Establishing Successful Mentoring Relationships

A Practical Guide

TANDEM Mentoring Programs
RWTH Aachen University
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Welcome Note

Dear mentees, dear mentors,

As an Excellence University, it is the aim of RWTH Aachen University to prepare the next generations of scientists as extensive as possible for their future tasks in a highly complex world. It is our responsibility to offer an outstanding academic education as well as a studying and working environment, that is fair and diversity-conscious and keeps the personal and professional development of each individual in mind.

Therefore, equal opportunity staff development is one of the core concerns of RWTH Aachen University – and has been not only since the beginning of the Excellence Initiative. In 2002, RWTH Aachen was one of the first universities in Germany to establish a structured mentoring program (TANDEM) for female students and PhD candidates. Ever since, the TANDEM mentoring programs have been an important element of the HR profile of the university. They address women in all status groups, from students to postdocs. They focus on the potential of the highly qualified participants who are actively shaping their career paths, and offer support and companionship. Our society needs the innovative potential of our young female scientists!

It is with immense pleasure that we observe how many former TANDEM participants have pursued successful careers and are now working in leading positions in universities, research institutions and companies.

Dear mentees, we hope that you as well will come closer to your personal career goals in the course of the mentoring year. We certainly want to encourage you to make the most of it!

Dear mentors, we very much appreciate your valuable commitment for our young academics. It is an immense gift that you share your personal experiences. Without you, your engagement and openness, our programs would miss their name-giving centerpiece – the mentoring. Thank you very much!

We wish all of you an exciting time together, an exchange that will be profitable for both sides, and many worthwhile new experiences!

Univ.-Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. h. c. mult. Prof. Dr. Doris Klee, Rector of RWTH Aachen University

Ulrich Rüdiger, Vice-Rector for Human Resources Management and Development of RWTH Aachen University
1. Introduction

The origins of the term “mentoring” go back to Greek mythology. Before Odysseus left for the Trojan War, he asked his friend and confidant Mentor to educate and take care of his son Telemachus. It is said that from time to time the goddess Athena took the disguise of Mentor to assist Odysseus or Telemachus.

The name Mentor led to the word mentor and became a principle of action and a synonym for companion and advisor. This experienced individual supports their mentee – their less experienced counterpart – in a mentoring relationship.

Today, companies, organizations, and universities use structured mentoring programs to promote specifically young talent and staff development. Mentors with professional and leadership experience personally guide young researchers (mentees) in developing professional and personal qualifications. Mentoring programs work on several levels. They establish or enhance interdisciplinary networking and the transfer of experience in the academic community and use extracurricular advising and knowledge resources. Mentoring programs in academia often explicitly address female target groups to encourage them to pursue an academic career, in accordance with equal opportunities objectives in staff and executive development.

Given this background, female mentors can be particularly inspiring role models for their female mentees. They break through traditional gender stereotypes, broaden social norms and values, and encourage young women to pursue an academic career. This is particularly important in technical subject areas, including natural sciences and engineering, where women often only represent a small proportion of the total workforce.

The TANDEM mentoring programs have been successfully established at RWTH. This guide provides you with an overview of the programs’ development and structure. It furthermore contains valuable practical suggestions for planning mentoring interactions.

We would like to thank Forum Mentoring e.V. for sharing their knowledge with us and providing us with valuable information which has helped us make the practical suggestions for the users of this guide.

2. Mentoring: Equal Opportunities for the Promotion of Young Talent and Staff Development

Developing effective strategies early on is a must in order to target specific career paths. Mentoring has proven to be a great example as it enables an active interchange of ideas with a supporting person who has already successfully mastered their career path.

Sharing specific specialist knowledge can, but does not necessarily, have to be part of mentoring. Acquiring specialist skills and qualifications is certainly essential for career development. Yet a more crucial factor is often knowledge of the rules of the game, which is not readily available to all.

