's something we should consider every time we communicate with someone, acknowledging that we don't know exactly what the other person is going through and it is important to always practice empathy and respect them, no matter what.

In short, trust and empathy should always be prioritized between mentors and mentees, no matter if the mentee is someone from the same age, younger or older, doesn't matter if it is a colleague of work or a student. Establishing a relationship based on trust and empathy may be a long and hard path but it is worth it, to ensure a health environment and a good communication during the mentorship. As mentioned, to become trustable it is important to respect the limits of the mentee, to



share your ideas in a tactful way and to keep confidence towards any shared information, etc. Additionally, to have empathy towards your mentee and comprehending their struggles and difficulties is another step to a successful mentorship.

### 12.3. Constructive feedback and validation

An important aspect of communication is providing and receiving feedback from the mentor and/or the mentee. Nevertheless, that is not an easy task, because most people don't know how to do it properly or, even, how to receive and lead with constructive feedbacks. In this sense, this chapter aims at explaining the importance of a constructive feedback provided by the mentor, the importance of also asking for assessment and how this should be presented to the mentee, ensuring that they feel validated and respected.

According to J. Fiske (1990 cit. Baltov et al., 2020, p. 37) "feedback is the transmission of a recipients response to the sender of that information, allowing them to adapt to the needs and responses of the interlocutor". In practical terms, the concept of feedback means sharing information regarding the effort or work done by someone in a specific matter, it can be a positive or corrective, but it should always be **constructive**, which means, that it must be for the development and growth of the mentee and not to make him/her feel apprehensive or unmotivated, and that's why mentors need to know how to do it properly.

It should be highlighted that, providing, and receiving feedback is excellent to improve in important areas, sometimes is the only way to figure it out and/or express if something is being done correctly or not. Considering that, B. Townsend Hall (2007) mentions that it is extremely important to get proper feedback, "because merely transmitting information is the wrong position for communication - communication is a two-way process" (Hall, 2007 cit. Baltov et al., 2020, p. 37). Following this perspective, Phillips-Jones (2003) mentions that "effective mentors and mentees are constantly fine-tuning this self-knowledge, incorporating new feedback and observations on a regular basis" (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 4).

Concerning the responsibility of giving feedback to a mentee, Dumitrascu (2021) presents three factors that must be considered in order to provide an effective feedback:

- 1) "Give feedback immediately and regularly": Dumitrascu (2021) explains that if providing and receiving feedback becomes a routine, this practice may lead to a supportive, communicative and cooperative environment for the ones involved.
- 2) "Use a friendly, trustworthy tone": Dumitrascu (2021) highlights that the receiver of the feedback, will only feel supported if they know that the assessment is well-intentioned, and that is why it is so important to use a friendly and kind tone, instead of making an angry or patronizing comment.
- 3) "Use feedback to meet goals": Dumitrascu (2021) affirms that through feedback people can easily understand the existing expectations towards them and how to accomplish them correctly.

Furthermore, Dumitrascu (2021) also presents two types of feedback:

#### a) **Positive Feedback:**

It is necessary to point out the importance of mentees reinforcing positive/good work done by the mentor and/or the mentee. Positive and constant feedback helps the person to keep focused and



motivated on their tasks (Phillips-Jones, 2003). Additionally, positive feedback may foster or maintain positive behavior (Dumitrascu, 2021).

### b) Corrective Feedback

Positive and honest feedback is very important but sometimes it may be necessary to give corrective feedback to your mentee, especially if they've done something less desirable. When that happens, the mentor must be direct and let him/her know what they've done wrong. Nevertheless, the mentor can't just inform the less desirable aspects, him/her must indicate the possible solutions and best way to act in the respective situations in the future (Phillips-Jones, 2003).

