

## **“MENTORING”**

Mentor – is derived from a Greek word meaning trusted advisor or friend.

Mentoring has become a necessary aspect of coach education. It provides an essential element for coaches to reach their full potential. Mentoring involves a one on one relationship between a mentor and a mentoree coach. It is a coaching tool that supports the professional development of coaches at all levels.

It is about an experienced person helping a less experienced person help themselves to gain knowledge and skills.

Mentoring is often a long term mutually agreed relationship which provides broad guidance and support for another. It is about sharing experiences from one to the other.

A mentor is a person with the skills to have a strong positive influence on coaches and on their skills and philosophies. The identification of a person to fill the mentor role has no set pattern, it is unique to the individuals involved. However a critical requirement is a mutual trust and respect for each other.

The interaction between the coach mentor and mentoree is the cement that makes mentoring successful.

The “friendly informal” approach rather than a supervisory or judgemental system has appeared to produce a more effective nurturing working atmosphere for coaches to develop their potential.

The mentor is a guide, consultant or facilitator where support is provided for a coach, individual talents and ideas, and allow them to develop their own coaching style.

Mentors can adopt many different roles and styles but integral to mentoring is the mentor's ability to contribute in new and better ways to the development of the coach, at the same time making the experience enjoyable for them.

It is about helping coaches recognise and maximise learning opportunities. It guides coaches to handle problems as they arise and solve them in a strategic manner.

## MENTOR – Who to ask to be yours?

Selecting a mentor is a personal decision. Aim for a person you are confident you can have an open relationship with, an honest dialogue and will understand your coaching needs.

There are many people that have probably had an influence on you. Try and identify one that could fulfil a mentoring role for your coach development. Remember that mentoring is a commitment that requires a significant amount of input, time and effort. Your choice may not be able to commit to the requirements, and scope of the role should be defined at an early stage.

- Senior or experienced coaches – well regarded and respected
- Good Role Models – who have personal attributes that you admire
- An Educator – that provided you with meaningful opportunities to learn
- Buddy/Peer Coach – that you enjoy sharing thoughts and ideas with
- Ex Players/Ex Coaches – who still have a deep interest in netball, but are now ready to be involved in a different aspect
- A critical close netball friend – who asks challenging questions and understands netball
- A colleague – to provide an independent and objective viewpoint
- Friends – who can give you honest thoughtful feedback on a 1-1 basis
- Your favourite coach – why do you remember her/him?
- A netball person – manager, administrator, umpire etc someone you can seek out and can understand your needs

## How can a mentor assist?

The mentor's role is not one of preaching, informing or teaching. It is one in which to assist a coach set her own values and coaching vision.

Mentoring is only successful when a two way partnership is developed and the mentor and mentoree identify with one another during the whole mentoring experience.

## A mentor may assist by –

- Building confidence – encouraging the coach to believe in themselves
- Sharing experiences, ideas and knowledge in an open and non critical way
- Being a resource, providing information and giving direction to where help can be found
- Providing constructive feedback
- Creating open lines of communication
- Being flexible in the interaction of roles – coach and mentor
- Establishing clear goals – meeting challenges
- Challenging and questioning

- Encouraging coaches to develop their own philosophies, skills and knowledge
- Actively involving coaches in their own decisions and development
- Building confidence through activities that move coaches out of their comfort zone
- Evaluating own and coaches performance in their respective roles
- Respecting individuality and flair in coaching practices
- Encouraging experimentation, trial and error and what works best
- Attending and observing one another's and other coaches coaching sessions with an open mind
- Planning programmes, and sessions together
- Attending competitions together
- Using video analysis for personal evaluation
- Making each experience a learning experience
- Making sure NOT to impose mentors beliefs and values on a coach, they should be led to discover their own

The partnership roles should develop through interaction. Informal roles will allow the process to develop naturally, and the structure of ensuing sessions should ensure the learning potential of the coach is fully realised.

Basic needs in a mentoring partnership are:

- The need to feel safe
- The need to belong and to be acknowledged
- The need to feel good about themselves and well regarded by each other
- The need to have freedom to grow and contribute

If these needs are under threat people become:

- Anxious
- Defensive
- Self focused

Questions a mentor might ask?

Mentoring should lead the coach to analyse and reflect by using questioning techniques.

Questioning will promote self discovery and reflection.

1. Expose assumptions
  - e.g Please tell me a little more about .....
  - Can you give me an example .....
  - I'm curious about .....
  - Help me understand .....

2. Promote thinking
  - e.g. What have you seen happening on the court.....
  - What might happen if .....
  - What do you think .....
  - Have you thought about .....
  - What results do you think .....
  - In what other way .....
  - Do you think that could be extended .....
  - Where is play breaking down .....
  
3. Consider alternatives
  - e.g. How can you learn from this .....
  - What approach should be used for this problem.....
  - How can it be looked at differently .....
  - What questions need to be asked .....
  - What can we do better .....

Relate questions to particular events, situations, people and actions.

Mentoring allows a coach to reflect on their practices and challenge their approaches. It is a privilege and an opportunity for the growth of both mentor and mentoree coach.

A mentor revels in the success of their mentorees.

Where to look for references on Mentoring:

- Sports coaching and sports mentoring websites
- Education – Teaching websites often have mentoring
- Websites on personal mentoring
- Business mentoring websites

There is a good reference book that SportsCoach UK have published:  
 “A Guide to Mentoring Sports Coaches”

[www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org)  
[www.coachwisesolutions.co.uk](http://www.coachwisesolutions.co.uk)  
[www.1st4sport.com](http://www.1st4sport.com)