

# The Mentee Playbook

*A guide to evolving in your partnership with a Mentor*



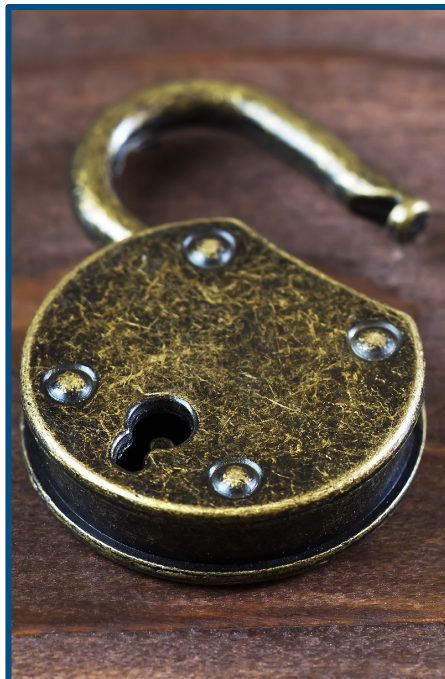
# The Mentoring Relationship

*A reciprocal relationship between two people, where one person is in a position to help unlock the highest potential of the other.*



1. Connect with ease.
2. Trustworthy.
3. Credible.
4. Inquisitive.
5. Engaged.
6. Insightful.
7. Generous.
8. Courageous.
9. Accountable.
10. Make the uncomfortable... comfortable.

