STEPPING STONES PROGRAM

THE ECUMENICAL MIGRATION CENTRE -
BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

Share a little of your privilege. The reward and satisfaction of helping others is simply a joy. Act now. You might just change a few lives and make a world of difference.

(Kirsten Zaat, Former UN Official to the Sudan)
# Table of Contents

Welcome to the Stepping Stones Program ................................................................................................. 4

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) ........................................................................................................ 5

The Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) ..................................................................................................... 5

How Stepping Stones Works ....................................................................................................................... 6

Participant Profile ........................................................................................................................................... 7

My Own Business in Australia .................................................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.

What is a refugee? ........................................................................................................................................... 8

Key Difference Between Refugees & Migrants .......................................................................................... 9

Life in a new country ..................................................................................................................................... 10

Difference between Asylum Seekers and Refugees ................................................................................. Error! Bookmark not defined.

Understanding Culture and its impact on the workplace ......................................................................... 12

What is ‘culture’? – Handout 8.4 ............................................................................................................... 13

Hidden Aspects of Culture .......................................................................................................................... 14

Adult Learning Styles .................................................................................................................................... 16

Adult Learning Principles: .......................................................................................................................... 17

What is mentoring? ....................................................................................................................................... 18

Establishing the Mentoring Relationship – Handout 2.1 ....................................................................... 19

The Role of the Mentor ............................................................................................................................... 20

Mentoring Skills ........................................................................................................................................... 21

Four Communication Styles – Handout 4.1 ............................................................................................... 22

Exploring communication ............................................................................................................................ 23

Verbal communication – Handout 4.2 ......................................................................................................... 23

Non-verbal communication – Handout 4.3 ................................................................................................. 25

Active listening .............................................................................................................................................. 26

Listening blocks ........................................................................................................................................... 26

Active listening – Handout 4.4 ................................................................................................................... 27

Listening blocks – Handout 4.5 .................................................................................................................. 28

Effective Communication ............................................................................................................................ 29

Cross-cultural communication – Handout 8.5 .......................................................................................... 30

Self-esteem – Handout 3.2 .......................................................................................................................... 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Building Self-Esteem</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Constructive Feedback</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting worksheet – Handout 2.3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring that empowers</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values That Can Bring Mentors' Skills Undone</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality – Handout 7.3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Mentor/Mentee Meeting</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with difficult situations</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External commitments</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phases of the mentor relationship</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health and safety (OH&amp;S)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback &amp; References</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome to the Stepping Stones Program

The EMC and the Brotherhood of St Laurence would like to thank you for volunteering to be a mentor on our program. The success of Stepping Stones depends on the commitment of volunteers who offer their time, skills, experience and networks to assist women from refugee backgrounds into developing their financial and business skills.

Through consultations and other EMC projects, recently arrived refugee women living in the City of Yarra have expressed a strong interest in a program that supports them to develop art, craft and food products and learn new skills in order to become more financially independent.

The project has been developed to offer skills development training, business and financial literacy education in a group context aiming to increase interaction with other similar groups, explore business opportunities and foster mentoring relationships increasing social interactions, economic participation and awareness of rights amongst refugee women living in Melbourne.

The key objectives of this project are to increase the women’s social interaction, economic participation, business skills, financial decision making ability, purpose and confidence.

The project commenced in September 2009 and will run until December 2013. The aim of this project is to create a model for supporting refugee women through the process of setting up small business in Australia.

Once again I would like to thank you for embarking with us in this journey. We trust that you will find this experience very rewarding and will gain just as much out of the experience as the participants.

Warm Regards

The Stepping Stones Team
The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL)

Established during the Great Depression, the Brotherhood of St Laurence was the vision and creation of Father Gerard Tucker, a man who combined his Christian faith with a fierce determination to end social injustice. The BSL has developed into an independent organisation with strong Anglican and community links. Today, we continue to fight for an Australia free of poverty.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence employs over 600 staff and is supported by 1200 volunteers. We are developing social and community enterprises to address inequality by forming partnerships between government, business, community and welfare organisations.

As well as providing services and programs for families and elderly people on low incomes, refugees, young people and the unemployed, we research the causes and effects of poverty and advocate both national and local policy solutions for people who are disadvantaged.

The BSL is currently focusing its work on strategies to alleviate and prevent poverty for those people most at risk at the four transition stages considered critical to their future well being: the early years, the years from school to work, periods in and out of work and retirement and aging.

Community Services is one of five Divisions of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and has a responsibility for the provisions of services, advocacy and policy change in areas such as family and children’s services, refugee issues, emergency material aid services and internal organisational development.

The Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC)

As a state-wide, non-ethno specific centre of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the EMC works with recently arrived emerging communities, as well as longer settled disadvantaged groups, for their full access and participation in the benefits of Australian society. At the same time, the Centre works for the Brotherhood’s vision of a reconciled Australia free of poverty and discrimination.

The Centre achieves this by

- Strengthening families, communities and their organisations (through complex casework and counselling, community development and organisational support for new and emerging communities)
- Challenging and shaping responsive service provision (through service development, advice, information, special projects across a range of sectors)
- Influencing public opinion and public policy (through advocacy, policy analysis, advice to government and community education)
- Learning, through its relationships with recently-arrived communities, to act as a centre of knowledge and experience (through information, consultation and advice, documentation, action research and publications).
How Stepping Stones Works

The Stepping Stones is a program that helps refugee and migrant women living in Melbourne to develop small business skills by offering financial education, micro-business training and mentoring support.

Building upon participants’ strengths and experiences, we aim to create a model that enhance women’s understanding of the implications of starting a small business in Australia and informs mainstream services and policymakers on alternative models of delivery for more inclusive and effective micro-business facilitation programs to refugee and migrant women.

