

A photograph of two women walking and talking outdoors. The woman on the left is Black, wearing glasses, an orange headwrap, and a dark blue top with a beaded necklace. She is holding a coffee cup. The woman on the right is white with long blonde hair, wearing a dark blue sleeveless top. They are walking on a paved path with a grassy area and buildings in the background. A large yellow circle is overlaid on the image, containing the title text.

MENTORING CONVERSATION GUIDE

CONVERSATION STARTERS
FOR ENGAGING WITH
YOUR MENTEE(S)

*Content developed for junior/senior
college students and young professionals*

MENTORING CONVERSATION GUIDE

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Expectation-Setting and Telling Your Story

The first meeting with your mentee sets the tone for everything that comes after, and is the most important meeting. To begin, **set some expectations:** why are we in this mentoring relationship, how often and when will we meet (use the Mentoring Relationship Agreement Form), and what goals do we hope to work towards together. Also, set expectations for confidentiality and trust.

Conversation Starters for Getting To Know Each Other and Telling Your Story:

- What is your background? How did you get to (this college, company/job role, this city, etc.) and what has your experience been?
- Why are you here (in this mentoring relationship, mentoring program)?
- What are you most proud of, when you think about the past few years?
- What are you most excited about when you think about what comes next for you? What are you most nervous about?
- What is one goal and some specific action items that you'd like to work on throughout the course of this mentoring relationship?

As the mentor, **you may choose to go first**, to model story-telling and to set the tone for the relationship being a safe space to share.

As your mentee shares, you might ask a few follow-up questions for more information. You may also provide some feedback such as "Thank you for sharing that," or, "That's a great goal, look forward to seeing what you do with that."

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

What Do You Think About When You Think About Work

Use the following conversation starters to discuss your mentee's thoughts and experiences related to career and work.

Suggested Pre-work/Reading:

The Four Year Career (<https://www.fastcompany.com/1802731/four-year-career>)

Rethinking Work

(https://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/opinion/sunday/rethinking-work.html?_r=1)

Conversation Starters for Talking about Career & Work:

- How have you defined “success” for yourself (in college, other experiences)?
- What do you think “success” will look like for you, professionally?
- When you think about “career” what do you envision? What do you think you will need to make that happen?

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

Building a Life and Community

Use the following conversation starters to talk with your mentee about building meaningful relationships and a community of support.

Suggested Pre-work/Reading:

Why Are Young People Pretending to Love Work

([https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/26/business/against-hustle-culture-rise-and-grind-tgim.html?](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/26/business/against-hustle-culture-rise-and-grind-tgim.html?action=click&module=Editors%20Picks&pgtype=Homepage)

[action=click&module=Editors%20Picks&pgtype=Homepage\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/26/business/against-hustle-culture-rise-and-grind-tgim.html?action=click&module=Editors%20Picks&pgtype=Homepage)

TEDx Houston: The Power of Vulnerability featuring Brene Brown

(https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)

TED: Listening to Shame featuring Brene Brown

(https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame)

Conversation Starters for Talking about Building a Life and Community:

- What do you envision when you imagine your life post-college? What will “balance” look like?
- How do you define “vulnerability”? What does vulnerability look like for you? For your friends, family, in other relationships?
- What do you imagine “community” will look like for you as a young professional? How can you start to prepare for that?
- What does “failure” mean to you? Personally? In your work?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

The "Impostor Syndrome" and Gathering Feedback

Use the following conversation starters to discuss the concept of the "impostor syndrome" and experiences when you and your mentee have felt like you didn't belong. And, talk about how to gather feedback on strengths and opportunities for growth from the people in your life.

Suggested Pre-work/Reading:

How to Deal with Impostor Syndrome (<http://time.com/5312483/how-to-deal-with-impostor-syndrome/>)

Your Career Needs Many Mentors Not Just One
(<https://hbr.org/2017/01/your-career-needs-many-mentors-not-just-one>)

What Self-Awareness Really Is and How to Cultivate It
(<https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it>)

Conversation Starters for Talking about "Impostor Syndrome" and Seeking Out Feedback:

- When have you felt like an impostor? What did it feel like and how did it impact you?
- How can you imagine the impostor syndrome impacting you in your life after college and as a working professional? What strategies can you use to work through it?
- What are you doing to gather feedback on your strengths and opportunities for growth?

MENTORING CONVERSATION GUIDE

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Own What's Next and Plan for the Future

Use the following conversation starters to discuss your mentee's goals and plan for moving forward in their personal and professional life over the next year.

Suggested Pre-work/Reading:

Career Exploration: Considering Your Possible Lives

(<https://alumni.opcd.wfu.edu/2018/09/career-exploration-considering-your-possible-lives/>)

Have a "curiosity conversation" - Learn how to do this in this video,

Curiosity Conversations: The No-Pressure Informational Interview

(<https://alumni.opcd.wfu.edu/2018/07/curiosity-conversations-the-no-pressure-informational-interview/>)

Use the following document to create a plan for the next six months

(<https://prod.wp.cdn.aws.wfu.edu/sites/200/2019/09/Taking-the-Next-Step-Handout.pdf>)

Conversation Starters for Talking about Your Goals for the Future:

- What have you learned about yourself over the course of this mentoring relationship?
- How do you currently feel about what comes next, for you?
- What are 2-3 goals that you can set for yourself, for the next 3-6 months?