

Module 6: Developing People

Mentoring: Paired Discussion

This exercise is based on the session *Embracing the Past, Envisioning the Future: Discussions Between Senior and Junior MCH Professionals*, co-facilitated by Joseph Telfair of UNC-Greensboro and Alice Richman of UNC-Chapel Hill at the 2009 University of Illinois at Chicago MCH Leadership Retreat.

This exercise pairs a “junior” and a more “senior” MCH professional for a bi-directional interview about each participant’s work and mentorship experience. Each partner will take a turn as the interviewer and interviewee. This exercise is intended to encourage deep reflection and active listening. The conversation should last about 45 minutes to one hour, during which time each partner should serve as both interviewer and interviewee.

If possible, after the conversations are complete, participants should come together as a larger group to share themes and insights. A facilitator should guide a group discussion about what participants learned and help identify broad themes. The facilitator may wish to close the session by asking each participant to say three words that express his/her feelings about the session.

Instructions to Participants:

- Pair up with a partner with whom you will engage in a one-to-one conversation.
- Find a space to engage in conversation comfortably.
- Decide who will be the first interviewer. Each person has 20 to 30 minutes to find out as much as s/he can about his/her partner.
- Ask your partner each question, encouraging deep reflection through your own friendly curiosity. Take a few notes if you wish, but your main job is to listen deeply.
- Change roles when the interview is complete.

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Questions:

Introduce yourselves briefly. What do you expect gain from this session?

1. Tell me a story about a time in your work when you felt most engaged, alive, and satisfied. Select one high point. What was it about that time that made you feel great? (Who else was involved? What were you doing? What did you feel you achieved?)
2. What do you value most about yourself? (Don't be modest.)
3. What do you value most about the organization or community in which you work?
4. *For the more junior person:* Are there experiences or things you have learned in MCH that you think senior professionals are not aware of or take for granted?

For the more senior person: What were your most valuable experiences as you established your career?

5. *For the more junior person:* What advice can you give to senior professionals in interacting and interfacing with junior professionals?

For the more senior person: If you had the opportunity to begin your career again, what would you change? What would you do the same or differently?

6. Tell me about an experience with a mentor or key person who has influenced you to date. Has this person influenced you to go in directions that maybe you hadn't planned?
7. What were some of the key challenges you've faced in your career, and how have you dealt with them? Do you think that you've handled them effectively?
8. What would you say is your constant source of motivation? How do you "keep the candle lit"? Does that change over time?