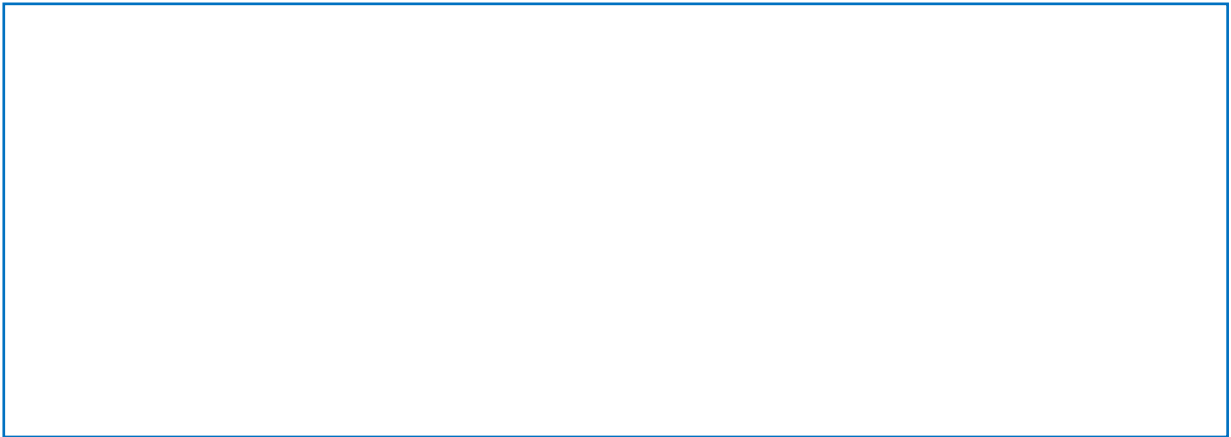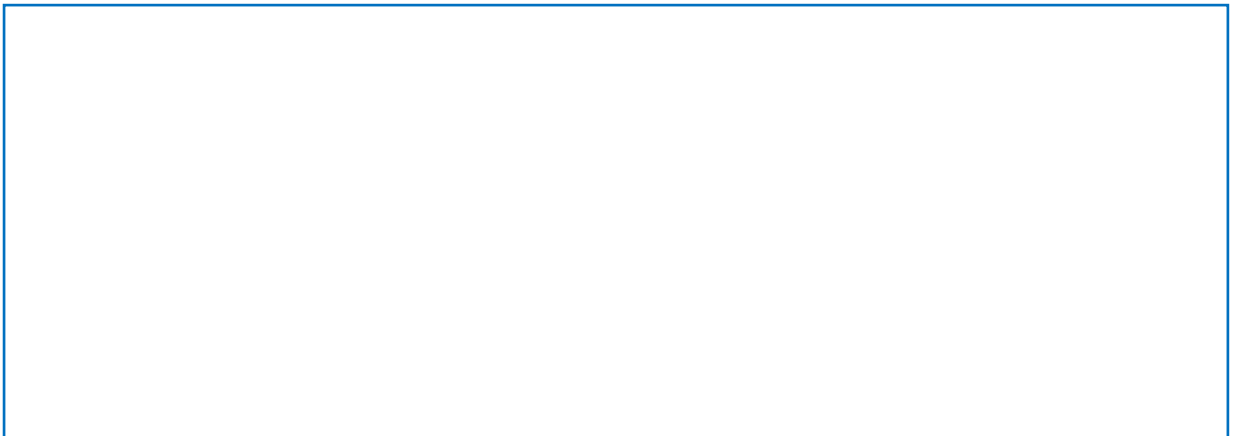# MENTORING SKILLS