Stepping Stones builds refugee and migrant women’s capacity to start small business in Australia by:
- Facilitating understanding of financial systems in Australia
- Facilitating understanding of Australian small business regulations
- Building participants’ capacity to develop business plans and marketing strategies
- Assisting in finding traineeship and work experience opportunities
- Assisting participants to adapt their business experiences overseas to the complexity and compliance issues of running a business in Australia.
- Linking participants to enthusiastic and talented female business mentors in Melbourne

Micro-business seminars:

The Stepping Stones Program also delivers series of small business seminars in partnership with stakeholders exploring topics such as: finance, marketing and small-business regulations. These seminars are open to the wider community and aim to attract refugee and migrant entrepreneurs from all over Melbourne.

Mentoring:

Stepping Stones offers a gender-sensitive and culturally responsive approach to small-business skills development. The project recruits successful women in the business sector to mentor our participants on a one-on-one basis. Mentoring relationships create opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, skills development support, connections with the wider community and expansion of networks.
1. The program aims to target around 40 women. Currently there are 30 women registered with the program.

2. Participants ages range from 18-61

3. Currently participants are from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, West Papua, Colombia and Afghanistan.

4. Participants have a range of small business experience back in their country of origin ranging from groceries shops, restaurants, selling clothing and fabrics and hairdressing.

5. Participants have varying literacy levels that we assess through written and spoken assessment but minimum English language skills at conversation level estimated at the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings level 1 to higher.
What is a refugee?

A refugee is defined by the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established to protect and support refugees.

A refugee is someone whom:

‘Owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’

or

‘Who, not having nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it’.

UNHCR Convention on Refugees 1951

- The term ‘refugee experience’ is used to describe the personal, social, economic, cultural and political consequences of forced migration

- There is no single refugee experience. There is a large degree of variability in the kinds of experiences that refugees have had. These experiences depend on the refugee’s country of origin, their status in life and broader political circumstances.

- Each refugee has their own story of the events that unfolded in their country of origin. These events sometimes led to catastrophe and loss for the refugee, and they often led to an escape to a first country of asylum, before coming to Australia.

- A refugee’s experience is a ‘history of violence’. It is estimated that around 1 in 3 of the world’s refugees has experienced some form of torture in their lives.
**Key Difference Between Refugees & Migrants**

In groups can you think of the key differences between refugees and migrants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refugee</th>
<th>Migrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life in a new country

Beginning a new life in Australia can present many challenges for people from refugee backgrounds. Refugees are not a homogenous group and each person will respond differently.

Challenges they may experience

- The process of starting again in a totally new country means that there are often large gaps in their general knowledge of the way in which a western country functions.
- They must navigate new social, legal, economic and political systems in Australian society such as Centrelink, banking systems, Australian law, schooling and employment.
- They are supported in the early stages of settlement through Australia’s Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy in accommodation, joining Centrelink, orientation around the city, schooling for children, English classes and counselling, this support drops off after 6 months-1 year.
- Although they are provided with 510 hours of free English classes this is often not enough to provide them with the language skills needed to find employment.

Other issues that impact on settlement

- After having arrived with literally nothing refugees are often left with a large financial burden to support their family in their country of origin or pay to sponsor them and supply their air fares etc.
- Sometimes they are alienated from their community because of the nature of their experience or other affiliations.
- Their personal history of violence can affect their capacity to handle every issue of resettlement.
- Sometimes when conditions change in their country of origin, there is a strong need to return, briefly, to their country and make contact with lost relatives, do something for them, etc.
Refugee

Any person who -- owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion -- is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling, to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country or to return there for fear of persecution.

Asylum seeker

An individual who has sought international protection and whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. In most cases, seeking resettlement from a neighbouring country is not possible for this group due to limited protection by the neighbouring country.
Understanding Culture and its impact on the workplace

There are many definitions of culture. Culture is how we make sense of the world.

‘There are as many ways of being human as there are cultures’ (West and Murphy 2007).

Culture

A shared system of meanings that dictates our actions, organises our values and is represented through our behaviour. It is a learnt way of organising our experiences to mean something. (Trompenaars & Turner, 1997: 13)

Culture is dynamic. It is made-up of values, beliefs, taboos, habits, style of dress, language, rituals.

Culture is the lens through which we view reality. It is a version of reality. And there are many different versions. Culture leads to the assumption that our version is the correct one.

Our perceptions of others and the assumptions we make about others, we base on the knowledge we have and it is all too easy to forget just how limited that knowledge may be.

If culture is ‘getting in habit of something’ then changing culture means ‘getting in habit of something else’. If culture is ‘the way we do things here’ then changing culture means changing the ways things are done.

If new circumstances demand that some aspects of a culture need to change then the first step would be to firstly understand what that culture actually is.

In the context of living in a multicultural society such as Australia, there is plenty of space for misrepresentation, misinterpretation and ineffective communication. For this reason it is important that a conscious effort is made towards developing awareness, knowledge and understanding of other cultures that promote behaviour and actions that lead to ways of relating to each other that is inclusive, and respectful of difference.

In order to understand another culture one needs to understand one’s own.

Dimensions of cultural variability as representations of differences in national value systems:

- Power distance
- Individualism versus collectivism
- Masculinity versus femininity
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Long-term versus short-term orientation

(Hofstede 1991, in Al Mousa 2008: 72)
What is ‘culture’? – Handout 8.4

There are a number of issues concerning culture to be mindful of and to think about when working with people of refugee and migrant backgrounds.

**Culture as guide.** Culture provides all of us with a guide for how we see the world, what we value, what we believe in and how we behave.

