



Guide for Effective Mentorship

The mentorship journey is a valuable opportunity for both mentor and mentee to build a mutually beneficial mentorship relationship founded on respect, humility, trust, learning, skill development and support. This document provides key considerations to cultivate a safe, effective mentorship relationship, particularly when working with Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC).

Demonstrate Humility and Establish Trust

Trust takes time to develop and requires work to build. An important first step to earn trust is to approach the mentorship relationship with humility. This requires mentors to recognize that every mentee's experience is unique and even as an IBPOC mentor, one may not understand the full breadth of the mentee's lived experiences. A mentorship relationship grounded in humility and trust can be incredibly meaningful particularly for IBPOC midwives who have had to navigate through a midwifery education program and profession where they are significantly underrepresented in almost every aspect including leadership, curriculum, policy priorities, etc., and within healthcare systems and societal structures that are often oppressive and discriminatory to IBPOC communities. When building trust, be authentic, compassionate, and have respect for each other's privacy, confidentiality, and boundaries.

Engage in Active Listening and Build Rapport

Take the time to truly listen and get to know the mentee. Hear their story, their thoughts, their goals, be patient, sincere and validate the mentee. It's also important for the mentee to know about you, your experiences during your midwifery education, midwifery career and other relevant aspects of your identity that would help inform your skills and experiences, and to build a rapport. Understanding each other and learning about the communities you both come from can highlight shared experiences and build appreciation for differences that support the creation of a safe and non-judgemental mentorship relationship.

Develop a Mentorship Plan

During your initial meeting, introduce yourself and discuss how you will work together to ensure the mentorship relationship is safe and effective. Establish a mentorship relationship agreement that both mentor and mentee can feel comfortable with and commit to (be patient, this might take a few meetings). Clearly communicate each party's expectations, availability, frequency and method of communication, expected duration (i.e., 6-12 months), your respective goals and what you are hoping to get out of the mentorship experience (see Appendix 1). Develop a mentorship plan (see Appendix 1) to guide the initial discussion to ensure the mentee's needs are met. Support the mentee to identify their top three goals in order of priority (encourage a maximum of 3 goals to work towards a number that is achievable), then identify the learning activity or



actions required, facilitators to leverage, barriers to manage, resources (i.e., people, financial, etc.) required, timeline to achieve goal, and how success will be measured. Co-creating the mentorship plan, with the mentee taking the lead, builds accountability and can lead to a more effective mentorship.

Hold Space for Lived Experiences

We all carry experiences with us that have shaped our outlook on life, our strengths and areas for growth. Sometimes there may be a disconnect between who we genuinely are, and what society has conditioned us to believe about ourselves based on our race, ethnicity, disability, religious beliefs or sexual orientation to name a few. Acknowledge and recognize the ways in which structural racism and intersecting oppressions can compound challenges an IBPOC mentee may be facing in midwifery, including power imbalance within the practice group or hospital, health human resource (HHR) crisis, burnout, difficulty balancing call schedule, fatigue from serving a community that is disproportionately marginalized and with whom you personally identify with, etc. Although there are many “common” challenges that midwives experience, hold space for individuality, as these unique experiences shape one’s perspectives and ability to move forward to achieve set goals.

Explore their Strengths and Share your Insights

As the mentee opens up to you, support them with identifying the significance of their own knowledge, skills and experiences and how these can be applied to achieve their goals. Focus on the mentee’s strengths by drawing their attention to the invaluable skills that IBPOC midwives bring to midwifery, such as providing culturally sensitive care, language skills, understanding of traditional healing practices and knowledge of the unique health and social needs of their communities. Acknowledging a person’s strengths and accomplishments enables people to feel seen, it’s empowering and can inspire further achievements. It is also beneficial to learn from others’ mistakes, if you feel comfortable doing so, reflect on your own learning opportunities, experiences and challenges to offer insight (as appropriate) into how you managed difficult or challenging professional experiences. Bear in mind that the mentee will have their own unique lived experiences which may be unfamiliar to you. Thus, practice humility by acknowledging gaps in your understanding, and lean into vulnerability by articulating what you are unsure about and asking respectful questions.

Don’t Make Assumptions

Many IBPOC midwives are familiar with being stereotyped. It is important to not make assumptions about your mentee, including what they know or don’t know, what they are capable of accomplishing, their family/personal life situation or what they may or may not be struggling with, etc. If you are unsure how to approach a conversation with your mentee, state this explicitly and ask the mentee to share what they are hoping to receive from the interaction.



Ask for Feedback

Providing mutual exchange of constructive feedback encourages personal and professional growth for both mentor and mentee. Holding space for feedback enables both parties to identify what is working well in the dynamic and what changes could support a more successful mentorship relationship. Determine reoccurring times to evaluate the mentorship relationship together (see Appendix 2). Be specific with your feedback, citing specific cases or incidents, ensuring it relates back to the mentee's goals, and recommend specific actions that will support the creation of an actionable plan for improvement.

Enjoy the Mentoring Journey

To get the most out of mentorship, the relationship between mentor and mentee needs to be an enjoyable and symbiotic one which feels valuable and purposeful for both parties. Approach the journey with an open heart and mind, and most importantly – enjoy getting to know another IBPOC midwife and sharing your expertise and insight on this journey with them!



Appendix 1: Sample Discussion for the Initial Meeting

Item	Midwife	Discussion Points
1. Introductions	Both	Share professional experience, academic background and any personal information/ interests that may help to build rapport.
2. Review goals for the mentorship	Mentee	Share goals for your career, professional development and the mentoring relationship. What do you most want to get from the relationship?
	Mentor	Reflect on which of the mentee's goals and needs you're best positioned to assist with, and in which ways. Let the mentee know what you can't help with, and point them towards alternative sources of support, if possible.
3. Method, scheduling and timing of communication	Both	Acknowledge that the logistics of the relationship may evolve over time, but some ground rules are needed to start. Both should describe their ideal ways to keep in touch and find some mutually agreeable guidelines.
4. Confidentiality	Both	Will it be publicly acknowledged that we are in a mentorship relationship? What expectations and concerns do the mentee and the mentor have about confidentiality? It may help for the mentee and the mentor to describe specific examples of information sharing outside the relationship that would make them uncomfortable. Example: "I wouldn't mind you sharing with others some of the strategies we discuss for improving hospital relations, but I would not like you to share my personal stories about hospital relations."
5. Setting boundaries	Both	Openness to sharing and frank discussion can be an advantage in the mentoring relationship, but there can also be times when the discussion becomes uncomfortable for someone. The relationship may evolve over time, but initially some discussion of boundaries can be helpful. Are there any areas that are off limits for either the mentee or the mentor? Any suggestions for how you will get discussion back on track if an uncomfortable topic or line of questioning is inadvertently introduced?



6. Ending the meeting	Mentee	The mentee should take the lead in closing the meeting and describing what they feel are the next steps. Will another meeting be scheduled? Should you determine if the mentorship is a good match before scheduling any future meetings? Are you feeling that it is not a good match? If you are going ahead, are there any topics on this agenda that you didn't have time for or need to be revisited next time? If you are going forward, it is advisable to schedule the date and time for the next meeting.
	Mentor	Is the mentor willing to move forward with future meetings? Any topics that you think need to be covered or revisited from this agenda, or any other concerns you would like to table for the next meeting?



Appendix 2: Mentorship Plan Template

Key Priorities	Short/Med/Long-Term Goal	Action Steps /Learning Activities	Facilitators	Barriers	Resources	Timeline	Indicators of Success
#1							
#2							
#3							



Appendix 3: Mentorship check-in and evaluation tool

It is recommended to check in using this tool whenever there seems to be a challenge, a change in the mentorship or routinely as needed.	
1.	Restate the goals: What are we trying to achieve?
2.	Is the frequency or method of contact working well?
3.	Do we need more contact or less contact and why?
4.	What has gone well for us so far?
5.	What have been the benefits?
6.	What have been our biggest challenges?
7.	Have we overcome our challenges? If not, how could we tackle them?
8.	What are our next steps?
9.	Do we both think we should continue?
10.	If yes, will we change anything?