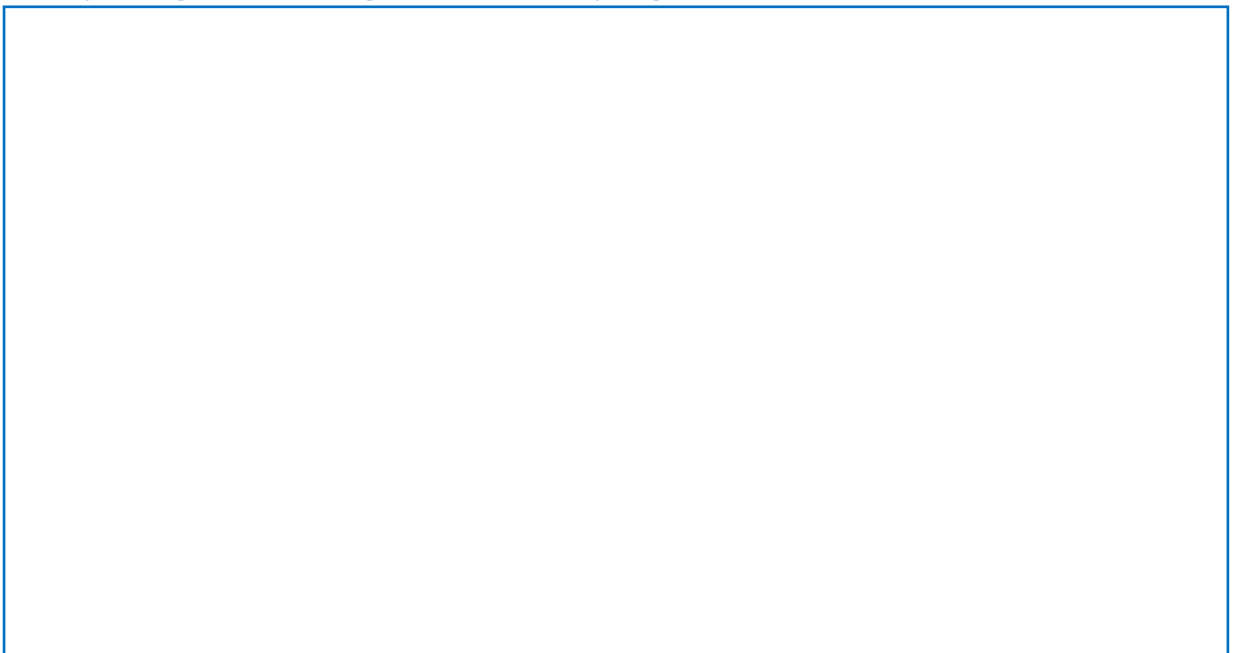## LANCASTER UNIVERSITY 2021

Mentoring Skills

What is mentoring?

Benefits of mentoring

Comparing mentoring to other helping interventions

Mentoring Skills

Key components of mentoring

Mentoring is…..

1. Contracting

2. Building Rapport

3. Effective Listening

4. Powerful Questioning

5. Affirmation and feedback

6. Information giving
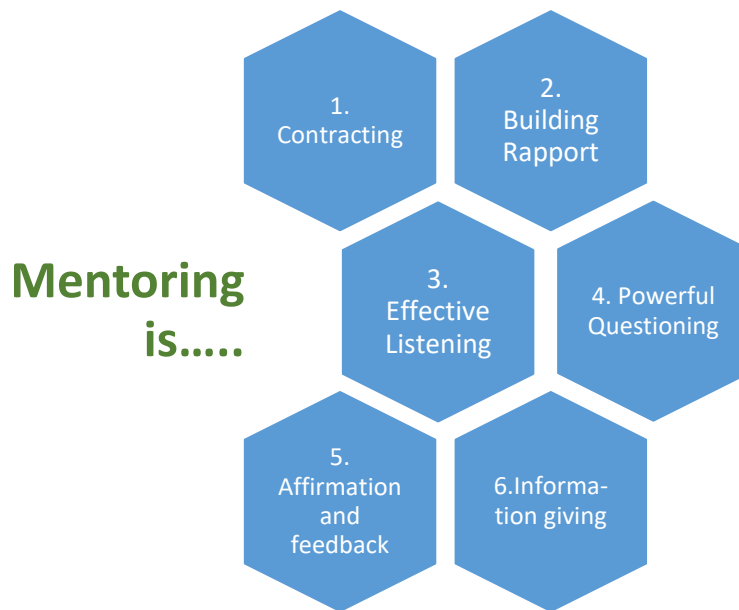
Rapport

Rapport is the ability to relate to others in a way and is key to effective mentoring because it creates a climate of trust and understanding. Creating and maintaining rapport is something we tend to do naturally as human beings.

