

# **Mentoring Women in Construction:** *Mentor Handbook*



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# Acknowledgements

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## Using this Guide

This guide is a resource for tradeswomen mentors. It can also be used as a reference for local leaders, contractors, and other trades-affiliated allies seeking to build mentorship programs for under-represented groups. It is not intended to be prescriptive but to support anyone looking to build a new mentorship program or enhance an existing one. Although we have written this guide with trade unions in mind, the lessons here can be adapted to other industries and organizations.

For any questions about this guide, please contact Dr. Marissa Baker at [bakermg@uw.edu](mailto:bakermg@uw.edu).

## **What is the Mentoring SMART Women program?**

The Mentoring SMART Women project was an occupational health study that sought to improve the working lives of tradeswomen. Through this program, we hope that apprentice women will develop leadership skills and receive social support that will equip them with tools to succeed in the field long-term.

This study was born out of previous tradeswomen research conducted in Washington state. Tradeswomen participants in these pilot studies identified mentorship as a meaningful intervention to improve women's experiences in the trades.

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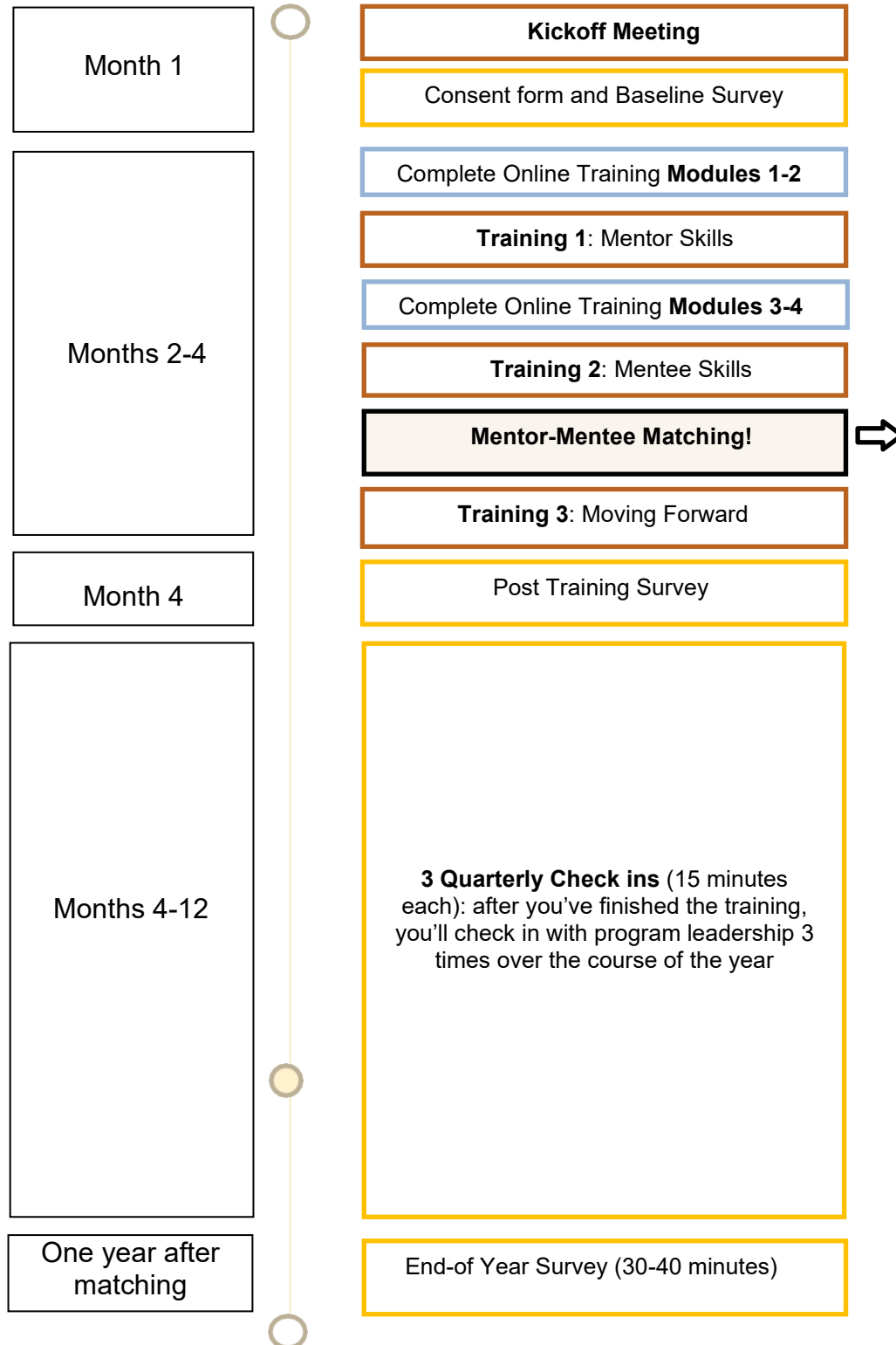


# **Program Background**

- **Timeline**
- **Mentor Role**
- **Program Goals**




# Timeline of Participation

Mentorship Year 



Once matched with your mentee(s) you'll be expected to check in around once a week with your mentees. **Before training 3, please meet with your mentee(s) at least three times if possible.**

## Key:

-  Surveys and check ins
-  Live Training Sessions
-  Online, Self-paced Training Sessions



# Time Commitment for Mentors in the SMART program

## Self-paced Online Training

*2-4 hours total*

These sections of the mentor training are online and self-paced: this part of the training will cover skills on relationship building, goal setting, communication, and problem solving and self-advocacy skills. You will work through this online training between live training sessions.