The personal cooperation between mentees and mentors therefore focuses on sharing structural knowledge, informal experience, and contacts, while facilitating access to professional sources of information and networks.

All in all, mentoring is ideally a form of binding and confidential contact between equals – beyond the relationships one is dependent on at the university or in professional life (see Chapter 4.)

Mentoring is therefore markedly different than traditional academic supervision or advising, or even staff management.

Equality and Equal Opportunities – Mentoring Programs in Academia

“Mentoring, in terms of an informal supporting relationship has a long tradition in German academia. Since the mid-1990s, formal mentoring has supplemented other equality policy measures as an effective tool for staff development at numerous universities and research institutions. “Formal” means that mentoring is offered as a structured modular program and mentees are selected in a transparent process.” (translated from Forum Mentoring e.V. 2014, p. 11.)

In particular, mentoring programs are used to counteract the leaky pipeline phenomenon, which sees women increasingly underrepresented the higher up the academic hierarchy. Data from the Hochschulranking nach Gleichstellungsaspekten 2019 (2019 Higher Education Ranking According to Equality Aspects) show that this situation (also) persists at universities in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Of the 6,848 doctorates awarded in North Rhine-Westphalia between 2015 and 2017, the proportion awarded to women was 43.7%, i.e. below gender parity. The proportion of women acquiring a habilitation (post-doctoral lecture qualification) in these years was, however, only 27.2%. Meanwhile, 41.3% of junior professors in this period were women (see Hochschulranking nach Gleichstellungsaspekten 2019, p. 87).¹

There are many reasons for this. Women usually receive less advice and support than men at the crucial points of their careers and have less access to relevant networks. They only have a few successful female role models in academia and also continue to suffer from inadequate opportunities to balance work and family life. However, successful
careers can often be facilitated with personal support, good access to informal networks, role models, and flexible room for maneuver. Against this backdrop, mentoring programs in academia are mostly still oriented towards women. Besides other gender equality measures that are already in place at universities and research institutions, the programs should primarily help “(...) counter the lack of qualified managers and the significant drop-out rates of highly qualified women in academia. Structured mentoring measures that take gender and diversity aspects into account ensure more equal opportunities on the academic career path in Germany.” (Forum Mentoring e.V. 2014, p. 5.)

In addition, other aspects of equal opportunities such as educational equity, origin, and accessibility are becoming more and more important. Since they are a feature of equal opportunities-oriented staff development, mentoring programs are increasingly focused on actively dealing with the topics of gender and diversity, i.e. the perception and recognition of gender and diverse life situations. This has a positive effect on people’s individual productivity, decision-making abilities, or problem-solving strategies, and consequently also on collective creativity and performance in academia, i.e. on the appeal of universities as a whole. 

Mentoring is worthwhile
Although it can be considered an individualized measure in several respects, mentoring is by no means a one-sided process. Besides the advantages for universities outlined above, the programs facilitate and promote cross-generational knowledge transfer, i.e. everyone involved in mentoring benefits. 

Mentees receive highly individual support and guidance on career planning, strategy development, and the development of key qualifications. They also receive feedback from their mentors, so they can reflect on their own potential and skills. Further, they acquire knowledge of informal rules of the game in the academic system, the respective academic community, or in companies, gain access to relevant professional networks as well as to their respective peer groups, and benefit from contact with role models.

For their part, mentors are actively involved in encouraging young researchers. In so doing, they receive detailed insights into the current situation of young scholars. They also develop their own advisory, leadership, and social skills further, can reflect on their own career path, pass on their experience to others, and expand their networks.

3. TANDEM Mentoring Programs

RWTH has a wide range of structured mentoring programs specified according to the different career levels of their target groups. The programs explicitly address women, with the sole exception of the Faculty of Medicine. 

TANDEM mentoring programs are recognized as best practice examples in Germany.

