

Guidelines for Effective Mentoring

IN THE KRI ACADEMY

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The Mentoring Process and the Mentoring Relationship

KRI recognizes the Mentoring Process in the KRI Aquarian Trainer Academy as one of the most powerful and effective tools for the professional development of new trainers and teachers. As such, KRI's goal is to encourage and support successful and meaningful mentoring relationships across the KRI Aquarian Trainer Academy to promote excellence in the future generations of teachers.

The Mentoring Process calls on both mentor and mentee to establish a unique relationship to develop competencies, nurture personal wisdom, and maturation. It also provides for an opportunity to work through known and unknown obstacles on our journey to becoming effective and inspiring trainers.

For the mentee, this relationship is not only about professional development. It provides a unique opportunity to receive personal guidance that guides and challenges the mentee to learn and blossom both a personal level and as a teacher trainer.

The Mentoring Process also calls upon the mentor to be generous by sharing his/her time, knowledge and compassion. Being a mentor is a sacred opportunity to manifest and honor Yogi Bhanjan's directive of teaching to make the student ten times greater than the teacher. Mentoring is about uplifting others, *...a teacher has no personality, a teacher has not reality. His only reality is that he uplifts, uplifts and uplifts; he keeps up and uplifts...* April 22, 1997 YB

At its best, it is a relationship that elevates both the mentor and mentee, offering a deeply meaningful experience for both mentor and mentee.

The Mentoring Process, however, can also result in a mediocre or poor experience that leaves one or both parties depleted, frustrated, and resentful, with a feeling of unrealized potential, wasted time, and even animosity between the parties.

To make sure that the Mentoring Process delivers its full potential, it is important that both parties understand their roles, commitments and the best practices that can make the difference between these outcomes.

The mentor must be acquainted with and follow good mentoring practices to promote positive outcomes while the mentee must demonstrate a commitment to learn, apply, and master the character and skills that are expected for his/her own personal and professional development.

As a learning and maturation experience, the mentoring relationship might go through challenging periods, not unlike *shakti pad*. These periods are paradoxical because they can be both intensely uncomfortable yet provide for deep learning opportunities. The mutual capacity to move beyond these periods of disruption in the relationship will not only strengthen the relationship but help take it to a deeper level of authenticity and personal growth.

One of defining characteristics that distinguishes effective mentoring is its focus on character instead of competencies. Mastering for competencies is clearly an important element of the Mentorship Process, but effective mentoring focuses on helping the mentee shape his/her character, pointing to a spiritual maturity that is supported by values, self-awareness, empathy,

compassion, courage, and a capacity for self-respect and others. In the long-run values-based qualities matter much more than skills.

The purpose of this paper is to open a discussion within the Academy about what effective mentoring means. It also aims at providing general guidelines from which mentors and mentees can draw insight about how to initiate and maintain nurturing and positive mentoring relationships, focusing on the skills and best practices that support excellence in mentoring.

The Mentee

An effective Mentoring Relationship starts by learning about each other and the commitments that are expected of the relationship. The mentee, for his/her part, is well served by getting informed and clear about what a mentorship relationship means in the Academy, as well as what is required of him/her in terms of time and effort commitments. What follows are some of the general guidelines that mentees can follow to learn more about the mentoring process

Choose a mentor well

Mentoring begins and ends with the mentee. A mentee who is looking to advance in Academy must first choose a mentor. This is perhaps the most important decision that a mentee can make. Among the best practices that KRI recommends for the potential mentee are:

- Be proactive in your search for a possible mentor. Talk to several mentors to learn about their skills, their mentoring style and what they offer and require.
- Keep in mind that there are many different styles of mentoring within the Academy. Working with the most comfortable mentor might not provide for the best professional growth.
- A mentee who is clear about what he/she expects from a mentor is better equipped to evaluate potential mentors. The mentee can do this by:
 - a. educating him/herself about the mentoring process
 - b. talking to several mentors
 - c. approaching KRI and other teachers for guidance
 - d. talking to current and/or former mentees about their experience
- Approach a potential mentor to have in-depth discussions regarding your goals, expectations, and commitments in the Mentoring Process. This conversation is a good opportunity to discuss what the mentor requires from you as a mentee and how the mentor proposes to work with you.
- Discuss how present and available will the mentor be to support you as a trainer in training. Open and regular communications, effective feedback and accountability arrangements, and time spent together are highly recommended.
- The decision of who to mentor with should be made by matching the mentee's learning needs to the prospective mentor's skills, not based on chemistry, friendship, business relationships, convenience, or charisma, for example.

