



Align Mentoring Program Best Practices

These recommendations address some of the most common challenges and share what has been effective for successful groups. The goal is to create an environment in which all members of the group can feel free to contribute, share, and bring their own unique experiences to the table. In this way, mentorship and learning is not a top-down situation but rather a 360-degree experience, where each member is expected to contribute and teach in some form or fashion. Groups are encouraged to connect on a quarterly basis.

For Mentors

- **Start strong.** Building strong momentum is key to a successful mentorship group. Hosting the group's first meeting as soon as possible is important to set the tone and to establish expectations for the group.
- **Discuss communication preferences.** It is important to determine the family members' preferences for communicating: video calls, email, texting, or some other platform.
- **Formalize scheduling.** Scheduling was by far the most frequently cited challenge. Decide on who will coordinate scheduling the meeting times and ask one of the group members if that is not one of your strengths. Consider using online meeting scheduling utilities to set dates or setting a standing meeting time that can be adjusted later as needed. Schedule as early as possible to avoid conflicts.
- **Maintain regular communication.** Members of inactive groups requested more follow-up emails or some degree of ongoing digital long-distance communication. It does not need to be anything elaborate, just something to maintain regular contact.
- **Answer emails.** In order to maintain ongoing communication and out of respect for the other participants, it is vitally important to answer emails promptly. Even if it is just to confirm receipt to respond more fully later, nothing kills momentum like silence.
- **Encourage participants to lead.** Challenge the members of the family to take charge of their professional development by requesting topics for discussion or experiences they might lack. Ask participants to contribute by leading individual meetings.
- **Don't underestimate your personal stories.** Many participants have reported that the most helpful and meaningful sessions have been candid discussions about the personal experiences of their mentors and fellow participants.



For Mentees

- **Take ownership.** This mentorship gives you access to unique experience and opportunities. To make the most of these requires that everyone takes active initiative to influence the direction of the family. Come with specific expectations and priorities for discussion topics.
- **Build a professional development plan.** Determine your professional goals in order to better understand how the mentorship experience fits into your overall professional development. Mentorship is much more effective and personalized when you are not just sitting back expecting to receive top-down programming. Asking your mentor and family members for their thoughts on how to achieve these goals provides ideas for group activities and lets the group know how they can help you.
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- **Make the group schedule a priority.** Be available to accommodate everyone's schedules and keep your commitments. Communicate your scheduling preferences and expectations during the family's first meeting.
- **Be a mentor.** Mentorship is never just top down, and the family structure of this program is based on mutual mentorship. Contribute to the discussions, share experiences, and share what you know.
- **Lead sessions.** You have the responsibility to initiate the meetings and drive the conversations. Be prepared to conduct meetings and take on leadership roles in organizing activities for your group.
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