At the core of rapport is the idea of matching and mirroring things such as:

- Posture
- Movement and gestures
- Breathing
- Voice tone and quality
- Language content (e.g. visual, kinaesthetic, auditory)

Mentoring Skills

Listening

We typically speak at the rate of 100 – 200 words per minute and our brains can process words at the rate of about 500 words per minute. This creates idle time which the listener can use to rethink the speaker's objective, weigh his or her evidence, search for clues to meaning and review what has been said so far. Or, of course, we could allow our minds to drift and not pay sufficient attention to the messages, spoken and unspoken, we are receiving.

Effective listening enables the receiver to absorb the idea communicated by the 'transmitter' with limited distortion, deletion or generalisation.

Effective listening requires practice and energy and is not the passive activity we may have been led to believe it is.

Developing a habit of positive listening can enable us to listen more effectively. This involves:
- Developing an interest in the speaker and what she or he is saying
- Using the mind systematically to fill gaps created by the difference between rates of speaking and listening
- Thinking about the words and ideas being expressed
- Working to discover what is not being said
- Checking out whether what has been understood is the intended message.

We can help speakers to communicate effectively by:
- Remaining unaffected by their words and manner
- Not putting up any signs of emotional defence
- Maintaining a good level of eye contact and smiling to encourage further communication
- Asking constructive questions
- Reflecting back in their own words what the speaker has said
- Listening with an open mind even when you may be able to anticipate what is going to be said next
- Letting the speaker finish without interruption or argument
- Avoiding evaluation until you are sure you have understood the intended message
- Re-stating the major points so the speaker can amend or amplify if necessary

Levels of listening
Listening happens consciously and unconsciously. To listen well is to do so consciously and positively with high levels of concentration and energy.

Levels of listening include:
- Level 1: Cosmetic listening – you can appear to be listening but your mind is elsewhere
- Level 2: Conversational listening i.e. getting the story out, thinking about what to say next
- Level 3: Active listening: participants absorbed and concentrating, in rapport, doing little of the talking, asking skilful questions
- Level 4: Deep listening: hearing the emotions, listening to the silences, feel connected at emotional as well as intellectual level, reading between the lines.

Mentoring Skills

State

Our state is our physiological *and* psychological state, the state of our body and mind. As the two are linked to make up a single person, we can change one to manifest a change in the other.

Have a go at this exercise to see how it works.

Stand up and put your arms down beside you, drop your head and shoulders, put your mouth in a grimace as though someone has put a horrible smell under your nose and something horrible in your mouth. Now become aware how you are feeling inside you. Probably low, dull, grotty and unenthusiastic.

Now lift your head up, raise your shoulders, smile, lift your arms above your head and take a leap into the air and give a little yell of triumph and joy. Now how do you feel? Probably energised, enthused, happy and in a far more positive state than before.

The important point to think about here is that you have control over your state and you have choice about how good or low you feel irrespective of the external surroundings and circumstances.

So how can you help yourself get into a resourceful state? Mindfulness exercises can help with this, helping us become more present. Or it may through a picture or view, hearing music or poetry, remembering a great holiday, wearing something fabulous or adjusting your posture to feel empowered and energised?

