

Support for Mentors

Mentoring lesson 1: Reign in that ego

Whose agenda are you working to - your mentees or yours? Julie Starr explains why it's vital for mentors to keep their egos in check.

As a mentor, have you already decided what's best for your mentee? Perhaps a choice they should make or something they should or shouldn't do? Having an agenda of your own will influence your approach to conversations and shape the nature of your relationship. So, watch out if you start having thoughts such as: 'I really want them to apply for that job. I'll be disappointed if they don't.' It's okay to have views or voice an opinion but keep a look out for the following pitfalls:

- Over-emphasising a topic, offering lots of information or repeating advice when it's not acted upon.
- Creating a focus on topics that you feel are important, such as wanting your mentee to be more assertive or advance at work.
- Filtering your listening ie. you listen with the intention to 'fix' or improve either the mentee's situation or the mentee themselves.
- When they don't behave or respond how you think they should, displaying impatience by interrupting, frowning, fidgeting, etc.
- Narrowing the conversation to topics you think are important, rather than allowing them to arise more naturally.

This isn't just true of mentoring. Check the list above against any close relationship you have and relax your need to control.

Q. How do I relax my agenda?

As with most things, the change appears to happen in this sequence:

1. **Awareness:** 'Oh, I'm doing this'.
2. **Insight:** 'This doesn't work, it's causing 'x' and I don't want that'.
3. **Intention:** 'I'm going to focus on (something else) instead', e.g., staying open-minded, listening more to what they want, etc.



THE MENTORING MANUAL
A SCOTTISH STORY
YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BEING A BETTER MENTOR
JULIE STARR

About Julie Starr
Julie Starr's *The Mentoring Manual* has clear principles, tips, and free supporting downloads to enable managers and leaders to build effective mentoring relationships. Her other books, *The Coaching Manual* and *Brilliant Coaching* build coaching ability through simple principles and practical approaches. Julie is the founder of Starr Coaching, a leading provider of leadership and management development. Find out more at www.starrcoaching.co.uk and www.LearnStarr.com

