



Guidelines for Effective Mentoring

IN THE AQUARIAN TRAINER ACADEMY

GURUDEV S KHALSA AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Contents

THE MENTORING PROCESS AND THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP	2
Recognized and accepted responsibilities	3
THE MENTEE	4
Choose a mentor well	4
Develop and Improve Competencies	5
Show Initiative	5
Deliver!	6
Manage Your Part in the Relationship	6
Persistence, Devotion and Your Rights	7
THE MENTOR	8
On teachers and mentors	8
KRI's Mentoring Structure	9
Structure beyond KRI's requirements	10
Compensation and Financial Arrangements	11
Models of Payment	12

THE MENTORING PROCESS AND THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

The Aquarian Trainer Academy (ATA) recognizes the Mentoring Process as a powerful and effective tool for the professional development of new trainers and teachers. As such, ATA's goal is to support successful and meaningful mentoring relationships across the Academy to promote excellence in the current and future generations of trainers. At its best, the mentoring relationship elevates both the mentor and mentee, creating a deeply meaningful experience for them both.

An effective Mentoring Relationship starts by getting to know each other's strengths and limitations and the commitments that are expected in the relationship. The Mentoring Process calls on both mentor and mentee to co-create a process that can develop competencies, nurture personal wisdom and spiritual maturity. It also provides an opportunity to work through known and unknown obstacles on one's journey to becoming an effective and inspiring trainer. It calls upon Mentors to be generous by sharing their time, knowledge and an ability to see and inspire the best in the Mentee.

To ensure that the Mentoring Process delivers its full potential, it is important that both parties understand their roles, commitments and best mentoring practices. The mentor must be acquainted with best practices and use them to promote positive outcomes; while the mentee demonstrates a commitment to learn, apply, and master the qualities and skills that are expected for their own personal and professional development.

As a learning and maturation experience, Not unlike *shakti pad*, there may be challenging periods in the mentoring relationship. These periods are paradoxical because they can be both intensely uncomfortable yet provide for profound learning opportunities. The mutual capacity to move beyond this disruption in the relationship will not only strengthen the relationship but take it to a deeper level of authenticity and personal growth. Direct, compassionate communication is the first step to move through challenges to the relationship when they emerge.

One of the defining characteristics that distinguish effective mentoring is its focus on character instead of competencies. Mastering competencies is an important element of the Mentorship

Process, but effective mentoring focuses on helping the mentee shape their character, pointing to a spiritual maturity that is supported by values, self-awareness, empathy, compassion, courage, and a capacity for self-respect and respect for others. In the long-run values-based qualities matter more than skills.

The purpose of this paper is to set a standard within the Academy to define effective mentoring. 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.

Recognized and accepted responsibilities

Once the mentor is chosen, it is important for both parties to agree to their respective roles and responsibilities. This is formalized in the required ATA Mentor-Mentee Operating Agreement.

To demonstrate their commitment to the process, an essential quality of a mentee is to be proactive in the relationship with the mentor. To be proactive the Mentee can:

- Follow through with the agreements commitments and goals agreed to with the Mentor and other team members.
- Propose solutions for personal obstacles and challenges as well as those related to the course/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.

To demonstrate their commitment to the process, the Mentor can:

- Help the Mentee navigate the Academy's standards and processes, and connect them with contact points within KRI.

- Help the Mentee expand their network within the Academy to enhance their opportunities to participate in trainings and committees, etc. both to share their expertise and to enrich their experience.
- Create adequate space within your own trainings for your Mentees to gather bench time and complete competencies.
- Explore with your Mentee creative ways to develop competencies beyond participation in Trainings.
- Create time and space to see and hear and know your Mentees in order to serve their development through the Academy.

THE MENTEE

The mentee, for his/her/their part, is well served by knowing what a mentorship relationship means in the Academy, as well as what is required of him/her/them in terms of commitment of time and effort. What follows are some of the general guidelines that mentees can follow to learn more about the mentoring process.

Choose a mentor well

Understand your unique gifts and life experiences that you want to develop in the training environment. A Mentee must first choose a Mentor. This is perhaps the most important decision. KRI recommends that the Mentee takes the time to select the best mentor for their development. What to consider:

- **Identify what is important to you in a mentoring relationship:** opportunities to train, frequency of in-person vs online contact, networking opportunities, 1 on 1 vs group meetings, opportunities for learning, language and geographical access, etc.
- **Reflect on how you learn and what you need to grow:** how you best receive and give feedback; your strengths, your challenges.
- **Reflect on the kinds of training programs and training teams with which you want to participate:** large or small; local or international; live or online/mixed,

etc.

After self-reflection, a mentee is prepared to reach out to potential Mentors to understand the Mentoring Process from their perspective - discuss their goals, expectations, and commitments. Be specific regarding Mentor's time for regular communications.

Becoming a KRI certified Trainer is a significant journey. Nothing is more important than your ability to bring the best of who you are to that training environment. Your relationship with your Mentor must provide appropriate support and challenge for that to happen. Be conscious when choosing a Mentor. Engage your heart, your mind and your soul in making that choice.

Develop and Improve Competencies

A focus of the Mentoring Process is to develop new skills and improve existing ones:

- Study content materials established by KRI
- Ask your mentor for additional study resources
- Integrate what is learned by teaching it inside/outside of the teacher training environment
- Learn how to deliver individual content topics by observing a variety of trainers.
- Learn by observing your mentor and others respond to challenges
- Ask questions of yourself and others to deepen your understanding
- Welcome feedback from your mentor and other team members

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 so both parties have clear expectations.

