

FOR MENTORS



ORGANIZATIONS
IN SOLIDARITY

ADVANCING EQUITY: APPROACHING MENTORSHIP



May 2023



WCAPS | WOMEN OF COLOR ADVANCING PEACE,
SECURITY, AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

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The Organizations

Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict

Transformation (WCAPS) is a platform devoted to women of color that cultivates a strong voice and network for its members while encouraging dialogue and strategies for engaging in policy discussions on an international scale. Through our dedication to mentorship and partnerships and our passion for changing the global community landscape, we remain committed to achieving our vision of advancing the leadership and professional development of women of color in the fields of international peace, security, and conflict transformation.

OrgsinSolidarity (OiS) is a partnership formed among more than 300 organizations and individuals who are signatories to the WCAPS United States or United Kingdom Standing Together Against Racism and Discrimination Statements. Our mission is to combat racist beliefs, attitudes, and acts of discrimination, and integrate diversity within all levels of our organizations and as individuals in the peace and security, foreign policy and national security fields. We evaluate the current state of affairs, educate, elevate and support diverse voices and perspectives and the individuals who hold them, giving due recognition and credit to achievements of Black people and people of color, and creating a world where all people are treated fairly, equitably, and with respect.

The core commitment of OiS' Mentorship Working Group is to develop and support mentorship opportunities for people of color in our organizations. Its primary goals are to: (1) expand access to mentorship opportunities for people of color in the peacebuilding and international security fields, and (2) communicate values that create a successful and meaningful mentorship environment, especially for people of color, in these spaces.

ABOUT

The Author



Kimberly Gillies helps social impact leaders actualize their visions. She lends executive office, management, and operations expertise to mission-driven teams so they can work more effectively—and enjoyably—together. Since studying peace, justice, and gender at Tufts University, she has served in cross-functional leadership roles and partnered with organizational leaders to create positive, holistic change within workplaces and society.

Gratitude

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Connect with us!




INTRODUCTION

Mentorship has been and remains widely recognized as mutually beneficial for organizations and individuals. More recently, and as explored in Organizations In Solidarity's (OiS) recent report, [**Advancing Equity: Mentorship in Peace and Security**](#), research has found these positive correlations extend to the diversity and equity of organizations and the professional experiences of people of color.

Together with the [**Advancing Equity**](#) report, we intend the OiS Mentorship Guide series to serve as a foundation of knowledge, support, and inspiration from which aspiring and long-time professionals in peace, security, and foreign policy can build life- and field-changing relationships through mentorship. This guide focuses on support for mentors, and we encourage readers to explore its companion guide for mentees.

These resources are featured on the [**OiS Mentorship Hub**](#), a free online community platform designed to increase the accessibility and quality of mentorship within and across peace, security, and foreign policy. In doing so, we can amplify the impact and equity of these efforts and the experiences of practitioners, especially those of color.

WHAT WE MEAN BY "MENTORSHIP"



Given the ambiguity that surrounds “mentorship” and society’s frequent use of language as a means of exclusion, we first aim to establish shared definitions of concepts and terminology central to this guide.

WHAT WE MEAN BY "MENTORSHIP"

There is neither a singular experience of mentorship nor a one-size-fits-all approach to it. Each individual and each partnership has the opportunity to engage with mentorship in a way that suits their needs, capacity, style, and goals.

Our definitions of *mentorship*, *mentor*, and *mentee* intentionally embrace and highlight the diversity of individuals in the roles of “learner” or “teacher” in a given mentoring relationship. The formats, focus, and impact of these experiences can be just as wide ranging.

Mentorship:

the sharing of experience, knowledge, or advice centered around learning or changing an individual (e.g., through skill development, situational analysis, advice sharing, etc.) (Gallo et al., 2019).

Mentor:

an experienced and knowledgeable person who advises another less experienced or knowledgeable person who aspires to a similar level of knowledge and experience (a mentee).

Mentee:

a person who receives advice, training, or guidance from a more experienced or skilled person (a mentor).

WHAT WE MEAN BY "MENTORSHIP"

Mentorship Structures:

Traditionally, mentorship is understood to be a long-term relationship where a senior professional helps a more junior one, but such a view limits the opportunity and potential benefits of mentorship. Peers, junior colleagues, and timebound focus groups are increasingly common and powerful formats for mentorship.

