

RISE ASSET DEVELOPMENT'S

# MENTOR PROGRAM

## Mentor Handbook



Rise Asset Development is a registered charity that provides low interest small business loans, training and mentorship to men and women with a history of mental health or addiction challenges.

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## Mentors Code of Conduct

- Treat your mentee with respect and sensitivity
- Conduct the relationship as professional, rather than social
- Keep any disclosure confidential unless your mentee grants permission otherwise
- Focus on providing knowledge and insight
- Do not assume the role of counsellor, regardless of issues brought to the table
- Support your mentee in achieving their goals

## Language and Etiquette

Acceptable terms when referring to a person with a psychiatric disability include “person with a mental illness”, “person with a mental health challenge”, “person with an emotional disorder”, “person with an addiction.”

Some people with a psychiatric disability refer to themselves as “consumers” of mental health services, as “survivors” of a mental illness, or simply as “consumer survivors”.

Avoid terms such as “mentally ill”, “a schizophrenic”, or “an addict” which emphasize the disability, instead of the person. Never disclose the person’s disability to another unless you have been given express permission to do so. Refrain from asking questions about the disability which do not expressly relate to the business you are discussing.

## Accommodations

- Adopt an attitude that is unprejudiced about mental illness and is accepting of differences
- Be patient; behave in a calm, relaxed manner
- Respect your mentee’s personal space, physically, mentally and emotionally
- Be flexible in your approach
- If your mentee seems distracted or anxious, re-focus the conversation to help them stay on topic
- With your mentee’s permission, record the conversation to make it easier to focus on your mentee during your time together
- Plan for frequent breaks, and be flexible in taking them
- Be understanding if your mentee has to cancel a meeting at the last minute or if it takes them longer than expected to respond to an email, and recognize that he or she may be unwell or facing personal challenges beyond the scope of their business

## Design Principles of Rise

1. Acknowledge and respect the expertise and knowledge that clients have gained through their own history and business experience, or in the informal economy. Recognize that they may not consider themselves to be a novice in the business world.
2. Beware of “The MBA Factor”: help clients become successful within their own definition of success, and in a way that respects their own daily rhythms and routines. Value different types of business intelligence and ways of “doing business.”
3. Recognize that clients are used to operating within an informal gratitude economy that is based on trust, respect, and reciprocity. Maintain the close, respectful, interpersonal relationships on which such an economy is built, and avoid the impersonality and suspicion that clients see in the formal economy, which often causes them to avoid participating in it.
4. Create mutual respect and reciprocity by finding ways for clients to share their expertise and experience and give advice to others – perhaps by becoming mentors as well as being appointed a mentor of their own.
5. Keep an awareness of stigma and information management at the forefront of all of your decisions about the program. Stay aware of the fact that affiliation with Rise may be a potentially discrediting experience, and that this is a source of great fear and anxiety for many clients and potential clients, especially those who have been successful and are – or may soon be – in the public eye.
6. Treat clients as people first, entrepreneurs second, and let their illness remain in the background. Do not make it their master status and do not treat them as a “case.”
7. Be careful about delaying recognition of positive client performance to a later date, and about demands placed on their time. Remember that although they appreciate awards and recognition, clients are running a business and they may already have challenges related to rhythms, structure, and time. Their world is not the traditional business world, and they may need to focus more heavily on the present than the future.
8. Acknowledge success – as the client defines it – without reference to their illness. Celebrate achievement for its own sake, not “In spite of...” Do not hold clients up publicly as a representative example of an entire category of people. Recognize them as individuals, and follow their lead in sharing information about their illness.

## Best Practices for Mentoring

In the famous book, “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,” author Dr. John Gray explains the different communication styles typical of men and women. Specifically, he deals with different ways we approach problems. “Martians” approach with a clear problem-solving agenda: ‘Give me a problem; I’ll give you an answer.’ Venusians want to empathize: ‘I understand how you feel, I’ve been there.’ A good mentor falls somewhere in between.

