



# MASONIC MENTORING



PROVINCE OF HERTFORDSHIRE



## ***MASONIC MENTORING***

In the Initiation Ceremony the candidate is told “to follow your leader with a firm but humble confidence”. So begins a journey from darkness to light, from ignorance to Masonic knowledge.

The work of the Mentor is to support the new Mason: to offer him friendship, advice and encouragement, to explain something of our workings, traditions and organisation.

### ***Who should be the Mentor?***

It is obviously important that the new Mason and Mentor get on well together and enjoy each other’s company so that a special relationship can readily develop. Ideally, there should be a number of brethren in the Lodge who could take on the role. In some cases, the obvious choice of Mentor may be the candidate’s proposer or seconder but:

- they may be in an active office in the Lodge which precludes them from spending quality time with the candidate when he is asked to retire;
- they may still be at an early stage in their own Masonic career without the required level of knowledge to answer the candidate’s questions;
- they may be unable to attend Lodge meetings and Lodge of Instruction (LOI) on a regular basis for family or business reasons.

In fact, it is up to the Lodge Mentoring Coordinator (whose role is explained later) to consult and find the most appropriate Mentor he can in each case.

## ***SKILLS A MENTOR NEEDS***

### ***Observational Skills***

Keeping a watchful eye will provide indicators on how the Brother is settling into the Lodge.

- Does he join in with the brethren, or is he found standing apart on his own?
- Does he appear interested in proceedings in the Lodge? Is he looking at what is happening in the ritual or does he seem inattentive or easily distracted?

### ***Questioning Skills***

A useful coaching or mentoring session depends upon asking open questions that provoke a response which enhances learning. A closed question may be answered with a simple Yes or No and usually begins with “Do you”, “Are you”, “Have you”

and so on.

On the other hand open questions are aimed at provoking an extended response and might start with “what”, “why”, “how”, or “when”.

You should use a closed question to gather or verify information, to confirm understanding of facts, and to confirm agreement or commitment.

The repeated use of closed questions should be avoided as a series of such questions can quickly turn a discussion into an interrogation.

A more difficult skill to acquire, but necessary in guiding and supporting a learner is to use open questions that enable the Mentor to:

- establish a rapport and put the other person at ease;
- free up the other person to answer as he chooses and in his own words;
- encourage uninhibited feedback.

The benefits of using appropriate open questions are obvious.

### ***Listening Skills***

It is the ability to listen “actively” that marks out a good communicator.

To succeed as a Mentor, you must concentrate on what is being said. You may make the Brother feel unimportant or unvalued if he senses you are not paying close attention to his ideas or considering his feelings.

When in discussion, listen for a note of confidence or hesitation in his voice - confidence and other emotions are expressed as much in the tone of the response as in the words themselves.

The Mentor who possesses these three skills will soon be able to gain a true picture of the Brother’s strengths and abilities, and make judgements on the sorts of contributions he can make to the life of the Lodge if he so desires.

### ***Other Qualifications of a Mentor***

As stated earlier, the Mentor must above all be someone who can relate to and establish a rapport with the Brother concerned.

*Ideally* he should also be:

- A knowledgeable Mason who regularly attends meetings and the LOL preferably with some experience of the Royal Arch.

- Someone not currently holding an office in the Lodge or at least not an onerous one which demands his presence during the meeting or at the meal afterwards. This is because the Mentor should retire with the candidate as well as sitting with or near him at the Festive Board.
- Enthusiastic, outgoing and friendly.

Whether the Mentor and the Brother are of similar age, or live near each other may in some cases be a factor.

Few of us may consider ourselves perfectly qualified for the role but, with good intentions and a bit of training, there are many who could make a good job of being a Mentor and gain much from the experience.

### ***How to be a Mentor***

As an absolute minimum it is important to meet with the candidate before and after each ceremony to put him at ease and answer any questions he may have.

How long this takes will depend on his level of self-confidence and the research he may have undertaken privately (the age of IT makes this increasingly possible).

Sometimes what he has discovered may need to be explained or put into context.

In addition as a Mentor you should:

- Ensure you are seated next to or near the Brother in Lodge and at the Festive Board, where you can introduce him to others present;
- Accompany him at all times when he is required to leave the Lodge - this can be a useful time for discussion;
- Explain Freemasonry, its structure, the officers, symbolism, ceremonial and demonstrate the correct method of saluting;
- Take a supportive and encouraging interest in his progress;
- Help him to learn the ritual as he progresses in the Lodge;
- Encourage him to play a full part in the life of the Lodge both ceremonially and socially.

### ***The Duties of the Lodge Mentoring Co-ordinator***

It is, of course, the responsibility of every Lodge to look after its members. The Lodge Mentoring Co-ordinator (LMC) has a specific task: to ensure the mentoring process is not only implemented, but that it works effectively in his Lodge.

The LMC needs to see that a Mentor is appointed for every Candidate, to do which he should:

- Make sure all members are aware of mentoring and its benefits - a short paper on mentoring to be read in open Lodge, perhaps;
- Ensure Mentors attend any training or workshops provided;
- Match the right Mentor to the Candidate;
- Monitor how the scheme is working and, when asked, fill in a simple form for the Provincial Mentor.

### ***Supporting the Experienced Mason***

Each and every Brother needs to feel that in his Lodge and that his contribution is valued. Members whose enthusiasm is engaged provide strength and stability in the Lodge; they contribute to the “buzz” of a successful meeting.

