

# A guide for mentors

Mentoring can take many forms, and all can make a positive impact on someone's career. Whether you're preparing for a one-off conversation with a job-seeker or embarking on a long-term mentoring journey, this guide was created by LinkedIn and MENTOR to help you adopt a mentoring mindset and turn every interaction with your mentee into a positive learning experience.



## Mentorship starts with understanding

Mentors play an important role in helping professionals build new connections that can transform their careers. At its core, being a career mentor is about learning to understand your mentee, and discover how you can help them achieve their professional goals. **The more you understand what your mentees are experiencing, thinking about, and aiming to achieve in their careers, the more likely you will be to build a meaningful relationship with them.** When you can meet your mentees where they are today and understand the context of their current life and career, you will be better equipped to help them realize their full potential, achieve their goals, and strengthen their confidence.

## Mentoring with cultural humility

It's important to approach mentoring with cultural humility, which is rooted in three key principles:

- 1 Engaging in lifelong learning and critical self-reflection
- 2 Recognizing and challenging power imbalances
- 3 Advocating for institutional accountability



Remember, you can't know everything about someone else's experiences. Cultural humility is about understanding that, and having the awareness and tools to navigate conversations and relationships, despite this lack of knowledge.



## Tips for a successful mentoring conversation

Career conversations can feel uncomfortable at first, particularly at the start of a new mentor-mentee relationship. Don't worry! This awkwardness will likely fade over time, and there are a few steps you can take to help the conversation flow more easily:

### ✓ Focus on collaborating, not directing

As mentors, we do not have all the answers. Our primary role is to ask great questions and actively listen to get to know others, understand their goals, and help them discover and leverage their strengths. Don't focus on fixing your mentee; be a champion for them.

### ✓ Encourage growth

Some mentees focus on reasons why they are not good at something and why they don't feel as though they can achieve a goal. Challenge this mindset by having your mentee reflect on past successes and consider how they can use past success strategies to overcome current challenges. This can help mentees develop a growth mindset and strengthen their resiliency.

### ✓ Share your experiences and perspectives

Instead of telling your mentee what to do, share your life experiences and alternative perspectives with them for consideration. By brainstorming options with our mentees, we empower them to reflect on the pros and cons of each option and to make decisions for themselves. Be fully present in the discussion and open to answering their questions.

### ✓ Be transparent about successes and failures

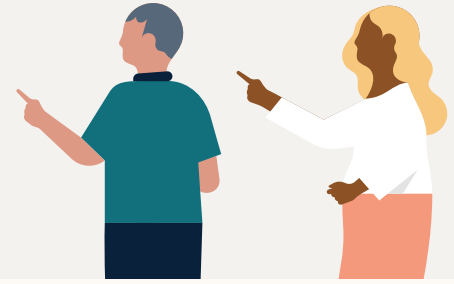
Discuss some of your successes with your mentees, including what it took to achieve them and what you learned in the process. Also, reflect on your failures, modeling how you leveraged these moments as learning opportunities and how they influence your thoughts and actions today.



Looking for more conversation tips? [Check out the Career conversation guide!](#)

# Best practices for providing career advice

During a career mentoring session, you might be asked to provide a mentee with advice tailored to their unique professional needs and journey. When offering career advice, consider the following:



## 1 Identify career goals

Work with your mentee to identify specific career goals. Start by exploring career interests and then work collaboratively to prioritize those interests into a few viable career pathways. Focus on connecting their strengths, skills, and life experiences to career options.

## 2 Map action steps

Brainstorm specific action steps that would help mentees achieve their career goals. Breaking bigger goals into smaller milestones makes the path forward feel more manageable and less overwhelming. Consider steps they can take to expand their network, develop or enhance their skills, and increase their understanding of career options.

## 3 Make a list of what they have and what they need

Review their action steps and consider what resources and relationships they currently have to leverage and what they need to achieve each action step.

## 4 Close the gap

As a mentor, it's your job to help mentees identify the steps they might take to "close the gap" and complete their action steps. Remember, don't tell them what to do but instead guide them with questions and by sharing your own life experiences. Part of guiding mentees as they complete their action steps is helping them to expand their professional network and increase their access to opportunities such as job shadowing, informational interviews, and networking events.

## 5 Confirm clear next steps

Model a solution-focused approach by working with mentees to confirm the next steps they've decided to take in pursuing their career goals. Ensure next steps are as specific as possible with a clear timeline that mentees can hold themselves accountable to. You can also help them identify back-up plans and think through how they would respond to potential scenarios that may play out on their career pathway.



## Looking for more mentoring resources?

Check out the following external resources for more advice and learnings about how to be an effective mentor:



### [LinkedIn Learning course on cultural humility](#)

Available with your LinkedIn Learning subscription, this course teaches the importance of fostering an inclusive mindset in the workplace and how to implement beneficial changes, all to help you grow as an individual and better support others.



### [LinkedIn Learning course on an inclusive mindset](#)

Available with your LinkedIn Learning subscription, this course teaches best practices on how to cultivate safer, more inclusive spaces by building a culture of empathy and acknowledging common challenges such as privilege, ignorance, and cultural insensitivity.



### [Growth mindset for mentors](#)

This resource helps mentors understand growth mindset and how to apply growth mindset strategies to many of the challenges that their mentees might face.