*The Mentor's role is to serve as a catalyst.*

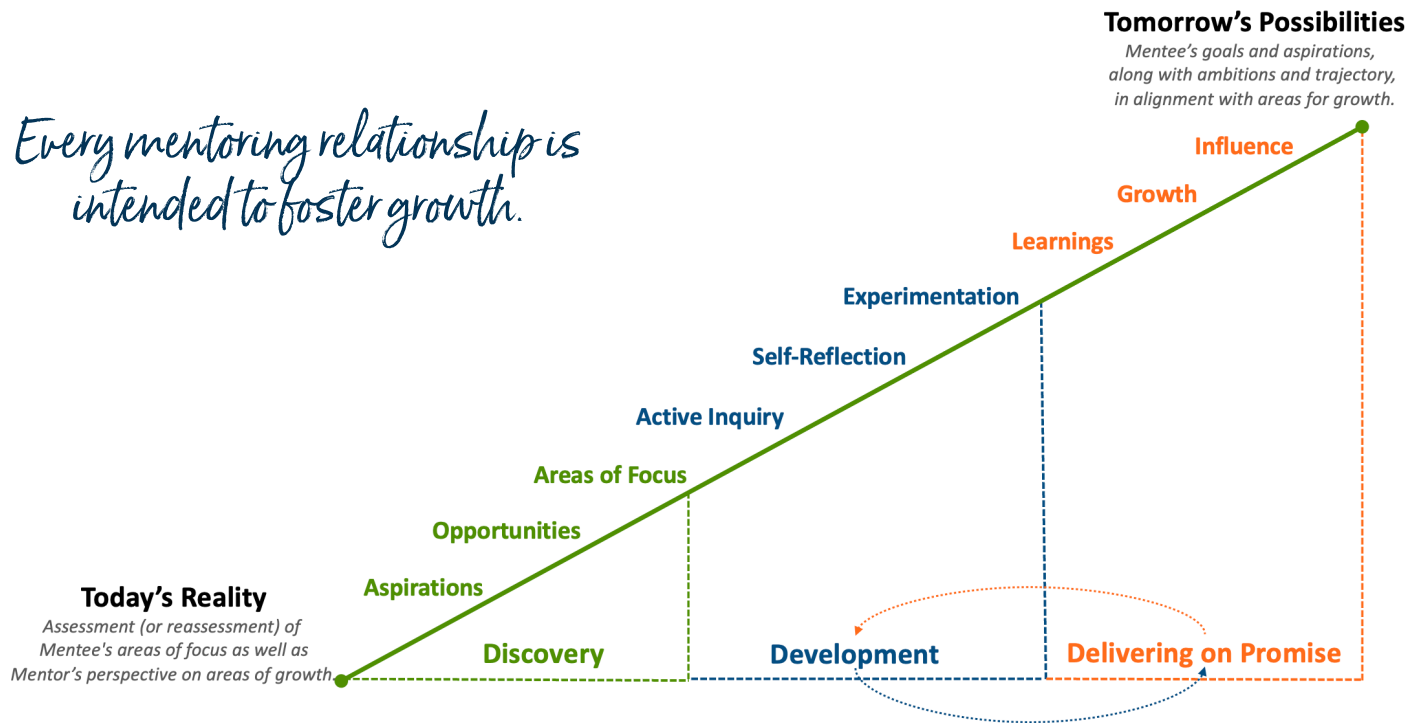


1. Aspirational.
2. Hungry.
3. Focused.
4. Candid and open.
5. Self-reflective.
6. Curious.
7. Receptive.
8. Active.
9. Courageous.
10. Accountable.

*The Mentee's role is to commit and evolve.*

# The Mentorship Journey

Every mentoring relationship is intended to foster growth.



Both the Mentor and Mentee have specific responsibilities to that end.

	Mentor	Mentee
Delivering On The Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish <b>trust</b> early in the relationship.</li> <li>✓ Explore the <b>aspirations</b> of the mentee.</li> <li>✓ Guide mentee to set meaningful, actionable <b>goals</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish <b>trust</b> early in the relationship.</li> <li>✓ Be thoughtful in advance about <b>aspirations</b>.</li> <li>✓ Expect to jointly define areas of focus and <b>goals</b>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create a <b>structured approach</b> for discussions.</li> <li>✓ Create and maintain the <b>Red Thread</b>.</li> <li>✓ Use <b>active inquiry</b> for meaningful dialogue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Take <b>clear and direct action</b> toward goals.</li> <li>✓ Reflect on <b>discussions and experimentation</b> for insight.</li> <li>✓ Challenge <b>conscious and unconscious</b> inhibitors to growth.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask how <b>reflections</b> are turning to action.</li> <li>✓ Ask about <b>wins</b> that are reflective of progress.</li> <li>✓ Connect the dots to <b>leverage insights further</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Proactively <b>identify challenges</b> in applying insights.</li> <li>✓ Share <b>successes, large and small</b>, around shifts.</li> <li>✓ Revisit progress as part of your <b>leadership rhythm</b>.</li> </ul>

# The Mentee's Quick Guide

*On this page you'll find the quick guide to position your mentoring relationship for success, along with links to more detail.*

## *Establish Trust*

We often place great responsibility on the Mentor to establish trust with Mentees. They may or may not excel in that regard. As a Mentee, you have the ability to set the tone for trust in your relationship. This can be achieved initially as a relationship forms or reestablished over time. [Click here for guidance on how to establish trust early and often.](#)

## *Agree on Focus and Goals*

The only way your Mentor can be a catalyst for growth on your behalf is if you have clarity on the growth you hope to achieve. You owe it to yourself and your Mentor to be clear on your opportunities for growth and development as a leader and continue to expand your view on this over time. [Click here for insight on identifying growth goals.](#)

## *Structure the Engagement*

Mentoring relationships can have a great deal of variability in terms of time investment and logistics. The key is that both parties are fully vested in the process, focused on achievement of growth and development goals, and demonstrating a commitment to each other on a consistent basis. [Click here for logistical elements to consider.](#)

## *Maintain A Growth Plan*

Once you've defined your goals, or at least directional focus for your mentoring relationship, you'll need a plan that allows you to capture insights and takeaways, identify actions and experiments, and track your development and conversations with continuity. Think of this as a consolidated roadmap and plan. [Click here for considerations.](#)

## *Commit To A Growth Mindset*

As leaders we all have opportunities to grow and develop. As we identify and understand those opportunities, it's easy to feel like the work is almost done – now I know. To actually grow, develop and expand our influence over time we have to invest energy in a focused and committed way. [Click here for guidance on the 'how.'](#)

