

Informal mentoring - a way to encourage positive behavior in the penitentiary

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Abstract

Re-entering society after incarceration is riddled with challenges. Those with a criminal history face many barriers to receiving public support. Many are suffering with mental or physical illnesses with limited means of getting adequate treatment, many of them have special needs, they don't have qualifications, some of them do not receive family support, they don't have a job after release, they don't have a home after release, etc. All of these issues are in addition to problems borne out of the societal stigma associated with serving time in prison

According to National Administration of the Penitentiary in Romania over 10.551 inmates was released from prison in 2018 and begin the process of reintegration into their communities.

Penitentiary aims is to reduce future crime by changing the behavior, attitudes, or skills of the offender by responsibilities prisoners in their own reintegration process, and also raise the public opinion awareness to prevent social exclusion.

The annual cost of re-offending is extremely high in all EU member states. The Ministry of Justice in the UK estimates that re-offending costs the country £1 billion a year, with an additional annual cost of convicting someone and keeping them in prison for one year being £126,000.

Statistically, across the EU high numbers of adult offenders re-offend within one or two years. Statistically in the UK 60% of adult offenders re-offend within 1 year and 75% of young offenders re-offend within 1 year.

Re-offending rates are highest amongst those sentenced for less than one year.

Mentoring in prisons could have a positive impact. Also, Mentoring can be a bridge between the penitentiary and the society.

Mentoring is a two way process being of benefit, not only to the mentee but also the mentor.

Mentoring gives the mentor the extraordinary opportunity to facilitate a mentee's personal and indeed professional growth by sharing knowledge they have learned through years of experience.

While the primary intent of the mentoring role is to challenge the mentee to think in new and different ways, the mentee is not the only one who gains from the arrangement.

There are various ways a mentor can benefit as well.

Keywords: SOCIAL REINTEGRATION; MENTORING; EDUCATION; DELINQUENCY, INMATES.

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INTRODUCTION

The Story of Mentor

The story of Mentor comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. When Odysseus, king of Ithaca went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his household to Mentor, who served as teacher and oversaw Odysseus's son, Telemachus.

After the war, Odysseus was condemned to wander vainly for ten years in his attempt to return home. In time, Telemachus, now grown, went in search of his father. Telemachus was accompanied on his quest by Athena, Goddess of War and patroness of the arts and industry, who assumed the form of Mentor.

Eventually, father and son were reunited and together they cast down would-be usurpers of Odysseus's throne and of Telemachus's birthright.

In time, the word **Mentor** became synonymous with trusted advisor, friend, teacher and wise person.

History offers many examples of helpful mentoring relationships – such as Socrates and Plato, Haydn and Beethoven, Freud and Jung.

History and legend record the deeds of princes and kings, but each of us has a birth right to be all that we can be. Mentors are those special people in our lives who, through their deeds and work, help us to move towards fulfilling that potential.

INTRODUCTION TO INFORMAL MENTORING

The idea of mentoring is used in different areas of life – they vary from students' support to help for drug-addicted people.

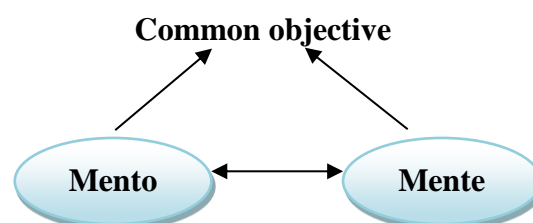
Today mentors can and should provide expertise to essentially less experienced individuals to help them advance their careers, enhance their education, and build their networks.

While mentoring is an important aspect to leadership training, it doesn't hold to a typical training environment or process. Its tradition has existed even longer than traditional training.

Mentoring is a unique and valuable volunteer service in prisons. It can often be the foundation for fundamental, positive change.

Mentoring is provided so that each prisoner or ex-prisoner will have a positive influence in life and have a positive contact to assist the prisoner upon release.

Mentoring is intended to enhance personal growth through the sharing of experiences and wisdom and to offer a framework for teaching and modeling values and life skills. Mentoring is the mentor's and mentee's interaction with a common objective.



FROM LEGEND TO CHALLENGE

Definition of mentor

Mentor who works in prison is a person who passes on his / her knowledge, skills and experience which are useful for the professional and personal improvement of the prisoners or ex- prisoners.

The mentor's assistance is important in integrating theoretical knowledge of social work into the sphere of practical work.

Mentors, using their own learning experiences to help the learner when it teaches, he teaches himself.

In a theoretical sense this study describes the concept of mentoring, as well as specific mentoring roles: leader, guide, expert, advisor, supporter, role model, and motivator.

Mentor who works with mentee is a "concierge" who opens the doors to opportunity. This role involves contact, the mentor helps the learner to get acquainted with the professional environment people create their own network, which could be utilized in achieving objectives.

Mentor may choose to be a specialist dealing with only one role or performing several roles. There is only one universal role - mentor is a facilitator.