Commit to the Mentoring Process

Once the mentor and mentee have committed to a Mentoring Process, it is important to be very clear on what is expected from both parties. KRI requires that these commitments are set in writing in the form of the KRI Mentor Agreement.

Mentoring commitments and agreements must be clear, such as how to work with the KRI mentoring guidelines (competencies, content credits, advancement in the academy), how the mentee's goals and skills will be evaluated, milestones and timetables, confidentiality, feedback styles, mentor availability and presence, meetings, compensation, etc.

Be Proactive!

An essential quality of a mentee is to be proactive in the relationship with the mentor because mentor's take seriously those who are self-initiated, self-motivated and assertive. To be proactive the mentee should:

- Follow through with the commitments and goals agreed to with the mentor and other team members.
- Propose solutions and work-arounds for personal obstacles and challenges as well as those related to the courses/students.
- Keep within the boundaries agreed to with the mentor in terms of authority, ethics, participation and conduct.
- Be a proactive learner regarding KRI policies and procedures and complying with the Academy's requirements. It is your responsibility to prepare, monitor and follow-up with KRI's communications/paperwork, except for the paperwork required from your mentor.

Develop and Improve your Competencies

One of the main purposes of the Mentoring Process is to develop new skills and improve existing ones. A mentee should commit to:

- Study and learn the materials related to the contents established by KRI and the mentor
- Ask your mentor for additional study resources
- Integrate what is learned by teaching it inside/outside of the teacher training environment
- Prepare adequately to present material in teacher training
- Learn directly from your mentor and other teachers about the topics by attending lectures and taking notes
- Learn indirectly by the modeled actions of your mentor and others.
- Ask questions to gain clarity on concepts
- Ask for feedback from your mentor and other respected teachers or team members
- Inform your mentor about how knowledge and skills are being applied.

Show Initiative

Some mentors will lead the relationship and expect the mentee to follow. Others will expect the mentee to drive the process. Either way, it is a good practice to discuss this between mentor and mentee in order to have clear expectations for both parties.

These are some ways in which the mentee can show initiative:

- Know when and when not to show initiative
- Ask appropriate questions
- Look for additional learning resources to support growth, such as books, videos, other courses, etc.
- Go beyond what mentor suggests, beyond comfort level to acquire knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes
- Seek other teachers to help you learn and develop specific competency areas that are not covered in your Mentorship Relationship.

Deliver!

The Mentorship Process should guide and motivate the mentee to deliver him/herself and others in terms of personal growth, skills, attitudes and presence. This speaks to a core teaching in Kundalini Yoga, *Commitment will give you character. That will give you dignity. That will give you divinity. That will give you grace. That will give you the power to sacrifice. Then you'll feel achieved, and you'll be happy.*

These are some ways the mentee can show their power to deliver:

- Be disciplined, keep a strong practice (sadhana) to deliver one-self
- Honor agreements and commitments
- Complete tasks on time
- Don't blame
- No excuses
- Communicate properly and in a timely fashion when agreements or commitments cannot be honored
- Persevere when learning becomes challenging, when obstacles are difficult, etc.
- Show mentor that they are working on themselves harder than the mentor working for them.

Manage Your End of the Relationship

Your mentor might take a lead in managing the Mentoring Relationship, but you should do your part in managing the relationship by taking responsibility for your part in the process and outcome.

- Maintain honest and direct communication with your mentor.
- Communicate consciously about what is working and not working in the Mentoring Relationship
- Keep your mentor informed about your personal goals, challenges and satisfaction.

Persistence, Devotion and Your Rights

Being aware of when to call upon your inner-strength and persistence, your respect and/or devotion for your mentor or your rights as a mentee is an important part of what you are learning. Keep in mind that:

- it is normal to experience moments when you feel disempowered, vulnerable and/or irritated and these moments can be unique learning opportunities. Such moments should be transitory and shift into a deeper personal understanding and lead to a deeper sense of self and, hopefully, to a greater appreciation of your mentor. In such cases, persistence, devotion and discipline will carry you through.
- other times you can experience challenges that are not about your personal growth but point to the need of changing or shifting something in the Mentoring Relationship/Process.

It is not easy or clear about how to discern the difference between both experiences, but it is important to do so. Here are some general guidelines that can help:

- The Mentoring Relationship is based on trust and respect so fear, control or manipulation in the relationship should not be present
- Ask for support from KRI when you believe/feel you need assistance with unmet needs or expectations in your Mentoring Relationship
- Be aware that you can change mentors at any time, but you will need to justify the reasons before KRI
- You have the right to be told clearly why your mentor feels that you are not ready to apply to the next level of the Academy and what specifically you need to do in order to recommend you.
- You can apply to the next level in the Academy even without your mentor's recommendation.

