



ATA ESSENTIAL MENTORING SKILLS

Deep Listening

This is the most basic and important of all mentoring skills. 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. 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. Developing trust requires that both the Mentor and the Mentee nurture an authentic relationship. The more trust develops between the Mentor and Mentee, the more committed and effective the relationship will be. 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.
- Establish appropriate boundaries, especially between the personal and impersonal.
- Not judge, condemn, compare or manipulate the mentee
- 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.
- 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 this contributes to a foundation of sincere and authentic positive verbal feedback. Research has shown that positive verbal reinforcement is rare in a mentoring relationship, the lack is detrimental to mentoring relationships. A helpful quote from a popular

business book is, “Catch someone doing something right and let them know about it.”

Be Authentic, Be Real

When a mentor is clear about his/her strengths and limitations it helps to adjust expectations, opens the possibility for the mentee to find 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 realistic path forward. Similarly, conversations regarding the mentee’s real or perceived limitations and challenges (cautions) are useful to guide the mentoring process.

Work with Goals and Milestones

After identifying areas of strengths and challenges or cautions, 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 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 processes, providing 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:

- 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

The ability of a mentor to inspire mentees to become greater than themselves defines an exceptional mentor. A mentee pursues his/her greatness. Remember, the mentor’s goal in the Academy is to support the mentee’s growth into their own excellence.

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 an event such as Summer Solstice or to serve in the community.
- Challenge the mentee to face obstacles and overcome them

- Help mentees pursue their definition of greatness, not yours
- Use stories, metaphors, and poetry to inspire and uplift
- Go beyond content learning, discuss learning strategies

Feedback

It is important to discuss how you give feedback with your mentees. 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
- Encourage more
- 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:

- ‘Reasons’ for falling short are different from ‘excuses’. It is important to learn from errors, not avoid or deny them.
- Be clear about the importance of honoring commitments and the consequences of breaking them.
- 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
- Be ready to intervene in situations that go beyond the competency of the mentee. Discuss how and why you intervened and prepare your mentee for the future.
- Be curious as to why the mentee might be failing to learn and discuss remedies and accountability
- Share your experience of mistakes that you made and what you learned from them when that serves the growth of your mentee.
- Use compassion to guide and correct, understanding that the road to success is paved with mistakes

Advocacy

A mentor is an advocate for each of their mentees. This role can mean different things in each situation

- opening doors and opportunities for your mentees to experience diverse learning and teaching styles, the wisdom of other teachers, and the structure of other programs within the Academy.
- identifying your mentee’s strengths and weaknesses while discouraging self-defeating behavior.
- empowering your mentee to be a self-directed, independent and self-initiated teacher over the course of the Mentoring Process.