Mentorship Topics:

Mentorship can focus on something specific like how to address an instance of discrimination or it can offer more general guidance, like one's approach to holistic decision-making throughout their life. No topic is inherently off the table for mentorship, hence the importance of a mentor and mentee setting and revisiting expectations and boundaries throughout the relationship.

Practicing Mentorship:

Mentorship can be something one does, and it can be something in which one believes. As an activity, mentorship's impact is felt strongly by those directly participating, but it likely does not influence the greater system or culture in which it takes place. As a value, individuals, communities, or organizations prioritize mentorship within and across their commitments and decision-making and more heavily influence their environment.

WHAT WE MEAN BY "MENTORSHIP"

Mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching are often used interchangeably. While there are certainly similarities among them, there are key and complementary differences that can shape one's approach to and satisfaction with a relationship. For more information on or examples of mentorship or these complementary relationships, please visit [Appendix I](#) in this guide or the [Resources](#) section on the [OIS Mentorship Hub](#).



FOR MENTORS

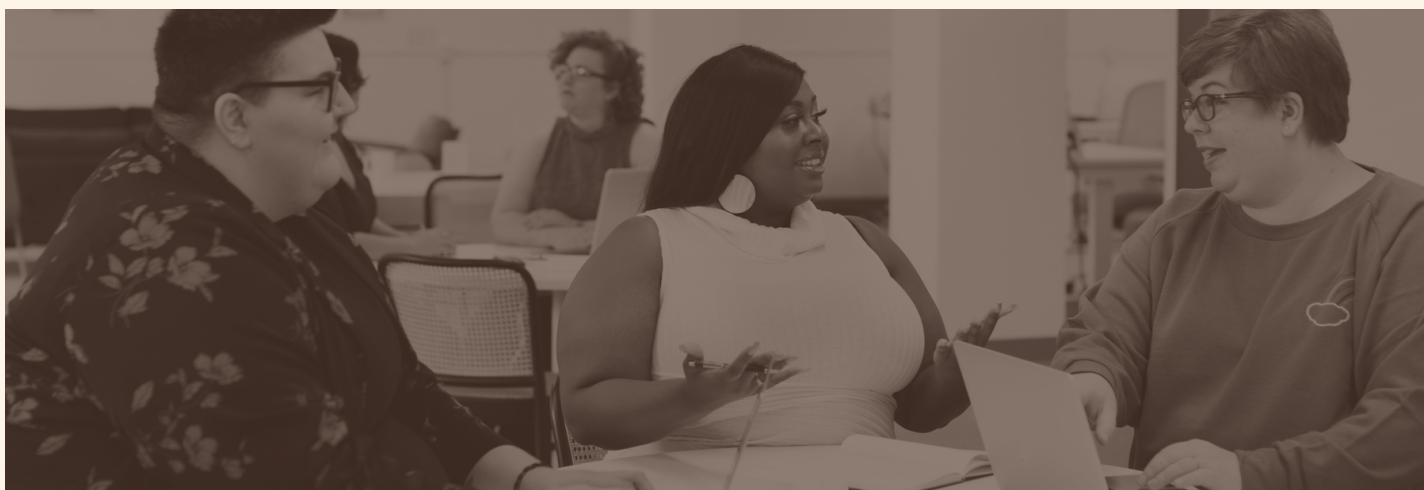
OiS defines a mentor as “an experienced and knowledgeable person who advises a less experienced or knowledgeable person who aspires to a similar level of knowledge and experience (mentee).” In this section, we explore the “whos, whys, whens, wheres, whats, and hows” of being a mentor within the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy. We advocate that everyone has the potential to be a successful mentor and for new and long-time mentors to self-educate and proactively engage prospective mentees of color as a means of advancing equity within the fields of peace, security, and foreign policy.

FOR MENTORS

Who Can Be a Mentor?

As Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy emphasized in their [Mentorship Handbook](#), the most effective mentor is someone who wants to be one (Cater & Bryda, n.d.). An individual who seeks out opportunities to mentor because of their genuine interest in it is likely to focus on the needs and motivations of a mentee and commit to sharing knowledge and empathy with them—a characteristic cited by mentees as the “most valuable quality in a mentor,” (Roche, 1979).