Powerful questions

Asking powerful questions can aid communication and develop our ability to influence. Successful mentoring is dependent on effective listening and asking powerful or probing questions. Questioning enables us to move from a 'telling' culture to one of drawing out the learning and ideas from others. This in turn builds engagement and commitment and promotes ownership and the psychological contract, where our teams are more likely to 'go the extra mile'.

| Type of question	Purpose	Examples
Open questions	Gather information and encourage people to talk	Tell me about… What did you think about…?
Probing questions	Learn more about what the person has said	How did you feel then…? Why do you think that was…?
Comparison (probing)	To probe negative or vague statements	Better than what…?
Cause and effect (probing)	Useful for dealing with emotions and relationships	So what was it that caused you to feel disappointed…?
Clarification questions	Ensure complete understanding	Just to confirm, are you clear about….?
Challenging questions	Challenge generalisations	Who do you mean when you say 'everyone'…?
Closed questions	Check facts	Are you going to be at the meeting…?
Non-verbal questions	Encourage people to say more	Pauses, nods, smiles, tilting head to one side

Mentoring Skills

Questions to avoid include

Leading questions	Suggest a desired answer	What did you like about….? Wouldn't you say….?
Multiple questions	Asking a number of questions without giving time to answer	How often do you attend and what do you get from it…?
Marathon questions	Long questions masked in statements which then become unclear or incomprehensible	
Discriminatory or inappropriate questions	Questions asked to cause embarrassment or which may cause offence	

Some coaching / mentoring models

GROW: John Whitmore

Whitmore, John. 2009. *Coaching for Performance: GROWing Human Potential and Purpose* 4th Edition. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Goal (make it SMART)   **Reality**   **Options**   **Will/ Way forward**
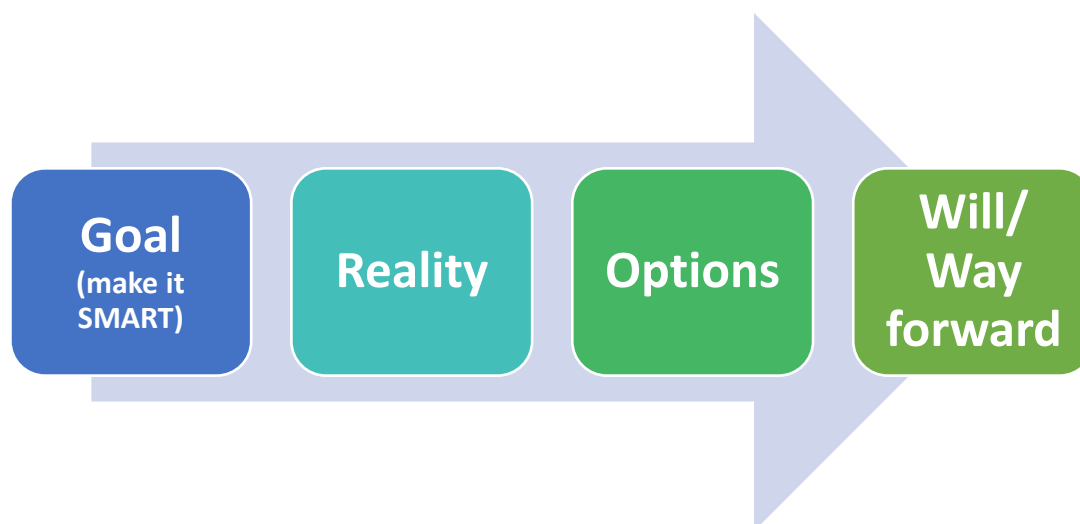
The GROW model was originally developed in the 1980s by performance coach Sir John Whitmore. It can be helpful to think of the GROW model in terms of a journey:

- Decide where you want to go
- Understand where you are now
- Explore what the various routes to your destination could be
- And finally, plan the journey and make a commitment to it, preparing for potential hold-ups and barriers along the way.

Mentoring Skills

1. Questions to help establish a goal

1. What do you want to have happen?
2. What do you want to achieve from this coaching session?
3. What goal do you want to achieve?
4. What would you like to accomplish?
5. What result are you trying to achieve?
6. What will success look like for you?
7. What outcome do you want to get to?
8. What do you want to change?
9. What would the benefits be if you achieved this goal?
10. How will you know when you have achieved this goal?
11. How will you know that the problem or issue is solved?
12. How does this goal fit with the team's objectives?

