



## **GUIDE: how to make change stick with peer mentoring**

Most of us have resolved to put something practice at some point, only to find that the actual *doing* never quite materialises. We know that resolution alone rarely creates change, so what's the solution? There are probably several, but one we swear by is peer mentoring. Read on to find out how to set up your own sessions, and how to get the best from them.

### **It takes two**

You *can* embark on personal development alone – but it's much easier with others. Regular meetings will help you trouble-shoot questions, hold each other to account, celebrate progress and challenge each other to take the next step. Fortnightly sessions should give you enough time to get things done in between. So book it in, and stick to it. You'll probably find you more than make up the time in greater productivity and reduced stress. Remember that you don't have to be in the same organisation – and may prefer it if you're not.

### **Think small**

If you're trying to make big changes, starting small can help. So pick something small, repeatable and manageable that you can do differently. The easier it is to apply, the faster it'll become habit. Practice doesn't always make perfect, but it does generate lots of useful data.

### **Gaze at your navel**

Reflect back on all the data you've gathered. You'll gain more clarity on what worked, or didn't, and what else might've affected that. And you'll see what you could do more, less or differently next time. This purposeful navel gazing should help you discard the proverbial bathwater while leaving the baby intact.

### **Before you pass GO**

Spend at least five minutes before you meet deciding what you need from that session. You might have a question to tackle, or simply an update on what you've been doing. Both are valuable, and will help you solve problems and discover fresh ideas and connections. It's also useful to agree how much time you'll each have during the session. We find that 50 minutes each works well, and suggest a minimum of 30 if you're pushed for time.



## Questions

The key to valuable peer mentoring is listening and responding relevantly, but we all get sidetracked sometimes. Asking each other (or yourself) one of these questions may help you to move forward.

- What has been working well since the last session? How often have you done this, and why?
- What hasn't worked so well? Have you tried it again; was anything the same or different?
- What did you feel and think before, during and after the actions you've been practising? Can you identify why you felt and thought that?
- How can you do more of what worked? How can you adapt what didn't?
- How easy are the changes you're making? What would happen if you made them more easy or difficult?
- How can we help you troubleshoot this?  
E.g. Would it be useful to practice the conversation/ draw it/ ask questions to help you formulate an answer?
- What other obstacles are in your path? How can you access the support you need to overcome them?
- What can you change that's within your control? How can you bring others on board to help you change what's outside your control?
- How could you take this further? What else can you do? Is it time to focus on a different challenge?



## A few 'do's

**Be curious.** Find out whether your peer has put their intentions into practice. Find out how, where and when they did this, what did or didn't work about it, what else may have affected this, and what they might change next time.

**Celebrate and challenge.** Note progress, and encourage each other to take the next step. Explore what that 'next step' means. It could be doing something more, doing it with greater commitment, or doing something else or in addition. Find out when, how and where they will do this.

**Experiment.** Find out what gives you the most value in any given session. That might include drawing pictures, practicing a tricky conversation, co-working a project plan or trying out breathing techniques.

**Avoid the urge to give advice.** Unless someone asks for it, of course. If you want to offer advice, ask permission first.

**Keep it relevant.** If something comes up that isn't, simply jot it down and then park it. You can always book in some time after the session to address these issues properly.

**Make a note.** Write down what you will do before the next session. Be specific: what, where, when, how and why.

**Stick to time.** Make sure you both have a chance to share, reflect and respond.

## Stuck or want some help?

Drop Kamala a line at [kamala@chirp.org.uk](mailto:kamala@chirp.org.uk).