TANDEM – A Great Success Story

2002 TANDEM, RWTH’s first mentoring program, was launched on the initiative of the University’s then Equal Opportunities Officer. It gave targeted support regarding career orientation and development for female students and doctoral candidates from all disciplines. It ran until 2013.

2004 The first mentoring program across German universities was launched with TANDEMplus. This was a pilot cooperation between RWTH (overall coordinator), Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft Munich, and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). It was aimed at highly qualified female natural and engineering scientists aspiring to a professorship. It ran until 2007.

2006 After the success of TANDEMplus, RWTH’s Faculty of Medicine established TANDEMplusMED – a program for female physicians with a doctorate wanting to pursue a professorship.

2007 TANDEMplusIDEA was the first ever international mentoring program and the first joint EU project of the four technical universities that then formed the IDEA League. The program supported highly qualified female postdocs in natural sciences and engineering preparing for a professorship. It ran until 2010.

2008 The newly established Rector’s Staff Unit: Integration Team – Human Resources, Gender and Diversity Management (IGaD) is now in charge of the TANDEM and TANDEMplusIDEA programs.

As part of the Excellence Initiative and STEM cooperation program, TANDEMkids for pupils in German grades 6 to 9 and TANDEMschool for pupils in grades 10 and above were introduced as part of IGaD’s mentoring offer. This ran until 2013.

TANDEMmed was established at the Faculty of Medicine in order to provide even more targeted support for female medical students who have passed their basic medical examination. They had previously been one of TANDEM’s own target groups.

2010 Since the program proved to be successful in the pilot phase, TANDEMplus was reestablished; this time as a cooperation between RWTH (overall coordinator), KIT, and Forschungszentrum Jülich. The target group here was female postdocs from engineering and the natural sciences aspiring to managerial positions in academia or industry. The program ran until 2016.

2011 TANDEMpeerMED was launched at the Faculty of Medicine. This program was geared towards resident physicians, as well as doctoral candidates from the natural sciences, engineering, and humanities in medicine.

This chapter also takes into account TANDEM mentoring programs offered by the Faculty of Medicine, which are described in more detail in a separate handbook.

As of 2007, the IDEA League consisted of Imperial College London, TU Delft, ETH Zurich, and RWTH.
2013 The interdisciplinary mentoring program **TANDEM** was split into two program lines due to constantly growing demand.

**TANDEMstud** addressed female students from the third semester of their degree, while **TANDEMdok** was dedicated to female doctoral candidates at all phases of their doctoral studies.

The test phase of **TANDEMpro** also began at this time. This was a program for highly qualified female postdocs from all disciplines (except medicine) hoping to be appointed to a professorship. This ran until 2014.

2015 The University management decided to establish **TANDEMstud** and **TANDEMdok** as permanent programs.

2016 **TANDEMplus** was reestablished as a four-year cooperation between RWTH (overall coordination) and Forschungszentrum Jülich as part of the Jülich Aachen Research Alliance (JARA). The target group is female postdocs from the natural sciences and engineering who are on their way to becoming professors.

2020 **TANDEMplus** will continue for another four years as sole offer of RWTH. This program is offered in English and addresses female postdocs from all disciplines.
Program Structure

All TANDEM mentoring programs are based on the modules Mentoring, Training, and Networking (see Figure 2), which are part of a series of events that support the program.

Mentoring is typically an interaction between two individuals. This means that each mentor advises their mentee in an intensive, personal, and professional exchange. When both profiles are matched as closely as possible, it ensures not only a highly successful mentoring relationship, but also that the participants will provide each other with significant insights. Each pair is matched based on the mentee’s needs and suggestions regarding their mentor (see Chapter 4.1).

All mentees regularly take part in training sessions to develop key qualifications that will be relevant in their future careers. The sessions are offered as part of the program and focus on topics such as developing their individual career profile, developing leadership skills, self-presentation, or solution-focused mediation. The successfully evaluated curricula are based on the general needs of each target group, but usually also offer participants the opportunity to take free electives that deal with their specific areas of concern. The exclusivity of the training sessions, which are generally intended for set groups even beyond the program period, enables the opportunity for a trusting exchange and consistent work on individual questions as a group.

