



THE MENTORING MANUAL

SECOND EDITION



YOUR
STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE TO
BEING
A BETTER
MENTOR

JULIE STARR



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***The Coaching Manual 2010*, Pearson Education**

Widely recognised as a leading practical handbook on coaching, *The Coaching Manual* combines an understanding of coaching principles, skills, attitudes and behaviours, along with practical guidance and a comprehensive toolkit for coaches.

The Coaching Manual demystifies the full coaching process, from first step to final meeting. This is the complete guide to coaching and includes models, perspectives, skills, case studies, tips and advice.

Praise for *The Coaching Manual* includes:

‘Many authors claim that their books coach the coach about the process for how to coach, Julie Starr’s *The Coaching Manual* actually delivers! It’s practical, comprehensive, and eminently readable. For anyone entering the field – start here.’

**L. Michael Hall, PhD, author and
developer of *Meta-Coaching***

‘No one has brought to life the nuts and bolts as well as the spirit of masterful coaching better than Julie Starr. *The Coaching Manual* is the definitive resource for aspiring as well as seasoned coaches looking to further refine their approach!’

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‘*The Coaching Manual* is the most comprehensive, practical, best-illustrated coaching source I have ever seen. It compellingly teaches the mindset of keeping the responsibility on the coach combined with a powerful, realistic skill set.’

**The late Dr Stephen R. Covey, author of
*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***

- Your meeting room is double booked, and you do not have anywhere to meet.
- The mentee shows up without their notes from the last session and appears totally unprepared for this one.
- Your sessions with your mentee are over Zoom, and they are consistently reluctant to turn the camera on.
- You've been matched with a mentee because they said they are interested in your specialist areas, but they now say they are more interested in leadership generally.
- In the last session your mentee hinted they wanted to leave their current role, and then, in this session, they explain it because their manager seems like a bully.
- HR contacts you to explain that your mentee wants to finish the sessions because they do not feel they are getting enough value from them to justify the investment of time.

I'm sure you have your own versions of the above – unexpected developments that you can respond to resourcefully – or not! It might be a minor, unexpected event, or a major change of circumstances. Within mentoring, we go one step further, in that we need to see everything that happens as an ideal stage along the journey. Again, as we reduce resistance, we increase acceptance, which helps us stay constructive. We are also embracing the concept of 'the road of trials' or useful challenges from which the mentee can learn and grow, which shaped our first theme of the relationship in Chapter 2.

A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Embrace does not mean 'become victim to'

This principle of embracing what happens within a mentoring assignment is not to make you passive or victim to it, but more to

enable you to maintain an objective viewpoint that is resilient to life's twists and turns.

Resilience is all about being able to overcome the unexpected.

The goal of resilience is to thrive.

Jamais Cascio

Accepting and embracing something does not mean that we don't work to change things, just that we don't waste emotional energy resisting 'what is'. This then frees up our energy to focus on a more resourceful response.

Let's use an example where your mentee moves work location, which requires you to work together differently, to see how the principle might impact your thinking.

- My mentee is moving work location and that means we can't meet face to face any more.
 - How can I see that as ideal (e.g. something ultimately constructive)?
 - What other options have now become available? (To do something differently, change approach, etc.)
 - What might the benefits of this be? Perhaps to confirm commitment, work differently, get creative (e.g. telephone calls, Zoom/video-conference sessions, or WhatsApp).
 - What skills do I need to develop now (e.g. video conferencing, creating a stronger focus of attention in a remote situation)?

Table 3.1 shows how this principle plays out over time, compared with a more resistant approach.

Table 3.1 The principle of ‘embracing’, or learned optimism

Response from frustration and resistance	Response from ‘accept and embrace’
<p>Short term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You feel disappointed and potentially frustrated and may even complain about that. • You develop a focus on the risks of not having face-to-face sessions, e.g. reduced personal connection, rapport, etc. • You look for options that reduce the loss of face-to-face sessions, or delay sessions until that can happen. 	<p>Short term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You register the development with interest and have a refreshed view of the assignment. • You wonder how this might be perfect, e.g. ‘I wonder how this is going to benefit the mentee over time?’ • You work creatively to understand options, e.g. ‘What different things could we try doing here?’
<p>Long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You view the new approach to sessions as a compromise, which might impact your attitude or mood during sessions. • You maintain a sense of ‘this is not ideal’, until you gain evidence to the contrary, (‘prove me wrong’). • Your perception of the relationship shifts – you might become a little more detached or ‘remote’. 	<p>Long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You maintain a positive bias to show how working in new ways, e.g. via Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, is beneficial. • You continue to feel ‘freed up’ to mentor the individual; mentoring is an enjoyable challenge. • You develop new thinking and tendencies that you can use in other situations.

