



6.1 Communication — Overview

Purpose

With a focus on effective communication skills, this section has a dual purpose: 1) to support the mentors' ability to work with the mentees and 2) to strengthen the mentees' communication skills. This section includes tips and concrete examples to assist in the art of effective communication.

Perspective

Satisfactory communication between the mentor and mentee is of paramount importance to a successful mentoring relationship. One of the greatest challenges for the mentor is to provide constructive feedback to the mentee. Communication skills must be practiced, planned and then performed. There is almost always an opportunity for improving one's communication skills. When a mentor practices excellent communication skills with the mentee and others, he or she is functioning as a positive role model.

Preparation

Reflect on the interactions you have had with your mentee. Your communication style might be a good place to start a discussion. In advance of this discussion, you may want to prep your mentee by asking him or her to think about a time when he or she felt he or she successfully communicated and a time when he or she felt communication could have been better.

Tools

- Communication — Discussion Starters
- Guidelines for Effective Communication Techniques
- Scenarios of Effective Communication Techniques (Mentor Copy)
- Scenarios of Effective Communication Techniques Handout★
- "I" Messages★
- Helpful Tools for Asking Questions
- Principles of Active Listening
- Book Discussion of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations and Bad Behavior* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Genny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzer – **OR** – There are alternate options with shorter time frames listed – see 6.9
- Communications References

Pointers

- ▶ The mentor's role is not to judge the mentee but to provide guidance and honest reflection.
- ▶ Demonstrate good communication skills and coach your mentee in developing his or her communication skills.
- ▶ There might be times where you feel that communication with your mentee could have been better. This is quite normal and can be used to enhance communication in the future.
- ▶ When the communication between you and your mentee is productive and constructive, be sure to give yourselves a pat on the back.

★ designates handouts and tools intended for the mentee