Personal networks are incredibly significant when it comes to career planning. Mentees can therefore take advantage of opportunities for sharing information both within and outside their groups with additional networking offers. The establishment and increase in number of sustainable contacts also aims at more successful communication within the respective academic or scientific community. Informal meetings among participants facilitate and specifically promote the mutual interchange of information and experiences, as well as support within the respective group. In addition, events for all programs are offered, such as Theme Nights. This is not only an opportunity to gain useful knowledge, but also helps further networking. The interaction of varied experiences and backgrounds strengthens both the individual potential of the mentee and that of the entire group.

Quality Management through Evaluation

(Expectations query, interim query, final query, whereabouts request)

Kick-off Workshop
Preparation for Mentoring

Opening Event
Official welcome of the new program attendees

Mentoring
Individual support through experienced mentors

Training
Seminars and workshops to extend personal and technical skills

Networking
Network and discussion meetings to exchange information and experience

Closing Event
Official farewell including certificate handover

Fig. 2: TANDEM Mentoring Programs’ Structure
Success Factors and Quality Assurance

An essential factor in the effective and lasting success of the TANDEM mentoring programs is that they are interlinked with other relevant measures and offers at RWTH. Nevertheless, intensive and sustainable networking is an indispensable prerequisite for the quality assurance of the TANDEM mentoring programs outside the University too. Those responsible for the programs are therefore involved in the Forum Mentoring e.V. - Bundesverband Mentoring in der Wissenschaft as well as the Netzwerk Mentoring NRW (a regional group for intensifying the exchange on mentoring initiatives at universities in North Rhine-Westphalia).

Work on the programs is based on the quality standards for mentoring in an academic context developed by Forum Mentoring e.V. (see Forum Mentoring e.V. 2014.) Among other things, these refers to:

- a multilevel standardized procedure for selecting qualified mentees,
- a matching process, i.e. forming a tandem, and
- a quality management system that is a consistent part of the program.

To ensure they approach the program in a highly responsible and effective manner, participants are always instructed carefully on the structure, use, and general conditions of mentoring in introductory workshops. In addition, this guide offers practical suggestions and recommended procedures to help mentees and mentors establish a good mentoring relationship.

The TANDEM mentoring programs are continuously evaluated for lasting quality assurance. The mentees’ motivation, expectations, personal experiences, evaluations, satisfaction, and suggestions are recorded and evaluated at the beginning and end of each program with the help of standardized questionnaires.

Around six months into the program, the mentee can reflect upon their participation in an interim review with the program coordinator, which may result in the mentee’s goals being readjusted. At the end of the program, closing workshops conducted by professional coaches help mentees reflect on their own development steps and how they can transfer their learning experiences to their study or academic life. The findings from these feedback events as well as the final mentor surveys are subsequently incorporated into the future program design.

Since 2013, surveys have been carried out every three to five years to determine career steps former mentees have taken and how this is related to the impact of the mentoring program. All events that are part of the program are also evaluated on the quality of the speakers and self-perceived personal learning success using short feedback questionnaires.

4. Practical Tips for a Good Mentoring Relationship

An equal exchange is one of the fundamental requirements for a successful mentoring relationship, despite differences in age and experience between the mentor and mentee.

The following aspects are therefore particularly crucial:

- Free will, i.e. participation in the program is voluntary for all participants and based on individual motivation;
- Independence, i.e. the mentees must not be in a state of dependence with their mentors (e.g. through study or work, supervision during doctoral studies, or a habilitation);
- Personal contact, i.e. the mentees and their mentors should meet in person at least once to find out whether they would like to work with each other.

The mentoring relationship is a working cooperation with a fixed duration. This can, however, also be continued on an informal basis after the official end of the program term if the mentees and mentors wish to do so (see Forum Mentoring e.V. 2014, p. 24).

