

EPFL Alumni Mentoring Program

Mentor Guidebook

This document helps the mentors with some tools to guide the mentee through his/her evolution.

Most of those tools are used as coaching technics and require holding the posture of a mentor or a coach that is to make the other grow thanks to a trustful and supportive attitude. Judgments, criticism, and other imposing advises are to be excluded. Open questions, positive curiosity and active listening has to be put into practice.

Have fun trying out those exercises – for any questions I’m at your disposal at celine@citrine.ch.

Types of questions and their impact

Asking the right questions is one of the most strength of a good coach. Hence, we encourage you to ask as many opened and exploratory questions to your mentee to bring him/her to a great point of development. The below chart provides you an overview to the types of questions and the impact they may have on your counterpart.

Types of questions	Examples	Benefits	Disadvantages
Opened	"Tell...?" "Explain...?" "Can you illustrate...?" "Give me an example...?"	Promote the collection of information Demonstrate active listening Pushing the other to express themselves	Drowning into details
Closed	"Is it...?" "Did you sign the contract?" "Has the action been taken?"	Check your own understanding as a mentor	Can be manipulative Do not encourage discussion
Targeted	"When...?" "Who...?" "Where...?" "How much...?" "Why...?"	Clarify the situation and check the steps Confirm the facts	May create inappropriate pressure
Exploratory	"What are...?" "In what...?" "What is...?"	Broadening the scope of exploration Promote the emergence of different options Raise awareness of the issues to be addressed Bring the person to the points of vigilance	None The basis of a coach's work

Discovering your mentee (personal)

- Where are you from originally?
- What is your family like?
- Why did you decide to study at EPFL? Why in this field?
- Who is/are your favorite teacher/s at EPFL and why?
- What do you do for fun?
- What are your core values?
- What motivates you to work hard?
- What is your proudest accomplishment?
- What is your favorite game or sport to watch and play?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What is the most daring thing you have ever done?
- What is your favorite movie?
- Is your glass half full or half empty?

Discovering your mentee (education/career)

- Are you considering doing a PhD? A MBA?
- What is your current minor/specialization? Have you already chosen your minor/specialization for next year?
- What kind of industries seems attractive to you?
- In which kind of roles do you see yourself? Rather in a technical, managerial or strategic position?
- Which kind of environment would suit you best? A start-up, a SME, a multinational?
- What are your strengths and how would you like to use them in your future career?
- In which country/region would you like to study/work?

Exploring my key priorities with the Wheel of Life

Objective: to get to know better your mentee and help him/her as well position himself better towards his future. Identify key topics for your next sessions.

Ask him/her to identify **the 6 to 8 domains which are the most important** for him/her so far when he projects himself in his working future, amongst for instance, the below list:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| - Education | - Travels |
| - Work location | - Impact |
| - Work-life balance | - Sustainability |
| - Financial | - Work ethics |
| - Domain of interest | - Teammates |
| - Work environment | - Network |
| - Recognitions, ambition | - |

Invite him/her to draw a wheel and divide it by 8, creating a pie with the 8 chosen domains.



Per area ask him/ her to

- Assess each area of the life wheel: is he clear what he expects?
- On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high) how clear his positioning is?
- Mark each score on the appropriate spoke of the Life Wheel
- Identify together the area which are the most important to clarify now for him/her and that could be great topics for your next mentoring sessions

Other questions for each area:

- What are his/her objectives or expectations towards that area – his/her dream?
- What prevents him/her to reach those objectives?
- What questions he/she asks himself/herself?
- What actions he/she could take to reach expectations?
- What actions he/she could take to clarify his/her positioning towards some?
- What is the % of importance of each domain for him/her?
- What is he/she ready to do to fulfill each area?
- What support does he/she need to fulfill each area?
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You can use that exercise in all domains in life, for instance listing all your interests or all roles you play in life and identifying what your goals are for each of those interests, for each of those roles, the amount of time you spend you and plan spending tomorrow on each, you could draw a ‘current life wheel’ and a ‘future life wheel’ and so on...

Exploring deeply an objective – the H2W5 Questions

Objective: To help focus and identify concrete elements of an objective in order to build an action plan.

Process: to go from the objective to the action plan, we will go through a series of successive questions. This will help us focus and identify the concrete elements.

Important: Always Start with the “Why” question.

WHY?	Recall the context. The motivation and the purpose of the action plan. Give meaning to what will be done.
WHAT?	List all the actions. Briefly describe their content. Prioritize them according to the impact on the global objective. Describe the concrete result to be achieved.
WHO?	Define who is responsible: who leads, who is held accountable? Who are the other persons who can/should take part? Who should be taken into account?

HOW MUCH?	What are the resources (financial, human, technical, etc.) I need to succeed?
WHEN?	Define the dates of beginning and end, and milestones with deliverables.
WHERE?	Precise the place/location, when necessary.
HOW?	Set success criteria. They enable to validate the success or not of an action and to take a new decision accordingly: continue, plan a new action.

Discovering the motivations of your mentee

Objective: to help your mentee to find out his motivational factors.

Process:

1. Ask your mentee to describe « a situation/a project/a moment in which you have been extremely motivated »
2. Then, with the help of the following questions:
 - What was important for you in this situation?
 - What were you looking for more particularly?
 - How would you name what you have particularly appreciated?

Identify and write down (for yourself) the detailed and concrete elements of this situation which are motivational factors for your counterpart

3. Ask your mentee « a situation/a project/a moment in which you have been extremely demotivated »
4. Then, with the help of the following questions:
 - How would you name what you have especially hated in this situation or what has affected you the most?
5. Identify and write down (for yourself) the detailed and concrete elements of this situation which are for your counterpart factors of non-engagement / motivation
6. Share your list of motivational and non-motivational factors with your mentee and confirm with him/her that this list is accurate.

To go further with your mentee, ask him/her the following questions:

1. Take the result from the previous exercise and identify 3 of your principal sources of motivation.
2. Up to which % are they fulfilled in your current life, will they be fulfilled in your future job's projection?
3. What can you do yourself to increase them/ maintain them high?
4. Which actions? When? With whom?

Discovering the beliefs of your mentee

Objective: sometimes we are blocked by our own beliefs/our own statements, and they prevent us to make the right choices, to move ahead and take control of our life. Most of the time we are not aware of those imitating beliefs in us, while we can see them well in others....

Example of potentially limiting statements: “I’m not good enough to find a job” – “HR won’t recruit strangers” – “I should know what to do” – “I need to be prudent” – “life is difficult” – “I am right”....

This exercise created by Byron Katie, helps to become aware of our own beliefs and to deconstruct them. More on that subject here: <https://thework.com/instruction-the-work-byron-katie/>

Invite your mentee to do the Work alone. As a mentor we suggest you try it yourself as well.

Instructions: On the “Belief” line below, write down a stressful belief. It could be a statement from a Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet, a stressful belief about someone (alive or dead) whom you have not forgiven 100%, or any stressful thought at all. Allow yourself to mentally revisit the specific situation. Then question the concept in writing, using the following questions and turnarounds. When answering the questions, close your eyes, be still, and witness what appears to you.

One belief at a time worksheet (Byron Katie)

My belief _____

1	Is this True? (Yes or no. If no, move to question 3.)	
2	Can you absolutely know that it is true? (Yes or no.)	
3	<p>How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?</p> <p>What emotions arise when you believe that thought? What images of past and future do you see when you believe the thought? How do you treat yourself and others when you believe the thought?</p>	
4	<p>Who would you be without the thought? Who or what are you without the thought?</p>	
5	<p><i>Turn the thought around.</i></p> <p><i>Example of a statement: He hurt me.</i> <i>Possible opposites: I hurt me. I hurt him. He did not hurt me. He helped me.</i></p> <p><i>Example of a statement: Paul lied to me.</i> <i>I lied to me. -I lied to Paul. - Paul did not lie to me. Paul told me the truth.</i></p> <p><i>Contemplate how each turnaround is as true or truer in that situation.</i></p>	

Your future self: projecting oneself into the future

Objective: to find out what I aim for, what my objective or my vision is. It can provide some ideas to a mentee who does not know what he/she wants, or who needs to define it.

Process: The mentor invites the mentee to project himself in the future and ask him/her questions.

Invite your mentee to follow such proposal:

“Project yourself in 8 months, at the end of the mentoring program. Imagine all your dreams have been realized, you are where you dreamed to be, you do the job you aim for, you achieved your goals, ...”

In the case your mentee is not well with visualization, suggest him/her to schematically draw, or illustrate the situation in silence, and then ask him the questions.

Questions to ask:

How is it? what do you see? how do you feel? who is with you? in which location/building/space are you? What do you hear? What do you do?

Before leaving that space what would you like to keep from that space? What do you leave with?

The mentor writes down what the mentee is saying.

Once the projection finished, the mentor **reads the text** to the mentee and ask:

1. What is this story telling you?
2. What is important for you?
3. What have you learned from that projection in the future? What is new to you? What has been clarified?
4. What have you taken back from it?

Giving Feedback

Objective: support you in preparing relevant feedback, knowing what to put in and how to build the message.

Definition of the feedback: Feedback is an exchange between 2 people on a past event with a view to positively and constructively influencing the future. We recognize two types of feedback, the Recognition feedback, positive and the Development feedback, constructive.

The posture to hold is a matter of giving and receiving feedback as if one were offering or receiving a gift, as if we wanted to show the other something he is not yet aware of:

- “I” formula: when I formulate my sentence with the “I”, I speak about my viewpoint of the situation
- Respectful: be careful and respectful in your wording
- Valuing: it is not the value of the person as such that you question, it is their behavior
- Relevant and useful: it is of interest only if the other learns something that can make him/her evolve or strengthen his self-confidence
- Sincere-authentic: there is no use to receive unauthentic feedback!
- Positive intention: Ask yourself what is your intention in giving this feedback. If your intention is not positive, avoid giving it
- Be positive and solution oriented, replace “but” by “and”
- Be trustful: trust yourself, and trust that your mentee is capable of progressing
- Be courageous: Feedback must be given quickly after the event has taken place, otherwise it no longer has an impact

To prepare a feedback, answer the following questions:

- Which situation am I referring to?
- What did I observe?
- What was the impact on me / on others? How did I interpret it?
- What are the elements I would like to see continuing or to change?
- What is my proposal to move forward?

And then use a feedback model, like

Steps:	Example
1. Situation	“When I saw you... When I heard you ... When you gave me...”
2. Observation	“I observed...”
3. Impact, interpretation	“This had the following impact on me...”, “I felt...”
4. >Make a pause<	
5. Reaction/ questioning	“Do you agree? Can you tell me about it? ...”
6. Way forward (positive or constructive)	“I would like this to continue / to change” “What do you think?” “What is your view?”