

Module 6. Be a mentor

Module description

This module will inform the parts engaged in the buddy system service model about the mentor's role, the areas in which mentors can support newly arriving migrants and refugees, and how a mentoring relationship is structured. In addition, it will highlight the benefits of mentoring for the mentors, the challenges they may face, and the boundaries that they will need to keep.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you will:

- Know what the mentoring activities (may) include
- Comprehend the boundaries of mentor's support
- Be capable of building/ strengthening skills for an effective mentoring relationship
- Be able to advocate the development of self-esteem and independence for the mentees and facilitate their integration procedure
- Understand the value of the mentoring relationship for the mentors

Theoretical and Contextual Background *(optional)*

For newly arriving migrants or refugees, the process of moving to and settling in a new country is often challenging and stressful. They must be supported in order to be able to navigate through social or legal procedures and eventually, find employment and become self-supporting; all while learning to express themselves effectively in a new language. Mentor's support can be significant to make this transitional period easier and help them gain independence and confidence in their new lives.

A mentor is a person who can support, advise and guide. Mentors get the time to get to know their mentees and the challenges they are facing, and then use their

understanding and personal experience to help them improve and reach their goals.

Therefore, a mentor should develop skills to ensure that the mentoring is effective and has lasting value. In more detail, mentors should be:

- Good listeners and sounding board
- Flexible
- Knowledgeable
- Non-judgmental
- Able to give constructive feedback
- Honest and candid
- Able to network and find resources
- Willing/ able to devote time to developing others
- Eager to learn
- Value diversity of perspectives

Furthermore, the mentoring relationship has benefits for the mentors. It builds/strengthens their communication and leadership skills, cultural awareness, and soft skills such as patience, tolerance, respect, and empathy while giving them the sense of accomplishing a complex and meaningful task.

However, boundaries should be set beforehand to avoid misunderstanding the roles and potential of mentoring, conflicts, and disappointment and for the mentoring relationship to fulfil its purposes without obstacles.

Content/Topics

This module will discuss the following topics:

1. Mentor role in several types of integration (reception, work, education etc.)
2. Why be a mentor?
3. Mentoring relationship (step-by-step)
4. Boundaries of the support they can provide

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES/GAMES/TESTS (optional)

1. Self-assessment to know what you are offering as a mentor to your mentee and what you expect of yourself.

- *What are my strengths as a mentor?*
- *What are my challenges as a mentor?*
- *In what ways can I compensate for my mentoring weaknesses (e.g., books, training, advice from good role model)?*

Mentor Characteristics Survey

This survey should be completed to assess whether you're ready to be a mentor or not. Assess each characteristic by asking: Am I...? or Do I...?

Circle the appropriate number using the scale below as a guide: 1=Always 2=Frequently 3=Sometimes 4=Rarely 5=Never

Effective Characteristics

- 1. Spot the Potential & Believe in Others 1 2 3 4 5*
- 2. A Networked & Resourceful Guide 1 2 3 4 5*
- 3. Display Patience and Tolerance 1 2 3 4 5*
- 4. Give Encouragement 1 2 3 4 5*
- 5. See the Big Picture 1 2 3 4 5*

Ineffective Characteristics

- 1. Too Busy to Mentor 1 2 3 4 5*
- 2. Use the Mentee as Help 1 2 3 4 5*
- 3. Overly Critical 1 2 3 4 5*
- 4. Not with the Times 1 2 3 4 5*
- 5. Ego Striving 1 2 3 4 5*

Based on this evaluation, are you ready to become a mentor? If not, what would need to be done in order to get ready?

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2. Questions mentors should consider in the start of the mentoring relationship when setting boundaries:

- Which phone numbers do I want to provide to the mentee? Which days and times are acceptable for them to call?
- Do I want to go places with my mentee that cost money? How much am I willing to spend per week?
- How will I respond to a mentee's request for financial assistance?
- Do I want my mentee to visit my home? How will I address this?
- Will I meet with my mentee only certain times each week or will it be flexible? What if my mentee calls and asks for help today?
- What will I do if I begin to feel stressed about the relationship? (Hint: contact coordinator)

It should be noted that the mentor can always have as a basis for his/her preparation the information provided during the recruitment and training phases.