The first instinct we have as business people is to look for a solution. Problems pose a threat to our business, our livelihood, and stand in the way of our goals, therefore they must be overcome. This paradigm may be most efficient for advancing a business, but does not encourage learning.

The “I’ve been there and it was worse for me” syndrome can be just as unhelpful. We have all faced challenges and been under stress at different times. Focusing only on our shared struggles may give a little comfort, but doesn’t help in any way. Commiserating offers no hope for progress, only the knowledge that others have faced the same problems and survived, but not necessarily overcome.

**A good mentor must understand their role is multi-fold.** They need to support and challenge their protégé, while encouraging their growth and aiding them in development. Obviously the mentor has been successful in their endeavors, or they would not be in the position they are in now. That does not mean that everyone who does it their way will succeed, or that there is not another equally effective way to proceed.

When I played baseball, every year I had a different coach trying to teach me how to bat. I started out a reasonable hitter, not batting clean-up, but getting a respectable number of RBI’s. For three years, my batting got progressively worse as each coach tried to make me hit their way. Finally, I had a coach that told me to forget all that I had been taught and go back to what

worked. He then showed me a few simple steps to improve my timing and power. I was never a Barry Bonds, but my batting improved tremendously. It took a coach watching what came naturally and offering advice from watching other styles.

Likewise, a mentor should cast a reflective eye on the business practices and philosophies of their protégé and assist them in making progress towards their goals. **A mentor should not judge what they hear**, instead, try to be empathetic and understand how the protégé reached the decisions and conclusions that brought them to where they are now. It is important to understand the paradigm of the protégé right now, before presenting alternative perspectives. Often simply reflecting the facts of a situation without the emotional baggage will allow the protégé to gain a new perspective on their own situation.

When mentors are presented with failures or obstacles, the first instinct is to discard the process that led to the failure and find a different path. It is more effective to first **examine the process**. Often, the failure is a result of one small part of the process. Identifying and addressing that one element is more effective than starting over, and encourages the protégé that they were on the right track. At the same time, considering other approaches can broaden the perspective and provide new avenues to explore in the future.

Think BIG! Too often, we get so bogged down in the details that we can no longer see the big picture. A mentor has the ability to step back and **see the forest, not just the trees**. Look for patterns and tendencies in the actions and emotions of your protégé. These will often be indicators of the underlying issues that they may not even be aware of.

Nothing leads to failure quicker than burnout. Encourage your protégé to step away from the issues for a few minutes. Soldiers fighting in

WWII had a much higher survival rate at the front lines when they received regular R & R. It refreshes the spirit and helps settle the nerves for the next challenge. Set aside some “safe” time when work WILL NOT be discussed. Never spend the entire meeting discussing problems. Ask about the most recent fiction book or movie your protégé read or saw. Ask about their vacation. **Find positive elements to draw strength from before tackling thorny issues.**

It is your job to **find ways to challenge your mentee**: if they didn’t want a challenge, they would not have become an entrepreneur. But that doesn’t mean they know where to go from here. Help them develop specific goals and measurable results, and then push them to

exceed them. We rarely set goals that we think we cannot reach, and we rarely grow without exceeding our own expectations. Your job is to push them past the limits they think they have.

Most of all, mentors are there to support and encourage their protégés. Just as a team will reflect the attitude of their coach, you shape the attitude of your mentee. **Be honest, but be optimistic.** You are living proof that failures can be learning experiences and that obstacle can be overcome.

In the end, the quality of your mentorship is partly based what your protégé brings to the table, but also in a large part to what you are able to do with it together. Be open, honest, frank, optimistic and completely down to earth.

# Derailment and Barriers to Entrepreneurship

While there is no shortage of opportunity and no shortage of optimism about their chances for success, clients with mental health challenges may have several barriers to overcome in addition to the usual hurdles that face aspiring entrepreneurs. Many times, these barriers exist as a result of the derailment people may encounter when struggling to overcome these challenges. However, none of these barriers are insurmountable. By using insight and imagination, taking advantage of community resources, and working together with the aspiring entrepreneur, solutions can be crafted that reduce or eliminate barriers for the entrepreneur.

