

# Building Trust and Rapport as a Mentor

## Essential Tips for Effective Mentoring Relationships

### Introduction

Trust and rapport are at the heart of every effective mentoring relationship. As a mentor, your ability to foster an environment where your mentee feels safe, valued, and understood can make all the difference. The following tips will help you build trust and rapport, with a special focus on active listening, vulnerability, empathy, and creating a non-judgemental thinking environment.

### 1. Practise Active Listening

- Give your full attention: Put aside distractions—silence your phone, close your laptop, and make eye contact.
- Reflect and clarify: Repeat back what your mentee has said in your own words to check understanding, e.g., “So what I’m hearing is...”
- Ask open questions: Encourage your mentee to elaborate by asking questions that begin with “how”, “what”, or “tell me more about...”
- Allow silence: Don’t rush to fill pauses. Silence can give your mentee space to think and share more deeply.

### 2. Demonstrate Vulnerability

- Share your experiences: Be open about your own challenges and setbacks. This shows you are human and approachable.
- Admit mistakes: If you don’t know something or have made an error, acknowledge it. This builds authenticity and mutual respect.
- Encourage two-way learning: Let your mentee know that you, too, are learning from the relationship.

### 3. Show Empathy

- Validate feelings: Recognise and acknowledge your mentee’s emotions, even if you haven’t experienced the same thing yourself.
- Offer support, not solutions: Sometimes, listening and understanding are more valuable than offering advice.
- Stay present: Focus on your mentee’s needs and concerns, rather than thinking ahead to your response.

## 4. Establish a Non-Judgemental Thinking Environment

- Respect differences: Be open to ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives that differ from your own.
- Encourage openness: Make it clear that your mentee can share anything without fear of ridicule or criticism.
- Respond with curiosity, not judgement: If you hear something surprising or challenging, ask, “Can you help me understand your thinking?” rather than reacting negatively.
- Maintain confidentiality: Assure your mentee that what is shared between you is kept private, helping to build trust.

## 5. Additional Tips

- Set boundaries and expectations: Agree together on how you will work, including frequency of meetings and confidentiality.
- Be consistent and reliable: Keep appointments and follow through on commitments; reliability fosters trust.
- Celebrate progress: Acknowledge growth and milestones to reinforce a positive and supportive relationship.

## Conclusion

Effective mentoring is built on a foundation of trust, empathy, and open communication. By practising active listening, showing vulnerability, offering genuine empathy, and fostering a non-judgemental environment, mentors can empower their mentees to grow and thrive.