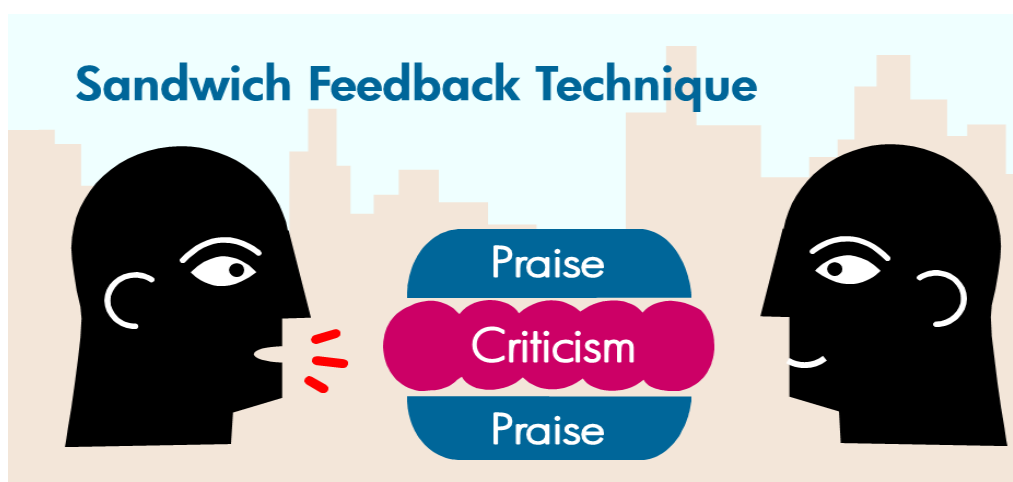
In this matter, Phillips-Jones (2003), mentions the possibility of the mentor discussing with the mentee "if and how they'd like to receive this feedback. People are more willing to hear corrective feedback if they've given permission and know in advance it's coming" (Phillips-Jones, 2003, p. 5). In this perspective, Phillips-Jones (2003) call attention for a few actions that should be put in practice while giving corrective feedback:

- Choose to use positive, non-derogatory, words and a specific tone of voice if something unsatisfactory happened;
- The corrective feedback should be given in private;
- Give feedback as soon as the situation occurred;
- Give specific feedback, instead of a vague one;

Offer useful solutions and suggestions for their improvement, offering support when the situation happens again in the future. It is also relevant to underline that presenting corrective feedback is harder than providing a positive one. Based on that, Dumitrascu (2021) highlights that sometimes the person who is receiving the feedback may take the comments in the wrong way and due to that, mentors need to be careful on how to mention the constructive critics. Based on that, "some types of responses are always inappropriate, such as belittling the recipient, becoming abusive, or commenting on irrelevancies. Instead of giving feedback, you're stirring up trouble" (Dumitrascu, 2021).

If you feel like you have hard time to provide honest corrective feedback, you can use the Sandwich Feedback Technique:

**Image 7: Sandwich Feedback Technique** (Belludi, N. (2008). How to Give A Compliment Sandwich Feedback. Right Attitudes. (<https://www.RightAttitudes.com/2008/02/20/sandwich-feedback->)





The Sandwich feedback is a very popular technique, based on three-steps procedures. This approach consists in providing, first, a praise, then a corrective feedback, and to finalize add another praise (Belludi, 2008). This is useful to make this process easier for the mentor but also for the mentee, by creating a conversation where both aspects, positive and negative, will be pointed out, leading to the mentee to understand where he/she is going well but also where he/she needs to improve.

In a general perspective, it is possible to visualize that feedback is a key aspect of communication between any mentor with its mentee or student. However, it not an easy process, full of communication and techniques that needs to assure that the mentees always feel validated and respected, receiving positive or corrective feedback, without forgetting that in both cases, the feedback must be always constructive. Accordingly, providing, receiving, and asking for feedback should be implemented as a routine during the mentorship stage, in order to ensure a safe and growing environment for everyone involved.