4.1 Selection Criteria for Mentors

To establish a good mentoring relationship, it is particularly important that mentees select a suitable mentor. They should try to find someone who matches their professional and personal goals as closely as possible.

Essential questions could be:

- What would I like to achieve (and by when)?
- What position would I like to pursue?
- What advice and support would I like to have for my next steps?
4.2 Mentoring Dialogs

The mentees’ learning and development process is at the heart of the mentoring relationship. They are therefore primarily responsible for ensuring the success of the relationship. This particularly includes a readiness to learn in an active manner, carefully prepare, implement, and follow-up on all contact.

Here are a few general pieces of advice:
- Be professional, active, reliable, and appreciative.
- Keep in touch with your mentor during the mentoring process.
- Regularly update your mentor so they can be involved in your development.
- Be considerate of the time your mentor has available.

Getting in Touch and Arranging Meetings
- Introduce yourself briefly in your first email and attach your CV.
- Ask for an opportunity to get to know each other in person and, if necessary, suggest specific dates or time periods when you would be able to meet up (see The First Meeting in Person).
- If possible, accept the mentor’s suggestion for a suitable meeting place.

Preparation
- Always prepare all personal, telephone or video chat contact carefully.
- Unless otherwise discussed, you should also let your mentor prepare for the meeting by sending them your planned agenda.

Course of Conversation
- Always be active and engaged with your mentor.
- Develop solutions and goals together with your mentor, but decide which areas you would like to act on and how you would like to proceed yourself (see Interacting in Mentoring Relationships).
- At the end of each meeting, take time to give each other feedback on the course of the conversation (see Constructive Feedback).
- Be open for feedback.
- Avoid having a sense of entitlement. Do not expect ready-made solutions or for decisions to be taken away from you.
- Do not avoid any issues. Although you may find it difficult at first, you should address any issues that arise and try to clarify them.

Follow-up
- Record the results and most interesting aspects of your talk in a short log (in the template section) and send this to your mentor.
- Summarize your log entries in a mentoring diary over the course of the year.

General to Specific Questions

Further, a few key questions help identify ideal mentors: (Vgl. Lozo 2016: “Wer kann mein(e) Mentor_in sein?”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Would you like your mentor to be male or female? What is your preference based on?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of Work</td>
<td>Which area should your mentor be working in? In science and research, in industry (possibly industrial research), or for a public authority?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Proximity</td>
<td>How important is it for you that the mentor is involved in a field similar to yours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important is it for you that the mentor is involved in specialist networks and to have specialist and/or informal knowledge of the particular culture, as well as methodological knowledge, or knowledge of specialist journals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Funding</td>
<td>How important is it for you that the mentor has experience with the successful acquisition of external funding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>How significant should your mentor’s publication output be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What exactly is important for you, e.g. an extensive list of publications in high-impact journals or gaining insights into the procedure and organization of academic writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>Would you like to have a mentor with a family?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important should the topic of balancing work and family life be to them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important is it for you to discuss topics such as flexible work organization, family time management, and dividing tasks as a couple?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>How important is it for you to be located near your mentor? Are you prepared to travel to them, even several times, if necessary?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

Would you like your mentor to be male or female? What is your preference based on?

Field of Work

Which area should your mentor be working in? In science and research, in industry (possibly industrial research), or for a public authority?

Professional Proximity

How important is it for you that the mentor is involved in a field similar to yours?

How important is it for you that the mentor is involved in specialist networks and to have specialist and/or informal knowledge of the particular culture, as well as methodological knowledge, or knowledge of specialist journals?

External Funding

How important is it for you that the mentor has experience with the successful acquisition of external funding?

Publications

How significant should your mentor’s publication output be?

What exactly is important for you, e.g. an extensive list of publications in high-impact journals or gaining insights into the procedure and organization of academic writing?

