Chapter 8
The importance of working with beginning teachers

Introduction
This chapter identifies the importance of working with beginning teachers and builds on the ‘mentor as relationship builder’. We start by looking at why we should mentor beginning teachers moving onto consider how you might develop your mentoring role. We consider how models of mentoring might inform the way you conduct professional mentoring conversations.

Objectives
By the end of this chapter you will
• understand why support for the beginning teacher is necessary
• learn more about different mentoring models
• explain approaches and strategies to help you carry out your role as mentor

Why it is important to mentor beginning teachers

Before considering how to work with beginning teachers it is worth taking a step back to briefly reflect on why mentors should work with beginning teachers. There is much evidence to suggest that beginning teachers often find the transition from initial teacher education into a full time job challenging and many experience ‘burn out’ and leave after 3-5 years of teaching (Ewing & Smith 2003). There are of course many factors which might contribute to this situation, however concern about class control and discipline, heavy workload, lack of administrative support and working in isolation are frequently cited (Krueger 2000).

A survey published in October 2015 by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and YouGov found that over half of teachers were thinking of leaving teaching in the next two years citing ‘volume of workload’ (61%) and ‘seeking better work/life balance’ (57%) as the two top issues,’NUT (2015). In the 12 months to November 2016 (the most recent year for which statistics are available) DfE figures show that over 50,000 qualified teachers in England left the state sector, which equates to one in ten teachers leaving the profession. The number of teachers leaving as a proportion of the total number of teachers in service, known as the ‘wastage rate’, is 10.5 per cent. The same figures reveal that more than 100,000 potential teachers have never taught, despite finishing their training.NUT (no date).


2 https://www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/teacher-recruitment-and-retention
The latest DfE (2018)\textsuperscript{3} survey of teacher retention found that workload remained the key reason for leaving teaching. Another factor cited by both primary and secondary teachers was the perceived lack of support from the senior leadership team (SLT) for issues such as managing workload, pupil behavior and progression. Teachers also claimed that they did not have access to other sources of advice and support. In particular, they reported that adequate time was not provided with mentors who in turn had limited time to support Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs). Some felt there was a disparity between the expectations of schools of teacher’s capabilities from their training: Cooper Gibson (2018:26-27).

The report goes on to suggest beginning teachers generally made the decision to leave the profession much more swiftly than more experienced teachers, typically within three months (Cooper Gibson, 2018:28). Their suggestions for leaving focused predominantly on pupil behaviour management, not knowing how to deal with SEN as well as a general lack of support.

In England Recommendation 4 of the National Standards for School Based ITT (2016) states

In light of the proposals set out about teacher accreditation in the White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, the role of the mentor should extend beyond the initial training period to teacher accreditation and early career. Mentoring support is crucial in a system where we will move to a stronger and more challenging teacher accreditation(2016:4).\textsuperscript{4}

In order to address issues around teacher retention, one of the recommendations from the Cooper Gibson report (2018) was to invite beginning teachers to ‘opt in’ to an offer of a support package in their first five years of teaching. This could include support from a mentor and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the early years of their teaching career, something many primary ECTs would like (DfE 2018).

The Teacher Induction Scheme, introduced in Scotland in August 2002, guarantees beginning teachers a year’s structured support from a more experienced colleague, a reduced timetable and opportunities for professional development (O’Brien & Christie 2007). However, just putting a support system in place doesn’t solve the problem. It is the quality of support and mentoring which makes the difference.

From this evidence it would appear that providing strong, effective mentoring support particularly for beginning teachers could result in fewer teachers leaving the profession so early on in their careers. However, it is also clear from the evidence that mentors need support to carry out this role effectively. In some schools the SLT may have a formalized system for supporting both mentors and beginning teachers whilst in others a mentoring system may be in place but mentors are not provided with the skills to carry out the role effectively and are often unaware of the kinds of support and professional development opportunities available in their school. Before looking in more depth at how to establish mentoring relationships with beginning teachers it is worth considering what CPD opportunities and barriers are available to support your development as a mentor and to your mentee.


\textsuperscript{4} National Standards for ITT (2016)
Reflection

Take a moment to carry out a brief audit of the kind of support and CPD opportunities available in your school for both yourself and teachers in the first few years of their career. Complete the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What kinds of CPD opportunities are available in your school? (e.g. enquiry / action research, mentoring, coaching, project work, working groups)</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the general attitude to CPD in your school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the SLT’s attitude to CPD? (If this is you, what is your view?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What’s the role of middle managers in CPD?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the school’s policy on CPD? Is it suitable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How is CPD evaluated? Is it a suitable method of evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How useful have you found the appraisal process in your school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has it had an impact on your practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are in-service days used?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does CPD in the school fit in with the improvement plan? Does one compliment the other?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is CPD given priority within your school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is learning encouraged beyond minimum standards or competence &amp; accountability? If so, how?</td>
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</table>

Based on your responses to the above questions, what opportunities are there within your school for you to

- develop professionally as a mentor?
- provide mentoring support to beginning teachers?
**A beginning teacher’s perspective**

Having provided a rationale for why beginning teachers need support, and undertaken a review of professional development opportunities for both mentor and mentee, we will now consider what the mentor should consider before entering into a mentoring relationship with a beginning teacher.

As the DfE (2018) report suggests, beginning teachers face considerable challenges as they develop their professional identities as teachers. Having successfully completed their initial teaching qualification they now face the prospect of developing professional knowledge and skills as they embark on their first teaching post. On a day to day basis this often results in reacting and responding to particular situations as they arise rather than reflecting at length as to how they might tackle a particular situation, or which teaching strategy might be more effective to motivate, inspire, or progress pupil understanding. Dealing with workload issues, challenging behavior and increasing accountability can lead to beginning teachers feeling isolated and exhausted. A regular link with a mentor can help alleviate some of the day to day stresses. The extract from a blog posted on the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCs) illustrates the difference a mentor can make.

**Me and my mentor blogspot GTCs**

... When we were introduced, someone (and it may have been me) made the rather weak pun: "Ah, you must be the tormentor..." Oh how we laughed.

Three months on and I am afraid the only torment I feel is the rather panicky feeling I get when I know she is not in school and I have to do something without asking her what she thinks. Like: "Is it time for my dinner now Jane?"

I fear I have come to rely on her rather too much and I have been undeservedly lucky in getting her. Not just because she is a fab teacher and a master at controlling unruly second years, but she and I are about the same age; we both have three kids; are both refugees from England and both teach English.

I have been slightly alarmed to hear from other probationers that they are not as smitten as I with their mentors. Poor things.

**Constant support**

Aside from offering brilliant advice in my own subject and frequent criticism of my lessons, she displays an almost German efficiency in sorting out all the bits of paper and forms and things I have to fill in.

She oversees my bulging CPD diary and tells me off when my first years leave her classroom untidy. And, when she is not teaching her own full timetable or acting as my "playground buddy" stopping big hairy fourth years from scaring me when I walk down the corridors, she somehow finds time to mentor two other probationers in our school.

But I'm not jealous because I know I am her favourite. Which leaves me with a bit of a problem come June and the possibility that I will register and lose her to another probationer.

I am not sure it is healthy to become so reliant, but it shows that the system seems to work in providing a constant support and point of contact for new teachers.
Moving on?

I am going to have to be weaned off her, and I fear periods of enforced separation are planned towards the end of the year. But we'll still have our weekly meetings because I need to be tormented for a little bit longer.\(^5\)

However, for a mentor to find time to work with a beginning teacher provides its own challenge in that schools are busy places and there is little time for teachers at any stage of their career to reflect and engage in professional mentoring discussion. If it is to be effective, mentors also need support and an opportunity to become aware of possible issues and develop the necessary skills.

The ethics of mentoring

In order to consider the most effective way to work with beginning teachers it is important to be aware of the common problems and pitfalls which can result when a mentor is new to this role. Often ethical issues and tensions concerning the imbalance of power can be overlooked and this can be more problematic especially if there is a limited number of mentors in schools and/or a large number of beginning teachers. Eby et al (2000) cited in Moberg and Velasquez (2004)\(^6\) warn that a dysfunctional mentoring relationship will become a barrier to any productive professional development and may even contribute to beginning teachers deciding to leave the profession. In their study they report on key areas where mentees felt that the mentoring relationship has not worked. These can be broadly organized into four main areas

- Mismatches in mentee/mentor personality, values and workstyle,
- Mentor neglect
- Manipulative behavior
- Mentor incompetence

Moberg & Velasquez (2004) suggest the ‘ethics of mentoring’ can be easily overlooked when entering into a mentoring relationship with many of the tensions stemming from the power difference between mentor and mentee. For example they suggest the role of manager and mentor are morally contradictory as a mentor needs to be loyal, partial and have concern for the professional development of the mentee, whilst a manager has to be fair to all those they line manage. The greater the power difference between mentor and mentee means that mentor has greater obligation regarding ethical obligations. They suggest that right from the outset mentors need to be aware of the ethical obligations of these roles.

Reflection

Consider how the power difference might influence your mentor/mentee relationship with your

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\(^5\) General Teaching Council Scotland
http://in2teaching.org.uk/Blogspot/View/880Meandmymentor.aspx

\(^6\) Moberg & Velasquez (2004)
beginning teacher. Use the seven ‘mentor obligations’ provided below from Moberg et al (2004) to structure your thoughts regarding particular moral and ethical issues which might arise.

1. **Beneficence** – have you been able to participate in appropriate mentor training and feel that you have the necessary skills and knowledge to take on the role of mentor?

2. **Nonmaleficence** – are you aware that your position might influence, or be perceived as manipulating or persuading the mentee to adopt particular action e.g. one which fits better with school priorities rather than support the development of the mentee as a beginning teacher?

3. **Autonomy** – to what extent do you feel comfortable to allow the your mentee to use self judgement even if it is different to what you would do? How easy will it be for you to avoid making decisions for your mentee or stop them talking to particular people?

4. **Confidentiality** – how easy will it be for you to maintain any confidences explicitly requested by the mentee, whether professional or personal? This is the key to trust and is core to the mentoring relationship.

5. **Loyalty** – how does your status within the school enable you to avoid conflict of interests but also protect the actions and needs of the mentee?

6. **Fairness** – how will you ensure the mentoring relationship does not put the mentee in a more favourable position than other teachers excluded from the mentoring process?

7. **Concern** – does your position in school enable you to have a deeper duty of care to the mentee without simultaneously being unfair towards others?

Depending on the beginning teachers It is easy for mentoring conversations to end up as a cosy chat, over coffee. Alternatively, they can become a platform for the mentor, eager to share their experiences, dominating the conversation and recounting what they did or would do in a similar situation. Whilst this might be comforting and reassuring, it is not always the most productive way of supporting a beginning teacher. Equally, beginning teachers may like to offload everything they are experiencing and conversations tail off in lots of directions without any clear focus or outcome. In order to avoid this it is important for both of you to be clear about the purpose of the mentoring relationship how to engage in productive conversations with clear outcomes and actions.

**Establishing a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities**

Before you start mentoring your beginning teacher it is important to come to a mutual agreement with them about the purpose of the mentoring relationship, what the mentoring process will entail and how you will both benefit. It’s important for both mentor and mentee to reflect upon and be clear about their roles and responsibilities right from the beginning of the mentoring relationship. Establishing a working agreement in this way could form the basis of the first discussion allowing the beginning teachers to have an equal say in how the mentoring relationship will play out. As mentor it would be important to facilitate rather than lead this process.

**Reflection**
Bearing in mind the ethical obligations outlined above and using the list below draft a mentoring agreement or ‘ground rules’ (Gravells 2017) which could form the basis of an initial conversation with your beginning teacher.

- confidentiality,
- boundaries,
- expectations,
- mutual responsibilities,
- evaluating progress,
- giving and receiving feedback,
- how and when to meet
- note taking and records

Is there anything else you would add?

Having considered some of the possible tensions which can arise in a mentoring relationship due to the power balance, the next section will provide a brief overview of four ways to conceptualise the mentoring relationship and the roles played by the mentor and mentee.

Models of mentoring
Daloz’s (1986) original model of mentoring relationships suggests for optimal learning to take place a mentor should provide both challenge and support. The challenge aspect refers to your ability as a mentor to question a beginning teacher to enable them to reflect critically on their own beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. The support aspect relies on you being able to offer an empathetic ear, actively listen and encourage a beginning teacher to find solutions in order to continue to develop and progress.

High challenge high support - mentoring leads to professional growth
High challenge low support – retreat from mentoring relationship
Low challenge low support – mentoring leads to little change stasis
Low challenge high support – confirmation of practice rather than professional growth

The skill of the mentor is to evaluate how much support and challenge is needed and this will depend on a variety of factors such as the confidence and experience of the beginning teachers as well as the context in which he/she works. Low levels of both challenge and support are likely to result in little change in practice, ‘stasis’ whilst high levels of challenge with low levels of support lead to retreat or withdraw from the mentoring relationship. Although high levels of mentor support and low levels of challenge produce confirmation of the beginning teacher’s practice; it is when the mentor is skilled in providing high levels of both challenge and support which will generate real professional growth.