However, the presumed image and qualifications of a mentor are often of someone who has “made it—” someone who has an “Executive” title, a corner office, and a prominent reputation. These individuals undoubtedly have wisdom to offer, but they will not be best-suited for every prospective mentee or mentoring query.* First Round Capital studied 100 mentor-mentee matches and found that a mentor’s ability to share understanding and applicable advice increases when the experience gap between partners is five to 10 years. This difference enables a mentor to be “experienced but still remember what it felt like to be in their mentee’s shoes,” (Mills, n.d.).



For example, organizational leaders with full schedules and pre-existing mentoring relationships will likely have more limited accessibility or availability for new mentees than colleagues with fewer inflexible commitments. Senior leaders with 30 years in the field probably have less directly relevant advice for early-stage mentees than a junior colleague who has more recently been through that experience.

FOR MENTORS

Why Mentor?

As with any role or relationship, clarity on what one hopes to give and receive is critical to a successful and satisfying mentorship experience. Understanding and embracing one's own purpose and motivation for becoming a mentor will help one prioritize, set boundaries, proactively engage with, and remain committed to a mentee in times of adversity (Bidwell, 2016).

While these drivers are personal to each mentor, it is worth highlighting that by proactively and effectively mentoring people of color within peace, security, and foreign policy disciplines, practitioners can affect positive change in the make-up, equity, and impact of these efforts. Recent research consistently and continually finds mentoring to be one of the most effective means of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizations (Dobbin et al., 2006). OIS' 2023 report, ***Advancing Equity: Mentorship in Peace and Security***, describes the widespread benefits of mentorship on organizations and individuals (e.g., better performance, higher employee engagement, reduced turnover, and an inclination to extend mentoring onto others) and highlights how effective mentorship of people of color can increase their experiences of equitable recognition, career advancement, retention, networks, sense of belonging, and exposure to and support for professional opportunities (Gillies, 2023).

FOR MENTORS

When Should One Mentor?

Regardless of the duration of a mentoring relationship, a mentor must invest time and energy in a mentee (Smith, 2014). Since personal and professional commitments ebb and flow, potential mentors should consider their bandwidth at a given time and the type of mentoring best supported by their available resources.* All mentors, especially those who have limited experience with cross-identity mentoring (e.g., a white mentor and a Black mentee, a Latinx mentor and an Indigenous mentee), should dedicate some of this resourcing to self-education. Doing so will help a mentor tailor their approach to each mentee and drive greater positive impact with every engagement.

Formal mentoring programs are great options for mentor education and community, and they can largely alleviate the logistical burden and ambiguity that commonly accompany new mentoring relationships. These programs often facilitate partner matching, provide conversation prompts, help with expectation setting and scheduling, and offer “train-the-trainer” opportunities for experienced mentors to help newer ones.

Many of the programs featured in the [Ois Mentorship Hub Database](#) are cross-organizational, but many workplaces have introduced their own internal mentorship programs, often as part of new employee orientation and onboarding. Mentors can be especially helpful in such times of transition by explaining norms, reducing social isolation, or shedding light on organizational and interpersonal dynamics that seasoned staff take for granted. When seeking to support a mentee as they navigate a transition, a mentor should keep in mind their role is to help—not prescribe or dictate—a mentee’s understanding of their environment or options and creation of their own path forward.

*More information on and examples of mentoring relationships are outlined in Appendix I.

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Where to Find Mentees?

Race is the most important and consistent differentiator of social networks, and most mentoring opportunities and connections stem from within one's network (Busette et al., 2021). The results of a 2019 study that found 71 percent of mentors surveyed had mentees of the same race and gender as themselves is thus unsurprising (Green, 2019). Such homogeneity perpetuates existing inequities to professional resources, opportunities, and recognition.

To move the needle on diversity, equity, and inclusion within peace, security, and foreign policy fields, mentors can consider the diversity of their network and how they can intentionally expand it. Given social power dynamics, white mentors in particular should initiate and maintain mentoring relationships with people of color.* Doing so can facilitate meaningful power sharing and help avoid exacerbating the cultural tax already paid by people of color working in these disciplines.** Rather than wait to be approached by a mentee, a prospective mentor can actively seek one out. Doing so empowers a mentor to take active responsibility for how and with whom they build relationships; it enables them to be more intentional about sharing their knowledge and resources.