Family Responsibilities

Would you like to have a mentor with a family?

How important should the topic of balancing work and family life be to them?

How important is it for you to discuss topics such as flexible work organization, family time management, and dividing tasks as a couple?

Proximity

How important is it for you to be located near your mentor? Are you prepared to travel to them, even several times, if necessary?
These suggestions enable more effective planning and observation of developments, results, and successes, bring open questions to the fore, and help comprehend and clarify possible misunderstandings.

The First Meeting in Person
- To get to know each other, we advise you start by taking it in turns to describe your general (professional) background.
- Discuss which topics and questions are generally relevant to you (see Suggestions for the Choice of Topics to be Discussed).
- Express your need for advice and support.
- Discuss what your expectations and specific goals are and how you should arrange future meetings and contact.
- Designate enough time to pinpoint your objectives. If necessary, go through your personal goals and decide on the meet-up place together now (see Chapter 4.4).
- The goals can be continuously reflected upon and adjusted over the course of your mentoring program.
- Clearly agree on mutual discretion and confidentiality. If there are any exceptions to this, communicate them openly.
- Agree on a strategy in case you have burning questions that you do not want to postpone until the next meeting.
- In between personal appointments, we advise you to contact each other by email or phone.
- Discuss how often and where you would like to meet in future. (see Lozo 2016: Themenbereiche des Erstgesprächs and Mentees: Wie agiere ich am besten in meiner Mentoring-Beziehung?).

Suggestions for the Choice of Topics to be Discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies, Doctorate, Postdoc Phase, Habilitation, University, Research Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any questions about your current job or studies where you would appreciate hearing your mentor’s experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your university have official guidelines? How do these fit into the unwritten laws of the respective specialization’s culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the different role behavior of women and men show up in the study environment or at the workplace?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Mentors Area of Work</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What structures and informal rules are in place in the mentor’s field of work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a hospitality or internship possible where they work? Could you possibly imagine working there too?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career, Career Goals and Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you and the mentor, understand “career” to mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can your career goals be achieved? What obstacles could arise and how could you overcome them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What experiences has your mentor had in the course of their career and what strategies have they applied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your academic or scientific achievements? What kind of support do you need?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and Project Proposals, Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you have to take into account when applying for external funding? How do you find cooperative partnerships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can students already get involved in research projects? What are the requirements for creating a working group?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Resolution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any difficulties with other students, superiors or in the team? What are possible reasons for this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has the mentor dealt with any conflicts or crises in the past?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing and Expanding Networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which informal ways are used to share relevant information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which networks do you have access to/are you part of? How can the useful and “right” ones be identified, maintained, and expanded?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you get access to suitable networks? How can you make and maintain contacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of your mentor’s contacts could also be valuable for you and vice versa?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leadership Positions

- Which strategies does your mentor use to lead a team and achieve goals together?
- How do you present yourself to superiors, colleagues, and employees? How do you give feedback?
- How do you conduct staff or objective agreement talks?
- Which tasks can easily be delegated?
- Are there any differences in the leadership behavior between female or male superiors? What is the effect of this, in the mentor’s opinion?

Work-Life Balance

- How can you maintain a good balance between your work and private life? How can you divide your time wisely?
- How can you create a good balance?
- How do you deal with stress?
- In which career phase is it most sensible to plan a family?
- How can family-friendly working hours be negotiated and implemented with superiors?

Interacting in Mentoring Relationships

Active listening means that the course of conversations in mentoring can be both constructive and effective. It is important to actually listen to the other person and hold back at first, i.e. not develop your own ideas while the other person is still speaking.