## 1. Education/Experiential Barriers

For a variety of reasons, some entrepreneurs may have not had the opportunity to complete higher levels of education or acquire business-related skills that often are considered the requisites to successful self-employment. They may need to be directed to some 'basic training'.

Some may have experienced chronic unemployment or underemployment and may lack experience, understanding or even awareness of business concepts, procedures and protocols. They may lack the personal and professional networks that would enhance business development and growth, and they may rely heavily on their mentor to guide them in discovering who and what they need to know and where they can find the information and answers they require.

## 2. Financial Barriers

Business financing for new entrepreneurs is almost always a challenge even if the individual has access to assets such as collateral or a good credit rating. A criterion for Rise clients is that they have had difficulty obtaining traditional small-business financing, and often they do not have other assets or a good credit rating.

If the entrepreneur is receiving social assistance benefits or income support, they may have additional challenges in this area. These programs often disallow benefits when businesses are started. Some government assistance programs have changed regulations to allow aspiring entrepreneurs to continue drawing some level of benefits through the start-up phase of business, but front-line caseworkers may not be aware of these changes. Through mistakenly disallowing benefits, there develops a risk of jeopardizing the entrepreneur's business before it's even had a chance to get off the ground.

## 3. Confidence

Circumstances faced by people with mental health challenges can lead to social marginalization and isolation. Because of past experiences, some entrepreneurs with disabilities may initially lack confidence in their own ability to plan for the future. Often, what they most need is to feel acceptance and support from their mentor and others from whom they seek guidance and support.

## Regarding Mental Health

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, between three and five percent of the Canadian population has a chronic mental illness, while one in five persons is likely to experience and seek help for a mental health problem in their lifetime.

Mental health challenges are the result of underlying conditions, including disturbances in the functioning of the brain (e.g., chemical imbalances) or external events, stresses or trauma (e.g., physical abuse). They vary in severity and duration and may consist of a single episode or be chronic in nature. The most common psychiatric disabilities include depression and bipolar disorders, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, eating disorders and addictions. Rise supports all entrepreneurs whose diagnoses fall within the scope of the DSM-5, including ADHD and the Autism spectrum.

Some psychiatric disabilities may be resolved through therapy or counseling. Others may respond best to a combination of therapies including drug therapies. Drugs can help people with psychiatric disabilities control the symptoms of their illness, but they may also cause side effects like cognitive delay, weight gain, nervousness or a lack of energy; these side effects may be the only indication that a person has a mental health challenge.

It is important to remember that clients will vary in regards to the severity of their mental health challenges. Many of the issues discussed here or in training may never come up during your time as a mentor; regardless, it will be beneficial to both you and your mentee to keep them in mind. Rise asks mentors not to discuss these issues unless first prompted by the mentee. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or unsure about handling a situation, please contact Rise for support.



# The Four Competencies of Mentorship

There are four core competencies that all mentors need to develop in order to be effective in their role

## 1. Effective Communication

- A mentor should be consistent in communication methods
- A mentor should respect the mentee's preferred communication method
- A mentor will use active listening and reflecting techniques to communicate ideas

The most effective feedback focuses not on what went wrong in the past, but on what can go right in the future. Forward-looking input focuses on the solution rather than the problem, and can urge your mentee to think creatively and build on your ideas. When your mentee encounters a challenge, suggest ideas that might work in the future, instead of focusing on what they did wrong in the past.

Forward-looking input is typically interpreted as encouragement and a boost forward because it emphasizes solutions rather than problems. Furthermore, the person accepting such feedback receives good ideas for completing the task, making the change, and delivering the result. Because forward-looking input does not imply superiority of judgment, it allows the mentee to focus on the help the mentor is providing.