*Racial dynamics are not consistent across every environment, and historical context must be considered when evaluating mentoring dynamics and which identity groups hold what social power.

**The cultural tax is the physical, mental, and emotional burden that people of color carry due to the disproportionate requests for their participation in unpaid promotional opportunities, task forces, mentoring conversations, and the like.

FOR MENTORS

Among the many benefits a mentor can share with a mentee is access to a broader network. In cases where a mentor has social privileges that a mentee does not (e.g., whiteness, maleness, wealth, prestigious education, etc.), a mentor can help bridge the “network gap,” or the advantage some individuals have over others as a result of who they know, by facilitating meaningful introductions for a mentee (Garlinghouse, 2019).* Every mentor should keep in mind that a network is just one of the many tools in their toolbelt, and that its value is not determined by the accolades of the people in it, but rather the strength of the ties between those people. Helping a mentee foster their own relationships can lead them to more job opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate, and greater career status and authority (Casciaro et al., 2016).

Joining a mentorship program focused on supporting professionals of color in peace, security, and foreign policy is an excellent avenue to diversifying one’s network and resource-sharing. Visit the [Mentorship and Network Opportunities](#) database on the [OIS Mentorship Hub](#) to learn more about and connect with leading programs in this space.



* Social privileges of wealth, a prestigious education, or work experience at a top-ranked company can give someone a 12x advantage in gaining access to opportunity (Garlinghouse, 2019).

FOR MENTORS

What is Expected of a Mentor?

Aligning expectations at the onset of a mentoring relationship and revisiting them as the partnership evolves helps a mentor and mentee engage appropriately and effectively (Goldstein, 2021). Areas where partners can set expectations includes but is not limited to:

- **Goals.** Since mentors can help mentees in countless ways, by acknowledging, planning for, and working toward shared goals, a mentor can recognize when and where to push for progress, refocus efforts, or celebrate success.
- **Timeframe.** Establishing a period for reliable engagement—whether it is a one-time call or months-long partnership—allows both a mentor and mentee to fully understand and follow through on the commitment they make to their partner. Clarity here makes it easier to transition a relationship at its end.
- **Availability, responsiveness, and communication norms.** Sharing and agreeing to communication approaches helps ensure both participants feel respected and understood. If a mentor makes it known to a mentee that they are slow on email and that they appreciate follow-up messages, a mentee will feel more comfortable reaching out with reminders. When a mentor voices that they need some time to process a mentee’s problem before offering advice or a solution, they create space for themselves and for a mentee to do the same.

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By readily describing one's own expectations and boundaries during these conversations, a mentor can help set a mentoring relationship up for success while modeling self-awareness, -advocacy, and -management for a mentee.

- **Topics and expertise.** When a mentor openly acknowledges that a skill, situation, or question is outside of their knowledge-base, they can refocus their support on areas within their wheelhouse while modeling self-awareness, authenticity, and integrity to a mentee. Responding to a question with, "I do not know, and I will try to find out," exemplifies an honest, solutions-oriented approach that is invaluable not only in mentorship but also in the workplace.
- **Confidentiality.** Critical to trust building and relationship success, both parties need to establish what is shareable and what is private information. Creating a mutual understanding of confidentiality helps each partner moderate what, when, and how they share.



FOR MENTORS

How to Approach Mentoring

Under OIS' definition of *mentorship* (“the sharing of experience, knowledge, or advice centered around learning or changing an individual”), there is no one “right” way to mentor. There are, however, key approaches to practice when giving advice that facilitate the trust and growth central to the relationship and its impact.

Creating a space where a mentee feels safe and comfortable being vulnerable—where they can freely ask questions, express uncertainty, share experiences of discrimination or microaggressions, or voice fears—is essential to a mentee’s development and requires a degree of trust with a mentor.* The depth and breadth of trust will vary in each experience, but a mentor can facilitate its development by clarifying expectations with a mentee, learning about a mentee as a whole person, seeking out a mentee’s thoughts on a shared interest, communicating appreciation for a mentee’s perspectives, and sharing their own strengths, limitations, barriers, and positionality.**

In any mentoring relationship, there is an inherent power disparity between partners: one possesses knowledge or experience that the other seeks to learn. A mentor’s recognition of this and other social power differences affecting the relationship (e.g., race, gender, ability, age, etc.) helps in both trust building and advice giving within a relationship (Cater & Bryda, n.d.). Importantly, this does not mean a mentor and mentee must have shared racial identities or lived experiences for the relationship to be successful. It does mean that a mentor’s ability to honestly and empathetically recognize and appreciate differences—in social power, lived experience, culture, goals, etc.—is central to their effectiveness (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021).