3. Communication tips for Mentors

- *Use gestures — Be mindful of your expressions and exude positivity when words cannot.*
- *Draw pictures — This will be your way of communication in the beginning. Draw a map with directions to the grocery store or draw an apple when you are teaching food vocabulary, etc.*
- *Be an active listener and demonstrate that you are listening to them, even if you do not understand them.*

- *Use open body language — It assures the mentee that you value what they are sharing with you, or what they are trying to share.*
- *Respect physical space and touch — A good rule of thumb is to not touch a person, especially from the opposite gender. Even if the person gives you expressed consent, remember power dynamics, and that the person may not feel ‘empowered’ to say no.*
- *Avoid interrupting — It reiterates that you are listening and being respectful of what your mentee is contributing.*
- *Patience — Always give time for mentees to communicate their issues.*
- *Ask for verification — It is important for your mentee to understand what you are saying. To accomplish this, ask your mentee to restate a point or comment (“I want to be sure I made myself clear. Could you tell me what you understood...?”)*

4. Feedback

THE FEEDBACK MODEL

This tool can be used to help mentees deal with the feedback they receive from other people. People tend to classify feedbacks into positive and negative, criticisms or compliments.

This model proposes four classifications for feedbacks: advice, compliment, criticism and suggestion. By organising the feedbacks they have received within a matrix, mentees are invited to ask themselves “what should I do with the feedback received?” rather than just classifying them into positive and negative. Mentors can help them understand if and what kind of change they might want to activate based on the feedbacks, and build an action plan towards it.

ADVICE:

COMPLIMENT:

IMPROVEMENT (CRITICISM):

SUGGESTION:

Supporting material for practicing/understanding/implementing the method
(Exercises, Case studies, Videos, Interactive resources)

Additional Resource 1

Title:	Mentoring migrants to reach their full potential. Truphena shares her experience as a volunteer mentor (Australian Red Cross)
Description:	Video
Link to resource:	Mentoring migrants to reach their full potential Australian Red Cross

Additional Resource 2

Title:	Helping refugees find jobs that match their skills and experience through mentorship (UNHCR Canada)
Description:	Video
Link to resource:	Helping refugees find jobs that match their skills through mentorship (unhcr.ca)

Challenges and tips for professionals/ mentors

Being a mentor, you might face one of these challenges when dealing with your mentee:

- Assessing mentee's background (knowledge and skills)
- Understanding mentees' cultural background and its impact to their decision making
- Identifying mentee's motivation

- Dealing with mentee's inexperience (knowledge and skills)
- Setting reasonable goals
- Keeping mentee engaged
- Building mentee's confidence
- Fostering mentee's independence
- Setting limits and boundaries for the mentor/mentee relationship
- Giving negative feedback to the mentee on lack of progress
- Allocating time
- Remaining patient

Duration

The duration of this block is approximately 1.5 hour.

Quiz / Self – assessment activity

1. In which areas are mentors able to support mentees with migrant/ refugee backgrounds?
 - a. Before public authorities.
 - b. In their everyday tasks (supermarket, grocery, paying bills)
 - c. In all aspects needed to facilitate their integration (public services, everyday tasks, learning the language, participating in social life).
[CORRECT ANSWER]
2. How should mentors address mistakes/ misconduct of mentees?
 - a. Mentors should help their mentees realize their own mistakes or areas of improvement with insightful questions and avoid being judgemental.
[CORRECT ANSWER]
 - b. Mentors should not tell the mentees that they have done a mistake in order not to discourage them.
 - c. It is not on the mentor to correct the mentee.
3. Do the mentors benefit from the mentoring relationship?
 - a. Mentors earn some money from mentoring.