Some younger Masons, particularly those with a professional background, will be used to the concept of continuous professional development. Their expectations of a career path may mean that their Mentors have a continuing role to play (like a parent) but, in some cases, other friends within the Lodge may themselves have become role-models.

Interest is engaged and potential developed when Brethren feel that they are making a contribution i.e. when they have something to do. Office holders are self-evidently involved. For others, participation in ceremonies is a way to achieve a similar sense of involvement. As the Provincial Grand Master wrote in the Provincial News:

“Every ceremony can be split up between a number of brethren: there is no need for the Master to do it all nor for him to vacate the Chair while someone else conducts a part. The Charge, the Second Degree Tracing Board and the Traditional History can all be broken into sections with several participants involved”.

### ***OTHER STRATEGIES MIGHT INCLUDE***

- Identifying external jobs that have real advantage to the Lodge and provide a new stimulus - taking responsibility for organising social events, establishing a Lodge web site, etc.
- Consider restricting occupation of permanent offices in Lodge to perhaps five (or seven) years. This gives people time to put their mark on a job but equally allows others the potential opportunity of taking office - perhaps after a period of shadowing or acting as Assistant Secretary or Assistant Director of Ceremonies.

- Manage the Festive Board. Don't let people sit in cliques but mix people up so that they get to meet everyone in the Lodge - young and old, junior and experienced.
- Take full advantage of LOI which can be a forum for gaining confidence and personal development as well as learning the ritual.
- Be accommodating of the knife and fork Mason. Each is a valued member even if he has no wish to progress and never joins another Lodge or another Order.
- Think about how to reward those Masons who will never go through the chair - a role as permanent Steward within the Lodge, for instance. Think about Provincial something the Province is keen to see as recognition of contributions made.

Experienced Masons are too important a resource to waste. The emphasis in Mentoring is rightly on looking after the new member, ensuring that he settles in quickly and feels well integrated. However, more experienced Masons have needs also, albeit different ones.

We must treat Masons as individuals, we cannot produce a "one size fits all" UGLE or Provincial blueprint.

### ***Stages in a Brother's career***

Before joining, the Brother will have talked with his proposer and seconder as well as being interviewed by the Lodge Committee. Usually, he will by then have picked up some basic information and have asked some of the questions forming in his mind. But after he has actually joined, there will be more.

#### ***Stage 1***

This comes immediately after his Initiation. Simple domestic questions are likely to be posed. For example: How often do we meet and when? Who is who? What is a Warden, Deacon etc.? What are the fees for and how often do I pay them? What am I expected to wear and who provides the regalia?

#### ***Stage 2***

This is where he can begin to understand the symbolic meanings of the Degrees as he completes them but tread carefully - many of us at this stage were more concerned with getting through the ceremonies than deeper understanding. So do not rush him. Be a helpful presence - sit near him in the Lodge and and go out with him if he has to retire during a higher degree.

### *Stage 3*

By now, he will have some grasp of Freemasonry. He will have formed a view on whether it is really for him and whether he fits into the Lodge. Discussion will reveal whether he is ready to play a more active part in the ceremonial and social side of the Lodge.

### *Stage 4*

By now, a Brother should be enjoying his Masonry, having struck a happy balance between his home/ work and Masonic life and wishing to progress further. Such progression could be up the ladder to the Worshipful Master's Chair, or into an active role such as Charity Steward, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Organist. Again, the Mentor can provide support and encouragement wherever required.

### *Checklist for Stage 1*

As a minimum you should aim to cover the following points:

- Give an explanation of the 'Private Lodge' and identify any other Lodges that meet in the area. Cover the difference between 'privacy' and 'secrecy'.
- Explain the set-up of the Lodge and the various offices.
- Make sure he has a written record of dates of meetings, rehearsals and the LOI.
- Make a tour of the Lodge, explaining the layout of the furniture, Tracing Boards etc.
- Tell him what he will need to bring to the Lodge in the way of cash and whether meals are or are not included in the Lodge subscriptions.
- Explain to him the procedure for introducing a guest to the Lodge.

A good way to cover some of these issues is to meet the Brother socially or to go with him to another Lodge where he can see an Initiation ceremony.

He may need re-assurance that Masonry does not involve him spending time which should properly go to family, work and other interests. **Do not rush him into joining other Orders.**

### ***Checklist for Stage 2***

- Explain the relationship between the three degrees.
- Inform him of the Royal Arch and explain its importance as the next step in Pure Antient Freemasonry. Introduce him to the Lodge's Royal Arch Representative but only if he shows interest. Never rush him.
- Visit a Lodge so that he can see a ceremony; sit with him and, afterwards, answer any questions he may have. Explain to him that visiting is not compulsory and should be at a level where it is a pleasure and not a chore.
- Encourage him to visit Freemasons' Hall, perhaps with his family, when a conducted tour is available.

### ***Checklist for Stage 3***

- Does he have any ideas of his own for social events? Encourage attendance at other Lodge's social events.
- Discuss with him whether he wants to take part in the ceremony, slow and easy at first, don't push him. Encourage him to attend LOI when he can. Help him with ceremonial work.

### ***Checklist for Stage 4***

- Explain the set-up of Grand Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge and the officers of these Lodges. If possible, attend a meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge with him.
- Make sure he meets Grand Officers and Acting Provincial Officers. They will be happy to talk to him.
- Inform him of the Royal Arch and explain its importance as the next step in Pure Antient Freemasonry. Introduce him to the Lodge's Royal Arch Representative for further discussions, but only if he shows interest. Never rush him.

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