## *Use Creative Approaches*

If you aren't clear on your opportunities for growth, or how to pursue them, you may want to engage your Mentor in a way that is more practical and pragmatic. These creative approaches allow your Mentor to react in a more specific way, which they may find easier. It also opens up entirely new possibilities for you to explore. [Click here for innovative ideas.](#)

## *Address What's Not Working*

The Mentor/Mentee relationship isn't always smooth sailing. It's common to hit a rough patch with regard to momentum toward achieving goals. Resets are needed on occasion. [Click here for guidance on common challenges.](#)

# Establish Trust

## (Early and Often)

*Trust is essential to your mentoring relationship. You play a role in fostering it.*

### Context

We often place great responsibility on the Mentor to establish trust with Mentees. They may or may not excel in that regard. As a Mentee, you have the ability to set the tone for trust in your relationship. This can be achieved initially as a relationship forms or reestablished over time.

### Action

Establishing trust starts with protecting time scheduled with your Mentor on the calendar whenever possible and demonstrating your appreciation for their investment of time in your growth. Not with words, but with actions.

#### Talk About Mentoring and Your Relationship

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Ask your Mentor: Have you had a Mentor previously?  
 What was key to you getting the most out of that relationship?  
 What ideas do you have about how you'd like us to work together?  
 How do you think about success relative to our engagement?

#### Share What You Hope to Gain

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Share early thoughts about your growth goals and aspirations.  
 Demonstrate vulnerability by sharing known areas for development.  
 Let your Mentor know you'd like to be challenged and explore blind spots.  
 Describe the level of commitment your Mentor can expect from you.

#### Show Genuine Interest In Your Mentor

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Look for opportunities to learn more about your Mentor.  
 (Blogs, articles, media features, quarterly calls, books on their shelves, peers.)  
 Ask about your Mentor's career and journey over time.  
 Inquire about interesting choices or unusual paths they've taken.

#### Acknowledge Similarities and Differences

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Acknowledge as you learn: Interesting that we have these things in common...  
 These experiences are unique, and we can learn from each other...  
 Commit to honor your more overt differences (gender, ethnicity).  
 Reflect back to your Mentor your appreciation and openness to learn.

*Your willingness to be vulnerable and ask your Mentor to challenge you opens the door for trust.*

As you continue to work together, commit to your partnership by investing fully, sharing your reflections and learning, and applying new perspectives in your role. This will continually reinforce trust and appreciation.

# Agree On Focus and Goals

*The foundation for any mentoring relationship is clear focus:  
Why are we here? What growth am I hoping to achieve?*

## Context

The only way your Mentor can be a catalyst for growth on your behalf is if you have clarity on the growth you hope to achieve. We are all a work-in-progress. You owe it to yourself and your Mentor to be clear on your opportunities for growth and development as a leader and continue to expand your view on this over time.

## Action

### Aspirations and Visioning

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What matters most to you in your professional life?  
 What roles attract you as you look to the future?  
 What haven't you experienced yet that you'd like to?  
 What's your vision for yourself?  
 What do you want to be known for?  
 What's the legacy you hope to leave behind?  
 What fires you up, sparks your energy and enthusiasm?  
 Describe your life at your most successful and fulfilled.

### Leveraging Skills and Talents

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What are your greatest strengths?  
 What unique talents do you bring to the table?  
 What are your greatest achievements so far?  
 What are you most proud of personally?  
 What adjectives describe you at your best?  
 What do others compliment you on?  
 Do you use your strengths in your current role?  
 How might you leverage your strengths more?

### Potential Skill Development

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What qualities do you most admire in others?  
 What existing skills do you hope to improve?  
 What new skills would you like to develop?  
 What shifts might serve you well?  
 What is the company asking for you to develop?  
 What challenges you most in your current role?  
 What might your next role require of you?  
 If you could improve in one area, what would it be?

### Known Opportunities for Growth

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What feedback have you consistently received?  
 Which growth area has proven most challenging?  
 How might you contribute more in your role?  
 What gets in the way of you being at your best?  
 What situations most challenge your confidence?  
 How might you need to be more courageous?  
 What would your leader say is an opportunity for you?  
 What might your team like to see you develop?

