



## MENTORING AND PEER SUPPORT

Mentoring is the act of providing guidance, advice, and peer support to assist individual growth. This is not to be confused with 'coaching', which by definition is a process that aims to improve performance in helping another person learn in ways that encourage new knowledge and understanding. By definition, mentoring is a process through which an individual offers skilled expertise as well as support to a less experienced colleague. The mentor acts as a teacher, counsellor, and advocate to an associate. In Scouting, this concept can apply across all the Youth sections as well as to all levels of Adults in Scouting.

Good mentors work on two distinct levels:

- Supporting the adult in understanding and undertaking specific jobs/roles and responsibilities as part of their role.
- Assisting in guiding the adult towards new or different directions and other opportunities.

They are also a role model, providing instruction on behaving like a skilled adult in Scouting (e.g. unit leader, commissioner, etc) and working with positive peer support. The modelling should reflect ways that allow the mentee to shape their own behaviours and not necessarily a direct copy of those of the mentor.

The mentor fulfils a number of roles. In summary, the mentor advises, advocates, acquires appropriate resources, acts as a role model, coaches, protects, and supports. Support is perhaps the most important of these responsibilities, particularly if the mentee demonstrates behaviors that are contrary to the NSO's ethos. Support here also relates to listening, explaining, and acknowledging successes and disappointments.

Mentors experience many learning benefits from cooperative engagement with the mentee. New things and new experiences for the mentee may also mean new things and new experiences for the mentor.

Additionally, mentors gain valuable insights into the operations of the NSO that may not have been noticed before. Interpersonal communication skills are enhanced and further developed through the mentoring experience, and many experience high levels of increased personal satisfaction, a greater sense of purpose, and being re-energized due to their mentor role.

Everyone, regardless of who we are, can benefit from mentoring at some time, and often don't realise it. Think about these two questions:

- Have you ever needed assistance for a particular job/role or responsibility and weren't quite sure what to do about it?
- Have you ever considered taking a particular action and weren't confident that this action was appropriate?



It is not about simply asking someone for the answers to your questions; it is about another individual providing Scouting or other work roles expertise and support to guide you to the answers you need, by way of a mentor-mentee relationship.

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but it does offer an insight into what mentoring entails:

1. Clarity – being clear in understanding your role as mentor, and the role of the mentee.
2. Agreement – goals need to be mutually set and put in writing. Be realistic. You are the mentor; the mentee will do the 'heavy lifting'. Both you should review this Agreement periodically.
3. Relationships – you are a colleague first and an expert second. Be open, warm, not intimidating. Listen, listen, listen, and listen again, the mentee's questions and concerns need an appropriate, considered, and thoughtful response.
4. Time limits – these should be applied particularly to goals set, they should not be open-ended.
5. High engagement and performance – expect this. Most beneficial mentoring is based on mutual learning, active engagement, and striving to attain a goal.
6. Dependency – at the beginning there will be a greater dependency, but it will move towards 'independence' as you mentor, support, and encourage your mentee, and express your belief in their ability as it develops.
7. Recognition – encouragement, and appreciation go a long way. Praise work well done, and help to find alternative paths for things not working as well.
8. Open-minded – cultural differences, gender, and different ideas and opinions provide challenges. Maintain communication and discuss things openly.
9. Example – as a mentor, you will be seen as a role model for everything, by many others, not just the mentee. Behavior and deportment must be exemplary.
10. Teach – by example and encouragement show your colleague how to become a mentor.

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