### 9 reasons to try forward-looking input with your mentee

- ① We can change the future; we can't change the past. Forward-looking input helps people envision and focus on a positive future, not a failed past. Athletes are often trained using forward-looking input: race car drivers are taught to look at the road ahead, not at the wall. Basketball players are taught to envision the ball going in the hoop and to imagine the perfect shot. By giving your mentee ideas on how they can be even more successful, you can increase their chances of achieving this success.
- ② It can be more productive to help people be right than prove they were wrong. Negative feedback often becomes an exercise in "let me prove you were wrong." This tends to produce defensiveness on the part of the receiver and discomfort on the part of the sender. Even constructively delivered feedback is often seen as negative because it necessarily involves a discussion of mistakes, shortfalls, and problems. Forward-looking input, on the other hand, is almost always seen as positive because it focuses on solutions—not problems.
- ③ Forward-looking input is especially suited to successful people. Successful people like getting ideas that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. They tend to resist negative judgment. We all tend to accept feedback that is consistent with the way we see ourselves, and we also tend to reject or deny feedback that is inconsistent with the way we see ourselves. Successful people tend to have a very positive self-image, and respond better to positive suggestions than negative ones.
- ④ You don't have to wait until you've established a relationship with your mentee to provide them with forward-looking input. Forward-looking input can come from anyone who knows about the task; it does not require personal experience with the individual. Feedback requires knowing about the person. Forward-looking input just requires having good ideas for achieving the task.

5 People do not take forward-looking input as personally as they do direct feedback. In theory, constructive feedback is supposed to “focus on the performance, not the person.” In practice, almost all feedback is taken personally, no matter how it is delivered. Positive suggestions tend to be seen as objective advice; critiques are often viewed as personal attacks. One benefit of using forward-looking input is that it cannot involve a personal critique because you are discussing something that has not yet happened.

6 Direct feedback can reinforce personal stereotyping and negative self-fulfilling prophecies by reminding the entrepreneur of the feeling of failure. To the mentee, this can seem like a reinforcement of the message, “This is just the way you are, so don’t bother trying to progress.” On the other hand, forward-looking input can introduce or reinforce the possibility of improvement because it is based on the assumption that the person receiving the suggestions can make positive changes in the future.

7 Forward-looking input can cover almost all of the same material as feedback. Imagine that your mentee has spent their marketing budget to purchase newspaper ads, only to realize it is a marketing method that is wholly unsuited for their business. Rather than make them relive the experience, you might help them make better plans by giving them suggestions for future marketing. You could say something like, “Let’s talk about some other marketing options that might be more cost effective. Have you thought about ways you can use social media to market your product?” These suggestions can be very specific and still delivered in a positive way. In this way you can cover the same points without making your mentee feel even more embarrassed.

8 Forward-looking input tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback. An excellent technique for giving ideas to successful people is to say, “Here are four ideas for the future. Please accept these in the positive spirit in which they are given. If you can only use two of the ideas, you are still two ahead. Just ignore what doesn’t make sense for you.” With this approach almost no time gets wasted on judging the quality of the ideas or proving that the ideas are wrong. By eliminating judgment of the ideas, the process becomes much more positive for the sender, as well as the receiver. Successful people tend to have a high need for self-determination and will accept ideas that they buy and reject ideas that feel forced upon them.

9 People tend to listen more attentively to forward-looking input than to feedback. Often when others are speaking, we are busy composing a reply. This is particularly true when receiving negative feedback, because we feel we must defend our position and our reasons for our decisions. With forward-looking input, your mentee will feel less defensive, and become freer to listen to your suggestions. Instead of trying to think of ways to defend their position, your mentee can focus on your advice, and be grateful for your help.

## 2. Personal Growth and Development

- A mentor should support his or her mentee's personal development and guide their learning
- A mentor encourages reflection, enabling mentees to learn from their experiences
- A mentor uses care and compassion to facilitate positive changes based on his or her mentee's strengths

## 3. Role Clarification

- A mentor understands his or her role, purpose and expectations
- A mentor takes into account the impact of personal biases and clarifies his or her own values, beliefs and attitudes and seeks to use these to support his or her mentee
- A mentor recognizes his or her own limits and promotes self-care

## 4. Connection

- A mentor connects his or her mentee to resources, services and opportunities
- A mentor acts as a guide to resources for his or her mentee
- A mentor shares stories of his or her experiences

# Establishing Expectations

## First Meeting

Before you meet your mentee, take some time to prepare for your initial meeting.