## Live Training Sessions

*6-8 hours total*

In these sessions, we will review, practice, and discuss skills from the online training in a group setting. These sessions will also be an opportunity for mentors in the program to connect with each other. The final session will be held after you have begun mentoring: this will be a space to discuss your experience, discuss challenges and share successes in a supportive space.

## Surveys and Check-ins

*1-2 hours total*

Throughout your participation in this program, we will ask you to complete a survey to understand your experience in the program.

The program leaders will also reach out to you every 3 months for a brief quarterly check in. This will focus on your relationship with your mentee(s).

## Mentor/Mentee Check ins

*15-30 minutes per week*

Each week, we ask that you check in with your mentee(s) approximately once a week for 15-30 minutes.

These check ins are an opportunity for you to set and check in on mentee goals, practice communication skills, and work on problem solving and self-advocacy skills.

This is also an opportunity for you to help your mentee troubleshoot any challenges they're facing on the job and offer support.

# Mentoring SMART Women: Program Goals

This program aims to develop leadership and communication skills in mentees through the support of experienced, journey-level mentors like you. Our goal is for mentees to feel more empowered on the job and, in the long term, make the trades a more inclusive space for women.

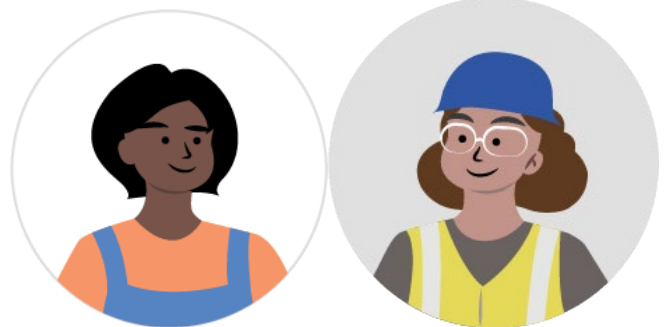
The diagram below represents how we envision this process, from mentor to mentee.



**Step 1:** Mentors learn communication, problem solving, self-advocacy and goal setting skills through synchronous and asynchronous training. They will also experience the **social support** inherent to these relationships.



**Step 2:** With guidance from the study team, mentors teach mentees these skills. Mentors circle back to skills with mentees as needed throughout the year.



**Step 3:** Over the year, mentees learn skills with mentor support.



**Step 4:** Mentees internalize and demonstrate **goal setting, communication, self-advocacy, and problem-solving skills** independently. Mentees feel a sense of **social support** from the relationship.

# Online Training Support

---

- Curriculum overview
- How to enroll
- Navigating the online
- Training  
Section overviews

# SMART Mentorship Curriculum Framework

## *Building Foundations*

## *Mentor Toolbox*

### Asynchronous Sections (8)

#### **Section 1: Diving into Mentorship**

Why this kind of mentorship,  
why now?

Gender and work in  
Construction: previous  
studies

Benefits of mentorship

#### **Section 2: Relationship Building**

What is a mentor?  
Setting boundaries  
Building trust  
Keeping confidentiality

How to approach first  
meetings with mentees

#### **Section 3: Goal Practices**

Connecting Goals to your  
mentee's sense of purpose,  
individual interests and  
strengths Developing and  
maintaining small,  
sustainable goal practices

#### **Section 4: Active Listening**

What is active listening,  
and why is it key in  
mentorship?

Connect, Clarify, Validate

Managing  
communication pitfalls

## *Mentee Toolbox*

## *Moving Forward*

#### **Section 5: Problem Solving**

ADAPT model for step-by-  
step problem solving

#### **Section 6: Self Advocacy**

Preparing and  
communicating a  
message to advocate to  
an appropriate audience

#### **Section 7: Navigating Challenges**

Realistic Challenges in  
mentorship, re-establishing  
communication norms,  
practicing self-care, when  
and how to get more support

#### **Section 8: Pulling it all Together**

combining mentoring skills  
and how to concluding the  
relationship

### Synchronous Sessions (4)

#### **Kickoff**

Introduction to the program:  
study specific content and  
program expectations

#### **Live Training 1**

Mentor skills practice,  
discussion, exercises

#### **Live Training 2**

Mentee skills practice,  
discussion, exercises

#### **Live Training 3**

Conclusion, check in and  
support moving forward

# How to enroll in the Mentoring SMART Women training visual guide

**Step 1:** Follow this link to create an account for the online mentor training:

<https://phlearnlink.nwcphp.org/login/index.php>

**Step 2:** Click on the “create new account” button at the bottom right-hand corner.

## PH LearnLink

Home » Log in to the site

### Log in

Username / email

Password

☐ Remember username

LOG IN

[Forgotten your username or password?](#)

Cookies must be enabled in your browser (?)

### Account Instructions

Welcome to PH LearnLink, the online portal to trainings from the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice.

If this is your **first time here**, you will need to register.

1. Fill out the New Account form with your details.
2. An email will be immediately sent to your email address.
3. Read your email, and click on the web link it contains.
4. Your account will be confirmed and you will be logged in.
5. Now, select the course you want to participate in and enroll in it.
6. You can now access the full course. From now on you will only need to enter your personal username and password (in the form on this page) to log in and access any course you have enrolled in.

If you have questions, please see our [help pages](#).

