

Quality Mentoring Digest

ISSUE 4, JULY 2025



The quality mentoring digest offers a summary of the latest mentoring insights, resources, and strategies to help you advance your knowledge and skills. The digest focuses on insights from Mentor Canada's national Community of Practice.

Insights from our Community of Practice

Key Insight Highlighting High-Quality Virtual Mentoring Programs and Practices

We were joined by Queens University, BGC Ottawa, and Girls E-Mentorship (GEM) for our latest Themed Showcase and Networking Event. During their presentations, each organization shared how they structure their mentoring programs to deliver high-quality virtual mentoring opportunities across Canada.

Some of the key insights and lessons learned included:

- **Onboarding for Success:** When utilizing virtual mentoring platforms and communication tools, programs must be strategic and intentional in their approach to onboarding participants. Dedicating significant time to providing step-by-step guidance on how to navigate platforms, build profiles, and conduct mentoring meetings is critical for participant engagement and satisfaction.
- **Centralized Mentoring Environment:** Presenters discussed the importance of establishing a central environment where participants can easily access all information and resources to participate in the program effectively. This “one-stop-shop” streamlines engagement and removes barriers to participation.
- **Monitoring for Quality:** Participants discussed the critical need to monitor and support virtual mentoring relationships. Presenters discussed leveraging embedded safeguards and features, such as anonymous surveys, activity tracking, and monitoring conversations for specific words or phrases to promote safety and quality.



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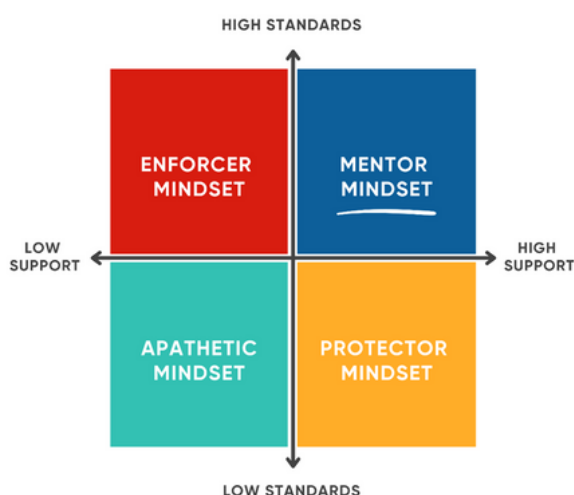
[Click to watch the full recording of the event.](#)

Key Insight

The Science of Motivating Young People

Dr. David Yeager joined us for our latest Visiting Expert Series. Dr. Yeager received his doctorate from Stanford and is one of the world's leading experts on human development, motivation, and how to develop a mentoring mindset.

During his presentation, Dr. Yeager discussed some of the mentoring strategies and tools from his latest book, [10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People](#). Dr. Yeager raised several vital insights, one of which was the distinction between a mentor mindset and other less optimal and even harmful mindsets.



- **Apathetic Mindset:** This mindset is characterized by low standards and low support. Mentors with an apathetic mindset often exhibit a general lack of care for their mentees, primarily due to their low expectations and minimal support. Apathetic mentors can cause harm to mentees and may require additional training or support to exit their roles in a positive and constructive manner.
- **Enforcer Mindset:** The enforcer mindset is characterized by high expectations but low support. Mentors with this mindset have high expectations for their mentees and hold them to high standards (which is good) but don't provide them with the necessary scaffolding and support to achieve those standards (which is not good). This mindset stems from the harmful belief that young people need to "sink or swim" or they won't be able to "survive" in today's competitive society. Enforcers also falsely believe that young people will harm themselves and society if they don't have someone who is controlling and demanding in their life to "keep them on track." Enforcers require additional training and support to better understand human development and how young people learn and grow through guidance and support.
- **Protector Mindset:** The protector mindset is characterized by high support but low expectations. This mindset stems from the belief that young people are too sensitive and lack resilience (or have already experienced enough adversity) and should therefore be shielded from discomfort and challenges. As a result of this belief, mentors provide their mentees with high support (which is good) but don't hold them to high expectations and standards (which is not good). Although well-intentioned, this mindset can hinder the growth and development of mentees. Mentors with this mindset require additional training to understand the resiliency of today's youth and the benefits of holding them to high standards and expectations, enabling them to become their best possible selves.
- **Mentor Mindset:** In this mindset, mentors hold their mentees to high standards and provide them with the necessary support to reach those standards. By believing in young people's potential for growth and meeting high standards through support and encouragement, a mentor mindset allows young people to feel respected and capable of achieving their goals. This optimal balance of high standards and high support should be the goal for any mentor.



[Click here to watch the full recording of Dr. Yeager's presentation.](#)

Key Insight

Transforming Youth Mentoring by Centering Equity

Back in February, we were joined by Drs. Kristian Jones (University of Washington), Grace Gowdy (Education Northwest), and Aisha Griffith (University of Illinois Chicago) for a Visiting Expert Series conversation.