KRI is committed to helping you make the Mentoring Relationship an enriching and effective experience for you. Your Mentoring Relationship exists within the framework of KRI's guidelines and requirements.

Mentors

On teachers and mentors

In the 3HO culture we have been trained to be teachers and sometimes it is not clear what is the difference between a teacher and mentor. It is helpful to think of teachers as those who impart their wisdom, voice and guidance. A teacher is an impersonal-personal figure. Mentoring on the other hand can be viewed as both a teacher and a nurturing figure that guides the mentee to be clear and confident about their own knowledge and skills. A mentor helps the mentee to both discover their own potential and their own personal style. A mentor is a personal-impersonal figure.

A useful metaphor is viewing the teacher as an author while the mentor can be viewed as an editor. The editor makes sure that storylines are clear and grammar is correct, it is a time-intensive activity.

These two figures can be one and the same, but just as the skills of an author are not the same as those of an editor, there are subtle and clear differences between the skills of teachers and mentors. We will focus on the specific skills that are required of a mentor.

The Importance of Structure

Research studies on mentoring have shown that the best mentoring experiences are based on a well-defined structure. KRI has observed this to also be true within the Academy.

Structured mentoring means in the Academy, among other things, that:

- The parties establish formal agreements that govern the mentoring relationship.
- Commitments, goals and milestones are clearly defined and agreed to by the parties
- There are clear lines of communication in the relationship.
- The KRI mentoring structure and tools, such as the Mentor-Mentee Operating Agreement, Competency Evaluation, Units of Content Credits, and the Individual Development Plan (or IDP) are used to monitor mentee's growth and development.

Core Mentoring Skills

Deep Listening

This is the most basic and important of all mentoring skills for many reasons. It is the basis of effective communication as Yogi Bajan explained and it a critical skill needed in the mentoring process.

Through deep and active listening the mentor comes to understand the mentee's needs and challenges, and how to guide mentees to their full potential as a teachers and trainers. Deep listening also enables effective communication and makes the mentee feels deeply heard and for the mentee to hear and understand what the mentor is communicating.

This dynamic of hearing each other is the beginning of nurturing one of the most important components of a successful mentoring relationship: trust.

Deep listening is the basis of manifesting true wisdom, as Guru Nanak stated in the Japji: *Sunni-ai sat saantokh gian* – By deeply listening, truth, completeness, contentment and genuine wisdom will be achieved, within yourself.

This skill can be learned and perfected through by practicing *The Art of Listening – Sunni-ai* in the Conscious Communication handbook.

Nurture Trust

Trust is a necessary component of the effective Mentoring Process. The more trust develops between the mentor and mentee, the more committed and effective the relationship will be.

An important factor in trust is by not viewing the Mentorship Process as a “check the box, comply with the requirements” process. Instead, nurturing an authentic relationship between both parties is highly encouraged. Mentoring requires rapport and rapport requires trust. At best, it propels both mentor and mentee to find common ground as people.

Trust develops over time and to become a “trustable mentor” he or she should:

- Keep strict confidentiality about personal and intimate information because it will surface through the Mentoring Process. Confidential information can be divulged outside the Mentoring Process, but only under agreement of both parties.
- Respect the boundaries of the relationship. A mentee is not a buddy, lover or partner, nor the mentor is a therapist for the mentee.
- Do not judge, condemn or manipulate the mentee.
- Follow through on promises and commitments. If mentor gives his/her word, deliver it.
- Put the relationship before the mentorship.
- Spend time together. Getting to know each other through formal and casual communication and working together is a powerful way of mentoring someone. Remote control mentoring, where the mentor seldom spends time with the mentee or barely present, is not a recommended practice.
- Be human and accept mistakes and take responsibility for them.
- Allow and honor for differences of opinion using conscious communication to express agreement or disagreement.

Encouragement

This is a very powerful and important mentoring skill and it should be used amply, both ways. It is the basis of sincere and authentic positive verbal feedback. Research has shown that positive verbal reinforcement is rare, to the detriment of mentoring relationships. Just as the mentee deserves encouragement, the mentor should also teach the mentee to provide encouragement and positive feedback to the mentor.

- Compliment accomplishments
- Point out positive traits
- Praise in private
- Commend in front of other people
- Express gratitude and appreciation
- Write encouraging notes

Be Authentic, Be Real

Awareness about the strengths and limitations of both the mentor and the mentee is a good mentoring practice.

