



Redefining Mentoring In Unique Communication Scenarios: Phase 2 Mentoring in Action

This project, Redefining Mentoring in Unique Communication Scenarios, is continuing to grow, and so is the community building it with us.

In Phase 1 we called for Mentoring to be redefined to question the traditional notion of mentoring, that is not always an inclusive communication practice for people with communication disability. We have created a powerful new definition of a more inclusive Mentoring 2.0:

“Mentoring is a flexible and inclusive relationship where both mentor and mentee learn and grow. It can happen in all kinds of ways and both mentor and mentee may not even be aware that it’s happening at times. Communication is adapted to fit the person, not the other way around.”

Phase 2 of the project has explored various examples of the mentor and mentee relationship. It can happen through:

- sharing a life story, presenting an idea
- developing a resource together
- connecting with peers
- simply having a conversation that helps someone see something differently.

Our Monthly Mentoring Spotlights have become an important part of this phase. People with communication disability and AAC users are sharing their experiences, ideas and perspectives, often discovering that they have been mentoring others all along. As trust has grown, so has confidence. Participants are increasingly sharing personal experiences, asking questions, exploring different perspectives and taking on leadership roles. Some previously reluctant people are even now choosing to create presentations to share with the group.

The spotlights have provided many important conversations around a range of topics from personal experiences, ableism and living a fruitful life. During one spotlight, our Inclusive Practice Officer, Margie Charlesworth commented that “Organic peer mentoring gives room for things to happen, whereas supervision is more structured”. The mentoring spotlight discussions organically evolve creating these opportunities for informal mentoring to occur.

Lisa is another regular at the spotlights and pointed out that, “People who have the education and skills, rightly so, want to be paid for mentoring. But for me, mentoring has always been about giving back from all the great mentors I’ve had over my lifetime”. Reciprocity is a central theme to mentoring. This includes paying mentoring forward if someone has benefited from great mentors in the past, as well as ensuring that both mentors and mentees gain value from the relationship.



Brenton, another regular contributor to the mentoring project commented that mentoring is circular, telling us that he and his support workers mentor each other when they work together. Brenton employs a support worker, yet they don't know the project as well as him so he needed to mentor them to ensure his presentation was the way that he wanted it to be.

A spin off of the Monthly Mentoring Spotlights are the Real Potential Mentoring (RPM) Spotlights aimed at adolescents. This new initiative is run in school holidays and addresses topics that appeal to a younger audience and may be thinking about what's next after school.

At the same time, we're building a growing collection of resources through Partnership Payments. People with communication disability are being paid for their time, knowledge and lived experience to create resources that will contribute to the national mentoring toolkit. We have a wide range of offerings from varied perspectives, which will come together in phase 3 as we develop the mentoring toolkit with our community.

We're also co-designing a Presenter Pathway Program, creating opportunities for people with communication disability to build presentation skills, share their expertise and take their experience into new spaces. If you are interested, there is still a chance to be involved in a range of ways.

More people are getting involved, more ideas are emerging, and the project continues to evolve with people with communication disability at the centre.

This is mentoring in action: people sharing what they know, learning from each other and creating new opportunities to participate and lead.

A huge thank you to all of the contributors who have worked and walked with us through phase 1 and 2 of the Redefining Mentoring in Unique Communication Scenarios project.

Co-designing resources with the community has been exceptionally fruitful and valuable for all of us here at Two Way Street. We continue to learn as we delve further into the possibilities of this work.

Looking ahead, the Mentoring Project continues to co-design resources for the final mentoring toolkit.

There is still time to be involved in this project. We encourage you to follow us on social media to stay up to date. You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

If you have an idea you would like to explore please email us at mentoring@twowaystreet.com.au.

*This project received funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.