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Mentoring Matters is a bi-monthly e-letter focusing on best practices that motivate, inspire and grow individual and organizational mentoring excellence.

In our last issue we discussed [Seeking, Selecting and Recruiting a Mentor](#). This month's issue focuses on **mentoring conversations**. We've chosen to focus on this topic because we believe that mentoring conversations really matter! Mentoring partners who engage in good conversation throughout their relationship have qualitatively better learning experiences than those that don't.

## The Art of Good Conversation

Some of our daily conversations are satisfying and some are not. What makes the difference? According to organizational development specialist, Ron Zemke, "The best and most memorable conversations are...as emotive as they are intellectual. And they are hot and human."

In mentoring, good conversation is critical. It is the basis for building and growing the relationship. It is also the arena in which meaningful learning takes place.

Good conversation [builds trust](#) and increases the potential for real learning. When trust is high, mentoring partners more honestly engage. They can discuss issues, problem solve and carry on genuine dialogue.

## Conversation In Action

Setting: 10 am. Bustling seaside coffee shop. Corner table. Mentor ("He") and mentee ("She") sitting on opposite sides of the table.

**She** was talking about her current work situation and was wondering how it related to her future career goals.

**He** was asking clarifying questions and connecting her questions to the twists and turns of his own career path.

**He** commented, "that was then and now is now. There are a number of ways you could go." And then, he laid out some possible scenarios for her to consider and asked her how she felt about them.

**She** responded with openness and curiosity and asked lots of questions which he guided into a mutual discussion of where their industry was headed and what it would mean for her company.

Their conversation was focused, intentional and led to deep conversation which produced new insights for both.

## What Is a Good Conversation?



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### October Blog Topics:

#### [Initial Conversation: Getting Started on the Right Foot](#)

#### [Deepening the Conversation: What You Can Do](#)

In our workshops we frequently ask participants to think about a time when they had a really good conversation and to give us some descriptors of that conversation. What they tell us, time and time again, is that listening, trust, openness, honesty, candor respect, safety, optimism, integrity, engagement, reflection and learning are what make it a quality experience for them. What gets in their way? Time constraints and work pressures. Those make interactions more transactional rather than conversational.

## Connection Is Key

Conversation is key to establishing connection. It comes in two forms: the human connection and the learning connection. They operate in tandem. When human connection is missing, it depersonalizes the experience and fails to engage the partners. When learning is not connected, it compromises the potential impact of conversation and results in diminished energy and enthusiasm for moving forward.

### MEET KARI

Kari, a new principal, received a call from the central district office announcing that Elisha, a retired veteran principal had been assigned as her mentor. Kari resented that she had not been consulted before the mentoring match was made.

She met with her mentor and made it clear that she was unhappy. She was resistant and standoffish throughout their first meeting.

Elisha had her work cut out for her. She needed to find a way to engage Kari in the conversation and connect with her on a meaningful level. Rather than push forward on goals when Kari wasn't ready, she took time to build the relationship. Each subsequent conversation added a layer of trust between them.

Without working to establish a connection, their relationship would have been superficial, at best. It was risky for Elisha. She could have been angry and resentful that Kari didn't come to the table as a willing partner. Instead, Elisha was respectful and managed her emotions. She didn't take Kari's attitude personally and listened patiently to each of Kari's concerns. Elisha demonstrated that Kari could trust her.

## What You Can Do

To keep your mentoring conversations on track, try the following exercise:

1. Think about a time when you had a really good conversation.
2. Make a list of all the words you would use to describe that conversation.
3. Once you have a dozen items, stop and review your list.
4. Ask colleagues and friends for feedback.
5. Make a checklist for yourself and use the list as an accountability tool to make sure you are engaged in good conversation in every mentoring session.

## There is still time to register for our October 19th Chicago Workshop, Mentoring: Raising the Bar on Performance! You Will:

- Learn directly from mentoring experts.
- Walk away with practical tips and tools that you can apply immediately.
- Learn proven strategies to facilitate your mentee's learning.

## Engaging in Critical Conversations

### The Closure Conversation: It's a Process!

### December Issue: Mentoring at Work

### Ten Strategies for Supporting Mentee Learning and Development

### Bridging the Gap with Challenging Assignments

### Creating a Path to the Future

### Hitches, Glitches and Stumbling Blocks

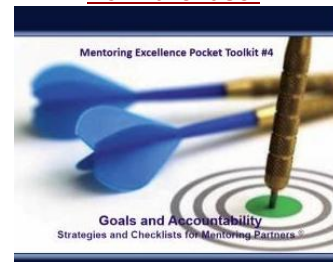
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### Toolkit #4 Is Now Available For Purchase!



- Raise the bar on your personal performance.
- Receive a signed copy of The Mentor's Guide and one of our Mentoring Excellence Pocket Toolkits.



## Mentoring: Raising the Bar on Performance

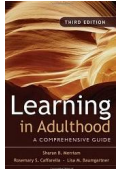
Chicago, Illinois

October 19, 2010

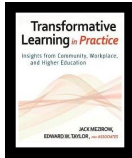
Register Online here:

<http://www.centerformentoringexcellence.com/chicagoregistration.php>

## What We Are Reading



**Learning in Adulthood:** A Comprehensive Guide (Jossey-Bass Higher & Adult Education)



**Transformative Learning in Practice:** Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education

### A Note to Our Readers:

We believe that leaders cannot be effective without a strong and ongoing commitment to mentoring excellence. This belief, our passion for mentoring excellence, and our extensive experience in the field with organizations led us to create the Center for Mentoring Excellence. At our virtual center, [www.centerformentoringexcellence.com](http://www.centerformentoringexcellence.com), you will find mentoring tools and resources, expert advice and a forum for sharing best mentoring practices. We hope that you will visit us there and let us know how we can continue to help you raise the bar on mentoring in your organization.

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