*When this space is lacking and either partner feels like they cannot share important information, the relationship will not work: superficial issues will be discussed and advice will fall short of impact.

**Positionality refers to how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society. Learn more: <https://indigenousofinitiatives.ctft.ubc.ca/classroom-climate/positionality-and-intersectionality/>

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

Too often, people overlook the value of their experiences, perspectives, and connections, the impact sharing these resources can have, and the various ways in which that sharing can take place.

Everyone has the potential to be a successful mentor. A mentor has the power and responsibility to choose with whom they share their resources—their time, knowledge, empathy, guidance, and network. More than answers, a successful mentor knows how to actively listen to a partner and turn what they hear into questions or guidance that facilitate a mentee's growth. The direct and ripple effects of self-education and seeking out opportunities to connect with and support professionals of color advances the equity and impact of peace, security, and foreign policy work.

Mentorship has no singular recipe for success. It can happen in a moment or over a lifetime, between peers or senior and junior staff, in groups or one-on-one. Regardless of its format, mentorship that fosters empathy and learning can consistently and positively change the diversity, equity, and inclusion of organizations and the professional experiences and recognition of people of color.

Organizations in Solidarity created the [OIS Mentorship Hub](#) to welcome, connect, and support peace, security, and foreign policy professionals in making mentorship more accessible and impactful across these disciplines, especially for people of color. Join the Hub to explore its resources, build relationships, and help normalize effective mentorship of people of color across peace, security, and foreign policy disciplines.

GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES



GLOSSARY

Mentorship

There is neither a singular experience of mentorship nor a one-size-fits-all approach. Each individual and each partnership has the opportunity to approach and engage with mentorship in a way that suits their needs, capacity, style, and goals.

Mentorship: the sharing of experience, knowledge, or advice centered around learning or changing an individual (e.g., through skill development, situational analysis, advice sharing, etc.) (Gallo et al., 2019).

- **Mentor:** an experienced and knowledgeable person who advises another less experienced or knowledgeable person who aspires to a similar level of knowledge and experience (mentee).
- **Mentee:** a person who receives advice, training, or guidance from a more experienced or skilled person (mentor).

Common Mentorship Structures

- **Traditional or Vertical:** a more senior individual helps a more junior individual.
- **Reverse:** a more junior individual helps a more senior individual.
- **Peer to Peer:** an individual helps another with comparable professional status or experience.

GLOSSARY

- **Formal:** a relationship formed with the explicit objective of offering and receiving help (often established through a program or the initiative of an individual).
- **Informal:** a relationship that involves the sharing of experience, knowledge, or advice between two or more individuals whether or not a “helping relationship” is explicitly established.
- **Timebound:** a relationship with a notable beginning and end (often determined by a program or shared objective).
- **Ongoing:** an enduring relationship that evolves with and between individuals.
- **One-on-One:** a mentoring relationship between two individuals.
- **Group:** a mentoring relationship between more than two individuals (who often come together through a commonality such as career stage, subject matter interest, identity, desired skill, etc.).

Mentorship

Phases:

Like all relationships, mentorship evolves over time. Regardless of its duration, each experience involves four predictable phases* as outlined by **The Center for Mentoring Excellence**: preparation, negotiation, enabling growth, and closure.

- **Preparation:** getting oneself, and the relationship, ready for trust building; an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to the mentoring relationship and process.

*Mentoring Month Webinar Week 3: Making The Most of Your Mentoring Relationship. (2022, January 20). YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bb1WRKtlyh8>

GLOSSARY

- **Negotiation:** setting agreements and expectations; understanding what and how each participant plans to give to and benefit from the partnership.
- **Enabling Growth:** the primary stage of learning and development; a focused period of skill-building, reflection, networking, etc.
- **Closure or Redefinition:** an opportunity to look back and move forward; some relationships come to a close while others will continue, albeit with an adjusted understanding.