CREATE NEW ACCOUNT

**Step 3:** Fill out the form and click submit at the bottom of the page.

## PH LearnLink

Home » Log in » New account

### New account

▸ Choose your username and password

Username\*

The password must have at least 6 characters

Password\*

☐ Unmask

▸ More details

Email address\*

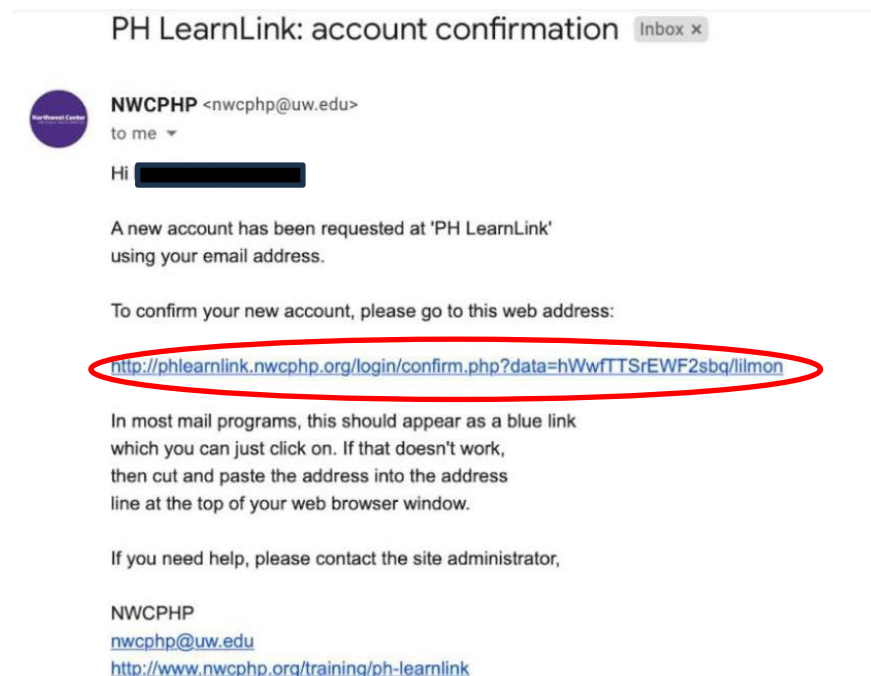
Email (again)\*

First name\*

**Step 4:** After you submit, you will be directed to the page pictured here. Check your email again to confirm your account.

The screenshot shows the PH LearnLink website. At the top, there is a purple header with the 'W' logo and 'PH LearnLink' text on the left, and 'You are not logged in. (Log in)' on the right. Below the header, the 'PH LearnLink' logo is on the left, and a search bar with the text 'Search trainings:' and a 'GO' button is on the right. The main content area has a heading 'Home > Confirm your account'. Below this, it says: 'An email should have been sent to your address at [redacted]'. It continues: 'It contains easy instructions to complete your registration. If you continue to have difficulty, contact the site administrator.' There is a 'CONTINUE' button. At the bottom, there is copyright information for the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, University of Washington School of Public Health, Department of Health Services, 206.685.1130 3980 15th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Below this is a 'Connect with NWCPHP' section with icons for email, Facebook, and LinkedIn, followed by the email 'nwcphp@uw.edu' and website 'www.nwcphp.org'. At the very bottom, it says 'You are not logged in. (Log in)'.

**Step 5:** Click on the link in the email from NWCPHP (The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice). If you don't see this email, check your spam folder!



**Step 6:** Log in with your username and password. It will take you to the course home screen pictured here, where you can access the full training.

**W** PH LearnLinkLily Monsey

## Mentoring SMART Women


Home ▶ Online Courses ▶ Leadership & Management ▶ Course: Mentoring SMART Women

Search trainings:  **GO**

TURN EDITING ON

Your progress

### Course Overview



**Mentoring SMART Women**

#### Welcome

SMART women are building a path for all women to thrive in the construction industry. But as any tradeswomen knows, there are still many challenges to confront in the industry, from safety risks, to discrimination and harassment, and fewer opportunities to lead in the field.

More than ever, today's tradeswomen need to rely on each other to share knowledge, support one another, and create leadership opportunities that will build a safer, more equitable industry for all. In short, that means

#### About this Course

- Approx. 2 - 3 hours
- Eight sections containing instructional content, videos, and activities





# Navigating the Online Training

**Step 1:** Scroll down on the course homepage click on the section of curriculum you want to navigate to.

## Mentoring SMART Women

Home » Online Courses » Leadership & Management » Course: Mentoring SMART Women

TURN EDITING ON Search trainings:  GO

Your progress

### Course Overview



### Welcome

SMART women are building a path for all women to thrive in the construction industry. But as any tradeswoman knows, there are still many challenges to confront in the industry, from safety risks, to discrimination and harassment, and fewer opportunities to lead in the field. More than ever, today's tradeswomen need to rely on each other to share knowledge, support one another, and create leadership opportunities that will build a safer, more equitable industry for all. In short, that means SMART mentorship.

### Learning Objectives

- ✓ Identify the benefits of and need for mentoring skills for women in the SMART trades.
- ✓ Describe the role of a mentor and the significance of trust in mentee relationships.
- ✓ Explain the importance of goal practices for measuring mentee success.
- ✓ Define active listening and how mentors can use it to support mentees.
- ✓ Describe problem-solving approaches through the ADAPT model.
- ✓ Identify steps mentees can take to become better advocates of themselves in the workplace.
- ✓ Explain strategies that mentees can use to navigate typical workplace challenges.
- ✓ Describe the importance of skills practice and reflection in closing out your mentoring relationship.

### About this Course

- ⌚ Approx. 2 - 3 hours
- 📖 Eight sections containing instructional content, videos, and activities

### Training Features

- Guided video & audio
- Reflection points
- Printable workbook
- Certificate of completion

### Course Content

There are four parts to this course. Each one focuses on a different mentoring skill area. They include: Building Foundations, the Mentor Toolbox, the Mentee Toolbox, and Moving Forward. We recommend that you complete each part in sequence. Select the links below to get started:

#### Building Foundations

[Building Foundations \(Section 1\)](#)

#### Mentor Toolbox

[Mentor Toolbox \(Sections 2-4\)](#)

#### Mentee Toolbox

[Mentee Toolbox \(Sections 5-6\)](#)

#### Moving Forward

[Moving Forward \(Sections 7-8\)](#)



**Step 2:** Click on the section you want to work on.

## Mentor Toolbox

Type: Self-Paced Module

3 Sections


45-60 minutes

### Overview

Practicing mentorship takes work, but it's built on just a few simple skill practices: building trusting relationships with your mentee, helping them frame and practice their goals, and being an active and supportive listener.

Follow the sections below to get started.

#### Section 2




##### Relationship Building

Discover the importance of building trust and creating structure for your mentor-mentee relationship.

[Go to Section 2](#)

#### Section 3




##### Goal Practices

Learn what it means to work towards your mentee's goals in practical, realistic terms.

[Go to Section 3](#)

#### Section 4



##### Active Listening

Find out what steps you can take to be a better listener and a stronger source of support for your mentee.

[Go to Section 4](#)

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**Step 3:** You can use the menu on the left-hand side to navigate directly to different subsections; you can also navigate page by page by using the “previous” and “next” buttons at the bottom of each page.

The screenshot displays a web interface for 'SECTION 4: ACTIVE LISTENING'. The left-hand navigation menu is highlighted with a red oval and includes the following items: Home, Relationship Building, Goal Practices, Active Listening (selected), Introduction (highlighted in yellow), What Is Active Listening?, Active Listening In Action, Active Listening, Step By Step, First: Connect, Second: Clarify, Third: Validate, Blocks To Active Listening, Drilling Down: Communicating Effectively, and Review. The main content area features an 'Introduction' section with text explaining the importance of active listening and a video player titled 'Active Listening - Introduction'. Below the video is a 'Reflection Point' question. At the bottom, a red oval highlights the navigation buttons: '← Previous' and 'Next →'.

SECTION 4:  
**ACTIVE LISTENING**

Home  
Relationship Building  
Goal Practices  
Active Listening  
Introduction  
What Is Active Listening?  
Active Listening In Action  
Active Listening, Step By Step  
First: Connect  
Second: Clarify  
Third: Validate  
Blocks To Active Listening  
Drilling Down: Communicating Effectively  
Review

### Introduction

What does it mean to be an "active listener", and how does it relate to mentoring?

As it turns out, active listening is one of the most important tools in your mentor toolbox. In this section, we'll explain why, and explore ways to start using it in conversations with your mentees.

Click the video below to get started!

Active Listening - Introduction

Active Listening - Introduction  
MODULE 2: MENTOR TOOL BOX  
Watch later Share

**Active Listening**  
Watch on YouTube  
Northwest Center

? **Reflection Point**— What does "Active Listening" mean to you?

← Previous      Next →

## Section 1

# Building Foundations

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## Diving into Mentorship

This section introduces the mentoring SMART women program, covers the benefits of mentorship, and discusses the origins of this study.

# Diving Into Mentorship

## Why Mentorship for Women in the Trades?

Mentoring can increase job satisfaction and reduce stress. It can also provide support help tradeswomen stay in the trade.

## Existing risks for Tradeswomen

(Data from a previous study with tradeswomen in Washington State)

**31% of tradeswomen report high stress**

18% of tradesmen report high stress

## What is the SMART mentorship program all about?

Help mentees develop important skills to navigate the construction trades.

1. Communication
2. Goal Setting
3. Problem Solving
4. Self-Advocacy

## How will I benefit from being a mentor?

1. Create a better experience for incoming women apprentices.
2. Develop leadership skills to use in your own professional and personal life.
3. Be a part of a social support network of tradeswomen across the country.

Because the culture of the trades can be particularly challenging for tradeswomen, **your experiences will be an important part of giving mentees the support they need.** The goal of the SMART mentoring program is to empower new tradeswomen with leadership skills, and ultimately create a more inclusive workplace culture.

Sections 2, 3, & 4

## Mentor Toolbox

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The mentor toolbox includes sections on **relationship building, goal setting, and active listening**. While these skills are tailored to your role as a mentor, they also help you build rapport with your mentee.

## Section 2

# Relationship Building

### *What is a Mentor, Anyway?*

The word “mentor” roughly translates to “Advisor.” Being a mentor means giving support to a mentee, or someone still learning skills that you have experience with. Mentorship is built on mutual **trust** and **confidentiality**.

## Spectrum of Relationships

A mentor’s role sits at the more personal end of the relationship spectrum, but your role is still one with professional boundaries.



### *How do I build a relationship with my mentee?*

#### 1. Set Boundaries

Know what is and isn’t your job as a mentor: and communicate this directly to your mentee. See next page!

#### 2. Build Trust

**Be reliable:** Follow through with communication and stick to your word.


**Show vulnerability:** Open up about your own experience when it feels right.

#### 3. Keep Confidentiality

**If you aren’t sure, don’t share:** Always check in with your mentee before sharing their information with others.

**Breaking confidentiality:** when they or someone else is in danger.

# The Dos and Don'ts of Mentorship

Knowing what is and isn't your job is an important step to **setting healthy boundaries** with your mentee. Knowing when to lean in or step back is important to keeping your role  sustainable.

## **As a Mentor, your job *does* include:**

- Active listening: usually more listening than talking
- Asking questions to better understand your mentee's experience
- Helping your mentee feel safe and supported
- Helping your mentee explore and navigate challenges
- Referring your mentee to resources
- Giving compassionate feedback
- Sharing relevant personal experiences on the job

## **As a Mentor, your job *does not* include:**

- Trying to solve the problem for the mentee or telling them what to do
- Being a therapist
- Breaking confidentiality (unless they or someone is in danger)
- Giving legal advice
- Putting yourself at risk
- Trying to mediate between a mentee and their boss, or their union
- Trying to handle psychological problems yourself
- Getting romantically involved with a mentee
- Sharing more of your personal experience than you want



## Section 3

# Goal Practices

**Goal Practices** are small, measurable steps you can take on a daily basis to work toward a larger goal. Helping your mentee identify long-term goals—and goal practices to help them get there—provides structure for your weekly check-ins.

### Understand Goal Practice



### Step 1: **Identify Long-Term Goals**

What is your mentee excited to learn more about? What are they struggling with, that they'd like to improve on? This is the first step before breaking it down into goal practices.

### Step 2: **Assess Mentee's Progress**

How much progress has your mentee already made toward their goal? **Ask your mentee questions** to see where they're at.

### Step 3: **Continue, Stop, Start**

**Continue:** What practices are working for your mentee?

**Stop:** What practices aren't working for your mentee?

**Start:** With the information above in mind, are there new practices that would be helpful?

### Step 4: **Review the Plan**

**Summarize** the discussion: what is your mentee's current goal, and what practices are they going to continue, stop, and start? It's also a good idea to **set up your next check-in** at this time to assess progress and provide support as needed.

# Blocks to Goal Practice

## What Are They?

Blocks to Goal Practices are common pitfalls that can make the process of setting and achieving goals frustrating or unsuccessful.

### Don't Emphasize Achievement over Practice

It's easy to focus on achieving your goal, rather than all the hard work you put in along the way.

#### ***Why is it a problem?***

Sometimes, the outcome of your long-term goal isn't within your control. Help your mentee focus on the daily practices and small steps of progress to avoid burnout.

### Abandon Unmanageable Practices

Unmanageable practices are goal practices that aren't realistic for your mentee's lifestyle or schedule: often, they're too ambitious.

#### ***Why is it a problem?***

This can lead to your mentee feeling a sense of failure or frustration. Encourage them to scale back practices to a level that is doable within their routine.

## Be Open to Shifting the Goal

Sometimes, the goal your mentee originally selected is no longer as relevant and needs to change.

#### ***Why is it a problem?***

Continuing on with an irrelevant goal can cause your mentee to lose momentum and motivation.

# Active Listening

**Active listening** helps the listener fully understand what the speaker is saying, how they're feeling, and why they're feeling that way. When you practice active listening, you make your mentee feel seen, heard, and validated in their experience.

## Step 1: Connect

Connecting means giving your full attention to your mentee. Often, distractions in our environment or other thoughts we're having prevent us from fully listening to the conversation.

### *How Do I Connect?*

**Check your surroundings.** You may pick your car, a room where you can close the door, or an outdoor space away from loud noise.

Fewer distractions make it easier to connect!

**Show Your Interest.** Keep a warm tone of voice, maintain eye contact, and use open body language. No crossed arms!

## Step 2: Clarify

Clarifying helps you understand what your mentee is really saying—and helps avoid miscommunications.

### *How Do I Clarify?*

**Ask clarifying questions.**

*"I'm hearing you say that \_\_\_\_\_. Do I have that right?"*

## Step 3: Validate

Validating will help your mentee feel understood in their experience. Even if you don't agree, you can still validate your mentee's emotions.

### *How Do I Validate?*

**Express empathy for your mentee.**

*"I can see how you'd feel that way when \_\_\_\_\_. I bet that felt really challenging in the moment."*

# Blocks to Active Listening

## *What Are They?*

Blocks to Active Listening are common missteps to be aware of when in conversation with your mentee. Knowing these pitfalls will help you avoid making your mentee feel misunderstood or unsupported.

### **Comparing**

When the listener contrasts a mentee's experience and feelings with someone else's—usually their own.

#### *Why is it a problem?*

Comparing your experience to your mentee's can make your mentee feel worse: *"Oh, that's easy—I learned that in my first few months."*

### **Derailing**

When the listener changes the subject after a mentee has opened up about something important.

#### *Why is it a problem?*

This can make your mentee feel like you're disengaged from your conversation, or like what they're sharing isn't important to you.

### **Sparring**

When the listener fights or debates a mentee, instead of listening openly.

#### *Why is it a problem?*

Your mentee may not feel heard, or like you're not there to support them: *"You say it's hard, but it really isn't. It's actually pretty easy..."*

### **Advising**

When the listener jumps to problem solving, before hearing everything a mentee has to say.

#### *Why is it a problem?*

Your mentee may *just* want you to listen, and not provide solutions. Remember that at this point, your job is only to actively listen.

## Section 5 & 6

# Mentee Toolbox

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The mentee toolbox includes sections on **problem solving and self-advocacy**. These skills are designed for you to teach your mentee with the goal of developing their leadership skills.

# Problem Solving

In this section, we approach **problem solving** through the ADAPT model. There are many ways to approach problem solving: this is one step-by-step process you can use to help your mentee solve problems proactively.

## **A**ttitude

## **D**efining the Problem

## **A**lternative Solutions

## **P**reparing Solutions

## **T**rying Out Solutions

### Step 1: Attitude

The first step is to encourage your mentee to **check in with their emotions**.

Are they feeling mad? Frustrated? Taking time to process these emotions will help her move forward.

### Step 2: Define the problem

**Identifying the root problem** in a situation can sometimes be tricky. Encourage your mentee to ask herself, "*and this is a problem because...?*" to help her dig deeper.

### Step 3: Alternative Solutions

Before jumping in to solve the problem, **encourage your mentee to brainstorm multiple solutions**. This way, if one approach doesn't work, your mentee has another approach ready to go.

### Step 4: Prepare Solutions

The next step is to **assess which of the possible solutions your mentee wants to try first**. Do they have context that might indicate one possible approach could be more successful than another?

### Step 5: Try Out Solutions

Now it's time for your mentee to try out one of the solutions. If it doesn't work out the way they hoped, that's okay. They have backup solutions ready to go.

# Mentor Support with Problem Solving

## **Step 1 (Attitude): Active Listening**

When helping your mentee assess their emotions, use your active listening skills. Validate their feelings (even if you don't agree) and offer the space to listen.

## **Step 2 (Define the Problem): Open-ended questions**

Try asking your mentee, "*What makes you feel that way?*" or questions to clarify, like, "*What do you mean by 'not good enough'?*"

## **Step 3 (Alternative Solutions): Offer Insight**

You have the advantage of experience and perspective: if relevant, this is a helpful time to offer advice on potential solutions, based on your lived experience.

## **Step 4 (Preparing Solutions): Encourage reflection**

As your mentee decided which potential solution to try out, encourage them to think through why they feel a certain approach may work well. Remind them that it is okay to pick a solution that demands less emotional labor.

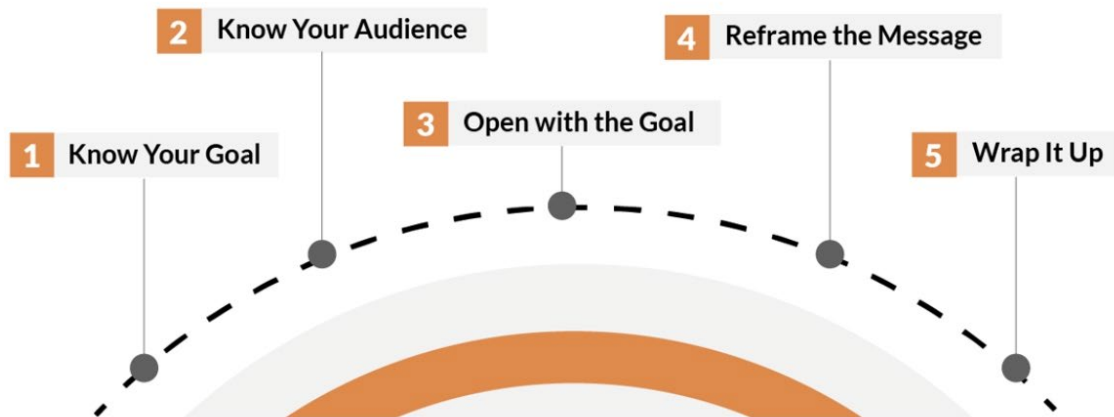
## **Step 5 (Trying out Solutions): Acknowledge multiple outcomes**

If your mentee doesn't experience their desired outcome, remind them that there are variables outside their control. This doesn't mean they've failed: encourage them to try out another possible solution.

## Section 6

# Self-Advocacy

**Self-advocacy** is one tool to help your mentee develop strong communication skills and confidence on the job. We break down self-advocacy into five steps.



## Prepare:

First prepare. Your mentee should begin with reflective “pre-steps” before self-advocating.

### Step 1: Know Your Goal

What does your mentee want to accomplish? By honing in on a focused goal now, your mentee will be better able to communicate the message.

*Tip: You can support your mentee with your active listening skills at this stage!*

### Step 2: Know Your Audience

Who, specifically, should your mentee advocate to for a specific issue? Identifying the right person is important. In general, encourage your mentee to communicate within the chain of command and not to go over the head of a co-worker or boss unless absolutely necessary.



## Communicate:

Next, communicate. Your mentee should break down their message into a three-step process.

### Step 3: Open With the Goal

Encourage your mentee to state their desired goal clearly and simply. This might sound like:

*"I want to strengthen my communication with others on the jobsite so I can learn more."*

### Step 4: Reframe the Message

Rather than framing the message around the problem, your mentee should try communicating their goal as an opportunity.

Instead of:

*"Why won't you rotate me off cleaning tasks?"*

### Step 5: Wrap It Up

Concluding with a clear question can be helpful in clarifying next steps toward a desired outcome. Your mentee can try something as simple as this:

*"Is there anything I can do going forward to get this experience?"*

Encourage your mentee to try:

*"I'd appreciate the opportunity to learn more technical skills and want to ask how I can make that happen."*

### Tip: Try practicing with your mentee!

Giving your mentee the space to practice communicating their message can help boost their confidence and practice the steps of the ADAPT model before they address their intended audience.

