

## **The Reflective Mentor**

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**The Reflective Mentor**

**By**

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A division of MA Healthcare Ltd

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*We would like to thank the many staff and students who have provided us with insight and wisdom into the reflective mentoring process. They have put our ideas under pressure, helped us to see new possibilities and provided us with rich and valuable feedback. Thank you for being on the 'receiving end' of a process that has helped us define, implement and refine the role of the reflective mentor and the process of reflective mentoring.*

*To my friend and mentor Irma Alcazar  
To all those in the reflective learning community*





# Introduction

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This book focuses on three things: the mentor, their protégés and a process we are calling reflective mentoring. The central questions we will explore are:

- What is a reflective mentor?
- What do they do?
- What are the characteristics of a reflective conversation between mentors and their protégés that enables both to improve their practice?

This book aims to enable mentors to look appreciatively at their own work so that they are more able to make wise and ethical decisions about how to support their protégés. We suggest that it is also important for mentors to be able to show that their mentoring has improved over time. In the concluding chapter of this book we offer a number of questions that might help mentors look for evidence of improvement.

Arguably, when trying to improve practice, thinking and conversations get stuck with vocabularies of human deficit and, in doing so, fail to unlock the creative potential of those involved. *The Reflective Mentor* is an invitation to mentors to use their appreciative intelligence to focus on the best of what is currently experienced, seek out the root causes of this, then design and implement actions that amplify and sustain this success. The implications for the mentor, the protégé and the process of reflective mentoring are explored.

The core values that guide our view of a reflective mentor are essentially inclusional. By this we mean that the reflective mentor incorporates, is accepting and includes rather than puts up barriers of distinction and exclusion based upon seniority or grade. This is why we argue that the reflective mentor seeks to look for, and to appreciate, what is of value and what is worthy, in their conversations with their protégés. In this book we describe and explain how the reflective mentor needs to use their appreciative and social intelligence in their encounters with their protégés. This means that mentoring-through-conversation is not about ‘good-and-bad’, ‘right-and-wrong’, ‘do’s-and-don’ts’. It is not about things being black-and-white, but about seeking to build (even) better future work from those positive aspects of current practice, no matter how small or insignificant the protégé may feel they are. This requires a major shift in a mentor’s mindset away from mentoring being only about problem finding, problem solving and about getting rid of ‘unwanted’ aspects of current practice. Away from confessional tales and towards conversations about success, about understanding why particular aspects of a protégé’s practice are indeed successful, and how these joyful and celebratory aspects of practice can be further amplified.

Quality in the mentoring process therefore comes from asking what is important or significant about what the protégé brings to the mentoring session. How well they are doing and also how the protégé can show others, how to build even better future practice from those things that are currently good and successful. Where appropriate, value can be added to this process if it is done in the company of others. We have developed the notion of *The Reflective Mentor* based upon the belief that reflective mentoring needs to focus on ‘the positives’ while appreciating the necessity to include those aspects of practice that need attention (weaknesses, limitations, etc) within this positive frame. Reflective mentoring is therefore infused with a spirit of optimism and hopefulness. To be a reflective mentor requires putting the values of inter-connectedness, reality grounded action, positive regard and relational awareness into action.