Mentorship Topics:

The topics, skills, or experiences that mentorship supports are as diverse as the formats in which it takes place. It can focus on something specific like competency development, or it can offer more general guidance, like how to approach holistic decision-making. Common mentoring topics in the field of peace and security include: enhancing subject matter expertise, skill development, career advancement, personal growth, networking, navigating transitions, intergenerational learning, overcoming identity-based obstacles, or health and wellbeing.

GLOSSARY

Practicing Mentorship:

Mentorship can be something one does, and it can be something in which one believes:

- **Mentorship as an Activity:** A distinct, time-bound engagement. The impact is felt strongly by those participating, but it likely does not influence the greater system or culture in which it takes place.
- **Mentorship as a Value:** Individuals, organizations, and communities prioritize mentorship within and across their commitments and decision-making. In this practice, mentorship influences the behaviors and cultures of a workplace or community.

These definitions intentionally embrace and highlight some of the overlap and complementary differences of learning relationships and participants within them. We hope highlighting the diversity of these terms, models, and approaches increases readers' understanding and utilization of the range and nuance of mentorship.

Overlapping Relationships

The following definitions intentionally embrace and highlight overlap and complementary differences between the relationship types, as well as the range of roles an individual can play in a given situation. Mentoring partners should take the time to align their understanding before engaging in a relationship to appropriately set and meet expectations.

GLOSSARY

Sponsorship:

public or private (i.e. “behind closed doors”) advocacy by a leader with power who advocates for an individual who has less.

- **Sponsor:** a leader with social, economic, or organizational power who believes in, advocates for, and uses their capital on behalf of a protégé (Gallo et al., 2019).
- **Protégé:** a professional whom a sponsor sees as a top or high-potential performer who deserves to be awarded opportunities or protected from disapproval (Gallo et al., 2019).

Sponsorship vs. Mentorship:

Sponsors can be mentors, and mentors can be sponsors, but that’s not always the case. It is critical to recognize the fluidity of these roles and activities, as well as their boundaries.

- Where mentorship fosters internal change within a mentee, sponsorship facilitates external change in how others see the protégé and what opportunities are available to them (Gallo et al., 2019).
- Mentorship often involves high investment of time and knowledge but low risk to the mentor, whereas sponsorship requires minimal time but poses a higher risk to the sponsor due to the investment of their social capital and the public nature of the relationship (Gallo et al., 2019).

GLOSSARY

Network:

the collective of individuals with whom one has or has had a positive relationship.

- **Formal or Professional Network:** a group of people organized by and connected through a commonality. These networks often involve membership fees, social events, and educational resources.
- **Informal or Personal Network:** the collective of individuals with whom one builds relationships over the course of their life. These can include co-workers, colleagues, academic peers or alumni, friends, family, members of one's community, etc.
- **Networking vs. Mentorship:** While networking and mentorship do not always go hand in hand, many mentors leverage their networks as a means of bolstering their support for a mentee. Examples of this could include: inviting a mentee to networking and training events; connecting a mentee with colleagues who work on portfolios of interest, looping mentees into potential career opportunities, etc.



GLOSSARY

Coaching:

typically a paid relationship where a coach engages a client in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires the client to maximize their personal and professional potential (ICF, the Gold Standard in Coaching).

- **Coaching vs. Mentorship:** Whereas a coach is trained, certified, and paid for the explicit purpose of building the skills of or confidence of their client, a mentor is typically not formally trained, certified, or paid to provide hands-on assistance in these domains. A mentor is often better suited to serve as an adviser or sounding board who can share knowledge, experiences, and ideas with a mentee without directly assisting them in decision-making (Wong, 2021). That said, a mentor absolutely can use **coaching techniques** to encourage a mentee's reflection and growth.

Counseling:

typically a paid relationship aimed at empowering an individual to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals (What Is Professional Counseling?, n.d.).

- **Counseling vs. Mentorship:** Similar to a coach, a counselor is a trained and certified professional who is paid to support a client's mental and emotional wellbeing. While a mentor can hold space for and offer advice regarding a mentee's difficult personal or professional issues, it is important for both a mentor and a mentee to set and respect appropriate boundaries that support the integrity of the relationship and advice exchanged.

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