- Review the mentee's business plan and any other documentation Rise provided to gain a better understanding of the mentee's background and professional objectives
- Review the Mentor Handbook

The first meeting should include your mentee and the mentee's loan officer. At the first meeting, take some time to get to know each other. Share your professional and personal histories to discover similarities and differences. Discuss your mentee's VISION for their business. Decide together on the overall business strategy for the next 12 months.

## 1.Connecting

Discuss the desired frequency of your meetings. Note, Rise recommends that you meet each other face-to-face once a month. Determine the protocol for rescheduling cancelled appointments. Discuss the best method for staying in touch between meetings

## 2.Setting Priorities

Determining a productive use for your time together is beneficial to achieving your mentee's business goals. This can be done using a structured or unstructured method. For a unstructured methodology, have the entrepreneur identify topics for discussion at the beginning of each meeting. For a structured methodology employ a Goal Worksheet (included) for each meeting

## 3.Staying Focused

Identify a topic, the steps to achievement, along with desired deadlines where possible. Work on that topic only, redirecting back to the subject at hand if required. Slot other topics that come up for a future meeting, either electronically or in person. Direct clients to speak with someone in their mental health network if the topic becomes focused on their mental health

## 4.Measuring Success

Briefly go over your goals and milestones—are you still on target? Does your mentee seem positive and enthusiastic? If not, then revisit steps 1 – 3 from above

# Networking

Becoming part of the larger business community requires the entrepreneur to expand his or her existing network. Here are a few ways you can support your mentee's networking efforts:

## 1. Value of a Network

Discuss the role of networking in business. The concept of reciprocal relationships that support business growth may be unfamiliar to your mentee. If appropriate, you can encourage your mentee to stretch beyond their existing network of friends, family and caregivers to include new and unknown networks of people

## 2. How to Network

Help your mentee Identify local business associations or groups that provide networking opportunities. Encourage your mentee to explore these networks and associations for an indication that they are a "good fit" for their business. Offer an opportunity to network together if appropriate. This may begin by simply attending a local business breakfast club meeting or even attending an informal meeting with a single new contact

## 3. Use Your Network

Explore how your own network may provide opportunities for your mentee to be connected with the local business community. Consider inviting your mentee to accompany you as a guest to one of your networking events. Search your contacts for potential matches and prepare a letter of introduction to expand your mentee's business network

## Dealing with Challenges

*All relationships face challenges, and your relationship with your mentee is no exception. As you help your mentee grow both their business and themselves, you will be most effective if you remember some key points.*