2. Questions to help understand the current reality

1. What is happening now?
2. Where are you now in relation to your goal?
3. What has contributed to your success so far?
4. What progress have you made so far?
5. What is working well right now?
6. What would make your current situation even better?
7. What's getting in the way of reaching your goal?
8. What do you think was really happening?
9. What have you already tried?
10. On a scale of one to ten how severe/serious/urgent is the situation?
11. If someone said/did that to you, what would you think/feel/do?
12. How does this goal relate to any other goals or objectives?

3. Questions to help explore the options

1. What are your options?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
3. What do you think you need to do next?
4. What could be your first step?
5. If anything was possible, what would you do?
6. Who might be able to help?
7. What has worked for you already? How could you do more of that?
8. What is the hardest/most challenging part of that for you?
9. What advice would you give to a friend about that?
10. What else?
11. What would happen if you did that?
12. What would happen if you didn't do that?
13. What wouldn't happen if you did do that?   *- Cartesian Co-ordinates*
14. What wouldn't happen if you didn't do that?
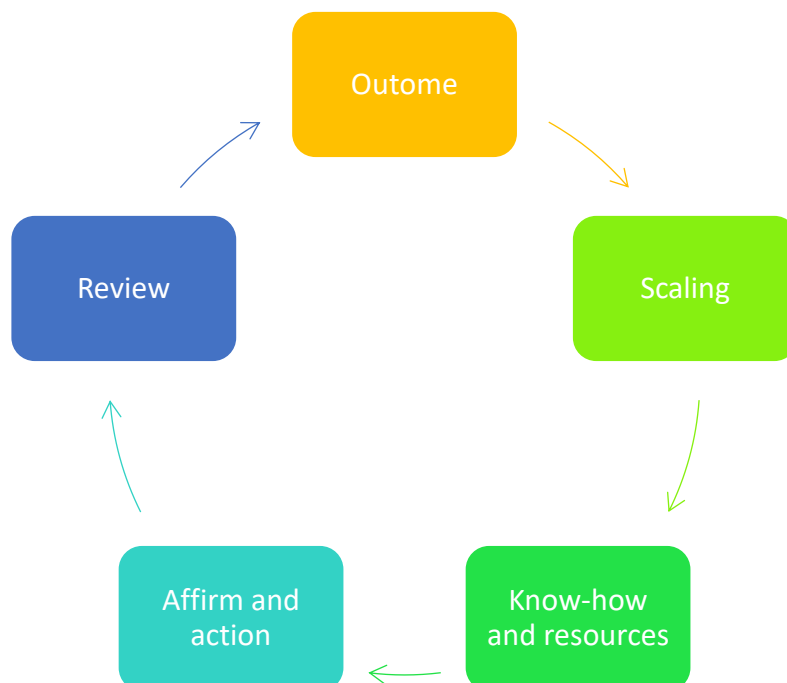
Mentoring Skills

4. Questions to find the will / way forward

1. Which option do you feel ready to act on?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to making this happen? What would move it to a __ ?
3. So, what will you do now?
4. When will you do that?
5. What could stop you moving forward? How will you overcome this?
6. How can you keep yourself motivated?
7. How will you hold yourself to account?
8. How can I help you achieve your goal?
9. What support do you need to make that happen?
10. What action will you take this week?
11. Is there anything missing?
12. What will happen (or, what is the cost) of you NOT doing this?
13. How often will you review your progress?
14. How will you know when you've reached your goal?

Solution Focussed Coaching: OSKAR

Jackson, Paul and McKergow, Mark. 2006. *The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE* 2nd edition London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing

This model can be applied equally well to mentoring.

Mentoring Skills

Outcome	Scaling
- What is the objective of the coaching/mentoring? - What do you want to achieve today? - What do you want to achieve in the long term? - How will you know this coaching has been of use to you?	- On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing the Future Perfect, and 0 the worst it has ever been, where are you on that scale today? - You are at n now; what did you do to get this far? - How would you know you had got to n+1?
Know-how and resources	**Affirm and action**
- What helps you perform at x on the scale, rather than x? - When does the outcome already happen for you - even a little bit? - What did you did to make that happen? How did you do that? - What did you do differently? - What would other people say you are doing well?	- What's particularly impressive so far - about strengths and resources employed - What is the next small step? What would you like to do personally, straight away? - You are at n now, what would it take to get you to n+1?