**Culture affects everyone.** We are all part of one culture or another. People can be part of a community, a region, a language or ethnic group or a work of organisational culture. Our cultural guide comes in the form of the values, practices, beliefs and attitudes that we may learn from and share with people around us.

**Culture is individual.** As individuals we are all influenced by culture. We all express culture in the ways we behave, think and communicate. But the degree to which culture is taken on and expressed is different for every individual, family, community, region and society.

**Culture is dynamic.** Culture is always changing. This is because culture is a product of being human, and no human ever stays the same. Over time as individuals we all have experiences small and large, meaningful and seemingly meaningless. We learn from these experiences. Based on these experiences we change. Culture is shaped by these changes.

**Culture creates differences.** All individuals have differences; life would be incredibly boring if we were all exactly the same. So, while understanding culture gives useful clues about an individual family or community, all individuals, families and communities are different.¹

---

Hidden Aspects of Culture

We can see the effects of culture in obvious ways such as the way people appear and behave, and in their food and customs but there are also hidden aspects that are explored in the ‘cross-cultural iceberg’

What aspects of culture do you think we remain unaware of at a surface level?
**Contrasting Values Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality</th>
<th>Recognised Hierarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality is to be honoured</td>
<td>Society is better organised if status and hierarchy are recognised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informality</th>
<th>Formality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informality and casual appearance are signs of warmth and equality</td>
<td>Informality can be intrusive and can result in lack of respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Society is composed of individuals and groups</td>
<td>Society is composed of interdependent groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confrontation</th>
<th>Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict should be addressed directly</td>
<td>Conflict should be addressed indirectly or not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clock Orientation</th>
<th>Event Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life should be organised within established time frames.</td>
<td>Life should be organised around momentary events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above highlights the difference in relationship values. Understanding what values relate to you and the culture that you identify with will help you understand what values influence interactions that occur in the workplace and enable you to effectively deal with people from different cultures.
Adult Learning Styles

The term “pedagogy” was derived from the Greek words “paid” (meaning “child”) and “agogus” (meaning leader). Thus, it is defined as the art and science of teaching children.

The term “Andragogy” was coined by researchers of adult learning in order to contrast their beliefs about learning to the pedagogical model. Malcolm Knowles who first introduced the concept to the US in 1968, implied that the concept implies self-directedness and an active student role, as well as solution-centred activities. (Mihall and Belletti 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Categories</th>
<th>Padagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Self concept**      | Children are dependent.  
                      | Expects to be taught.  
                      | Expects teacher to dominate. | Adults expect and enjoy independence.  
                      | They like to control.  
                      | Learning is a process of sharing.  
                      | Mentor has responsibility to encourage and nurture the process of self-direction. |
| **Need to know**      | Children need to know what the teacher teaches. | Adult learners need to know why they need to learn. |
| **Experience**        | Children have few experiences relevant to what is being taught.  
                      | Teachers/experts are the transmitters of experience.  
                      | Elicits little discussion – one way communication. | Have many experiences; therefore mentor must draw on adult-learner experience.  
                      | Trade-off.  
                      | Sometimes the mentee may have more experience that the mentor is some areas.  
                      | Elicits a two way conversation. |
| **Readiness to learn**| Children are not necessarily ready to learn.  
                      | Imposed curricula. | Adults normally are motivated and ready to learn because they have chosen.  
                      | Adults learn in order to cope with real-life tasks.  
                      | Adults do not group by age, sex, but by experience. |
### Stepping Stones Mentor Handbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Perspective</th>
<th>Children are believed content to study for the future.</th>
<th>Pragmatic – want application today. Can barely tolerate studying that can’t be applied in the near future.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are believed to be content to accept knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to learning</strong></td>
<td>Children and teachers are subject-centred. Learning is a process of acquiring subject matter, to be used later in life.</td>
<td>Adults and mentors need to be problem or task orientated. Learning is a process of increasing competence to achieve full potential in life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adult Learning Principles:**

1. Focus on “real world” problems.
2. Emphasize how the learning can be applied.
3. Relate the learning to the mentee’s goals.
4. Relate the materials to the mentee’s past experiences.
5. Allow debate and challenge of ideas.
6. Listen to and respect the opinions of the learners.
7. Encourage the mentees to be resources to you and to each other.
8. Treat mentees like adults.
9. Give mentees CONTROL!!!
What is mentoring?

Mentors assist our participants by sharing their knowledge and experience to help them develop their skills, improve their performance and achieve their goals in the workplace.

Most of us have had a mentor at some point in our lives. This may have been a relative, friend or work colleague who showed you support and generosity and influenced your life.

There are many kinds of mentoring relationships in our project producing all kinds of valuable results. In our induction for mentees, a mentor is defined as

‘A person who can assist you by sharing their knowledge and experience to help you develop your skills, improve your performance and achieve your goals in the workplace. They can help you understand where you are now, where you want to go and the best way to get there’.

Qualities of a good mentor

- Willingness to share skills, knowledge and experiences
- Positive attitude
- Enthusiasm, helping the mentee identify their strengths and promote their self-esteem
- Provides guidance and constructive feedback
- Values the opinions of others
- Good listener
- Help with goal-setting, suggest possible courses of action and support the mentee in making choices
- Be a sounding-board for ideas and problems
- Offer guidance, support and realistic advice
- Offer a consistent and non-judgmental relationship
- Offer support, encouragement, optimism and hope
Initial engagement strategies

- Make eye contact and address the person directly when you first meet.
- Shake their hand, if you (and they) are comfortable with this.
- Don’t hold eye contact if they aren’t comfortable doing so.
- Walk and talk, or get a drink as you chat.
- Be yourself and act in a way that is genuine; e.g. don’t use slang you wouldn’t normally use; don’t wear your hat sideways.
- Smile and be friendly but don’t appear too confident.
- Ask open-ended questions and tell them a bit about yourself.
- Nod and encourage their answers.
- Present yourself as a regular person with flaws and weaknesses rather than a perfect role model.
- Be realistic about mentoring; e.g. ‘We’ll see how it goes for both of us’, rather than, ‘You’re mine for a year.’