*The End Game: What goals do you want to work toward?  
How will you know if you're successful?*

# Structure The Engagement

*Every mentoring engagement requires an agreed upon approach that meets the needs of both Mentor and Mentee.*

## Context

Mentoring relationships can have a great deal of variability in terms of time investment and logistics. The key is that both parties are fully vested in the process, focused on achievement of growth and development goals, and demonstrating a commitment to each other on a consistent basis.

## Action

Take time up front, and revisit frequently, what may be best for the engagement.

### Frequency

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How often will we meet formally?  
 How much time should we schedule?  
 Will we meet in person, via phone or video?  
 Do we want to interact for on-the-job mentoring?

### Communications

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Will we touch base in between formal meetings?  
 What might trigger a touch-base?  
 What is the preferred method? Email, text, call.  
 If we need to reschedule, how will we handle it?

### Meeting Dynamics

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What expectations do we have for our time together?  
 How will we hold each other accountable?  
 What will we do to prepare for our meetings?  
 How will we track our progress for continuity?

### Evaluating Our Success

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How will we define success for our engagement?  
 What does a successful meeting look like?  
 How will we handle it if we aren't feeling aligned?  
 If one of us feels we're not a good match, what then?

*The Result: clear, aligned relationship expectations and a plan to manage any rough spots that surface.*

# Maintain A Growth Plan

*View your mentoring relationship as a journey vs. a series of transactional discussions, with a roadmap and plan that evolves over time.*

## Context

Once you've defined your goals, or at least directional focus for your mentoring relationship, you'll need a plan that allows you to capture insights and takeaways, identify actions and experiments, and track your development and conversations with continuity. Think of this as a consolidated roadmap and plan.

## Items to Consider

### Your Growth Opportunity(s)

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As you begin or reset a mentoring relationship, the starting point of your plan is a clear assessment (for your eyes only) of *where you are today and where you hope to be moving forward*. This can include preparing for a change in role, new skills and competencies, leadership confidence or acuity, overcoming barriers that are inhibiting your success, consistent points of failure and/or improvements in relationships. (And more.) The key is to know what you hope will be *different and better* as a result of your mentoring relationship. Extra credit: Try to connect to how you'll feel day-to-day or in a general sense when you've experienced this growth. Connecting to that feeling will be your motivation to invest fully in the process.

### Situations, Scenarios, and Discussions

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As you engage with your Mentor, you will likely be sharing specific situations or scenarios that center around your opportunity for growth. Document them as they surface in your mentoring roadmap, so you keep all of your discussion points in one place. As you discuss and receive advice or gain insight from your Mentor, set aside time to document key takeaways or insights after your meetings. As you look back over time, you'll start to see consistent themes and insights that relate. This is a powerful part of the learning journey. You'll also see your perspective changes over time and situations that once challenged you no longer carry the same power.

### Actions, Experiments, Reflections

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As you walk away from every mentoring discussion, you should have a commitment to consider the advice provided, change an unhealthy mindset or pattern of thought, try a new approach, or experiment with a new skill or technique. Core to your growth is taking action, from nuanced shifts in thinking to fundamental changes in behavior. If you find yourself walking away from discussions feeling inspired and knowledgeable, but without a commitment to do anything differently... there's a good chance you're not going deep enough or committing fully to *growth in action*. Agree with your Mentor on what you'll think about, act upon, or experiment with. Share your results and insights in your next discussion. Every conversation will build on the last.

*Commit to your growth plan as you would success in any other facet of your role.*



# Commit To A Growth Mindset

*A great Mentor, a solid plan for growth and meetings on the calendar only take you so far. You have to do the work.*

## *Context*

As leaders we all have opportunities to grow and develop. As we identify and understand those opportunities, it's easy to feel like the work is almost done – now I know. To actually grow, develop and expand our influence over time we have to invest time and energy in a focused and committed way.

