

Mentoring in the Workplace (Blog published on Workinglearning.blogspot.co.uk)

As human beings we are all hard-wired with a number of instinctive characteristics, which include an innate inclination to nurture. While we usually associate this everyday form of mentoring with family and friends, it is an activity we also naturally or even unconsciously engage in at work. Searching your memory will inevitably yield examples of automatically helping or being helped by a colleague; perhaps by showing them the ropes or listening to their ideas or issues.

In the learning context mentoring reinforces reflective practice and can facilitate understanding whilst providing pastoral support. Bolton (2001ⁱ) contends that mentoring provides the very structure in which learning can occur. An effective mentor can inspire learning and development in their mentee and encourage ownership and confidence by allowing the mentee to assume responsibility for their own learning and the achievement of self-prescribed goals (Connor and Pokora, 2007:6ⁱⁱ). There are learning opportunities for the mentor too, through the development of transferable skills such as empathic listening and powerful questioning techniques, as well as the satisfaction of seeing their mentee thrive.

One inspiring tenet that has stayed with me since my initiation to mentoring is:

‘I am here for you.

I believe in you.

I will not let you fail.

You have the power.’ Pascarelli (1998ⁱⁱⁱ)

Such a reassuring mantra epitomises the true essence of mentoring. Little wonder that such a synergetic partnership, dependent upon trust carefully nurtured and enriched over time, can be mutually enhancing and empowering.

ⁱ Bolton, G. (2001) *Reflective practice, Writing and professional development* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

ⁱⁱ Connor, M. and Pokora, J. (2007) *Coaching and Mentoring at Work, Developing Effective Practice* New York: OUP

ⁱⁱⁱ Pascarelli, J. (1998) *Mentoring and Tutoring by Students*, edited by S. Goodlad, , London: Kogan Page Ltd