- Maintain awareness that your communication style may be different from your mentee's, and give your mentee the benefit of the doubt when differences arise during your mentoring relationship. It is best to assume that your mentee has positive intentions, but you should still establish firm boundaries around your relationship. If your mentee acts in a way you feel is inappropriate, leave no wiggle-room when you discuss the situation. Make a definitive statement about your expectations for your mentee and the way you expect them to treat you. Leave no grey area surrounding your position.
- Make every effort to keep in mind that your mentee may have limited experiences with professionals outside of a health care setting. If you find that your mentee often uses your meeting time to discuss their mental health challenges, you may need to redefine your role. You can say something like, "I understand that anxiety has been a problem for you, and I'm glad that you're taking steps to overcome it. I have business expertise, and I'm able to help you with that, but I don't feel like I have the expertise to help you with your anxiety. Do you mind if we just focus on the business?" Empathy is always well-received, and acknowledging how your mentee is feeling before re-directing the conversation back toward business will help you both feel more secure.
- Reinforce your mentee's strengths but be honest about the limitations or difficulties which you see in their business. This can help your mentee learn to manage priorities, capacity and resources. Ask questions like, "Can you do all of this at once?" or "If you only do this, when will you reach your goal?" This type of questioning may feel like an attack to some mentees, so it is important to ask for permission to go beyond sharing of knowledge. Start by asking, "Do you want my support with this?", "Shall we work together on this?", or "Do you want some feedback?" Ultimately, your mentee's decisions are their own choice. But if the two of you have built a relationship based on trust, they will be more likely to initially listen to your concerns, and allow you to help them fix problems that may arise when their plans go awry.
- Remember that your mentee's actions and reactions are only marginally based on what is currently happening. Most of our reactions are based on the past, including the circumstances of our education, professional and life experiences. Especially in the beginning of your relationship, emphasize listening to your mentee, and then connect your own experiences to their reality. Remember that first and foremost, mentoring is about building a relationship together, and you should always allow some time for small talk and catching up with each other.
- If you notice that your mentee is showing signs that may be consistent with a mental health crisis, you may choose to speak to them about it. Use facts about what you've observed to express your concern in a non-judgemental way. For example, you could say, "I've noticed that you've arrived late to our last two meetings, and you haven't been responding to my emails this month. You're usually quite prompt with both things. This makes me wonder if something is going on with your mental health. What do you think?" By framing your concern with facts and by asking your mentee for their assessment, you have effectively expressed your concern, made it safe for your mentee to confide in you regardless of whether or not they are actually facing challenges, and placed the onus for their behaviour upon them. If your mentee shares with you that they are indeed having challenges, remember that you are not a therapist or counselor, and encourage them to use whatever health care services they already have in place. You may always contact Rise staff for assistance; seek help and advice when you need it.

## On Going Mentorship

Keep in mind that some mentoring pairs benefit from structure, while others are comfortable with a less formal plan. If you and your mentee decide that formally planning your time together would be helpful, you can use the Initial Business Plan Assessment Tool to identify areas of their business on which the entrepreneur may need to focus; this will give you both a sense of what to do next. This tool will be especially helpful for mentors who are providing pre-disbursement support. Once you have identified the entrepreneur's needs, use the Action Plan Template as a starting point to record your thoughts and keep you both on track.

## Final Meeting

*The mentorship program is intended to last 12 months, but may be extended upon completion with the agreement of both the mentee and the mentor.*

- Arrange a final meeting with your mentee
- Complete the final feedback form found on the rise mentor portal

**“One of the things I keep learning is that the secret of being happy is doing things for other people.”**

–Dick Gregory; American comedian and entrepreneur

*With gratitude, we acknowledge the following resources, each of which were helpful in the creation of this handbook: Rotman School of Management, The Mentoring Partnership, Canadian Youth Business Foundation, Mentor City, Mentoring Canada, SEDI (Social and Enterprise Development Innovations), and Iowa Mentoring Partnership.*

## Mentor Resources

For more information on mental health and addictions, refer to the following:

*General Information and further education*

<http://camh.net/education/index.html>

*Mental illness diagnoses*

[http://www.camhx.ca/education/online\\_courses\\_webinars/mha101/](http://www.camhx.ca/education/online_courses_webinars/mha101/)



## Learning Goals and Expectations

*Prior to your first meeting, take the time to document your goals and objectives for your mentorship partnership. During your first meeting, we recommend that you review this form with your mentor, not only to explain your own goals and expectations, but to understand those of your mentor as well.*

### My Learning Goals

We often benefit by defining and writing down the things we want to achieve. Write down specific things you want to learn throughout the duration of your time with your mentor. By having a list of goals, your mentor will be better able to help you find the people and information you need to learn new business skills.

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### My Expectations

It is always best to seek clarity at the beginning of your partnership about what information, connections or assistance your mentor is able and willing to provide. Write down what you expect to receive from your mentor and take the time to discuss them at your first meeting.

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### My Mentor's Expectations

During your first meeting, take the time to ask your mentor what his or her primary expectations are for your partnership. Write them down, and discuss any questions you may have about what he or she expects from you and your partnership.

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