Ideas for building relationships

- Your early efforts should focus on developing rapport.
- Be a friend, not a parent or an authority figure.
- Have realistic expectations of the person.
- Have fun together: visit local businesses, the library, or do any activity you both enjoy.
- Give your person a choice in what you do together.
- Let your have control over what the two of you talk about, and how you talk about it.
- Listen. Just listening without criticising or judging will help to develop trust.
- Always be reliable. Show that you are committed to the relationship.
- Your primary relationship is with the person, not their family, their children or other women participating in the program.
- The mentor builds the relationship, so take responsibility for maintaining contact, and don’t expect too much feedback from the person.

---

2 Adapted from MOIRA Mentor Training Manual, Moorabbin, Victoria: South Directions Youth Service.
**The Role of the Mentor**

In groups discuss which activities are appropriate, may be appropriate, definitely inappropriate in your role as a mentor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In (Appropriate)</th>
<th>Maybe (Appropriate)</th>
<th>Out (Inappropriate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentoring Skills
Communication styles

Activity: What’s my style?
Use the circle below to ‘slice’ into four pieces to represent assertive, passive, aggressive and indirect communication.

Referring to Handout 4.1, reflect on your own communication style and divide the pie up in proportion with your own communication styles.

What did you learn about yourself through this exercise?
All of us have at some time used each of these styles of communicating. Generally we tend to have a dominant style. This is a summary of the behaviours associated with each of the four communication styles. Not all characteristics of any one stereotype are present in any one person’s communication. They can be present to differing degrees.

### Passive
- do not assert themselves
- allow others to deliberately or inadvertently infringe on their rights
- fail to express their feelings, needs or opinions
- tend to speak softly or apologetically

### Assertive
- state needs and wants clearly, appropriately and respectfully
- express feelings clearly, appropriately and respectfully
- use ‘I’ statements (e.g. “I feel frustrated when you turn up late”)
- communicate respect for others
- listen without interrupting
- have good eye contact
- speak in a calm and clear tone of voice
- have a relaxed body posture

### Aggressive
- try to dominate others
- use humiliation to control others
- criticise, blame, or attack others
- can be very impulsive
- have low frustration-tolerance
- speak in a loud, demanding and overbearing voice
- act threateningly and rudely
- do not listen well
- interrupt frequently
- use ‘you’ statements (e.g. “you are irresponsible”)
- may have an overbearing posture.

### Indirect
- mutter to themselves rather than confront the person or issue
- have difficulty acknowledging their anger
- use facial expressions that don’t match how they feel; i.e. smiling when angry
- deny there is a problem
- appear co-operative while purposely doing things to annoy and disrupt.
Exploring communication

Activity: Exploring communication

What were some of the verbal and non-verbal communications you witnessed in this activity?

Verbal communication – Handout 4.2
Idea. A speaker has an idea. There is a piece of information they want to get across, such as what happened on a TV program, or what they think of such and such.

Encoding. They must then encode the message. That is, they must choose how they will get the message across – which words they will use.

Message transmitted. They then send the message – saying or demonstrating what they’ve planned.

Decoding. The listener then interprets the words, body language, facial expressions, voice, and so on that make up the message.

Message decoded. The listener understands the message in a certain way and may then provide feedback to the speaker about what has been heard.

NB: Effective verbal communication is also influenced by the listener’s cultural background, physical and mental health and their previous experiences with the person who is communicating the message.

Verbal communication transmits the content of messages. Research suggests that only 20 per cent of communication is expressed via the spoken word.³

Non-verbal communication – Handout 4.3

How we use our bodies plays a big role in communicating our attitudes and feelings.

Research tells us that 80 per cent of communication occurs through non-verbal means. This includes pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, and proximity to the listener, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance. Non-verbal behaviours may not always read in the same way due to cultural or other reasons. For example, Indigenous young people might not use eye contact as it is a cultural sign of disrespect. People who have a disability in the autism spectrum will often find eye contact difficult.

Here are some behaviours and attributes and the body language that goes with them.

- **Openness** is shown by facing a person both with face and body.
- A relaxed posture conveys receptivity, but being too relaxed (slouching) can suggest lack of interest.
- Leaning too far forward can be an invasion of someone’s personal space and conveys aggression or dominance.
- Excessive use of fiddly or fidgeting movements may indicate nervousness, impatience, or boredom.
- Eye contact signals that the listener is interested and really listening.
- Infrequent eye contact can be interpreted as boredom or lack of interest, but could also indicate shame, unfriendliness or guilt.
- Too much eye contact can make the other person feel uncomfortable and could be interpreted as aggression or dominance.
- Physical appearance – clothes, hair style, attention to fashion – can offer clues about role, status and power.
- Head nods are messages that a person is paying attention, but do not necessarily signify that they agree with everything being said.

5 Adapted from MOIRA Mentor Training Manual, Moorabbin, Victoria: South Directions Youth Service.
Active listening

[Optional] Activity: Active listening

What was your experience of being listened to?

Listening blocks

On reflection, what stopped people from feeling listened to in today’s session?
Active listening – Handout 4.4

Listening is the mentor’s greatest tool for developing relationships. Being listened to makes someone feel valued, important and respected. Often young people don’t feel truly listened to. This is one of the greatest gifts a mentor can give.

Active listeners:

- suspend judgement and criticism
- don’t interrupt
- respect the speaker’s viewpoint and value system
- resist distractions
- let the speaker know if they are inaudible, ambiguous or incongruent
- are open and deal with any negative emotions they might be hearing.

So when communicating with your mentee:

- clear your mind of unnecessary thoughts and distractions
- make (culturally appropriate) eye contact
- check your body language
- pay attention to the young person’s facial expressions, gestures and body language
- read between the lines for implicit feelings
- ask open-ended questions that provoke conversation
- paraphrase what you think they’ve said
- clarify what you don’t understand
- put yourself in the person’s place and get their perspective
- put aside preconceived ideas and pass no judgments
- nod your head and say things like, ‘I see’.

Mentors sometimes wonder if they’re listening and responding effectively. If a person talks with their mentor about personal issues, shares their joys and woes and occasionally their feelings, a mentor will know they are being understanding and helpful. In some cases the cues are more subtle.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Adapted from the ‘Gippsland Mentoring Alliance Training Package’, Trafalgar, Victoria: Gippsland Mentoring Alliance.
**Listening blocks – Handout 4.5**

Just as there is effective listening, there is also ineffective listening. There are many causes of ineffective listening, including:

- **Environmental limits**, such as places that are noisy, cold, badly lit, poorly ventilated or badly arranged, and have constant distractions like mobile phones or television.

- **Language or cultural limits** can include multiple or ambiguous meanings of words, poor command of vocabulary due to age, education, jargon, slang, dialect, accent or English being a second language.

- Being critical or **making moral judgments** puts the other person on guard, and usually reduces their willingness to share and be honest.

- **‘Shoulding’**, telling the other person what they should do is extremely judgemental behaviour. It’s guaranteed to create distance.

- **Put-downs** and **patronising statements** ridicule or shame the other person. They are likely to be countered by aggression at one extreme and withdrawal at the other.

- **Explaining something away**, looking for causes and excuses, interpreting or intellectualising are all talking about the experience rather than experiencing it.

- **Interruption** shows an unwillingness to listen, being more concerned with dominating or impressing the other person than achieving understanding.


- **‘Alwaysing’**, using always, is a sure sign that a sweeping generalisation is on the way and discussion is almost impossible.

- Using **clichés**, using those tired and worn-out phrases like ‘better late than never’ and ‘can’t see the wood for the trees’, results in little value or significance.

- Asking **pseudo-questions**; these are questions that attempt to manipulate, influence or control, such as ‘Would you agree that ...?’ rather than questions that elicit information or opinion.  

---

7 Adapted from **MOIRA Mentor Training Manual**, Moorabbin, Victoria: South Directions Youth Service.
Effective Communication

- Create a good listening environment.
- If you are having trouble being understood think about the complexity of what you are saying.
- Ask questions to double check that they have understood what you are saying, perhaps phrasing it differently.
- Try to demonstrate visually what you are saying.
- If you don’t understand ask your mentee to repeat the sentence.
- Restate what they have said back to them to check your meaning and interpretation with theirs.
- We encourage mentees to say if they haven’t understood but often they are too polite. Don’t ask ‘Have you understood?’ but test for understanding.
  Show that you are interested and encourage the person to keep talking without finishing their sentences.

Emphasising the positive

- Many refugees have been through experiences that have made them very negative and fearful. The universe seems like a hostile place. Help them to begin to base their attitude in the present, in the advantages they have now, not on what life has dished out in the past.
- Help them to see their experiences as refugees as a positive, that those experiences are a testament to their resilience and strength.
- You must build trust in your mentor/mentee relationship, so the mentee can begin to rebuild their trust in this new world around them.
- It’s not only about money and business, it’s about creating bridges. Providing the networks, the doorway to opportunity. They arrive without any of our ordinary networks. It’s about facilitating access to the mainstream systems and structures and consequently, mainstream Australian life.
Cross-cultural communication – Handout 8.5

Key points to consider when communicating with others whose English language skills are limited.

Do:

- Listen attentively
- Explain technical terms
- Keep language simple and use short sentences
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use a professional interpreter to assist in communicating your message
- Remember that you are engaged in a dialogue rather than just needing to get your message across
- Make the message visual if you can
- Check that the message has been understood – ask questions and be patient
- Give people plenty of time to respond
- Recognise the influence of culture on communication styles and meanings; e.g. the degree of directness or indirectness, formality and informality, non-verbal/body language
- Remember that many languages are structured differently to English and some English terms will not have a direct translation
- Use direct questions; e.g. ‘Have you finished signing that form?’ rather than, ‘You haven’t finished that form yet, have you?’
- Learn and use some words in your young person’s native language.

Don’t:

- Shout, mumble or speak really slowly
- Show impatience
- Replicate the client’s accent

Use technical terms, abbreviations, slang or jargon.  

---

8 Developed by the Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2008.
Self-esteem – Handout 3.2

People’s thoughts and feelings about themselves fluctuate depending on daily experiences, like how others treat them and what happens at school or work. These factors all temporarily affect our well-being and may result in a range of feelings from anger to joy and from frustration to elation.

Self-esteem goes beyond situational ‘ups and downs’. Good self-esteem mitigates the daily fluctuations in our well-being. For people with poor or low self-esteem these ups and downs can make all the difference in the world.

Where does self-esteem come from?

Self-esteem develops and evolves throughout life as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences and relationships.

Childhood experiences play a crucial role in shaping self-esteem. Successes and failures, and how a person was treated by family, teachers, peers and others all contribute to people’s evolving self-esteem.