- b. They build and strengthen important skills, such as communication and leadership skills, while broadening their knowledge on different cultures and perspectives and often feel that their lives are enriched through the support they provide. [CORRECT ANSWER]
 - c. Mentoring is mainly beneficial for mentees.
4. How are boundaries set in a mentoring relationship?
- a. The coordinator will set the boundaries in the mentoring relationship.
 - b. The mentor can set boundaries by being prepared and informing the mentee and by not being afraid to say no. [CORRECT ANSWER]
 - c. Boundaries can be set by signing a contract with the mentee.

Sources

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Topic 1 – Mentor's role in several types of integration (reception, work, education etc.)

Topic description:

In the beginning, mentees will need support to be able to communicate for their everyday needs and tasks as well as to make arrangements in the fields necessary for their integration, such as access to public authorities, health care and education services.

Read

For migrants and refugees who have little or no chance of returning to their home country, starting a new life in their host country and integrating into the local community is a necessity.

The mentors should keep the following goals in mind as they help mentees achieve self-sufficiency through the long-term impact of mentorship: (1) Local language acquisition, (2) Socialisation, (3) Community integration (4) Development of knowledge and job skills.

Together, mentors and mentees should have frequent opportunities to practice language learning. This can be done more formally through a sit-down review of vocabulary, or through conversation whilst participating in activities together.

Each mentor-mentee relationship is specific to the situation. It is recommended that activities are centred on practical needs such as how to get around, purchase food items or pay bills. These day-to-day activities address the larger goals of learning the local language, socialisation, and community integration.

Mentors assist mentees with local language learning whilst discussing cultural orientation topics such as housing, employment, transportation and education. These discussions help mentees improve their language skills as they adjust to life in their new community.

Mentors should also help mentees with specific problems they report that might require some advocacy or knowledge of local rules or systems.

Furthermore, as mentoring activities are marked by informal relationships, mentors can acquaint mentees in the community or in local traditions' events or spend leisure time together (i.e., visiting a library or museum).

Topic 2 - Why be a mentor?

Topic description:

Mentors often mention that by giving their time and energy to work with mentees, their own lives are deeply enriched. Friendships are gained while working with people from other cultures, as well as knowledge about the rich heritage and cultures of migrants.

Read

Being a mentor goes far beyond the rewarding feeling of 'giving back'. There are a huge range of personal development benefits that mentors gain from the experience, including:

- Increased self-confidence
- Increased self-awareness
- Leadership skill development
- Strong communication skills
- Becoming a good listener
- Exposure to new and different perspectives
- Growing a personal network
- Increased job satisfaction
- Learning from someone else

Topic 3 - Mentoring relationship (step-by-step)

Topic description:

Establishing an effective mentoring relationship requires proper organisation, willingness and commitment of time and effort by both parties, while understanding their roles and boundaries.

Read

Based on all this, mentor and mentee have to agree on the next concrete steps: tasks of mentor and mentee for the next meeting, place and time of the next

meeting. The details agreed upon are written down (prepared form or calendar) and handed over to the mentee. The frequency of meetings should be discussed and pre-fixed: depending on the needs of the mentees from weekly to fortnightly or monthly, anything is possible. For example, they can meet every week for approximately two hours, over the course of approximately 6 months. If both agree, a prepared (pre-)contract with the essential items is signed. The format and content of the buddy sessions can vary. An important thing is the flexible dimension of the relationship. The mentor can suggest the planned objectives and discuss them with the mentee in order to collect the mentee's ideas and plans for the next steps. Goals may change as the process unfolds. Supervision, self-assessment and monitoring the progress are crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

As the mentoring relationship evolves, mentors should focus on helping the mentees adjust in the hosting country and society.

How can mentors effectively help mentees?

