

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 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 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 an opportunity to work through known and unknown obstacles on our journey to becoming effective and inspiring trainers.

For mentees, 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 at a personal level and as a teacher trainer.

The Mentoring Process also calls upon mentors to be generous by sharing their 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 the defining characteristics that distinguish effective mentoring is its focus on character instead of competencies. Mastering for competencies is 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 provides 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 whom 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-Mentee Operating 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 mentors tend to take more 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 workarounds 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 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 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 the 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 is 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 to 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 to recommend you.

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.

The Mentor

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 knowledge and skills. A mentor helps the mentee to both discover their potential and their unique 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 and involved activity.

These two figures can be 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 about mentoring has shown that one of the most important elements for effective mentoring is having a well-defined structure in place between the mentor and mentee.

At first sight, this might seem like an obvious strategy when mentoring is about acquiring hard skills that can be quantified and measured. Within the Academy, however, where mentoring for soft skills is important, a structure might seem unnecessary or even burdensome. After all, how can inspiration, upliftment, spiritual maturity, and even healing be structured into a mentoring process? These two perspectives on structure are not mutually exclusive. They can and should work in tandem.

Consider how an effective structure can support a mentoring relationship. Among others:

- It can help establish goals that are learnable, reachable and attainable
- Goal attainments can become powerful motivators
- Expectations on both sides can be made clear which reduces the possibility of stagnation and frustration
- It can help establish a framework for mentor and mentee accountability
- It can help to focus the relationship on what is important and minimize unnecessary friction, misunderstandings, and conflict in the relationship

KRI's Mentoring Structure

KRI recognized several years ago that as an institution it had two goals when it established the mentoring process. The first was that it needed a minimal structure in place to document the mentoring relationships within the Academy. The second was that the structure had to be useful for mentors/mentees, not a bureaucratic requirement. With this in mind, KRI now asks mentors/mentees to:

- Establish formal agreements that govern the mentoring relationship (Mentor-Mentee Operating Agreement).
- Review and track hard skills (Units of Study - Content Credits Form) and soft skills (Competency Evaluations) on a regular basis
- Establish clear goals and milestones (Individual Development Plan)

Structure beyond KRI's requirements

There are many other ways in which structure can be very helpful and effective and that go beyond the scope of KRI's requirements.

Consider that each mentoring relationship is unique and that there are practices that can work for some and not for others. The important point here is exploring how to best support the mentoring relationship with a structure that fits the style, needs, and challenges of the particular individuals and situations. Here are some tried and proven examples of structure that has been established successfully by experienced mentors within the Academy:

- Establish clear roles, tasks, and responsibilities for the mentee and communicate them from the start. Many of the mentoring challenges/conflicts faced in the past revolve around mentees not understanding their roles beforehand. Structure the different roles and responsibilities of the mentees based on what is expected of them according to their status in the Academy (intern, associate, professional) and make sure everyone in the team understands them.
- Establish regular scheduled one-on-one mentoring meetings. Having personal mentor/mentee personal time means that there is a scheduled time and space to connect, listen, poke and provoke, and elevate. This can provide time to process the experience, thoughts, and emotions and create a neutral space of communication.
- Make a habit to meet before and/or after modules to plan and/or review content, student challenges, schedule, teaching strategies. This is reported as one of the most powerful learning processes for mentees and it allows for quick corrections and clearer communications.
- Establish a process to provide/receive feedback about teaching, organizational and communication skills. A well-structured process can support the feeling of a safe space in which conversations can be authentic, direct and deep.
- Provide/receive feedback on the mentoring process itself regularly. Effective mentoring requires an auto-correction mechanism that is based on deep listening that works best when it goes both ways.
- Create “personal learning opportunities” such as co-teaching a workshop, or serving together, among other examples. This sends the message that the relationship is important to both parties on a personal level and it can help develop trust.
- Watch or read a YB lecture or other books/resources regularly and make it a point to discuss them together. This practice enables both parties to take their conversations to unexpected, often overlooked but important areas of our personal growth.