Consequences of Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem can have devastating consequences, such as:

- anxiety, stress, loneliness and increased likelihood of depression
- problems with friends and relationships
- impaired academic and job performance
- under-achievement and increased vulnerability to drug and alcohol misuse
- a downward spiral of lower self-esteem, and non-productive or self-destructive behaviour.
Strategies for Building Self-Esteem

- **Avoiding ‘shoulds’**. Concentrate on doing what is possible and what feels right instead of paying attention to the ‘shoulds’ of others.

- **Respecting personal needs**. Self-care is about identifying longer-term fulfilment, not just immediate gratification. By respecting personal needs, individuals can increase self-worth and well-being.

- **Setting achievable goals** and working step by step to get there.

- **Engaging in positive self-talk**. Try to stay positive and don’t allow the ‘inner critic’ to take over. Telling yourself that you’re ok and can succeed can be very powerful.

- **Experiencing success** by doing things that stretch but don’t overwhelm abilities.

- **Taking chances**. New experiences are learning experiences; mistakes are part of the process. Feel good about trying something new.

- **Solving problems**. Face rather than avoid problems. Identify ways to solve or cope with challenges.

- **Making decisions**. Practise making decisions and trust yourself to deal with the consequences.

- **Developing skills**. Know what you can and can’t do. Assess the skills you need; learn and practise those.

- **Emphasising your strengths**. Focus on what you can do rather than what you cannot. Live comfortably with limitations, and consider what strengths to develop next.

- **Relying on your own opinion of yourself**. Listen to feedback from others, but don’t rely on it. Apply your own values to making decisions about what is right for you.

- **Find opportunities to help others**. This can help put your own life and struggles in perspective. Helping others can make you feel you are having a positive impact on the world around you.

---

9 Adapted from the *Gippsland Mentoring Alliance Training Package*, Trafalgar, Victoria: Gippsland Mentoring Alliance.
Giving Constructive Feedback

- This is a really important aspect of your role. Some mentors and employers struggle with giving feedback to participants because they are not sure how they will respond or they feel like ‘they have already been through enough’. This approach will not assist them in achieving their goal. The key is to be able to hold up a mirror and reflect back to them the way their actions or behaviour may be being perceived.

- Sometimes participants have an unrealistic idea about their current financial capabilities or their business paths. No one wants to shatter a person’s dreams but try to break it down into short and long term goals and come up with a plan of the steps needed to reach the long term goal.

- It is important to break down problems into their component parts. Respond to the moment. Don’t confuse them with a barrage of advice about things that aren’t relevant now…Deal with Step 1 first, and then move on to Step 2, etc.
Goal setting worksheet – Handout 2.3

Using strengths to promote goals

- This goal-setting model uses individuals’ strengths to promote the achievement of short- and long-term goals. Through this model, you will gain an additional tool to build goals for yourself and your young person.

- You can think of each step as an area in which you can help your young person to develop skills. By giving young people opportunities to practise any and all of these steps, you give them incredible tools to achieve their potential.

- **Step 1. Defining strengths**
  - The first step in this model is to define personal strengths. What are the qualities, skills and characteristics that you would define as your strengths? What are the abilities that you bring with you that you can use as a foundation for future success?

- **Step 2. Envisioning the future**
  - Step 2 will help you see the big picture. What is your ideal future like?
  - How do you want to be living in 10 or 20 years? What do you want to achieve in the long term? By thinking long term, you will gain insight into what you truly value. This will help to connect your goals and short-term activities with your long-term dreams.

- **Step 3. Goals for action**
  - Having reflected on your personal strengths and vision for the future, choose three to five short-term goals that will help to move you towards that long-term vision.

- **Step 4. Concrete tasks**
  - What specific and concrete activities can you start doing now to start you on your way to achieving these goals? Describe each activity and set a date by which you plan to accomplish the activity.

---

Managing Conflict

Conflict is usually about values, beliefs and needs and may occur when people have opposing interests or opinions. Behaviours resulting from conflict may include arguments, fights or disagreements that may be verbal or physical.

Formal conflict resolution is a skill for trained counsellors, but everyone can learn to manage conflict by practising a few personal skills.

Advantages of conflict:
- brings about change
- presents an opportunity to learn
- encourages a person to do better
- helps people to see and understand differences
- helps people to become more flexible
- clears the air and helps people to move on.

Disadvantages of conflict:
- people can become hurt
- people can become angry
- people can become confused
- it can be scary
- it can stop people taking risks.

A formula for mentors managing conflict

Step 1: Treat the person with respect
- Address the behaviour, not the person.
- Use appropriate language. Don’t swear.
- Don’t dismiss their concerns.

Step 2: Listen until you experience the other side
- The goal is to understand the other person’s thoughts and ideas.
- Understand content. What meaning do you think it has for them?
- What feelings do you think they are experiencing?

Step 3: State your feelings, needs and views briefly

- State your point of view.
- Avoid loaded questions.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Disclose your feelings.

Step 4: Move on to problem solving if required

More about values

Values are principles in which an individual has an emotional investment. Values are used to decide about right and wrong, good and bad, should and shouldn’t. Sometimes values conflict with one another and the person must decide which is the more important.

Values like equality, honesty, privacy, security and education are of fundamental importance to people.

People usually feel strongly about their values, although they may find them difficult to describe or discuss.

A person’s values begin to develop during childhood, influenced by family, peers, religion, culture and society in general, and can change over time.

These values greatly affect the person’s:

- opinions or judgments
- beliefs about what is true
- attitudes, feelings or emotions
- decisions about education, work, friends and relationships.
Mentoring that empowers

- Stepping Stones is about empowering refugees to become skilled, capable and independent.
- If your mentee asks an information type question, help them work out how they can find the answer themselves, e.g. make a phone call, find a website to introduce themselves to others, get them to do the action, either in your meeting with them or as homework.
- Homework helps keep the mentee focused between meetings.
- Coach them in self-advocacy-talking about themselves and their skills.
- Relax, listen, be empathic, empower the mentee by allowing them to lead discussions wherever possible.
- However, be realistic about what your mentee can actually achieve to avoid setting them up for failure.
Values That Can Bring Mentors Skills Undone

Mentors can have wonderful qualities and skills but be brought undone by their values. This is why mentors are strongly encouraged to be non-judgmental and avoid being reactive when other people’s values differ to theirs.

A mentor should take special care not to censure a person's values, or to take the ‘moral high ground’, as this will be perceived as saying that the mentor is a better person, a sure recipe for relationship disaster.

Dos and Don’ts for Mentoring

**DO**

- **Find common ground** – find shared interests, family, cooking, football, music. You will be surprised by what you have in common
- **Be positive and enthusiastic** – Assist in identifying strengths and goals and celebrate all achievements no matter how small
- **Be honest and sincere** - Do what you say you’re going to do. Don’t make promises you can’t keep. Set up the right expectations and be reliable in following through on them.

**Be Flexible** - Accept that things won’t always run smoothly and won’t always happen how you would like them to turn out

**Be Consistent** - We ask that you stick to the basic commitment, but don’t feel obliged to do any more than that. If you want to do more than please do, but be consistent.

**Be willing to share your story** – it’s a two way relationship. Mentees can be inspired by the challenges you may have faced in your life

**Know your boundaries** - You are there to help them to build financial and business skills, first and foremost. Help them find other resources for themselves if they need them such, as financial counsellors, etc.. You are not there to assist with every single area of their life.

**Be clear about when you need help** - Don’t hesitate to ask for support, even if it’s just the need to talk. That can make all the difference.

**Lead by example** - write your next meeting in your diary and encourage them to do the same.
DON’T

**Lose sight of the objective** - Your main role is to help the person in their journey towards financial literacy and business skills.

**Try to be a counsellor** – It is more than likely that your mentee will share some of their story with you but your role is not to assist them with dealing with any trauma they may have experienced.

**Do everything for the participant** – It is important to discover the skills and capabilities of your mentee so you understand what they can do on their own and areas where they need more assistance.

**Does anything you feel uncomfortable doing** - if you do not feel ready to put your name down as a reference, do not want to meet their family or any other situation that makes you feel uncomfortable you don’t have to do it. Sometimes this can be challenging if you are torn between wanting to assist someone who is disadvantaged and staying in your comfort zone

**Give advice outside of your field of expertise** - some mentees may be facing legal issues, have health concerns or settlement issues. Please refer them to us or an appropriate service provider.

**Lend your mentee any money** - regardless of how desperate your mentee’s financial situation is it is not your role to assist them. This changes the dynamic of the mentor-mentee relationship. Please contact us if you have any concerns.

**Be judgmental** – the challenge and the joy of the mentoring program is that you get to know a person from another culture. This can be challenging for some people as culture affects the way we think and behave. Your beliefs may be in direct contrast to the person that you are mentoring. Try to be open minded

**Take it personally if it does not work out** - Like any relationship between people, things do not always work out. Please do not take this personally. We can always rematch you.
Confidentiality – Handout 7.3

Confidentiality builds trust

Confidentiality exists when a person entrusts their mentor with information that they are confident will remain private. Confidentiality is important to the mentoring relationship because it:

- builds trust
- builds respect
- allows an honest relationship to grow
- encourages the person to talk about things they might not be comfortable to tell others.

That said, there are limitations and legal issues when considering confidentiality and privacy.

Information Privacy Act 2000 (VIC)\(^\text{12}\)

The Act requires personal information that identifies a person, or could be used with other readily available information to identify them, to be stored securely and to remain confidential. Mentors should be aware of the following.

a) A mentoring program can only collect information about someone – mentor or young person – if that person agrees to it. The person is informed about why the program needs the information and how it will be used, and is entitled to see the information.

b) Some information cannot be kept secret. A mentor cannot ‘sit on’ information. Confidentiality does not apply:

- Where a person has disclosed that they intend to harm themselves or someone else.
- Where they have disclosed some form of abuse.
- Where the young person has given permission for information to be disclosed.

Confidentiality – Handout 7.3 (continued)

If a person says they want to tell a mentor something, but only if the mentor promises not to tell anyone else, the young person should be told the limits of confidentiality as described above.

In this situation the conversation could go as follows:

‘Everything you tell me will be in confidence; however, there may be times I’ll need to share that information with someone else in the mentor staffing team. The only reason I would tell anyone else would be if I thought you were going to hurt yourself or someone else, or someone has hurt/is hurting you. I will always speak with you first if I need to tell someone else about important things like this.’
The First Mentor/Mentee Meeting

Most people are a little nervous about the first meeting. It is natural to have concerns about how the first meeting will go. Most mentors are relieved after the first meeting as they realise it is easier to find things to talk about than they realised.

Things to consider

- Just remember your Mentor Coordinator will be there to introduce you at the first meeting. It will be held at the EMC unless otherwise arranged. The Mentor Coordinator can start or direct the conversation if needed.
- The first meeting is to get to know each other. There is no right formula or procedure you need to follow on the first meeting.
- Find common ground. Generally, our participants come from collectivist cultures where the harmony of the group is important and this means that family is very important. Enquiring about each others’ family is finding common ground. They will probably tell you about their families and may want to know about your family as well. The amount of information you share with them will be up to you.
- Find shared interests - cooking and food is always a good one. However, don’t lose sight of the objective, which is to help the refugee in their journey towards financial literacy and self-employment.
- You don’t have to jump into talking about money and business straight away but it is good to touch on in the first meeting.
- On the first meeting, take the initiative to plan the time and the place for the next meeting. Most of our mentees will have a tendency to leave it up to you as they don’t want to put you out. If you ask them where or when for your next meeting, chances are they will say ‘I don’t mind’. Take the lead in this instance.
- Chose a quiet place like a café, library or your workplace.
- Most mentees use public transport as they do not own their own cars. The cost of public transport may be an issue to consider.
Dealing with difficult situations

Do I talk about their refugee experiences?

Some mentors have a tendency to completely avoid asking participants about their experiences as a refugee. However I would encourage you to talk about it if you both feel comfortable otherwise it can be like a big pink elephant in the room!

You will know whether it feels right to talk about certain issues. It may come up when you discuss family as most participants have family in their country of origin. Some of their family may be still in refugee camps. It may be something that they would like to talk about to share their story with you.

Learning about their journey to Australia can be fascinating and a humbling experience for many mentors. Again I encourage you to trust your instincts about whether or not you should talk about it.

The important thing to remember is that if you feel like you are stuck in a counselling role by talking about these issues rather than employment then it is time to give your Mentor Coordinator a call!

Possible challenges

Punctuality

- Some mentees have never had the chance to work in Australia they are not familiar with the importance of being punctual in Australia. Most will not have a diary, Offer to ring then the morning of your meeting as a reminder.

- Contact us if they miss three meetings and we will speak with them.

Mobile phone etiquette

- Lead by example and make a point of highlighting that you are turning off your phone and ask your mentee to turn off his/her mobile phone while meeting with you.

Apparent lack of responsiveness

- You may be very clear about what your mentee should do, but they may need some time to be ready to act.

- Patience is a virtue that will be needed.
External commitments

- Most of our participants are under a huge amount of stress because of family pressures both here and in their home countries. Most are supporting their families back home. Sometimes it can take some time for participants give you the whole picture.

Patience and persistence

There can be a lot of potential for frustration where you feel that the mentee isn’t paying enough attention or isn’t following through. There can be many reasons why a mentee doesn’t automatically follow through.

- Traumatised, damaged – still finding confidence.
- Inability to comprehend Australian Cultural practices.
- Communication problems, misunderstandings.
- Depression, negativity

Be clear about when you need help.

- Don’t hesitate to ask for support, even if it’s just the need to talk. That can make all the difference. E.g. Mentors came in recently feeling like their mentee was making unreasonable demands. Childlike demands. Talking put the situation in context.
- Not all relationships work out. We understand that. Please don’t just drop out. People have been matched successfully the second time around.
Phases of the mentor relationship

There is no guarantee how long the mentor relationship will last. We ask for 6 months to 1 year’s commitment but your match may last for a longer or shorter period of time.

- Initial stages- regular meetings focussing on developing rapport and gaining an understanding of goals, both short and long term
- Preparation stage for business skills mentoring
- Business planning and implementation phase
- Wind down- exit phase

If things are not working out

- If your mentee continues to miss meetings with you, please contact Stepping Stones Mentor Coordinator as your mentee may not be ready for a mentor, may not appreciate the role of a mentor or have other more pressing issues affecting their lives at the time.
- If you feel that they are expecting you to go beyond your role discuss this with them or alternatively we can assist with addressing this.
- If you do not feel comfortable with your mentee don’t despair. The matches do not always work. We can always rematch you.
- If they decide they are not ready to start their own business do not see it as a personal failure. Some of our participants may decide their priority is to get a job, improve their English and gain more experience. You will be offering other kind of support.
- If your mentee is showing signs of depression, trauma, and mental illness or just not coping, please contact us as we have specialised counsellors at EMC to help. You do not want to end up in the role of a counsellor.
Occupational health and safety (OH&S)

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is committed to providing a safe workplace for all staff. That means that everyone has a responsibility for their own safety, and the safety of their colleagues and any visitors to a Brotherhood of St Laurence site.

These responsibilities might include reporting any hazards, taking appropriate rest breaks and attending training. Most areas have an OH&S representative or committee.

If you are concerned about a safety issue in your workplace, you can speak to your Manager, the safety reps in your area (ask your Workplace Buddy who they are) or to one of the PW&C team (People, Work and Culture).

The BSL has developed an OH&S logo that reads “Protect-Respect” and is intended to remind us all about our OH&S responsibilities. The logo is displayed at all worksites and is aimed at encouraging actions to protect ourselves, our working environment and our clients, as well as an attitude respect toward one another and our workplace.

Volunteers

As a valued volunteer of the BSL, the BSL has a duty of care towards the work you perform. It is important that you are aware of the importance of reporting a hazard, near miss or incident and how to go about doing this.

A hazard means the potential to cause injury, illness or disease. All paid and unpaid staff has the responsibility of identifying hazards and reporting them.

Once hazards are identified we need to assess the risk associated with each hazard.

Risk is the likelihood of injury or illness arising from exposure to any hazard. This is done via the BSL’s incident report. Having assessed the risks associated with a hazard, we must then put in place measures to either eliminate the hazard or reduce the risks associated with it.

Volunteers Code of Conduct – Refer to Brotherhood of St Laurence Code of Ethical Behaviour
Feedback & References

As mentioned before Stepping Stones Project depends a lot on the commitment of volunteers. This booklet has utilised materials from the Given the Chance Mentor Handbook and the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance Training Resources.

Your contribution is very important. Please feel free to help us with your feedback, suggestions and information you may have in order to improve Stepping Stones mentoring program and our induction material.

References


Given the Chance Mentoring Handbook (2010), Centre for Work & Learning, Brotherhood of St Laurence


Mihall, J., and Belletti, H.(1999), Adult Learning Styles and Training Methods, FDIC ADR Presentation Handouts

Mentor Training Workbook (2011), Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance