



# Mentoring Matters

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## Blogs and Websites Margie Meacham Visits!

### [Sharp Brains](#)

Tracking Health and Wellness Applications of Brain Science

### [Brains](#)

The Smithsonian page, "What does it mean to be human?"

### [Center for Cognitive Neuroscience](#)

Penn State's multidisciplinary community dedicated to understanding the neural bases of human thought

### [Fresh Brain](#)

The technology exploration platform for teens (and the rest of us)

### [Genes to Cognition Online](#)

Focuses on cognitive disorders, the cognitive process and research

### [Hacking Knowledge](#)

Ways to learn faster, better, cheaper

### [Psychology Today](#)

Peer-reviewed articles on human behavior

### [Ted.com](#)



## Interview with

### Margie L. Meacham

President of Meacham Learning, LLC

Margie L. Meacham is an adult learning expert with a Master's of Science degree in Learning Technologies and over 15 years of experience in the field. A self-described "scholar-practitioner," Margie's work focuses on applying practical applications of neuroscience to the field of human capital management.

**MM: Trust is essential in a mentoring relationship. How can an understanding of neuroscience help mentors build trust early on in a mentoring relationship?**

**MLM:** Our brains [make a determination of the trustworthiness](#) of a person within milliseconds of meeting them. This initial evaluation continues to be updated as more information is obtained and processed. It is all going on so quickly that most people will find it hard to express exactly why they trust or distrust a person. So how does a mentor build trust?

The number one thing you can do is extend your trust to the mentee. When we watch someone else our brains are activated in the same way that the brain of the person we are observing is activated - through the function of special "[mirror neurons](#)." This means that you can actually induce trust in another person's brain by demonstrating that you trust them. You can't fake it. You must actually believe that your mentees are trustworthy in order to elicit the trust response towards you.

**MM: Mentoring is a reflective practice. What happens in the brain when people are engaged in reflection?**

**MLM:** Coaching expert [David Rock says](#) that every event that occurs in coaching starts out in someone's head. Reflection is the act of watching yourself think, and it is a crucial step in achieving lasting

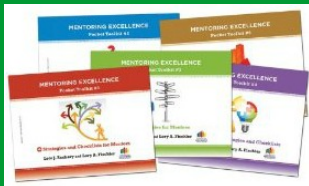
Ideas worth spreading

### [Eyewire](#)

Help us map the brain and have fun too

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[Tell us](#) what your favorite eletter has been this year and why and you could win a set of Mentoring Excellence Toolkits!



#### [Issue 1:](#)

Happy New Year, 2013  
Mentoring Resolutions

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Interview with Dana Campbell  
Saylor, Chief Executive Officer,  
YWCA Maricopa County

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Interview with  
Beverly Kaye, Founder  
of Career Systems  
International

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Interview with  
Chip R. Bell, Author,  
Consultant, Keynote Speaker

#### [Issue 5A & 5B:](#)

Interview with Dr. Frances  
Kochan, Wayne T. Smith  
Distinguished Professor at  
Auburn University

### Coming Up....

Look for our November Issue.  
We will be interviewing  
[Sharon Daloz Parks](#)  
Director, Leadership for the  
New Commons,  
an initiative of the  
[Whidbey Institute.](#)

change. Reflection takes place in the temporal lobe, where the brain processes incoming information and [forms long-term memories](#) and patterns of behavior. During reflection, the brain integrates new information with old information and forms completely new connections between brain cells. These connections are the physical manifestations of our memories and habits. They are like a bread crumb path for the brain.

Reflection takes time and effort. The individual may outwardly appear quiet, but inside their brain is raging. Neurons are breaking old connections and forming new ones, then going over the new pathways over and over again, until the pathway is established. Brain imaging has become so powerful that we can actually [watch someone in the act of reflecting](#) at the cellular level.



How Your Brain Looks When You Think New Thoughts

Researchers have even been started to understand the [neuro-mechanisms of insight](#), which they call the "Eureka effect." By watching people solve puzzles, they have determined that while this moment of insight seems instantaneous, it is actually preceded by a series of steps - the actual process of reflection.

**MM: Knowing that, what recommendations do you have for mentors to help them facilitate reflection?**

**MLM:** Harvard professor [Chris Argyis](#) makes an interesting observation about [mentoring smart people](#). He believes that they have had very little opportunity to fail. Reflecting on failure is one of the most powerful exercises for personal development. So mentors should look for opportunities to put mentees into situations that are so challenging that they may not immediately succeed. Then you can walk them through how to reflect on this experience and learn from it. It also helps to walk them through your own reflective process, to trigger those mirror neurons we spoke of earlier.

**MM: Goals frame the work of a mentoring partnership. What do you know about the brain and how we set and achieve goals that might inform better mentoring practice?**

**MLM:** Neuroscientists have demonstrated that our brains do not distinguish between an imagined future event and our present experience. This means that mentees can use their brains to experience goal achievement before it has actually happened. When you speak of goals with your mentees, ask them to picture the actions they will take to achieve their goals. The act of visualizing an event stimulates neural activity that is [identical to experiencing the actual](#)



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[event](#). Role-playing and visualization can help mentees develop the skills they need to get to the next level.

**MM: Mentors are role models. What is going on in the brain when role modeling occurs?**

**MLM:** The mirror neurons play a role in modeling. The scientists called this the "[salesperson effect](#)." As the mentee watches your performance, these mirror neurons are firing in the same way that analogous neurons fire in your brain. So your mentees can begin to pick up your behaviors simply by observing you in action. If you want to accelerate their learning, you can couple modeling with discussion and reflection. After the modeling session, schedule time to answer questions and let the mentee share what they have learned. Then send them away for a period of reflection. The next time you meet, follow-up and ask what insights came from the reflection period. Each time you help your mentee go back over these newly formed neural pathways, they will be stronger.

**MM: What books/resources would you recommend to our readers that would help them better understand the link between brain science and mentoring?**

**MLM:** The field is developing so quickly that you must combine books with more immediate resources, like websites and blogs.

For more information, contact [Margie Meacham](#) and check out her blog at [ASTD Human Capital Blog](#).



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