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7 Cameron-Jones et al. (1997)
Maynard and Furlong’s (1995) model\(^8\) focuses more on how the mentor might perceive their role. They propose three categories of mentoring,

- The Apprenticeship model - the skills of being a teacher are best learned by supervised practice, with guidance from imitation of, experienced practitioners;
- The Competence model - learning to teach requires learning a predefined list of competences (the current Teachers Standards in England (DFE, 2011) could be described as a competence model). In this model, the mentor becomes a systematic trainer supporting a beginning teacher to meet the competences;
- The Reflective model - requires the beginning teacher to have some mastery of the skills of teaching to be able to reflect upon their own practice and for the mentor to be a co-enquirer and facilitator rather than instructor. The promotion of reflective practice through mentoring is key.

The categories suggested by Maynard and Furlong (1995) enable us to consider the mentor’s role in more depth, and whether the mentor might take different approaches. In any given mentoring relationship, a mentor may need to adopt a different style and/or approach to challenge and support an beginning teachers at various stages of their development and the preferred or agreed style of mentoring.

Clutterbuck’s (2014:10) model of developmental mentoring\(^9\) suggests that an effective mentor draws on

2 dimensions of learning
- directive/non directive
- stretching/nurturing

4 styles of learning which are
- guiding,
- coaching,
- counselling
- networking (Clutterbuck 2014:10).

In developmental mentoring it is the beginning teacher who sets the agenda based on their own development needs and the mentor provides insight and guidance to support the beginning teachers to achieve the desired goals. As mentor it is important to select the right ‘helping to learn’ style for the beginning teacher’s needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Coach</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
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</table>
Van Ginkel et al.'s (2016) ‘adaptive mentoring’ also notes the skill of the mentor to adopt a flexible and versatile mentoring approach when working with beginning teachers. Their study found that mentors adapted by

1. Aligning mutual expectations of mentoring
2. Attuning to mentees emotional wellbeing
3. Adapting to mentees capacities for reflecting
4. Building tasks to match mentees’ levels of development (Van Ginkel et al., 2016:212).

Reflection

Read through the case study below in light of the four models of mentoring outlined above. By referring to the models of mentoring above, in what ways has this Deputy Head Teacher managed the mentoring relationship?

Case study: mentoring Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

St Vincent’s Primary School was inspected as part of a national sample of primary education. The depute headteacher provided exemplary support in her role as mentor for NQTs. In particular, she:

- maximised opportunities for the NQT to be exposed to good practice within the school and to learn from other schools;
- made clear what was expected of the NQT in meeting the needs of the pupils in her class and shared school policies and programmes;
- developed effective working relationships with all staff, parents and pupils;
- shared her skills as a classroom practitioner very effectively through modelling very good up-to-date learning and teaching practices for the NQT;
- encouraged the NQT to be reflective and self-critical in her own practice;
- managed and used time very effectively to provide evaluative feedback and challenge on how the NQT could improve her teaching and impact upon pupils’ learning;
- gave appropriate emphasis to support and challenge including how to engage effectively with parents, and in wider aspects of the work of the school such as effective liaison with the parish priest;
- supported the NQT effectively to develop confidence in the sharing and celebration of pupils’ achievements with parents and the wider community.


11 HMiE report Mentoring in Teacher Education 2008
https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/998/7/mite_Redacted.pdf
Structuring mentoring conversations

As we have seen there are a number of ways of conceptualizing your role as a mentor. The nature of flexibility in the way you might work with a beginning teacher will vary depending on the context you are working in, the confidence of your beginning teacher as well as whether they are in their first or third year of teaching. Equally your own beliefs about mentoring, along with your confidence and experience as a mentor will also influence how you approach this role and how you might structure a mentoring conversation. Temperley (2009) refers to a productive mentoring conversation as one which is a ‘learning conversation’ for both mentee and mentor.

However, effective Communication

- two-way,
- built on trust and respect
- takes time,
- must be planned
- is only as good as the people who operate it.

However Gravells (2017) offers some good straightforward advice for the mentor

- Ask don’t tell
- Listen don’t speak
- Understand don’t solve

A popular way of structuring a mentoring conversation is the GROW model of mentoring and coaching. The model was originally developed in the 1980s by business coaches Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore.

GROW stands for

- Goal.
- Current Reality.
- Options (or Obstacles).
- Will (or Way Forward).

Mentors often make the analogy of thinking about how you would plan for a journey first deciding where you are going – the goal; then deciding where you actually are – your current reality. The next step would be to explore possible routes for your journey - your options and finally establishing how much you want to go on the journey and overcome any obstacles – the motivation or will, to find a way forward.

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12 Gravells (2017)
13 https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm
Another model not dissimilar to the GROW model is the CLEAR model. It was established in the early 1980s by Peter Hawkin and is frequently used by coaches and mentors. CLEAR stands for:

- Contracting
- Listening
- Exploring
- Action
- Review

**Reflection**

Visit the websites for the GROW and CLEAR models of mentoring using the website links below. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each model and their suitability for mentoring a beginning teacher. How will a model support you in structuring your conversations?

GROW model: [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm)
CLEAR Model: [https://www.personal-coaching-information.com/clear-coaching-model.html](https://www.personal-coaching-information.com/clear-coaching-model.html)

**Egan’s Skilled Helper Model**

This is a model used a lot in counselling or coaching situations but can also be an effective way to support beginning teachers and to facilitate reflection and action. The aim is to empower the beginning teacher to manage their own problems more effectively and develop unused opportunities more fully.

A short summary of the skilled helper model has been adapted from Egan (2002 & 2006)

**Stage 1: Exploration**

Initially it is important to get the beginning teacher to explain what is happening in their own words and then for you to reflect it back to them, without judgement. This involves:

- attention giving - positive body language, eye contact, etc.
- active listening - learning forward, nodding, focusing on what is being said not what you plan to say in response
- acceptance and empathy - it is vital to detach from your judgement about what you are being told. Keep your views to yourself if want to find out what’s really going on. Nobody opens up in a situation where they feel judged

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14 [https://www.personal-coaching-information.com/clear-coaching-model.html](https://www.personal-coaching-information.com/clear-coaching-model.html)

• paraphrasing and summarising - to check your own understanding of what has been said focusing - which of the issues discussed seems the most important to the mentee?
• reflecting feelings - help mentees to uncover blind spots or gaps in their perceptions and assessment of the situation
• questioning - useful questions are: How did you feel about that? What were you thinking? What was that like? What else is there about that?

You may find that just getting your beginning teacher to reflect and clarify the issue or situation helps to make the way forward obvious. However, when upset or confronted, it is often difficult to see things clearly and this is where the ‘skilled helper’ can support in identifying the blind spots or misperceptions.

Stage 2: Challenging

This stage involves you challenging existing views - one issue at a time. Encourage your beginning teacher to think about whether there is another way of looking at the issue. Some useful questions to do this are:

• what might this look like from another person’s point of view?
• what in particular about this is a problem for you?
• if you were describing someone else in this situation, how would you describe them?
• what does she/he think/feel?
• goal setting - this is where you seek to move the mentee forward from being stuck, by identifying an
• area in which progress can be made

Stage 3: Action Planning

Your goal is to turn good intentions into actions, so it is important to help your mentee to set realistic, practical and achievable targets. Useful questions here include:

• what are the possible ways forward in this situation?
• what of these feel best for you?
• what will you achieve if you do this?
• what will you do first and by when?

Make sure the targets are specific and measurable so the student can know they have been achieved. Agree a time period. Always follow up at next meeting - did the mentee do what they said they were going to? Do not judge if they haven’t achieved the goal, but remind them why they committed themselves to it when you spoke before.

Reflection
Reflecting on what you have read in this chapter, complete the SWOT analysis for yourself as a mentor working with a teacher in the first few years of their career. From your SWOT analysis set your self an action plan for your professional learning as a mentor.

Mentoring SWOT analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>THREATS</td>
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**Summary and main points from the chapter:**
This chapter has outlined why mentors should work with beginning teachers and the importance of being aware of possible pitfalls. It has outlined four well known models of mentoring to support reflections on the mentoring role and how this might be different depending on the beginning teacher and educational context. Finally it has provided some guidance on ways in which mentoring conversations can be structured.

**Further reading or links.**


This explains how mentoring fits into current ideas of effective continued professional development and learning.


The first chapter by Lorna M. Earl, and Helen Timperley Understanding how Evidence and Learning Conversations Work p1-12 provides a further detail of what is understood by a productive learning conversation.

Timperley was commissioned by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to undertake a literature review which drew together national and international research on supporting teachers’ professional growth. The link below provides a useful summary of common themes identified from the literature review.


**References**


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General Teaching Council Scotland In2Teaching, Blogspot 
http://in2teaching.org.uk/Blogspot/View/880Meandmymentor.aspx


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Accessed 20 September 2019


Mindtools *The GROW model of coaching and mentoring* [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm)

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