

Society of Psychologists in Leadership: Mentoring Guidelines

Thank you for participating in the Society of Psychologists in Leadership Mentoring Program. These guidelines are intended to help mentors and mentees build a productive and rewarding mentoring relationship. Every mentoring partnership is unique, so we encourage you to adapt these recommendations to best meet your shared goals, interests, and availability.

Purpose

The purpose of mentoring is to support professional growth through the sharing of experience, thoughtful conversation, encouragement, and perspective. Mentoring relationships often provide opportunities to explore career development, leadership challenges, decision making, and professional identity in a confidential, supportive environment.

While many SPL mentors are psychologists with expertise in coaching, consulting, and leadership development, the mentoring relationship is distinct from psychotherapy, clinical supervision, legal advice, or formal consulting.

Getting Started

An initial conversation can help establish a strong foundation for your mentoring relationship. Consider discussing topics such as:

Your Goals

- What prompted you to seek (or offer) mentoring at this point in your career?
- What would you hope to gain from your conversations together?
- What would make this experience feel successful?

Areas of Focus

Discuss the topics you would most like to explore, such as leadership development, executive coaching, consulting, academic careers, private practice, organizational leadership, publishing, career transitions, or other areas of professional interest.

Planning Your Meetings

Many mentoring pairs find it helpful to discuss logistical expectations early in the relationship, including:

- How long you anticipate meeting together (for example, one conversation, several months, or longer)
- How often you would like to meet
- Your preferred meeting format (virtual, phone, or in person when feasible)
- Typical meeting length
- How meetings will be scheduled
- How you would like to communicate between meetings, if at all

Making the Most of the Relationship

Successful mentoring relationships often include a balance of curiosity, openness, preparation, and mutual respect.

Mentors may choose to:

- Share experiences, lessons learned, and professional perspectives.
- Ask thoughtful questions that encourage reflection and growth.
- Offer encouragement, feedback, and resources when appropriate.
- Be open about their availability and any changes that may affect the relationship.

Mentees may find it helpful to:

- Come to meetings with questions, challenges, or topics for discussion.
- Reflect on conversations and identify actions or next steps between meetings.
- Remain open to feedback and new perspectives.
- Respect the mentor's time by communicating promptly about scheduling and preparing for meetings.

Confidentiality

A mentoring relationship is strengthened by trust. In most circumstances, mentors and mentees should treat their conversations as confidential unless they mutually agree otherwise or disclosure is required by law or ethical obligation.

When discussing professional situations, it is important to avoid sharing identifiable client or patient information and to ensure that any examples are appropriately de-identified and consistent with applicable ethical and legal standards.

Professional Boundaries

Mentoring is intended to be a collegial, voluntary relationship focused on professional development. It is separate from psychotherapy, clinical supervision, formal consultation, employment, or performance evaluation.

Either person may decide to conclude the mentoring relationship if it has accomplished its purpose or if circumstances change.

Checking In

As your mentoring relationship progresses, it can be helpful to pause periodically and reflect together:

- What has been most valuable so far?
- Are we focusing on the topics that matter most?
- Is there anything we would like to do differently moving forward?

Bringing the Relationship to a Close

When your mentoring relationship concludes, consider taking time to reflect on what you have learned together.

Questions you might discuss include:

- What goals or insights emerged through our conversations?
- What are the most important next steps?
- Would an occasional future check-in be valuable for both of us?

Thank you for contributing to the Society of Psychologists in Leadership's culture of collegiality, generosity, and professional development. We hope your mentoring relationship is both meaningful and rewarding.