<div align="center">

Review
- What's better?
- What did you do that made the change happen?
- What effects have the changes had?
- What do you think will change next?

</div>

Thinking Errors (taken from Roberston Cooper: www.robertsoncooper.com)

We all have to use short-cuts to draw conclusions and make sense of what is going on around us, based on incomplete information. The following are common thinking errors when they represent a bias towards thinking in a particular way, whatever the objective evidence suggests. Individuals tend to be prone to making one or more of these errors more frequently than the others. It can be very helpful to identify your own bias, and to learn to challenge it by checking out the evidence for and against these thoughts when they occur. Identifying these thinking errors in our mentees can help them move forward with their thinking and get themselves 'unstuck'.

All-or-nothing thinking: you see things in black-and-white categories. For example, if your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure (and similarly for others and their performance). All-or-nothing thinking forms the basis of perfectionism.

Over-generalisation: e.g. you see a single negative event, such as a career setback, as a never-ending pattern (thinking about it in terms of "always" and "never").

Mental filter: e.g. you pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your vision of reality becomes darkened.

Jumping to conclusions: you make a [negative] interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion.

Mind reading: you assume you know what other people are thinking, without checking.

Mentoring Skills

Magnification (and minimisation): you exaggerate [problems, imperfections etc.]

Should (must, ought) statements: e.g. I should be more analytical; she ought to be more patient (even though such thoughts may often be justified, a bias towards this type of thinking is generally unhelpful in understanding and motivating oneself or others).

Labelling and mislabelling: instead of describing your effort, you attach a [negative] label to yourself: "I'm a failure" instead of "I made a mistake" – and similarly with others' behaviour.
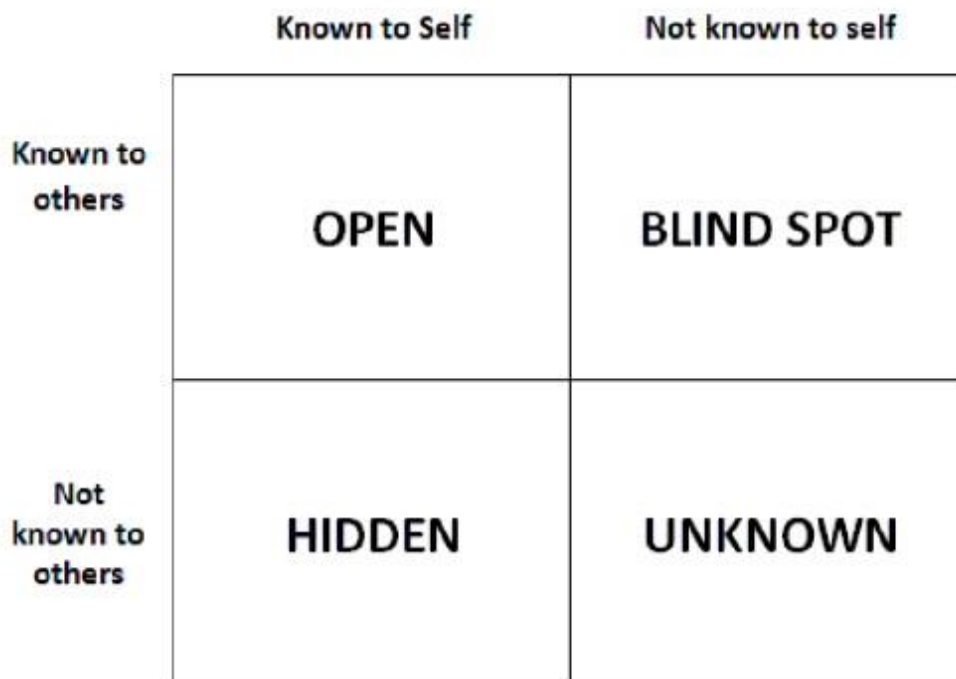
Activity

1. In pairs or small groups, choose a type of 'thinking error' which you think you'd like to address.
2. What kinds of things might you hear people say when they are generalising, distorting or deleting information in this way?
3. What kinds of questions could you use to help someone overcome these errors?

Feedback

Feedback is a gift. It enables us to recognise behaviour in ourselves which we may not see, even through reflective learning, and then to take action to either improve or continue to do what works.

The Johari window model

The Johari Window is a model developed in the late 1960s by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham to describe how humans interact, including the process of giving and receiving feedback. The model is used as a tool to foster self-awareness and understanding of group processes and interaction. The window has four quadrants as illustrated next:

	Known to Self	Not known to self
Known to others	OPEN	BLIND SPOT
Not known to others	HIDDEN	UNKNOWN

The Johari Window (Luft ,1969).

Mentoring Skills

- The 'Open' pane is the part of ourselves that we see and others see.
- The 'Blind Spot' is the aspect that others see but of which we are not aware.
- The' Unknown' is the unconscious or subconscious side of us, seen by neither ourselves nor others.
- The 'Hidden' pane is our private space, which we know but keep from others.

Receiving feedback enlarges the 'open' quadrant by reducing our 'blind spot'. The receiver of the feedback learns things about themselves of which they were previously unaware. Equally, it is possible to increase the 'open' pane and reduce the 'hidden' pane through self-disclosure. Sharing something of ourselves, previously unknown to others, may assist in the development of trust and which is crucial to developing effective relationships.

Top tips for <u>giving</u> feedback

- Invite the individual to self-assess- 'how do you think that went'?
- Focus on the behaviour not the person e.g. 'I think the draft you've given me needs further editing in chapter 2' rather than 'your writing is really shoddy.'
- Be clear in your own mind about what you want to communicate.
- Be specific and clear and if possible, suggest concrete ways to make improvements.
- Own the statement i.e. use 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements, e.g. 'I find your description confusing' rather than 'you sound confused here'.
- Give the feedback as soon after the event as possible.
- Recognize that an immediate response to negative feedback may be defensive.
- Consider what is at stake.
- Ensure that the message has been clearly and correctly understood.

Constructive feedback
- What they did well and the impact of this
- Specific behaviour that was particularly effective
- Specific criticism/what was less effective?
- What else could they have done?
- Were there any behaviours that were a hindrance/could be uncomfortable for others?

Destructive feedback
- Saying what they want to hear
- Giving unwarranted praise
- Flattery
- Put downs
- Insults
- Non-specific/vague criticism
- Hurtful comments

Top tips for <u>receiving</u> feedback

- Feedback is a gift which enables you to grow and develop. Receiving it graciously and with thanks will encourage others to give feedback readily.
- Self-assess your ideas and work and compare with the feedback you receive.
- Ask for help in finding solutions to the difficulties For instance, 'can you tell me what you think would work better?'
- Remember that it is easy not to 'hear' feedback, particularly if it's negative.
- Take notes so that you can think through more thoughtfully the specifics of any negative feedback you receive.
- Check that you have fully understood the specifics of the feedback.

Mentoring Skills

Action Planning

My goal is...				
Action	Timescale	Resources	Measure	Comments (risk, support etc.)

Mentoring Skills

Further reading

Clutterbuck, D (2004) Everyone Needs a Mentor CIPD Publishing

Jackson, PZ and McKergow, M (2006) The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE Nicolas Brealey International

Kline, Nancy. 2002. *Time to Think* London: Cassell

Knight, Sue. 2009. *NLP at Work: Neuro Linguistic Programming The Essence of Excellence* 3rd Edition: London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Megginson, D (2004) Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring Routledge

Passmore, Jonathan (Ed.) 2010. *Excellence in Coaching: The Industry Guide* 2nd Edition London: Kogan Page

Whitmore, John. 2009. *Coaching for Performance: GROWing Human Potential and Purpose* 4th Edition. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing