

Mentoring lesson 2: Mentor, don't manage

It can be easy to forget that you are a mentor and start acting like a manager, says Julie Starr. She explains why this happens and offers some tips for mentors to avoid this trap.

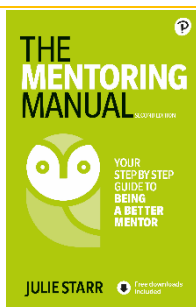
Mentors are likely to be in a more senior role than their mentees. If this is the case, it can be easy to adopt a feeling of seniority or authority in the relationship. You might feel flattered to be mentoring, and aware that you have something that the mentee wants - such as specialist knowledge, skills, or contacts. This can lead to an inflated idea of status. To avoid this, watch out for the following pitfalls:

- Unconsciously viewing the mentee as a subordinate, and so becoming a manager
- Giving instructions - or advice which is strong enough to sound like an instruction.
- Acting from a position of 'I know, and you don't'.

This becomes more likely if your role, objectives, and purpose have not been agreed upon and shared beforehand. Without a clear purpose and principles as a guide, it's easy to become confused about what your contribution should be. When this happens, you can stop mentoring and start managing.

Tips to avoid managing:

- Gain a clear understanding of the difference between managing and mentoring, for a fuller explanation, check out The Mentoring Manual free downloads on [LearnStarr.com](https://www.learnstarr.com).
- Agree and share upfront the true nature of your role as a mentor.
- Check to see how you position yourself next to others. For example, observe your own interactions with those less senior to you, do you feel superior in some way?



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