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, online resources including the KRI Elearning Center, other courses, etc.
- Go beyond what the mentor suggests, and what comes easily to you
- Seek other teachers to help you learn and develop specific competency areas that are not covered in your Mentorship Relationship.

Deliver!

The Mentorship Process will guide and motivate the mentee to deliver him/her/themselves and others in terms of personal growth, skills, attitudes, and presence. These are some ways the mentee can show their power to deliver:

- Be disciplined, keep a strong practice of Kundalini Yoga(sadhana) to deliver one-self
- Honor agreements and commitments to yourself and to others
- Complete tasks on time and be organized
- Take responsibility; without blaming others

- Communicate in a timely fashion when agreements or commitments cannot be honored
- Persevere when learning becomes challenging, when obstacles are difficult, etc.

Manage Your Part in the Relationship

Your mentor might take the lead in managing the Mentoring Relationship, but you are equally responsible for maintaining the relationship and the outcome of the process.

- Maintain honest and direct communication with your mentor.
- Communicate consciously about what is working and not working in the Mentoring Relationship

Share freely, your challenges and limitations as well as your strengths and your

victories.

- Keep your mentor informed about changes in your personal goals and new challenges.

Persistence, Devotion and Your Rights

Be aware of when to call upon your inner strength and persistence to push through a challenge and when the relationship is not working. 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 can be transitory and shift into a deeper personal understanding and lead to a deeper sense of self and to a greater appreciation of your Mentor and the Mentoring Relationship. In such cases, persistence, courage, devotion, humility, and discipline can carry you through.
- Other times the challenges are not related to your personal growth but reflect concerns in the Mentoring Relationship/Process. Bring this conversation to the Mentor and have a real conversation.

It is important to recognize

- The Mentoring Relationship is based on trust and respect not fear, control or manipulation.
 - After communicating with your Mentor, if you believe/feel you need assistance with unmet needs or expectations in your Mentoring Relationship, ask KRI for support in resolving the issues. And if necessary to request to change mentors.

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 ATA culture, we have been trained to be teachers, and sometimes it is important to reflect on the difference between a teacher and a 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. The author has their story to share with the world. It is their story to be guided, supported, and shaped by the editor.

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.

ATA Mentees who were interviewed often described effective mentoring as when a mentor can see a step beyond the mentee's capacity; then, challenge, encourage and support the mentee to take that next good step.

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. Just as the skeleton creates limitations for the body, it also makes for efficient movement.

At first sight, this might seem like an obvious strategy since mentoring is about acquiring hard skills that can be quantified and measured. Within the Academy, however, where mentoring for

soft skills is as 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 work in tandem.

An effective structure will support a mentoring relationship to:

- Create a shared vision of the relationship, who is responsible for what and what is being worked toward.
 - Define the steps along the journey and ways in which those steps will be taken, how the goals will be achieved.
 - Establish times and places, and methods and standards for communication.
 - Identify the methods and mechanisms for learning and growth.
 - Establish goals that are learnable and attainable. Attaining goals is a powerful motivator
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- The structure is a framework that holds the mentor accountable to the mentee and the mentee accountable to the mentor.

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 that would facilitate the mentees movement through the Academy. The second was that the structure had to serve both mentors and mentees, to co-create the process.

With this in mind, the ATA Mentoring Relationship includes:

- A formal agreement that describes and governs the mentoring relationship (Mentor-Mentee Operating Agreement).
- Reviewing and tracking the development of hard skills (Units of Study - Content Credits Form) and soft skills (Competency Evaluations)
- The creation of clear goals, how to achieve them and acknowledgment of when they are

achieved (Individual Development Plan)

Structure beyond KRI's requirements

There are many other ways in which structure can be helpful and effective beyond the scope of the ATA requirements.

- 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 and the expectations of the mentor at the beginning.
 - Structure the different roles and responsibilities of the mentee based on what is expected of them according to their role in the Academy (intern, associate, professional) and make sure everyone in the team is in agreement..
 - 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, challenge, support, and elevate. This can provide time to process the experience, thoughts, and emotions and create a neutral space of communication.
 - Meet before and/or after modules (weekends) 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 clear communications.
 - Establish a process to provide/receive feedback about teaching, organizational and communication skills. A well-structured process can create and support 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. Working together builds trust that the relationship is important to both parties on a personal level and it can help develop trust.

- 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.
- Assign reading, videos or courses, then have time to discuss to deepen the understanding.
- Encourage Mentees to train in ways that include the narrative about the topic, the yogic technology that develops that topic, and the application of that topic into daily life.

Compensation and Financial Arrangements

Mentoring styles and time commitments vary across the Academy. Because of this, the ATA has left the topic of compensation open for the mentors to establish and negotiate with potential mentees.

Some mentors do not charge for mentoring while others do. It is important to consider the economic resources of the individual and the area where the training is being carried out when determining compensation. The cost should not impede the mentoring process. Whatever the compensation structure you choose, be consciously aware of what you are

receiving from the relationship. If it's not apparent, consider sharing it with your mentee to help them appreciate the balance in the relationship.

Mentoring can be a big time and effort commitment on the part of the mentor for the benefit of the mentee. 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.

There are pros and cons to each compensation agreement. Here are some ways that compensation has worked in the Academy:

Models 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 voluntary contribution determined by the mentee alone or in agreement with the mentor.
- An hourly or 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.

For more information on Mentoring go to:

<https://trainersupport.kundaliniresearchinstitute.org/aquarian-trainer-academy/level-one-pathway/>