Formal and informal mentoring

Many organizations feel they are familiar with may even have plenty of mentoring taking place amongst their people.

There are differences between informal mentoring and formal mentoring. Both forms of mentoring have effect between the mentor and learner relationship quality, but they are not the same things. Formal and informal mentoring has similarities which influenced the success of mentor and mentee cooperation.

Differences between the informal and formal mentoring

Informal Mentoring:

1. The relationship grows "like topsy", as needs or circumstances.
2. The relationship is rarely, if ever, evaluated.
3. The relationship may be very long-lived - sometimes many years long.
4. The possibility of win/win benefits.
5. Mentoring is initiated and maintained solely by the mentoring partners.
6. Mentoring partners are matched by chance or serendipity, often with the mentor choosing the mentee.
7. Aims of the relationship may be non-specific, non-existent or suggested by the mentor.
8. A primary criterion for accepting the mentor is a feeling of liking and respect.
9. The relationship may not be called or recognized as "mentoring".
10. There is no mentoring agreement.

Formal Mentoring:

1. The relationship works within an agreed framework of frequency of meetings, timeframes, communication methods, structure, etc.
2. The relationship is regularly evaluated, and measures established for assessing progress towards the goal/s.
3. The relationship has a finite duration, beyond which the partners can elect to conclude it, extend it, or exchange it for a friendship.

4. The likelihood of win/win/win benefits (for the mentor, mentee and the organization).

5. A mentoring program coordinator manages the start-up, progress and evaluation phases of the program.

6. Partnering 2 people is a facilitated process, with the mentee having the responsibility of choosing the mentor.

7. The aims of the relationship are specific, directed towards achieving goal/s which the mentee has clarified.

8. A primary criterion for selecting the mentor is his/her ability to assist the mentee to achieve identified goal/s.

9. Both partners identify the relationship as mentoring, and seek to apply the appropriate skill and expectations to it.

10. A mentoring agreement forms one of the early cornerstones of the partnership.

Similarities between the informal and formal mentoring

1. The requirement of free choice by both partners.

2. Dependence on a high level of rapport for success.

3. The opportunities for learning for both partners.

4. The possibilities of crossing departmental or hierarchical boundaries and achieving improved networking.

5. Contagion: the opportunity to take the learning from one mentoring relationship into another, leading to continual improvement for all concerned.

The different elements of Informal Mentoring. Awareness of Employment Opportunities

A mentor needs to be aware of employment opportunities that may be appropriate for the mentee. One way to do this is to subscribe to websites that detail a mixture of job vacancies in the area.

What Mentors Do?

- ✓ Set high expectations of performance;
- ✓ Offer challenging ideas;
- ✓ Help to build self-confidence;
- ✓ Encourage professional behavior;
- ✓ Offer friendship;
- ✓ Confront negative behavior and attitudes;
- ✓ Listen to personal problems;
- ✓ Teach by example;
- ✓ Provide growth experiences;
- ✓ Offer meaningful sayings or quotations;
- ✓ Explain how the organization works;
- ✓ Coach mentees;
- ✓ Stand by mentees in critical situations;
- ✓ Offer wise counsel;
- ✓ Encourage winning behavior;
- ✓ Trigger self-awareness;
- ✓ Inspire mentees;
- ✓ Share critical knowledge;
- ✓ Offer encouragement;
- ✓ Assist with mentees careers.

Awareness of external support available

It is important to make links with as many other organizations/companies you can, that you can then signpost people to or refer people to, if it is appropriate.

Examples could include:

1. Housing Associations;
2. Local Council's;
3. St Giles Trust;
4. Pictora;
5. Koestler Trust;
6. Volunteer Bureau;
7. Benefits Experts;
8. Self-Employment Agencies.

Personalized Approaches

Every individual **MUST** be treated as an individual.

Every person has different needs and different goals, therefore requires a personalized approach to help them move forward.

When you meet a mentee for the first time, you need to have an open mind.

Listen to them, ask questions about what they want in their future and then support them as best as you can to move them towards their goals and aspirations – their DREAMS!

There are tools available to help you do this, which will be shared later in the program.

Identification of a support network

At the start of the mentoring process, identify who their support network is. Do they have family, friends or other professionals who they can also look at for support?

This is just a question you need to ask and most importantly, keep this information on file, should you need to make contact with those people at any time during the mentoring process.

Also, make sure the mentee tells those people who you are and how you are helping them, so if you did need to make contact with them, they know who you are.

Self-Development/Personal Development

There are many tools available to you, for use with the mentee.

These tools can support the mentee in their self-development, including looking at their attitudes and beliefs.

Also, think about any training they could be signposted to, in order to aid their personal development, which can then have an impact on their choices in career roles and a possible self-employment role, if they choose this particular pathway.

Listening/Emotional Support/Spiritual Support

NEVER get emotionally involved with the mentee.

You can guide them through their challenges, but never get yourself involved in their dilemmas.

You also need to provide spiritual support, not just in terms of religion but also in terms of keeping focus on their tasks, their vision and where they should be heading to.