### *1. Connect Concepts and Actions*

One of the most challenging aspects of growth is to move beyond the concept of potential shifts that would benefit you to actually materializing the shifts. The key here is specificity. In your conversations with your Mentor, take the time to translate concepts into action. What specifically might you do differently? What technique might garner better results? How might you think about something differently so you can get out of your own way? Linger here until you have a way to experiment.

### *2. Reflect, Reflect, Reflect*

Your Mentor at their best will challenge your thinking and your actions in a way that allows you to see a different path or perspective. Be sure to ask for this and hold your Mentor accountable to entice you from your comfort zone. You can prompt this with 'Is there another way I could be thinking about this?' or 'Why am I not getting the best outcome here?'. Ask yourself these types of questions as well. As you look back on your conversations, insights and takeaways, reflect on what you've learned and where you may be stalled and unable to move past a roadblock. This isn't about journaling. It's about setting aside dedicated time to think and consider what showing up with more influence could look like for you.

### *3. Don't Let Yourself Off Easy*

It's important that you not take the easy way out. While our circumstances and relationships may prove challenging, much of the time it's our perceptions or approaches that allow those situations to influence our success. Challenge yourself directly on what role you may be playing in a less than ideal situation or relationship. Don't stop until you can name it. Go deep to identify potential biases in play or blind spots. The best way to do this is to pretend you're an uninterested party and assess from that vantage point. If your colleague was experiencing what you are, what insights might you have? Doing the work is about holding up a mirror even when it isn't easy to do so.

# Use Creative Approaches

*Sometimes our best opportunity to learn comes from being creative in the ways we engage our Mentors.*

## *Context,*

If you aren't clear on your opportunities for growth, or how to pursue them, you may want to engage your Mentor in a way that is more practical and pragmatic. These creative approaches allow your Mentor to react in a more specific way, which they may find easier. It also opens up entirely new possibilities for you to explore.

## *Creative Ideas*

1. Read a book chapter relevant to growth and discuss key takeaways.  
*Ask your Mentor what books, chapters, or articles have been meaningful to them professionally. Read them, explore what resonated and why. Share your insights and takeaways.*
2. Ask your Mentor for advice on how to be mindful about a challenge.  
*Explore specific ways you can be more mindful about an opportunity you're discussing with your Mentor. Ask them for an assignment that will keep you focused and expand your perspective.*
3. Vision long-term goals together, for growth and business outcomes.  
*Take advantage of time with your Mentor to brainstorm long-term goals, both professional and personal. Your Mentor can help you solidify intentions, approaches and even outcomes.*
4. Share executive core competencies and discuss how best to demonstrate them.  
*Ask your Mentor to share their thoughts on executive competencies and how best to demonstrate them. Explore potential gaps and how you can strengthen key competencies.*
5. Share your role aspirations and strategize on skills that might support your readiness.  
*Be thoughtful about the potential progression or alternative paths your career could take. Ask for advice and explore how you might focus your growth to ensure your readiness over time.*
6. Review psychometrics and earlier feedback and explore implications to growth.  
*Share any and all profiles, assessments, 360s or other references to discuss your key takeaways and get a fresh impression from your Mentor. This will also foster trust and empower them with insights.*
7. Identify and discuss your most influential relationships and current state.  
*It's incredibly powerful to be intentional in fostering professional relationships. Identify the stakeholders most influential to your success and assess opportunities to strengthen them.*

# Tips and Practical Troubleshooting

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*Even with a focus on alignment, structure, goals and the relationship, challenges and rough patches can surface,*

## I can't seem to form a genuine connection with my Mentor.

Just as with every new relationship, sometimes we 'click' with another person and sometimes we don't. Other times we're in the middle ground, not quite connected but not awkward. The good news: you can feel some amount of distance from your Mentor and still benefit greatly from the relationship.

- ✓ If you *haven't taken time to know your Mentor* go back [here](#) and start fresh.
- ✓ If your *Mentor is awkward or unsure how to help*, be explicit about how they can help and take the lead.
- ✓ If your *Mentor is distracted and doesn't seem vested*, focus on specific situations they can help with to pull them in.
- ✓ If you *can't make a connection or find 'ease'*, invest a full session on just learning about their journey to warm them up.
- ✓ If *you're not sure your assigned Mentor can help* in a meaningful way, ask your HR partner for guidance or reassignment.

