

# Mentees: Cultivation Phase Resources

In the cultivation phase, the mentor and mentee follow through on the expectations and timelines outlined in the Alignment Phase, modifying the specifics as the relationship plays out. For you, this phase means cultivating your areas for growth and communicating your needs as they change; it means seizing opportunities as they arise and following through with intentional action.



## Mentee Responsibilities in the Cultivation phase:

1. Actively listen and contribute to conversations
2. Acknowledge your weaknesses and build from your strengths
3. Accept and reflect on constructive criticism
4. Don't shy away from difficult conversations
5. Follow through on tasks and meet deadlines
6. Communicate your changing needs
7. Celebrate successes
8. Periodically evaluate progress and assess the relationship

## Cultivation Resources

- [Maintaining effective communication](#)
- [Mentoring across differences](#)
- [Managing mentoring challenges](#)
- [Assessing the mentoring relationship](#)
- [Resources and suggested readings on Cultivation](#)

# Mentees: Maintaining Effective Communication

Virtually every aspect of successful mentoring boils down to effective communication. Four key skills for effective communication in mentoring relationships are:

## 1. Increase your awareness of yourself and others.

You are the instrument through which mentoring happens, both as mentor and mentee. The more you are clear about your own agenda and able to separate out your own thoughts, feelings, and wants from those of your mentor/mentee, the greater the potential for intentional partnership and mutual benefit. "In each moment you spend in another person's presence, you are communicating that person's importance to you. Are you doing this consciously or unconsciously?"

- Denise Holmes

## 2. Get curious about the other person's story.

Listening in order to learn something new (rather than to confirm what you already know) is essential to good mentoring. When you get curious about the other person's story, you open up the possibility of greater connection and value for both parties. "In order to understand what another person is saying, you must assume

that it is true, and try to imagine what it could be true of." - George Miller

**3. Listen for passion and potential.**

Great mentoring means understanding what makes the other person tick, what has brought them to this moment in their career, and where they would like to go next. [Read more about active listening.](#) "Listening for potential means listening to people as if they have all the tools they need to be successful, and could simply benefit from exploring their thoughts and ideas out loud." - David Rock

**4. Share your own crystallized experience.**

One of the pleasures of mentoring is the chance to share one's own hard-earned experience so that it might be helpful to others coming along a similar path. [Read more about receiving feedback as a mentee.](#)

## Mentees: Mentoring Across Differences

Individuals bring a wide range of different life experiences to their mentoring relationships. Three key principles can help mentors and mentees bridge the potential differences to create satisfying mentoring relationships.

**1. Be aware of your own assumptions.**

In the same way that others may have different points of view because of differences in their life experiences, you likely have been shaped by your gender, race, social class, education, generation, geography, and a multitude of other cultural influences. Increasing your awareness of the ways you are a product of your past can help you avoid assuming that others see the world in the same way.

**2. Get curious about the experience of colleagues who have different life experiences.**

Putting yourself in other people's shoes and seeking to understand how they may have come to their different points of view is a critical step in building a mentoring relationship.

**3. Address differences openly.**

Relationships in which it becomes comfortable to talk about and acknowledge differences have much greater potential value for both mentor and mentee. While it may initially feel uncomfortable to talk about topics such as race, gender, and/or socioeconomic background, the potential for increased understanding and connection makes it worth the risk.

## Mentees: Assessing the Relationship

Formally evaluating the mentoring relationship and providing feedback to mentors is an important next step. If an explicit plan and expectations have been laid out at the beginning of the relationship, assessing progress and checking in on the health of the relationship is not only possible but necessary if maximal benefit is to be gained.

As you negotiate your expectations at the beginning of the relationship, be sure to lay the ground work for ongoing assessment:

1. What do you want to measure?
2. What are your criteria for success?
3. How will you go about measuring success?

Be sure to include measures for each domain of the mentoring relationship:

- Meetings and Communication
- Expectations and Feedback
- Career Development
- Psychosocial Support

As always, the instruments you use need to be tailored to your individual relationship; effective assessment relies upon both parties feeling free to be honest and forthright. Leverage these [existing evaluation templates](#) as you negotiate how you will evaluate your relationship success with your mentor.