#### 12.4. Conflict management and Flexibility

Diving into the deeps of communication abilities between mentors and mentees, leads to the inevitable topic about conflicts and flexibility. These topics are part of the complex side of communication and interpersonal skills, where mentors and mentees need to know how to face and solve specific conflicts that may happen in a flexible and respectful way, and the purpose of this chapter is to guarantee that, as a mentor, you will know how to react when a conflictful moment happens, or even, how to avoid it.

Hudson on his study about “Conflicts and conflict resolution strategies in mentor-mentee relationships” (2014), highlights that conflicts between mentors and mentee can be considered “a major obstacle to the formation of productive mentoring relationship”(Hudson, 2014, p. 5), and that is why is so important to talk about this aspect and to present possible skills to manage conflicts with wisdom. Also, the author underlines the fact that sometimes conflicts between mentors and mentees happens due to misperceptions of each other’s characteristics, developing negative emotions and feelings between them.

Considering the negative impact of unsolved conflicts, a few researchers have provided some tips that may be useful for mentors to lead with conflictful circumstances. For instance, Caroll, on her article about “How to Address Conflicts or Concerns in a Mentor-Mentee Relationship”(2013) presented a few options, and, similarly, Feldman and Kahn in the article “Making the most of conflicting advice from mentors” (2020), did the same. Based on their perspective, it will be highlighted the most interesting practices for mentors:

- **Conflicts should be solved face-to-face** between the persons involved. “This allows both people to address the issue in “real time” and increases the chances that it can be resolved at a faster pace. Written communication all too often can be misinterpreted and lead to further escalation of the issue” (Caroll, 2013). If you are mentoring at distance and is not possible to meet face-to-face you should organise an online meeting to discuss some ideas and clear misunderstood with your mentee.
- If the discussion is not going to be solved easily, **you can invite someone from outside the situation to mediate the conversation**. “Sometimes having a third party hear both sides of the story can help in making headway with the issue” (Caroll, 2013).
- People have the tendency to avoid conflicts, however, this kind of circumstances may be a good opportunity to grow and learn something. In light of that, Caroll (2013), advice that, **after**



**the situation is solved, both mentors and mentees, should look back and analyse the issue in order to search for the existing lessons behind it.**

- It is important to recognize that your mentee will look for other opinions and ideas that may be different from yours. In this sense, Feldman et al., suggested that, as a mentor you can “**communicate** that you are glad they are seeking multiple viewpoints. Be clear that you are open to hearing about and discussing other mentors’ ideas. And be willing to shift your own perspective based on what you learn about others’ guidance” (Feldman & Kahn, 2020).
- **A two-way debate it is expected and appreciated**, and that’s an idea that the mentor should make it clear to the mentee since the beginning of the mentorship. The mentee needs to comprehend that their relationship will “stay strong regardless of the decision they make. Show them that you support their efforts to make a decision for themselves” (Feldman & Kahn, 2020).

As previously stated, conflict is an inevitable event that can happen between the mentor and the mentee, and it is the responsibility of the mentor to ensure that the conflict will be used as a lesson and will make their relationship grow in a good way. But this can only happen if the mentor is flexible, reasonable, patient, and respectful with the other part.

If and/or when a conflict happens, it is important to put in practice everything that you’ve learned in this chapter, from active listening to empathy and trust, because a conflict may be a hard obstacle to overcome if both parts don’t know how to solve the situation. Knowing how to manage a conflict can make life more pleasant not only during mentorship but with any relationship established in your life.

## 13. Exercises/practical activities

### 13.1. Icebreaker – visit card

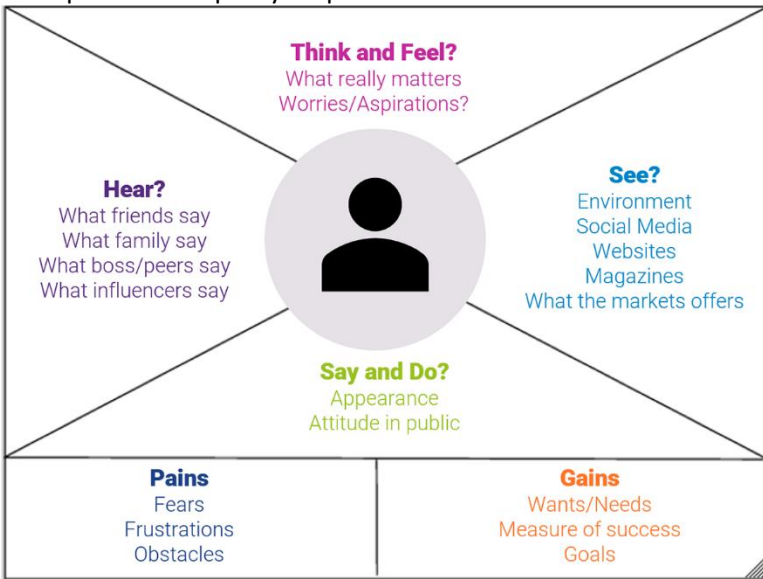
Icebreaker – visit card	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes (5+10+10+5)
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>The main objective of this dynamic is the self and hetero knowledge of the participants.</p> <p>At the same time, it is intended to create a positive and informal atmosphere among the participants, as well as a greater awareness of active listening skills.</p>
<b>Guidance for the implementation</b>	
<b>Materials required</b>	<p>Visit card template</p> <p>Pen or pencil</p> <p>Enough space for conversation in pairs</p>
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>The trainer presents the theoretical rationale of the dynamics, briefly explaining what the activity consists of, not revealing all the information and objectives of the activity. The trainer introduces the activity saying that it is an activity with the objective of increasing knowledge among the trainees. There are essentially 4 steps in this dynamic:</p> <p><b>1 - Presentation of the activity by the trainer and completion of the business card by the trainee:</b></p>



	<div data-bbox="405 203 1337 723"> </div> <p>a) In the center of the business card they must write the name by which they would like to be called in this training</p> <p>b) In the upper left corner they must write a name of a color or colors</p> <p>c) In the upper right corner, write the name of an adjective/verb that is related to you</p> <p>d) In the lower left corner you should write/remember a remarkable and significant episode in your life (that can be shared)</p> <p>e) In the lower right corner you should think of a symbol/metaphor that can represent you (people who know you well would know that this metaphor/symbol is in fact associated with you)</p> <p><b>2 - Presentation of the business card to the designated pair</b>  The trainer creates pairs of trainees (it is important that the pairs do not know each other) and gives them 6 minutes to introduce each other, based on the business card. They must do this task in a place that is spacious enough so that others cannot hear the conversation. When the presentation is over, they should fold the paper into four parts and put it in their pocket.</p> <p><b>3 - The presentation to the large group of the designated colleague</b>  After everyone is finished, we gather everyone back together in a large group and ask each member to introduce their partner (no one can see the "business card" again or ask questions to their partner). Each one is given 30" for this task</p> <p><b>4 - Individual and large group reflection</b>  The trainer points out important aspects of the dynamics that involve the need for active listening, personal filters, memory, the questions to be asked, the thoughts, behaviors and emotions involved.  What do we now know about ourselves?  What do we know about each other?  What is my communication style?  What areas should I invest in?  What hasn't been said but what I've read about the other?  ...</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Feedback and feedforward in general.



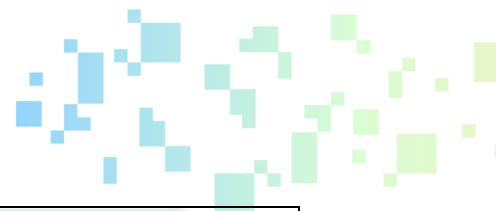
### 13.2. Building trust and empathy













Empathy map	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	Create a shared understanding of someone needs Aid in decision making Develop empathy
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	<p>Example of an empathy map</p> 
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>Define scope and goals for the activity.</p> <p>Gather materials. Your purpose should dictate the medium you use to create an empathy map.</p> <p>Individually generate sticky notes for each quadrant.</p> <p>Converge to cluster and synthesize.</p> <p>Polish and plan.</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Feedback according to the information defined in each component.

### 13.3. Exercise 3 - constructive feedback and validation

Six Thinking hats	
<b>Duration</b>	60 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	Promote the communication of different problems and ideas develop feedback ability
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	Image of 6 hats of different colours (white, red, green, yellow, blue, purple)





	<div> <div> <div>PROCESS</div> <div>  <p><b>Blue Hat - Process</b> Thinking about thinking. What thinking is needed? Organizing the thinking. Planning for action.</p> </div> </div> <div> <div>FACTS</div> <div>  <p><b>White Hat - Facts</b> Information and data. Neutral and objective. What do I know? What do I need to find out? How will I get the information I need?</p> </div> </div> <div> <div>FEELINGS</div> <div>  <p><b>Red Hat - Feelings</b> Intuition, hunches, gut instinct. My feelings right now. Feelings can change. No reasons are given.</p> </div> </div> <div> <div>CREATIVITY</div> <div>  <p><b>Green Hat - Creativity</b> Ideas, alternatives, possibilities. Solutions to black hat problems.</p> </div> </div> <div> <div>BENEFITS</div> <div>  <p><b>Yellow Hat - Benefits</b> Positives, plus points. Why an idea is useful. Logical reasons are given.</p> </div> </div> <div> <div>CAUTIONS</div> <div>  <p><b>Black Hat - Cautions</b> Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers. Spotting the risks. Logical reasons are given.</p> </div> </div> </div> <p>For the exercise the hats should be physically or should be printed to create different experiences. The following image can be used:</p> <div> <div>  <p>Managing the Thinking Process</p> </div> <div>  <p>Information</p> </div> <div>  <p>Intuition and Feelings</p> </div> <div>  <p>Benefits and Feasibility</p> </div> <div>  <p>Caution, Risks, Problems</p> </div> <div>  <p>Alternatives and Creative Ideas</p> </div> </div>
<p><b>Methodology to implement and develop</b></p>	<p>The problem is divided into its different aspects (hats). At each moment, the mentor "puts on" the hat chosen by the facilitator and directs his thinking according to the point of view determined by the colour of the hat.</p> <p>Blue: When you are in blue hat mode, you focus on controlling your thinking and managing the decision-making process. You have an agenda, ask for summaries, and reach conclusions.</p> <p>Green: The green hat represents creative thinking. When you are "wearing" this hat, you explore a range of ideas and possible ways forward.</p> <p>Red: This hat represents feelings and instincts. When you are engaged in this type of thinking, you can express your feelings without having to justify them logically.</p> <p>Yellow: With yellow hat thinking, you look at issues in the most positive light possible. You accentuate the benefits and the added value that could come from your ideas</p> <p>Black: This hat is about being cautious and assessing risks. You employ critical judgment and explain exactly why you have concerns.</p> <p>White: The white hat represents information gathering. Think about the knowledge and insights that you have collected already – but also the information you are missing, and where you can go to get it.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b></p>	<p>Feedback and feedforward in general.</p>





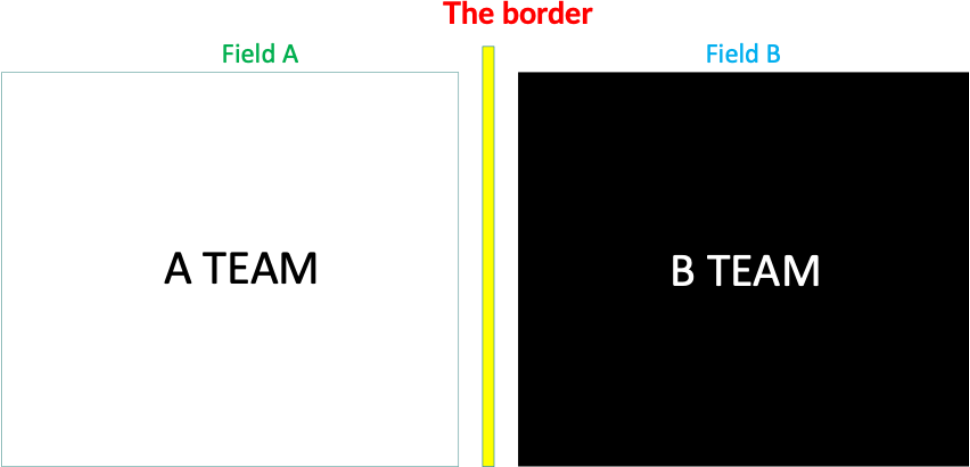
### 13.4. Reflected best-self feedback

Reflected best-self feedback	
<b>Duration</b>	60 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	Promote feedback Identify and understand your unique strengths and talents
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	Case description
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask 10 persons in your relationships (e.g. colleagues, supervisors, friends, family members) to identify their strengths and describe specific examples and situations in which these strengths were revealed. The request can be made by e-mail.</li> <li>2. Analyse the data, trying to find the main sources described by the interlocutors. Create a table with three columns. In the first column put the strength identified, in the second insert examples of these strengths, and in the third write your interpretation of the accounts.</li> <li>3. Compose your self-portrait. Complete sentences such as "when I am at my best, I am able to...", "whenever I use my strengths properly, I am able to...", "I get excellent results from my team when...", "using my greatest strengths as a leader, I am able to...".</li> <li>4. Redefine your goals and working strategies in the light of the strengths identified. Reflect on the ways in which you can change the way you do your job. Think about the ways in which you can redesign your role in the organisation. Think about how you can foster enthusiasm in your team and those around you. Use your strengths to develop yourself and to improve your life and the lives of others!</li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Feedback according the information.

### 13.5. Border exercise

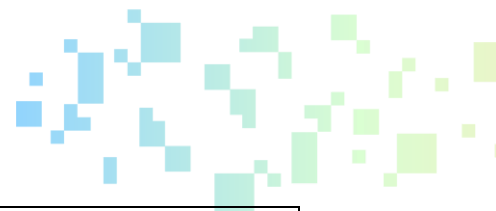
Border exercise	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Train conflict management and negotiation skills</li> <li>- Identify and analyze a problem</li> <li>- Develop exploratory and assertive communication attitude</li> </ul>
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 teams</li> <li>• 2 fields</li> <li>• 1 border</li> </ul>



<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>1 – Create 2 teams, and explain that the team A is in the field A and the team B in the field B (3')</p> <p>2 – Team A stays in the room and team B is taken out of the room, being told that they will win this challenge if they can convince the other team to change from field A to field B.</p> <p>Team B is given 3 minutes to think of strategies to win.</p> <p>While team B thinks about its strategy, the trainer returns to the room and gives team A the objective "Convince team B to move to field A". Give also 3 minutes for team A to plan their strategy. (3')</p> <p>3 – Each team need to prepare the strategy (in diferentes spaces) PLAN (6')</p> <p>4 – The teams are in position in each field and have do put the strategy in action (first A team and after B team) OPEN (6')</p> <p>5 – The teams can ask Questions and Bargain TRADE (3')</p> <p>6 – The teams need to have a solution AGREE (3')</p> <p>7 – The teams need to Act after the decision CLOSE (1')</p> <p>8 – AFTER ACTION REVIEW/REFLEXION (5')</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	<p>Win-Win, Win – Lose or Lose – Lose attitude?</p> <p>Trust? Aggressivity? Assertiveness?</p> <p>Is the solution incompatible?</p> <p>Cooperation or competitiveness?</p>

### 13.6. Conflict management

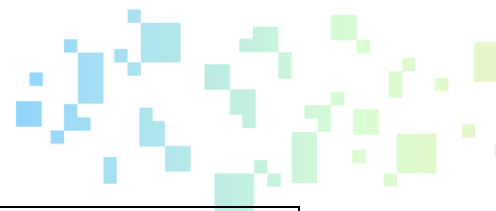
Main responsability	
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Develop negotiation skills</p> <p>Promote problem analysis from different perspectives</p> <p>Differentiate conflicts and its origins</p>
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	Case study



<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>Case description:</p> <p>Isabel started working 3 months ago in an event management and organisation company. She is married and has a son aged about 1 year. At night she is quite tired, because during the day she works with her utmost commitment and dedication, as she really wants to grab this opportunity. After all, this is her first job after maternity. When she applied, it was explained to her that she would not need to work on weekends, which clearly influenced her decision to choose this job offer over another. For the last month or so, your superior has asked you to go to work in the morning on most Saturdays, but you only get this request on Fridays, even in the late afternoon. She is paid overtime, but Isabel is not satisfied because this request has always been made at short notice, repeatedly, and is not in accordance with the working conditions initially defined. Managing the family dynamic has not been easy and has even generated some conflicts with her husband.</p> <p>The facilitator should make some questions to analyse the case such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Type(s) of conflict(s) experienced by Isabel;</li> <li>b) Background of the conflict(s);</li> <li>c) Define different strategies and styles of conflict management, identifying their consequences.</li> </ul>
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### 13.7. The old woman and the back young man

The old woman and the back young man	
<b>Duration</b>	40 minutes
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Know your personal filters, lack of perception and attributional cause</li> <li>- Think critically about the causes of the existing conflicts</li> <li>- Practice assertiveness skills</li> </ul>
Guidance for the implementation	
<b>Materials required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slides</li> <li>• Projector</li> <li>• Blank sheets</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology to implement and develop</b>	<p>1 – Put the slide 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The old lady and the young black man</b></p> <p>An old lady is in a self-service.</p> <p>She approaches the counter and orders a plate of soup.</p> <p>She pays for what she ordered and takes her tray to a table.</p> <p>Then sits down.</p> <p>She realizes that she did not buy bread.</p> <p>She gets up and comes back to the counter, buys bread, pays for it and returns to the table.</p> <p>Then sees, with surprise, that a black man is serenely eating the soup.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What would you do if you were the lady?</p>



	<p>2 – Give 1' for each participant write a reaction if in the old lady role (as individual and to not share in this moment)</p> <p>3 – Put in small groups 4/5 participants sharing the responses and analyse them (6')</p> <p>4 – In Big group the spokesperson shares the synthesis of the debate (3')</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The old lady and the young black man (...)</b></p> <p>The old lady said to herself, "I won't let myself be robbed."</p> <p>She then decides to sit in front of the young man, part the bread into pieces, put them into the plate and start eating quickly. They eat from the plate, alternately, until they are over. Then the man gets up and comes back, shortly after, with an abundant plate of spaghetti and... two forks... They both eat the same plate of spaghetti, each in turn. When they are done, the man gets up and, after wishing the lady a good day, begins to walk to the exit door. The astonished Lady stares at the young man on his way out.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What would you do if you were the young man?</p> <p>5 - Put the slide 2 (1')</p> <p>6 – Give 1 minute for each participant write a reaction if in the young black man role (as individual and to not share in this moment)</p> <p>7 – Put in small groups 4/5 participants sharing the responses and analyse them (6')</p> <p>8 – In Big group the spokesperson shares the synthesis of the debate (3')</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The old lady and the young black man (...)</b></p> <p>When the old woman gets up to shout "Thief", she realizes that two tables in front was a tray with a plate of cold soup.</p> <p>And in front of the table a chair with her suitcase.</p> <p>She had made a mistake at the table when she came back from buying the bread.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AFTER ACTION REVIEW</b></p> <p>9 – Put the slide 3 (1')</p> <p>10 – In Big group all participants have a reflexion (14')</p> <p>11 – The facilitator have a final conclusion about the causes of the conflict and give some strategies to coping (5')</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Feedback</b>	Feedback according to the information.

## 14. Communication and interpersonal skills: references



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