By embracing what happens during an assignment, we develop a perspective or ‘filter’ that enables us to view the positives in a situation. Here are just a few of the ways this development might show itself to be a constructive event in the mentee’s journey.

- You both agree that video conferencing requires better preparation and focus to be effective. This quality is something that the mentee has previously lacked and so they are now being presented with the choice to add effort to make the mentoring assignment work, or not.
- It's a useful dilemma that highlights a need for them to decide how committed to the mentoring they actually are.
- By discussion of the challenges, your mentee learns to become effective during remote meetings, namely video conferencing, or by telephone. That proves a valuable skill for them generally, as it is now a more frequent element of their role.

What about trickier examples?

You might be wondering, 'Yes, but some of the previous examples were more difficult; for example, I'm now mentoring someone who isn't actually interested in my specialist field and I'm less confident to mentor on topics like leadership'. Actually, the principle works just the same and so are the steps you go through, namely:

- 1 How is this situation perfect right now, for example as a challenge for me, them or us?
- 2 What is a positive filter that I need to develop, to sustain my sense of buoyancy or optimism?
- 3 How might there be unseen benefits here, in the longer term?

4. Ultimately, what the mentee chooses to do, learn or ignore from the mentoring is not the mentor's business

Here is another philosophical principle to help you remain resourceful and resilient as a mentor. Where you are engaged in the opportunity to help your mentee learn, develop and progress, there can

be a tendency to become emotionally invested in a certain outcome for them. It might be that you want your mentee to make what you believe are better choices, or to change certain behaviours or tendencies. Perhaps your mentee tells you about an opportunity to attend an internal job interview, which you feel would be a hugely positive experience, but then they decide against it, saying that they don't feel ready, either for the interview process or for the change involved if they were offered a new, more senior role. You notice that they tend to avoid situations that make them anxious (such as job interviews) and that seems to hold them back from attaining the career success they say they want. You give them your view and their response indicates they accept your view; for example, 'Maybe you're right, but I just don't feel comfortable at the idea of this.'

Imagine, then, that you convince them to go for the job interview. The experience might turn out in several ways:

- 1 They are successful at the interview and they thank you for encouraging them to go for it. They excel in their new role.
- 2 Their fear of interviews is embedded – they 'froze' several times, resulting in an experience which felt like failure for them, and a negative impression with the interviewers.
- 3 They are successful in interview and are offered the job, but then refuse it as they follow their instinct that they 'aren't ready' – again creating a poor impression with the interviewers.
- 4 They are successful, accept the job but are not able to tackle its challenges and pressure, and so leave the company soon afterwards.
- 5 They are offered the position, begin the new role and then when a different role that they want much more is advertised shortly afterwards, they are unable to apply for it.

The purpose of this list is simply to acknowledge the many ways that events can unfold, and that on-going consequences of choices always include an element of the unseen.

Remain interested in what your mentee does – and not invested in it

This principle that ‘what they do is ultimately not your business’ is not intended to dissuade you from being interested in what your mentee does. The principle simply means that the extent of your involvement, or ‘your business’ is to offer, to advise, to support, to facilitate, to help, to guide – and that’s all. So this principle can provide a helpful boundary for you, which will help you to relax about what happens outside of your mentor sessions, as something beyond your control. That’s why what someone chooses to do or not do is ‘not your business’. A little like a bookshop owner’s ‘business’ is to offer and then sell books to people, not to make sure they read them from cover to cover.

By adopting this principle, you remain impartial to potential outcomes. This doesn’t mean you are not interested in what your mentee does – of course you will be! I do encourage you to demonstrate interest – ask them what they have been doing, listen as they tell you, retain key information and so on. In addition, the principle of detachment does not indicate that you do not care about what happens, merely that you will retain a balanced view of it. If you accept that empowering someone else is more valuable than fixing things for them, then this principle is logical and hopefully acceptable to you.

By the way, this principle can also work with teenagers and young adults – sometimes!

Notice the influence of your ego

When we are motivated to experience the pleasure of what we view as a successful outcome, or the gratification of the mentee ‘getting it right’, when their actions fall short of our expectations, we may feel frustrated or thwarted in some way. These feelings relate to the influence of our ego. Our ego is a function of our mind and creates our sense of who we are, such as ‘I am [your name]’. Or it is indicated by the labels we give ourselves; for example, ‘I am a daughter, husband, manager, mentor, kind person, short person, creative person,