## It's hard to extract value from my Mentor given the time we have together

Every relationship has a different pace, tempo and level of interaction. Depending on the success you hope to achieve, you may need to ask for more of their time, more focused time, or additional informal opportunities to engage. Your mentors want to help. You will only get what you need if you ask for it.

- ✓ Discuss your *cadence and what might be most valuable*: less frequent but longer, more frequent and focused?
- ✓ Try to *choose a time less likely to get consumed* by urgent issues of the day so you can both focus.
- ✓ *Define an agenda in advance* so you can both prepare and make the most of your time together.
- ✓ *Send informal updates and follow-ups* in between meetings so you can focus your time together in new areas.
- ✓ *Don't be afraid to ask for what you need*, whether more time or more focused time. Your mentor wants to help.
- ✓ Be *creative and define what works for the two of you*, not some preconceived notion of how it's done.

## Our discussions feel transactional and superficial vs. deep and provocative.

Typically when conversations feel superficial, lacking real value in takeaways, these elements need to be addressed.

- ✓ If *lack of preparation by either of you* is evident, consider rescheduling your meeting for a future time.
- ✓ Identify at the end of each meeting *where you'll focus in the next*. Come prepared to share your reflections.
- ✓ If you want to go deeper, *ask your Mentor to give you a moment* to be thoughtful. Don't avoid silent reflection.
- ✓ If your *Mentor is giving superficial advice*, ask them to go deeper with you and provide more specific guidance.
- ✓ If *you aren't prepared to go deep or haven't been thoughtful*, admit it and defer that topic to the next meeting.
- ✓ If your Mentor doesn't appear to have advice, *ask them to share how they approach something* (vs. how you might).
- ✓ If you *don't feel comfortable being vulnerable*, share your hesitation with your Mentor and explore why.

# Tips and Practical Troubleshooting

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*Even with a focus on alignment, structure, goals and the relationship, challenges and rough patches can surface,*

## My Mentor doesn't have enough exposure to my day-to-day to be really helpful.

When your Mentor doesn't have direct exposure to you on the job, it can be challenging for them to understand the nuance of situations you might be facing. They also may have a harder time seeing what might be inhibiting your success or impacting your potential. You have a few options that may make a big difference here.

- ✓ *Share your job description* so they can learn more about your role and understand what's being asked of you.
- ✓ Give your Mentor 'permission' to *speak with your leader* for any insights they can share about opportunities, challenges.
- ✓ Share *former assessments, reviews, 360s* openly with your Mentor and share your key takeaways and trends.
- ✓ Identify *specific opportunities* for your Mentor to engage and observe you in daily or high stakes interactions.
- ✓ Discuss *key relationships that play a role in your opportunities or challenges* and use storytelling to engage your Mentor.
- ✓ Share your *strategies, plans, team reviews* or other elements that might help your Mentor lean into your challenges.

Note: In some cases, a fresh outside perspective is incredibly valuable to us as Mentees. Other times, particularly if there are areas that require growth more expeditiously, it may make sense to request a Mentor more closely aligned to your day-to-day work environment. *It's worth understanding which of these is true before you consider changing Mentors.* Also consider that you may receive significant value from a Mentor who is more abstract and focused on leadership in the general sense, while also working with a Mentor who is more closely aligned to your current role and can provide tactical advice and guidance.

## It isn't clear that I'm making progress or growing as I'd hoped with my Mentor.

The best mentoring relationships have a strong foundation in what you hope to accomplish together and how you'll evaluate success in each meeting and over time. When this is less clear, or your time is unfocused, or your conversations are transactional vs. developmental, you may need to revisit and reset.

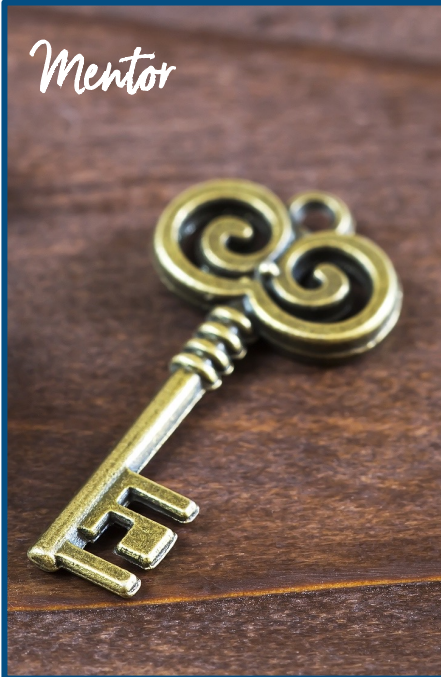
- ✓ Press *reset, go back to the beginning*: Here's my renewed focus on what I hope to achieve and how you can help.
- ✓ Incorporate at the *end of each meeting what was valuable and share key takeaways*. Commit to meaningful outcomes. (This focus will inevitably reorient both of you toward what will be valuable in your discussions.)
- ✓ If no meaningful takeaways are stacking up, *discuss openly what might be more valuable*. Be courageous.
- ✓ If you have great conversations, but they *aren't supporting your growth in a material way*, redirect the dialogue.
- ✓ *Ask your Mentor how they feel* about your relationship and progress. Share your perceptions and ideas.

*It is never too late to press re-set, mix it up, keep it fresh.  
Don't hesitate to take 2 steps back to move 3 steps forward.*

# Key Measures Of Success

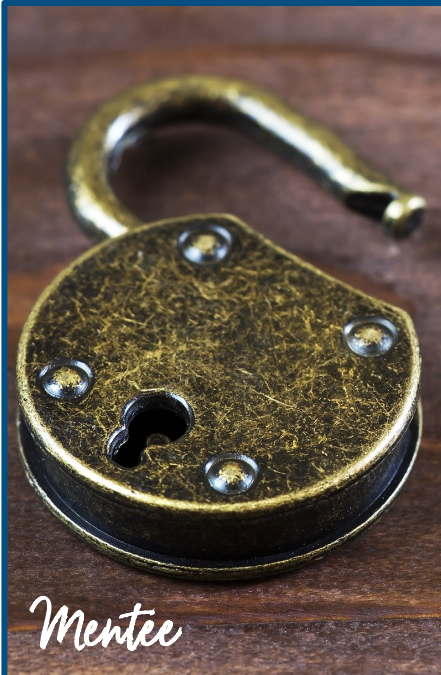
The measures of success for each mentoring relationship, for both Mentor and Mentee individually, are worth evaluating iteratively along the journey.

Mentor



1. To what degree was rapport and trust established?
2. Were both parties engaged, present and committed throughout?
3. Did I foster and maintain a Red Thread and continuity of learning?
4. Did I strike a good balance of inquiry vs. imparting, support vs. challenge?
5. Did the Mentee achieve their goals and experience positive shifts?
6. Are there memorable takeaways that resonate with the Mentee?
7. Was this a valuable investment of my time?

Mentee



1. To what degree was rapport and trust established?
2. Were both parties engaged, present and committed throughout?
3. Did I get what I was hoping for from my Mentor?
4. Did I take full advantage of my Mentor relationship?
5. Did I achieve my goals and experience positive shifts?
6. Are there memorable takeaways that resonate with me?
7. Was this a valuable investment of my time?

Reminder that finding value in your mentoring relationship is driven largely by your choices.



1. Think of your role as 'active' vs 'passive.'
2. Do the work to **find clarity** on what you hope to accomplish.
3. Commit to being **fully honest and transparent** with your Mentor.
4. Act on advice and **experiment** with new mindsets, ideas, approaches.
5. Actively **reflect** on discussions, reactions, experimentation and growth.
6. Share your **successes and new insights** and your **challenges and stalls**.
7. Move **beyond the superficial** to engage fully in deep thinking.
8. Mentoring is **all about you**. Lean in. Be grateful. Take full advantage.

For Questions or Support  
[lisalai@laintures.com](mailto:lisalai@laintures.com)