## Section 7 & 8

# Moving Forward

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To conclude the training, we discuss how to **navigate challenges** in mentorship and how to bring together different mentoring skills in the final section, **Pulling it all Together**.

# Navigating Challenges

A variety of **challenges** can pop up in a mentoring relationship. Below, we explore two common challenges, or “blocks to mentorship,” and strategies to **navigate** them with your mentee.

## Block 1: **Communication Breakdown**

Sometimes, consistent and healthy communication can be difficult to maintain. This might take the form of *too much communication (overstepping)* or *too little communication* with your mentee.



## **Address Communication breakdowns by Having Uncomfortable Conversations**

A direct conversation is one way to deal with a communication breakdown. Express what is challenging or unsustainable for you. This may sound like, *“I want to keep supporting you, and to do this, I would like us to revisit the frequency of our check-ins.”* When having this conversation, remember to:

1. Pause and center yourself
2. Consider others in the situation
3. Remember the goal

## Block 2: **Burnout**

Exhaustion, fatigue, and burnout can happen to anyone. Feeling burned out is not your fault. It is often the result of too many responsibilities and too little time to take care of yourself. Burnout can make being a mentor feel more challenging.



### **Address burnout with Self-Care**

Self-Care is the practice of protecting your emotional and physical wellbeing. It can be a useful tool to help yourself re-charge when you're feeling exhausted and run-down. Remember that self-care:

- Doesn't need to cost anything:** it can be reading a book or spending time outside.
- Doesn't mean you're weak:** it's a sign of self-awareness.
- Can be quick:** even just a 5- to 10-minute walk may work for self-care.

### **When You Need More Support**

At times, you may not be able to address challenges in your mentoring relationship(s) on your own. In these cases, don't hesitate to reach out to trusted tradeswomen allies, a mentorship coordinator or women's committee chair (if you have one) fellow apprentices, or journey-level workers. They can help by:

1. Connecting you with local resources.
2. Listening and sharing helpful tips from their experience.

# Pulling It All Together

You can use your mentorship skills together—not just one at a time—to support your mentee. This section focuses on how to combine your mentorship skills as well as ways to closing the relationship with your mentee at the end of the year.

## Combining Skills

As a mentor, it's likely that more often than not, **you'll use a combination of skills** covered in this course while working with your mentee. For example, if you're **building your relationship** with your mentee in one of your first meetings, you're probably also using **active listening** skills. If you're helping your mentee **problem solve**, you might also be guiding them through the steps of **self-advocacy**. **Remember that these skills are meant to be flexible and used in a way that works best for you and your mentee!**

## Closing the Relationship

At the end of your year-long relationship with your mentee, it's a good idea to take some time to formally reflect on your time together to close your relationship. In your last meeting, consider discussing some of the following questions:

1. What did you learn from your experiences?
2. How can you use what you've learned going forward?
3. What did we learn about ourselves?
4. What could have been improved, and why?
5. What worked well in our partnership?
6. What gifts/strengths did we bring to the relationship?



## **Appendix 1: First Three Meetings**

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## First Meeting: Getting to Know Each Other



Once you and your mentee are matched, set up your first meeting with the objective of getting to know one another. The questions below can guide your conversations and are designed for both you and your mentee to answer. You do not need to ask them all and can ask them in any order as makes sense to the flow of your conversation.

*Note: Documents in this section are designed to be a template, but Appendix II includes versions of these sheets with more space for writing.*

### Getting to Know You Questions

1. How would you describe yourself? How would your workmates describe you? How about a family member?
2. What do you like to do in your free time?
3. What would you like me to know about you?

### Professional Questions

1. Why did you decide to go into the trades?
2. What do you like most about your job?
3. What work-related skill would you like to improve on?
4. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

### Mentorship Questions

1. Why did you join this mentor-mentee program?
2. Have you ever been a mentor-mentee before?
3. What questions do you have? What are you wondering about regarding the program?  
**(mentee only)**
4. What are you looking forward to? What might you have concerns about? **(mentee only)**



## Second and Third Meetings: Establishing Expectations



Your second and third meetings are a great time to set the tone and establish expectations for your communication with each other. This document is designed to guide you through establishing communication norms. You can also use this as a reference point to review and modify as your relationship and schedule evolve over time. Below are some questions for you to review with you mentee. To note: if you have more than one mentee, you may find your answers may differ for different partnerships based on each person's unique schedule.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. What are our shared communication goals?

*Mentors: how will you show your support?*

*Mentees: What kind of support do you want from your mentor?*

*Both of you: What is most important to us in this relationship?*

### 2. When will we touch base?

*At the beginning of your relationship, we ask that you touch base at least once a week. Find a check-in time that works for both of you.*

*Day of the week: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time of day).*

*Back up time:*

*Day of the week: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time of day).*



**3. What are our preferred modes of communication?** (If more than one, list them in order of preference.)

**4. How do we each prepare for the check-ins to be successful?**

*Mentees: this might look like reflecting on your week before you check in, writing down your thoughts or and either writing down or making a mental note.*

*Mentors: this could look like striving to find a check-in time when you will be most able to listen openly and give your mentee your attention.*

**5. If a time conflict or unforeseen situation arises and one of us is unable to make the scheduled check-in time, how do we want to communicate with each other?**

*If a conflict arises, giving one another some notice is important—both of you may want to agree upon a general amount of time you feel is appropriate by which to give each other notice.*

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Mentor signature

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Mentee Signature

## **Appendix 2: Worksheets and Resources**

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## First Meeting: Getting to Know Each Other



Once you and your mentee are matched, you will want to set up your first meeting with an objective to get to know one another. The questions below can guide your conversations and are designed for both you and your mentee to answer. You do not need to ask them all, and you can ask them in any order as makes sense to the flow of your conversation.

