

Understanding the Eight Mentoring Styles

Great mentoring is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor; it is a dynamic practice shaped by your unique instincts, experiences, and strengths. While every mentor aims to support and guide, how we achieve that varies greatly. This document outlines the eight core mentoring styles, from the skill-building Developer to the advocating Sponsor. While most leaders naturally gravitate toward one or two dominant styles, the most effective mentors understand their baseline tendencies and learn to adapt their approach to meet the evolving needs of their mentees. Use these definitions to interpret your assessment results, maximize your natural strengths, and discover new ways to foster growth in others.

Advisor

An Advisor mentor is someone who enjoys sharing their accumulated knowledge and experience to help others overcome challenges and achieve their goals. They are a source of practical advice and guidance, drawing upon their own successes and failures to provide actionable insights. An Advisor is comfortable offering specific recommendations and suggesting solutions, often becoming a trusted resource for others seeking expertise in their particular field. They fundamentally believe that sharing their insights is a powerful way to support the growth and development of their mentees.

Key Elements:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Emphasizes the Advisor's enjoyment and willingness to share their knowledge.
- **Practicality:** Highlights the focus on practical advice and guidance, not just theoretical concepts.
- **Experience-Based:** Stresses the use of personal successes and failures as a foundation for their advice.
- **Confidence in Recommendations:** Shows the Advisor's comfort level in offering specific solutions.
- **Expertise:** Acknowledges that Advisors are often sought out for their expertise in a particular area.
- **Belief in Insight as Growth Driver:** Underlines the core belief that sharing insights is a primary means of fostering growth in others.

Developer

A Developer mentor is a talent cultivator focused on building a mentee's skills and capabilities. Passionate about helping individuals reach their full potential, a Developer actively creates pathways for learning and hands-on experience. They identify specific areas for skill enhancement, provide constructive feedback on performance, and encourage mentees to embrace new opportunities that stretch their abilities. The Developer's primary aim is to help mentees build a more robust and versatile skillset.

Key Elements:

- **Skill Builder:** Emphasizes the focus on acquiring and honing skills.

What type of Mentor Are You?

- **Constructive Feedback:** Highlights providing actionable feedback on performance and technique.
- **Opportunity Creator:** Stresses the active role in finding or creating learning opportunities.
- **Talent Spotter:** Focuses on identifying a mentee's potential and the skills needed to achieve it.
- **Growth through Experience:** Underlines the belief that growth comes from doing and applying new skills.

Broker

A Broker mentor thrives on connecting people with the resources, opportunities, and individuals they need to succeed. They are comfortable to introduce mentees to external resources, industry contacts, and peer learning opportunities. A Broker possesses a knack for identifying the specific resources and relationships that can propel a mentee forward, and they fundamentally believe that networking is a crucial element of career advancement and overall success.

Key Elements:

- **Connector:** Highlights the joy and skill in connecting people with resources.
- **Network Utilization:** Emphasizes the comfort and willingness to use their network for the mentee's benefit.
- **Active Opportunity Seeker:** Stresses the proactive approach to finding relevant connections.
- **Resource Identification:** Acknowledges the ability to identify what resources and connections are needed.
- **Networking Advocate:** Underlines the belief in the importance of networking.
- **Focus on Access:** The core is about providing access to things that would otherwise be difficult to obtain.

Challenger

A Challenger mentor is a critical partner who fosters growth by pushing mentees to refine their thinking and confront their assumptions. They believe that true development comes from intellectual rigor and a willingness to question established norms. A Challenger asks tough, probing questions, provides direct and honest feedback (even when it's uncomfortable), and challenges a mentee's preconceived limits. Their goal is to build a mentee's resilience, and strategic thinking, ensuring they learn best when confronted with high expectations.

Key Elements:

- **Critical Thinker:** Broadens the scope to all forms of critical thought, not just assumptions.
- **Constructive Criticism Advocate:** Keeps the focus on the value of honest, tough feedback.
- **Fearless Questioner:** Stresses the willingness to ask difficult, probing questions.
- **Mindset Shaper:** Highlights the goal of changing how a mentee thinks.
- **Growth through Discomfort:** The core is pushing someone beyond their perceived intellectual or psychological limits.

Clarifier

A Clarifier mentor excels at guiding individuals toward a deeper understanding of their goals, values, and aspirations. They are skilled at asking probing questions that encourage self-reflection and promote greater self-awareness. A Clarifier facilitates the process of developing a clear vision for the future and helps individuals identify their priorities, enabling them to make decisions that are aligned with their core values. They fundamentally believe that self-awareness is the essential foundation for lasting success.

Key Elements:

- **Goal and Value Illuminator:** Highlights the ability to help others understand their objectives and principles.
- **Probing Questioner:** Emphasizes the use of insightful questions to promote self-discovery.
- **Self-Reflection Facilitator:** Stresses the role in guiding the process of introspection.
- **Vision Developer:** Acknowledges the ability to help others create a clear future path.
- **Value-Driven Decision Supporter:** Focuses on helping align choices with core principles.
- **Belief in Self-Awareness:** Underlines the core belief in the importance of understanding oneself.

Affirmer

An Affirmer mentor is characterized by their genuine enjoyment of providing encouragement and unwavering support to others. They are quick to celebrate successes, offer reassurance during setbacks, and foster a supportive and encouraging environment. A key strength of the Affirmer is their ability to build confidence and self-esteem in their mentees. They fundamentally believe that positive reinforcement is essential for growth and development.

Key Elements:

- **Encouragement Provider:** Highlights the enjoyment and natural inclination to offer support.
- **Success Celebrator & Reassurance Giver:** Emphasizes the balanced approach to both positive and challenging situations.
- **Confidence Builder:** Stresses the ability to instill self-belief in others.
- **Positive Reinforcement Advocate:** Acknowledges the belief in the power of positive feedback.
- **Supportive Environment Creator:** Focuses on actively cultivating a nurturing atmosphere.
- **Belief in Positive Growth:** Underlines the core belief in the importance of positivity for development.

Sponsor

A Sponsor mentor is characterized by their proactive advocacy for others and their willingness to use their influence to promote their mentees' careers. They are comfortable nominating individuals for high-profile projects and opportunities and leverage their network to help them gain visibility within the organization. A Sponsor firmly believes in actively supporting the career advancement of others and consistently speaks up for their mentees, even when they aren't present.

Key Elements:

- **Active Advocate:** Highlights the proactive role in supporting others.
- **Influence User:** Emphasizes the willingness to leverage their position to benefit their mentees.
- **Opportunity Provider:** Stresses the comfort in nominating mentees for key projects.
- **Visibility Enhancer:** Acknowledges the use of their network to increase mentee recognition.
- **Career Advancement Believer:** Focuses on the core belief in actively supporting career growth.
- **Absent Advocate:** Underlines the willingness to speak up for mentees even when they aren't present.

Protector

A Protector mentor is characterized by their keen ability to anticipate potential risks and challenges that others may face. They excel at offering guidance on navigating difficult situations and providing unwavering support during times of stress. A Protector is a strong advocate for their mentees' well-being, shielding them from negative influences and creating a safe space where they can openly share their concerns. They are often proactive, anticipating potential problems and offering assistance before it's even requested.

Key Elements:

- **Risk Identifier:** Highlights the ability to foresee potential problems.
- **Guidance Provider:** Emphasizes the ability to offer support in difficult situations.
- **Well-being Advocate:** Stresses the commitment to protecting mentees from harm.
- **Safe Space Creator:** Acknowledges the ability to create a secure and supportive environment.
- **Proactive Helper:** Focuses on anticipating and addressing problems before they escalate.
- **Focus on Safety and Security:** The core is providing a sense of security and well-being.