- Ask mentees to explain their strategies to present a topic before class and offer further guidance and suggestions. Some mentees report that this has been one of the most effective ways to help them articulate the teachings better.
- Establish a structured course curriculum that is only minimally changed from one cycle to the next. Some mentors report that having a course-flow that is familiar to the mentees helps eliminate uncertainty and confusion for the mentees. Also, ask for the mentee's feedback on how to improve the curriculum.
- Establish regular workshops for mentees focused on developing their knowledge/skills outside of the regular course. Some mentors have the mentees attend a two-day workshop before each module and have reported great success.
- Establish regularly scheduled meetings to review KRI documentation, including competencies, content credits, individual development plans, and other KRI required documentation. Be clear with the mentee on who is responsible for the paperwork.

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 Bhanjan explained and it a critical skill needed in the mentoring process.

Through deep and active listening both mentor and mentee can come to better understand and identify the mentee's qualities, goals, and challenges, and to agree on a path forward in the mentorship process that is clear to both parties. Deep listening enables conscious communication, a crucial quality of a good mentoring relationship.

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

This skill can be learned and perfected through 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 to develop trust is not to view the Mentorship Process as a “check the box, comply with the requirements procedure.” 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” the mentor strives to:

- 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 the agreement of both parties.
- Establish appropriate boundaries, especially between the personal and impersonal. While this is not a buddy, lover, therapist or partner relationship, it has been shown that nurturing a strong and healthy personal dimension in the relationship is very helpful, one in which generosity, appreciation, kindness, and acceptance between both parties helps to develop trust.
- Not judge, condemn, compare or manipulate the mentee or anyone.
- Follow through with promises and commitments made to the mentee, students and team members.
- Spend time with the mentee. Getting to know each other and working together is a powerful way of nurturing a good mentoring relationship and should be encouraged.
- Allow and honor differences of opinion using conscious communication to express agreement or disagreement.
- Allow the mentee to establish personal safety boundaries.

Encouragement

This is a very powerful and important mentoring skill and it should be used both ways, generously. 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 receive encouragement and positive feedback from the mentee. A helpful quote from a popular business book is, “Catch someone doing something right and let them know about it.”

Some ideas:

- 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 should be encouraged.

When a mentor is clear about his/her 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.

One of the goals of mentoring is to guide and encourage mentees towards discovering their strengths and challenges. Within this context, it is a good practice for the mentor to invite the mentee to talk about their 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 are 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 regularly

Teach

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

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 greatness. Remember, the mentor's goal in the Academy is to make the mentee 10 times better than him/her, as was Yogi Bhanan'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 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 explicit permission to do so 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 on how to avoid them. Here are some ways this can be done:

- Don't allow for nor enable excuses. Yogi Bhanan 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 with the 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.

Compensation and Financial Arrangements

Mentoring styles and time commitments vary across the Academy. Because of this, KRI has left the topic of compensation open for the mentors to establish.

Some mentors do not charge for mentoring while others do. It is important to consider the economic status of the individual and the area where the training is being carried out when determining compensation. The cost should not impede undergoing mentorship.

Compensation for mentoring arises from the reality that mentoring can be a big time and effort commitment on the part of the mentor for the benefit of the mentee. It also stands for the principle that Yogi Bhanjan often taught: if one comes to the teacher empty-handed one also leaves empty-handed.

It is convenient to recognize that mentoring is an act of generosity and being mentored should reflect generosity from the mentee to the mentor. Compensation is the avenue through which this exchange takes place. Generosity can take the form of exchanging money, service or a combination of both.

Mentors should be aware that compensation can also signal that they might be more invested in the compensation itself than in the mentee's progress. This should be

considered when creating a compensation scheme or it can turn into a recipe for promoting a transactional relationship instead of an uplifting and effective partnership.

There are pros and cons to each way that compensation can be arranged. Here are some ways that compensation has worked in the Academy:

Modes of Payment

- A set fee per year or cycle in the academy (time as intern, associate, etc.) based on an estimate of the hours that the mentor might spend working on behalf of the mentee.
- A set of fees for every aspect of the mentoring work. Examples are, filling out paperwork, competencies review, preparation of individual development plan, hours for consulting/advising, etc.
- A fee for training workshops, payments for sitting/teaching in the course, etc.
- A voluntary contribution determined by the mentee alone or in agreement with the mentor.
- A monthly fee while the mentoring is active during the length of the course
- In-kind by doing work-exchange to promote, organize and manage courses