I-messages that reflect one’s own feelings and perceptions are also beneficial, while You-messages can make the other person feel attacked and they may then react defensively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You-Message</th>
<th>I-Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Do you really always have to interrupt me?”</td>
<td>“I’m angry when I get interrupted because I don’t think what I’m saying is important to you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should really take a debating course!”</td>
<td>“You really can’t be trusted with anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m terribly embarrassed that you’ve told someone what I said.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Ich- und Du-Botschaften (see Gordon 1972)

Constructive Feedback

Feedback is one of the key ways to give advice in mentoring. Both parties can gain experience with this feedback. Constructive feedback that the receiving person can benefit from should be structured as follows:

(according to Lozo 2016, Feedback):

- **First positive, then critical:** State what you liked most before expressing your criticism.
- **Clear, precise, descriptive:** Describe your own thoughts or feelings as briefly and concisely as possible.
- **Specifically:** Do not evaluate or interpret the other person’s behavior.
- **Directly:** Give feedback immediately after the situation – the other person will be able to benefit the most from it then.
- **Constructive:** Express feedback in a way that allows the behavior to be changed.
- **Appropriate:** Do not target the other person’s weaknesses or mistakes.
- **In the “I” form:** Emphasize that you are expressing your own opinion or feelings.

This applies to those on the receiving end of the feedback:

- I pay undivided attention to my counterpart and ask if I have not understood something.
- I listen without already thinking about my answer or possible counterarguments and do not interpret what I have heard.
- I concentrate on the core of the message.
- I let the feedback sink in and do not jump to defend or justify myself.
- Finally, I express my thanks for the feedback given.
4.3 Suggestions for Mentors

Mentors are also subject to certain requirements. If you take on this task, you should be able to spend the necessary time on it and enjoy supporting your mentee in the following ways (see Haasen, Nele 2001):

- Listening and asking questions: I really want to understand my mentee’s concern.
- Confirmation and encouragement: I support my mentee in realistically assessing and evaluating their own abilities.
- Advising: I let the mentee find their own solutions by asking specific questions.
- Requirements: I draw the mentee’s attention to possible obstacles and difficulties.
- Exercise: I use role plays or our conversations to show the mentee how they could behave differently.
- Help: If any mistakes or difficulties arise, I give the mentee encouragement and look for solutions together with her.
- Confrontation: If necessary, I call my mentee out on inappropriate behavior.

"As a mentor, I have received ideas and inspiration for my own life."

A mentor in the TANDEM dok program

"It’s simply great fun accompanying a young and committed scholar on her path by sharing my own experience."

A mentor in the TANDEM plus program

4.4 Working Materials and Templates

The following materials and templates help mentees make the most of the program by offering suggestions for self-reflection and on how to best benefit from, and design, the mentoring relationship.

Determining Personal Goals and a Meet-Up Place at the Start of the Mentoring Year

When you embark upon the mentoring program, we advise you to truly reflect on your goals, values and resources. This is the key basis for personal career planning and you can refer to your ideas again and again over the course of the mentoring year. Your completed questionnaire can also be used to start a meeting with your mentor.

Career
For me, career means …

I want to pursue a career because …

Strengths and Weaknesses
What are my strengths and skills? What tasks do I particularly like taking on?
What do my colleagues or my superiors particularly praise me on?


How can I use and further develop these strengths and skills?


What do I find more difficult? Which aspects of myself am I critical about? Which tasks do I not particularly like taking on?


What aspects are my colleagues or superiors critical about?


Which of my weaknesses am I happy to accept? Which ones do I want to, and can, compensate for? Where do I still see potential for development?


Professional Goals

Later in my career I am particularly looking forward to...


In 5 to 10 years, I see myself...


In the long run, I would like to...


To achieve this, I want to...


My goals for the mentoring year are:
In this context, I would like my mentor to be able to help me with...

I would like to have support from the other mentees regarding...

For my part, I can pass on to the other mentees...

When I have achieved my goals, I will reward myself with/by...

Meeting Log Template

Last name, first name:

Date:                                Duration:                              Place:

Topics discussed:

Objective(s) of the meeting:

Recommendations/advice:

The next steps:

Notes:
5. Literature

Bibliography

Recommended Reading

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