Use active listening techniques, by clarifying what they say to you e.g. "So, what you're saying is...". This is covered in more depth in the unit of "Questioning and Listening" later in the program.

Tackling Victim Mentality/Learned Helplessness

All individuals at times in their lives have moments of helplessness when they fail. It's a time when the "physical wind" is knocked out of them.

A time of sadness when the future looks negative and exerting effort is overwhelmingly difficult.

For some people, the recovery is very quick, with the symptoms of helplessness dissipating within hours.

For others, the helplessness can last for weeks, or if the failure is important enough, for months or longer.

Learned Helplessness is a condition, which appears to all people in everyday life, especially when something doesn't go according to plan.

To start to break the condition of learned helplessness, people need to stay focused, to be positive and view failure as something that didn't work or part of a learning process. You keep on trying until you get the correct results.

There is a Learned Helplessness Snapshot Tool, which is available for you to use with the mentee. This will be shared with you later in the program.

Through its use in the past, it has managed to open people's minds to actually think that they should change their mindset to think more positively.

Promoting Informed Choice

As you work through the mentoring process with an individual, you will make suggestions for actions they could take to further their opportunities for success.

Don't let the mentee always think on their own what they could do. Your job is to inform them of opportunities that is open to them and that may be beneficial for them and their future. This not only impacts on them as an individual, but also the people around them (family, friends etc.).

De-Institutionalize

When people are released from prison, they are very often institutionalized after being in a locked up environment for many months and years, where they are fed, told what to do, where to go. So, when they are released, they find themselves with many challenges, including how to cope in a busy city environment and with new modern technology.

In order to support the individual to de-institutionalize, you need to have regular contact with the mentee to make sure all is ok and engage them into meaningful activity (volunteering) with other organizations such as Pictora (Sale of offender art).

Social Skills/Daily Operation skills

This links into de-institutionalization, where they need support to have the awareness of new environments, behaviors within certain environments and new initiatives. An example of this is self-service checkouts at supermarkets, which may not have existed at the time of going to prison.

Therefore, without being told what to do, people do not know how to work the machines. Things that are sometimes taken for granted. Support will be required to tackle these challenges, should they arise.

Work in prisons

Mentoring is a unique and valuable volunteer service in prisons.

Mentoring is provided so that each inmate will have a positive influence in life and have a positive contact to assist the inmate upon release.

Mentoring is intended to enhance personal growth through the sharing of experiences and wisdom and to offer a framework for teaching and modeling values and life skills.

Mentoring topics will be geared towards personal growth in ethical behavior and interpersonal relationships.

Mentoring ideally will be a one-on-one relationship, with mentor and inmate of the same gender.

Inmates may change or decline mentors at any time without any penalty and may request a new mentor.

Mentors may decline to mentor an inmate at any time and may request a new inmate to mentor.

Successful volunteer mentors need to have two important qualities:

- 1) Faithfulness
- 2) Good listening skills

The success of mentoring process is one of the conditions essential to know the needs to inmates, their skills, social and family relationships, their professional capabilities to provide assistance.

This implies a close mentor to the inmate to get as much information as possible about it. But this approach must have some limits considering the fact, that work is in prison and which must follow certain rules of conduct, security for mentors and inmates.

For a good development of the mentoring process will be developed some rules to follow. These rules will be given for mentors in their instruction phase.

The mentor must observe the following rules:

A) On entering the prison

- presenting himself at the prison gate at the hour established. He cannot be on an inmate's visiting list at the same institution where you are volunteering;

- at entry into prison is necessary to be controlled. Do not enter in the institution with any: weapons, drugs, cell phones, mirrors, and money cash. Anything you will bring must be pre-approved by the supervisor;

- to wear badges that is certified as the "visitor";

- to respect the established route to move in prison and not go non accompanied;

- to take care where you leave the luggage. Do not leave any items unattended;

- wait until the arrival of inmates.

B) During the mentoring activity

- must have an appropriate outfit;

- you no can to hugging and embracing inmates (only handshakes);

- do not give anything to an inmate except that which has already been pre-approved by the supervisor;

- do not take anything from an inmate; do not agree to do anything for an inmate, like make a phone call to his family for him or mail out a letter;

- to inform the prison administration about the fact of corruption and reject this fact;

- maintain a visual contact with inmates permanently and keep a proper distance from them;

- if the inmate asks questions about you, be open but do not reveal personal information that might be used by the inmate for illegal or undesirable purposes;

- your body posture should say "I'm open, I'm interested, I'm attentive.";

- gives him hope, a different perspective, a friend who will visit and listen;

- do not enter into polemics with the inmates and not to harm the dignity of him;

- be careful to inmates' questions, respond promptly and take into account tone of voice;

- always you thinking to your security and you control gestures.

When mentoring activity is continued after the release of prisoners is necessary as meetings to take place at the organization or in public places. Throughout the activity of mentoring, the mentor shall maintain confidentiality of information received and not to disclose aspects of the person who is offered support only with their consent.

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