When a mentor is clear about his/her own strengths and limitations it helps to adjust expectations, opens the possibility for the mentee to find the additional resources to support his/her growth, and it builds trust in the relationship.

An important goal of the mentoring process is for the mentee to discover in themselves their own strengths and weaknesses. Within this context it is a good practice for mentor to invite the mentee to talk about their own visions, values, desires, dreams and goals and to help him/her map a path forward. Similarly, conversations regarding the mentee's real or perceived limitations is useful to guide the mentoring process.

Work with Goals and Milestones

After identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses, it is time to set goals for personal growth, skill development and process. It is recommended that:

- Knowledge/competency/attitude goals must be measurable and/or observable
- Agreed-to goals must be kept in writing on the IDP form
- Goals and milestones must be monitored and/or reviewed on a regular basis

Teach

Mentoring seldom requires lectures and speeches. It is more informal than a teaching environment in that it can include from modeling behaviors to conveying ideas, concepts and process, from providing appropriate and actionable feedback to one-on-one tutoring.

A mentor can also be thought of as a learning broker who points mentee to other teachers, books and resources that will support the mentee's work.

Other teaching tools for the Mentorship Process:

- use poke, provoke, confront and elevate carefully
- teach through asking thought-provoking questions
- demonstrate and model behavior
- help mentees refocus on what is important
- point out, name and recognize which aspect of the Mentoring Process is being worked-on at the time and why

Inspire

What separates the superb mentors from others is their ability to inspire mentees to become greater than themselves. A mentee pursues his/her own greatness, not necessarily the greatness of the mentor. Remember, the mentor's goal in the Academy is to make the mentee 10 times better than him/her, as was Yogi Bajan's directive. Here are some ways to inspire:

- Act in ways that inspire and challenge your mentee to improve
- Help him/her notice and study others who are inspiring
- Arrange inspirational experiences for your mentees. For example, motivate them to attend Summer Solstice or to serve in the community.
- Challenge the mentee to face obstacles and overcome them
- Help mentees pursue their own form of greatness, not necessarily yours.
- Use stories, metaphors and poetry to inspire and uplift
- Go beyond content learning, discuss learning strategies

Helpful Feedback

It is important to discuss with your mentees how they want to receive feedback. Asking for their permission for feedback makes the mentee more open to receiving it and it encourages the mentor to provide it. This can be done by:

- Use positive, non-judgmental statements and tone of voice when providing feedback.

- Provide feedback in private unless there is a need and permission to do it in public
- Be specific
- Do not generalize, exaggerate, accuse or play guilt trips when providing feedback
- Encourage more often than giving feedback
- Help mentee to prepare and learn well
- Encourage the mentee to give feedback to you as mentor regarding the Mentoring Process

Risks and Mistakes

An often-overlooked role in the Mentoring Process is that the mentor can help mentees avoid making unnecessary mistakes by instructing them how to avoid them. Here are some ways this can be done:

- Don't allow for nor enable excuses. Yogi Bhanjan was clear on this, *Excuses are abuses*.
- Be clear about the importance of honoring commitments and the consequences of breaking them.
- Teach and model proper communication and handling of students
- Model and explain ethical behavior and discuss the consequences of unethical behavior
- Listen to feedback from KRI, the community and other teachers that is helpful to the professional development of your mentee and address any concerns that might surface
- Call attention to the mentee behaviors that might hurt or offend others. For example, do not tolerate ostracizing, shaming, retributing behavior.
- Be ready to intervene in situations that go beyond the competency of the mentee
- Be observant as to why the mentee might be failing to learn and discuss remedies and accountability
- Share your experience about mistakes that you made and what you learned from them.
- Use compassion to guide and correct, understanding that the road to success is paved with mistakes

Advocacy

Advocacy means:

- opening doors and opportunities for your mentee in which he/she is exposed to new learning and teaching styles, the wisdom of other teachers, the structure of other programs, in general, to the rich diversity of approaches that exist within the Academy.
- to encourage your mentee to work with other teams, to put in a good word for him/her with others, and to motivate him/her to become an active voice within the Academy/KRI/3HO community.
- encouraging and defending your mentee's strengths and weaknesses while discouraging self-defeating behavior.
- that the Mentoring Relationship is for the benefit of the mentee, not for the benefit of the mentor. This is the only way that the relationship can work effectively. It is the only way to avoid conflicts of interest.

- empowering your mentee to be self-directed, independent and self-initiated teachers over the course of the Mentoring Process.