1. **Prioritise learning the local language and achieve employment.** Mentees should be made aware that the first key factor in adjustment is learning to speak a new language and the second factor is getting a job;
2. **Encourage self-sufficiency.** Mentors are an initial source of guidance for mentees, however eventually mentees need to learn how to navigate these challenges themselves.
3. **Provide honest feedback.** Good mentors can help their mentees realize their own mistakes or areas of improvement with insightful questions, rather than simply telling them what to do. This is known as the 'Socratic method' – try it by asking questions such as: "What went right?", "What could have gone better?", "What should you have done differently?"
4. **Set expectations.** Give your mentee a thorough orientation about what is realistic to expect in their new community.

5. **Study the mentees.** In order to be a good mentor, you must listen, observe, ask questions, and only then advise.
6. **Learn about the mentee's culture and history.** Newcomers may have different norms and communication. Consider taking the time to learn a few words using a bilingual dictionary. This can help provide you with a framework for interpreting differences and understanding refugees' perspectives and experiences.
7. **Recognize that mentees need a support community.** People from the mentee's own ethnic group can be a valuable source of support.
8. **Ask for help.** In many cases, the mentors should be advised by professionals on how to address certain issues. For example, if the mentees suffer from psychological issues, depression etc. that deepens and/ or lasts a long time, a mental health worker should be contacted.

In order to create a successful mentoring relationship here are some tips for mentors (do's and don'ts):

Do's

1. Listen actively
2. Be approachable
3. Promote mutual trust and confidentiality, unless consulting your coordinator or peer mentors
4. Be open-minded and aware of your own attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes
5. Be actively involved and committed to your mentor-mentee relationship (e.g., you can keep in touch beyond mentoring sessions)
6. Understand that being a mentor requires personal investment and time
7. Come prepared to the individual meetings
8. Manage the mentoring time effectively
9. Be flexible: be able to adjust the mentoring sessions to your mentee's needs and mood

10. Carefully consider the specific cultural background of the mentee and his/her migration status
11. Set your limits and find a certain degree of balance between a close relationship and a professional one
12. Acknowledge what you can and you cannot do
13. Encourage the self-sufficiency and independence of your mentee
14. Hold your mentee accountable for things that are expected of him/her.

Don'ts

1. Be judgmental about your mentee's choices/ beliefs/ lifestyle/ culture
2. Be their family/ social worker/ therapist/ babysitter
3. Preach your personal values to your mentee
4. Lend money or valuable things to your mentee
5. Make promises that you cannot fulfil
6. Expect immediate results and improvements from your mentee.

Topic 4 - Boundaries of the support they can provide

Topic description:

Setting boundaries is essential for both parties. Mentees may have unrealistic ideas about what a mentor can and will do for them. Mentors should explain what kind of help they can provide and address in advance potential issues that should be settled and agreed.

Read

In order for the mentoring relationship to work effectively the mentor should make boundaries clear early on and keep them consistent. Doing so will help prevent problems in the future.

- **Be prepared to set a general framework of the mentoring relationship.**
You should be ready to answer questions regarding the days and hours that

you will meet with the mentee or that the mentee can call you; if they can visit you in your home; claims for financial support etc.

- **Do not be afraid to say “No”.** This can be very difficult at first but it is essential. Is the mentee asking you to make a phone call even when the mentee’s local language ability is sufficient to do it alone? Is the mentee asking you for money or material goods? As a mentor, you have the right to say no.
- **Boundaries help prevent burnout.** Migrant and refugee resettlement work can be stressful, even for mentors. It is a high burnout field and the primary way to prevent burnout is to care for yourself. The best helpers know how to keep a balance between their needs and the needs of those they’re serving. If you start to feel yourself burning out, please let organisation staff know.
- **Mentors should train to develop “detached compassion”.** Detached compassion means to develop a way of entering into the situation of the person who needs support that enables the mentor to continue to function effectively in the helping role. Although it is important to form a bond with your mentee, you should remember that taking on their problems as your own can hurt both of you in the long run.