

I. Conversation Starters

Here are several good conversation starters and “deepeners” to help you in your meetings with your mentoring partner.

On your Mentor Program Application/Profile, you mentioned _____. Please tell me more about that.

What would make this mentorship an excellent experience for you? What might make it a waste of time?

Tell me a couple of high points and a couple of challenges in your day/week/month.

(For high points) What skills, knowledge or attitudes did you use to help make this happen?

(For challenges) What part, if any, did you play? Is this part of a larger challenge you’re dealing with?

Are you open to feedback from me? How would you like it? What should I avoid doing?

What things are you grateful for? (Wait.) What made them so good?

What, if anything, do you regret? (Wait.) What, if anything, could you have done differently? (Wait.) What do you wish would have happened?

What talents are you most proud of?

What makes you laugh?

Tell me about some personal accomplishments that you’re proud of.

Tell me about the best working situation you’ve been in.

What part of being an entrepreneur do you like most? Like least?

What keeps you up at night?

How would your loved ones describe you?

How would your competitors describe you?

How do you connect with people?

Tell me about one of your best memories. (Wait.) Why was that so memorable for you?

What do you hope to accomplish in the remainder of your life?

Tell me about a conflict you had. What did you do that was effective? What did you try that you wouldn’t do again?

What do you wish you had known/done 15-20 years ago?

May I ask your advice about _____?

How could I be a strong/better partner?

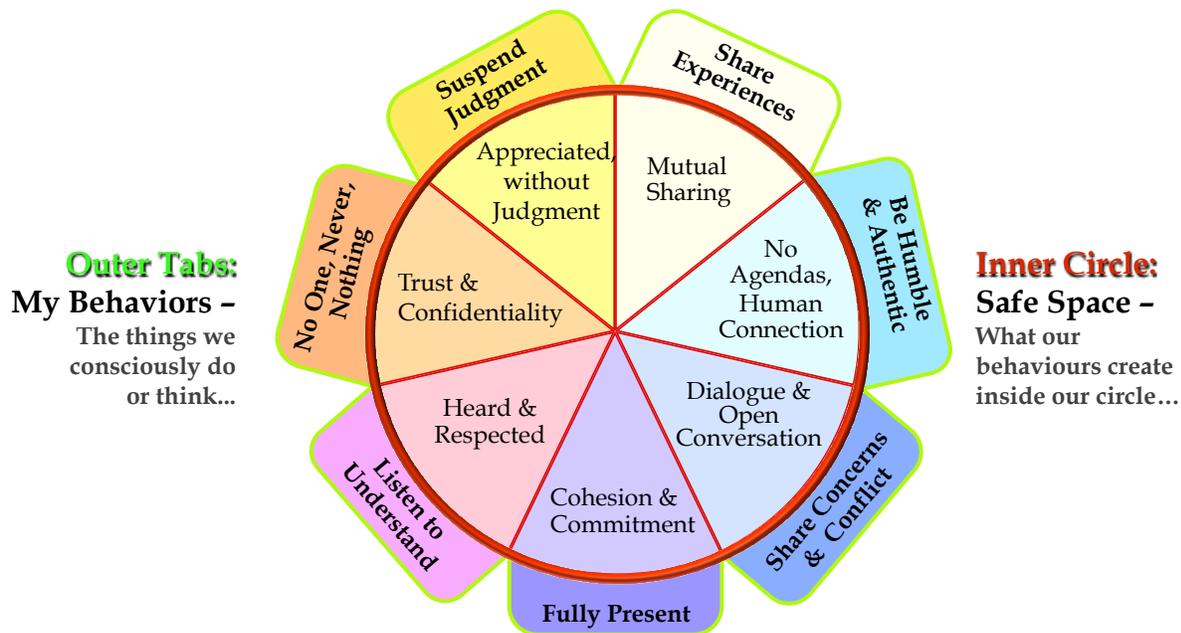
How do you find work/life balance?

What would you like people to say about you on your _____ birthday? What do you hope they’ll forget?

Are you holding onto anything that you should let go of? Why is this so?

What would you like mentioned in your eulogy? What do you want your life to have been about?

2. Creating a Safe Space for Mentorship



EO mentorship relationships can be a confidential, peer learning space created when mentors and mentees share their experiences and stories in a safe, engaged environment.

Building on EO's Forum cornerstones of absolute confidentiality, personal responsibility and a 'gestalt' language protocol, these guidelines enable a unique and powerful group environment for individual growth and transformational learning.

Why do we follow these practices? Productive and transformative conversations happen when we are free to share openly. Most of our conversations are constrained by fear, status, conflicts and confusion. Mentorship can be a safe space created by our words and intentions.



Sharing from experience is a powerful way to uncover the lessons we have learned and pass that learning on to others. When we tell others what to do we stand in judgment. When we recount our stories, we stand side-by-side as peers. Specific, detailed events and realizations are shared, not ambiguous abstractions.

Dialogue happens when we share and disclose rather than lobbing charged opinions to support our entrenched positions.

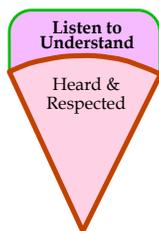




We speak our honest thoughts and concerns, openly to each other. When conflict arises, we disclose our feelings and own our thoughts and behaviors. This is a space for ‘difficult’ conversations, exploring the power of thinking together and supporting authentic vulnerability. Our ability to affect change comes when we see our own contributions to a situation and chose to change. Tough challenges are tackled, reality is interrogated and learning provoked.



We commit to Mentorship with our full attention. We turn off our phones, listen intently and keep our focus on each other. We give the meeting our full attention and make space in our calendars and minds, prepared to be nowhere else. Our work of shared inquiry creates a flow of meaning that our contribution is uniquely valuable to.



We expand our simple, yet profound capacity to listen by practicing it. We listen to each story that is shared and to our internal reaction to it. We listen for the emotion, meaning and interaction enfolded in the words. We notice the conclusions we reach and question them, distinguishing assumption, memory and thinking. We listen to understand, to feel how others experience the world and without resistance.



The only stories we share are our own. We will never, ever share any details of any story told with anyone else. We create confidentiality with this commitment and demonstrate it by sharing our vulnerable stories. Trust is created when we share. It is strengthened with time and mutual sharing.



We suspend our assumptions, judgment and certainty. We work to understand each other in real time, as we speak and listen, actively creating our experience of the world in real time. We don’t rush to solutions for problems, rather good questions “How is this working?” “What is really going on?” “What is at risk if we say I don’t know?” Living with the questions will create space for us to notice our own answers.

Our Practices:

- ❖ Fully present – no phones, computers, or other electronic distractions
- ❖ Short breaks – this time together is important and we value it
- ❖ Clean Communication – we commit to speak authentically and succinctly
- ❖ Positive Emotional Engagement – suspend judgment and negativity
- ❖ Absolute confidentiality – “What is said here stays here”

Our Beliefs:

- ❖ We are different and our diversity creates valuable perspectives
- ❖ We have our own answers, yet get in our own way
- ❖ My experience is a gift, not a directive
- ❖ Relationships are conversations