### Getting to Know You Questions

4. How would you describe yourself? How would your workmates describe you? How about a family member?
5. What do you like to do in your free time?
6. What would you like me to know about you?

### Professional Questions

5. Why did you decide to go into the trades?
6. What do you like most about your job?
7. What work-related skill would you like to improve on?

8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years professionally?

### **Mentorship Questions**

5. Why did you join this mentor-mentee program?

6. Have you ever been a mentor-mentee before?

7. **(mentee only)** What questions do you have? What are you wondering about regarding the program/your roles?

8. **(mentee only)** What are you looking forward to? What might you have concerns about?



## Second and Third Meetings: Establishing Expectations



Your second and third meetings are a great time to set the tone and establish expectations for your communication with each other. This document is designed to guide you through establishing communication norms. You can also use this as a reference point to review and modify as your relationship and schedule evolve over time. Below are some questions for you to review with you mentee. To note: if you have more than one mentee, you may find your answers may differ for different partnerships based on each person's unique schedule.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. What are our shared communication goals?

*Mentors: how will you show your support?*

*Mentees: What kind of support do you want from your mentor?*

*Both of you: What is most important to us in this relationship?*

*Mentor:*

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*Mentee:*

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### 2. When will we touch base?

*At the beginning of your relationship, we ask that you touch base at least once a week. Find a check-in time that works for both of you.*

Day of the week: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time of day).

*Back up time:*

Day of the week: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time of day).

- 3. What are our preferred modes of communication?** (If more than one, list them in order of preference.)

*Over the phone, in person, text, email...rank your top three.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. How do we each prepare for the check-ins to be successful?**

*Mentees: this might look like reflecting on your week before you check in, writing down your thoughts or and either writing down or making a mental note.*

*Mentors: this could look like striving to find a check-in time when you will be most able to listen openly and give your mentee your attention.*

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- 5. If a time conflict or unforeseen situation arises and one of us is unable to make the scheduled check-in time, how do we want to communicate with each other?**

*If a conflict arises, giving one another some notice is important—both of you may want to agree upon a general amount of time you feel is appropriate by which to give each other notice.*

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentee Signature



# Identifying Goals

With Your Mentee

(If your mentee doesn't have a goal already in mind)



## 1. Brainstorm: What does your mentee want to work on?

*Encourage your mentee to think about what would make them feel more successful at work. Is it to get a specific certification? Achieve a certain grade? Advocate for themselves more on a jobsite?*

## 2. What kind of support is needed for you mentee to feel successful?

*This may look like your mentee setting up times to study more, identifying you or a friend to help with accountability, or seeking help from an instructor. Asking this question can help your mentee identify possible steps toward reaching a goal as well as any current barriers to success.*

Check: Does this goal feel realistic?  
If not, try scaling down.

Can the goal be broken down into  
small, daily steps (goal practices)?



# Active Listening

## With Your Mentee



This activity is designed to help you and your mentee walk through the steps of active listening.  
As the mentor, **you'll be the active listener. Your mentee will be the speaker.**

As the Listener, your job is to ask the speaker (your mentee) a question and give them 2 minutes to respond. If possible, set a timer.

### Question:

*At work in the past week, what was something that made you stop and think? This could be a good thing, something that confused you, or something that posed a challenge. Describe the experience and your thought process.*

**Step 1: Connect** The mentee/Speaker talks for two minutes. During this time, you (the active listener/mentor) *simply listens*. Keep your body language open, find a quiet space, and give your full attention to your mentee.

**Step 2: Clarify** After two minutes are up, the active listener has the chance to ask clarifying questions. While your mentee spoke, was there anything that you didn't quite follow? This is your chance to make sure you understand what they're saying. Give your mentee the chance to respond.

**Step 3: Validate** Once you have clarified your understanding, you have the chance to affirm what you're mentee has spoken about. Expressing empathy, or similar situations you have been in, can be a helpful way to make your mentee feel validated.



## Reflection:

After the exercise, take a few minutes to debrief the experience with your mentee. Use these questions to guide your reflection:

1. How did it feel? Did anything come up that surprised you?
2. As the speaker: How did you feel while sharing? When the active listener responded?
3. As the active listener: What did you notice? Did you find anything challenging?
4. What, if anything, would you do differently nexttime?



Your name	
Mentee name	
Date of check in	
Time	
Length of check in	
Communication method (circle one)	Phone                      In person                      other: _____
Date set for next check in	

Overall Goal:	Current status of goal:	Current goal practices:
<i>Has it changed?</i>	<i>Just beginning? Somewhere in the middle?</i>	

Continue:	Stop:	Start:
<i>What is your mentee doing that is helping them move in the right direction?</i>	<i>What is your mentee doing that is not helping them?</i>	<i>What does your mentee want to start doing to help move them toward their goal? These may be new goal practices.</i>

Other notes:

# Check-in log

Mentee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Notes / support needed

# Check-in log

Mentee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Notes / support needed

# Check-in log

Mentee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Notes / support needed