The event introduced their innovative "[Equity Model of Youth Mentoring](#)," a practical framework for centering equity and social justice in mentoring programs and relationships. The model outlines four key elements of positive and effective mentoring relationships and programs:

- (1) A Strong Foundation – Mentors develop and maintain a strong foundation of mutual respect and trust by practicing cultural humility, being authentic, practicing empathy, and acknowledging and celebrating their mentees' strengths, power, and voices.
 - Reflection Question: This element invites mentoring professionals to consider how they are training and supporting mentors to develop close connections with mentees. It also invites them to consider whether and how they are celebrating youths' voices and inviting them to shape their program structure and ongoing delivery.
- (2) Mechanisms of Mentoring – After developing a strong foundation, mentors evaluate the assets their mentee already possesses, determine how they can best support their mentee, and identify who else could be recruited to help their mentee achieve their goals. Mentors also work to expand their mentees' social worlds by introducing them to new potential mentors, resources, and communities.
 - Reflection Questions: How does your program increase mentees' confidence to seek out support from other people and potential mentors? How does your program explore the existing connections that mentees possess and how they might be leveraged to provide additional support alongside their mentoring relationships?



- (3) Reciprocity – Mentors help their mentees celebrate and develop their various identities and bolster their well-being. Mentors also recognize and appreciate the positive impacts they are personally experiencing by connecting with their mentee and their community.

- Reflection Questions: How is your program exploring and supporting the various identities that youth define as important to themselves? How does your program help mentors reflect on and identify the reciprocal benefits they are experiencing?

- (4) Context-Specificity – In this final element, mentors utilize training and resources to gain a deeper understanding of their mentees, their diverse identities, and their social worlds. Mentors apply their ongoing learning to develop more contextually sensitive relationships with their mentees.

- Reflection Question: How is your program training and preparing mentors to understand the realities of the mentees that you support?



[Read more on the Equity Model for Youth Mentoring.](#)



Key Insight

Three Reflections from a National Conference on Inclusive Mentoring

I (Ben Dantzer) recently had the privilege of attending the Canadian Association for Supported Employment's 30th annual conference. The conference included three full days of presentations and discussions on employment and career mentoring for youth with disabilities in Canada.

- Reflection #1: The Future of Mentoring is Accessible – There are currently 8 million people in Canada with a disability (Statistics Canada, 2022). This means that approximately 1 in 4 youth have a disability. These statistics highlight how the disability community is nowhere near a small or niche group that can be relegated to projects and priorities that we work on from the “side of our desks.” This is a large community that is deserving of a more inclusive and accessible mentoring ecosystem. Your program is likely already supporting youth with disabilities – even if you don't know it. Progressive and forward-thinking organizations realize that the future of mentoring is accessible and are placing this topic at the heart of their work.
- Reflection #2: The Value of Inclusive Career Mentoring – [MentorAbility](#) is a national mentoring initiative designed to remove barriers for youth with disabilities through short-term workplace and career mentoring experiences. Throughout the conference, mentoring professionals shared powerful testimonies and case studies of the incredible value of this mentoring model. With representation in all provinces and territories, MentorAbility is helping youth with disabilities discover their career interests, boost their confidence, and secure meaningful employment. Employment is more than a paycheck. It's purpose, social connection, and autonomy. Inclusive mentoring also benefits employers. In fact, after hosting several youths with disabilities in their workplace, one employer shared that several of their employees felt comfortable disclosing their disabilities and seeking accommodations – allowing them to perform their roles more comfortably and effectively. These cultural shifts and reciprocal benefits highlight the value of inclusive career mentoring.
- Reflection #3: Mentoring Can Cause Harm – During a panel discussion on inclusive career mentoring, I was asked to share one fact that I wish all mentors and employers knew about mentoring. My answer: mentoring can cause harm. I raised this potential for harm due to the rising enthusiasm for mentoring among funders, policymakers, and employers. I've personally witnessed organizations quickly cobble together mentoring initiatives, hoping to ride the mentoring wave. Unfortunately, some of these organizations mistakenly believe that if they simply place mentors and mentees in the same room, that mentoring will magically happen! In this community, we – of course – all know that it's not that easy. **Mentoring isn't rocket science, but it's not a walk in the park, either.** To do this work well, we need to be intentional and leverage the evidence-informed information, tools, and strategies that are available to us. The ethical principle of “do no harm” should be at the forefront of everything we do – a sentiment that seems especially important while working with youth experiencing disabilities. As a strong advocate and expert in quality mentoring, Mentor Canada's latest courses on inclusive career mentoring were developed to help employers and mentors develop and deliver safe and effective career mentoring experiences for youth with disabilities.



[Click here to learn more about Mentor Canada's latest courses on inclusive mentoring.](#)