

Successful Strategies for WIC Mentoring

Tips from Mentors

Below are tips from other mentors about making the process as effective as possible. These tips are followed by examples of open-ended questions that can be used to facilitate mentoring discussions.

Mentoring tips:

Listen more, talk less. In mentoring sessions, both the mentor and the mentee should have time to talk, reflect and explore. Use open-ended questions to evoke self-reflection and ideas from the mentee.

Use examples. Use specific examples from the WIC appointment during the mentoring discussion. Use an observation guide to jot down key phrases or notes during the observation to help you remember.

Affirm specifically. When using affirmations, let the mentee know why that strength or skill that you are affirming was important to the outcome of the session. This will help build motivation to continue to explore and grow this area. General affirmations like “good job” are less effective at producing motivation for growth.

Don’t try to cover too much. Most often, short focused discussions are more powerful and impactful than long conversations with multiple topics. Mentoring is about small shifts over time. You will have many opportunities to mentor.

Set your Intention. Before each session, it is helpful to remind yourself of the purpose of mentoring. Mentoring is not about looking for weaknesses or what mentees are doing wrong. It is not an evaluation. Mentoring is about helping others grow through self-observation and self-reflection.

Stay in the moment. Let the conversation evolve naturally. Avoid the pressure of going in with a plan about how the conversation will unfold. Active listening will help you feel where the conversation needs to go.

Have an organizational plan. Creating a mentoring plan will make it more likely that regular mentoring takes place. In the plan, specify how and when mentoring will take place.

Be flexible. Have a plan but be flexible enough to change it when needed.

Examples of Open-Ended Questions for Mentoring

Questions to open the mentoring session

- How do you feel the appointment went?
- On a scale of 1-10, how do you think the encounter went overall?
- What went well for you in that session?
- What if anything would you like to have been different?

To evoke change talk

- What do you think are your strengths?
- What do you find challenging when working with participants?
- If there were one skill or technique you would like to do more of, what would it be?
- If there were one thing you would like to work on with your counseling what would it be?

To gather more information

- Could you give me an example?
- Tell me more about that.

To build importance for the change

- For you, what are some of the reasons for _____ (the change)?
- If you were to _____ how would your interactions with participants be better?

To evoke ideas and planning strategies

- What are some things that might work for you?
- If you did decide to change your approach, how might you go about it?
- What might that sound like?
- How would you start that conversation?
- What tools or strategies would help you with that?

To assess support needed

- What types of support do you need?
- How can I help you with that?