Collaborative Communication in Mentoring: Annotated Sources

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The literature relevant to mentoring and coaching is vast. We focus on *reflection that occurs in dialogue* with other people, primarily in higher education. Three overlapping themes emerge from the literature:

1. **Reflective practices**: clear time and have a safe space for reflecting both alone and with others; reflect on new learning; apply it to work context and professional goals; keep in mind personal identity, authenticity, strengths, needs in the professional role. Develop skills and habits of reflection (Brookfield, Qualters).
2. **Centrality of listening**: to oneself and to others; "hearing into speech" (Palmer), listen so people can give voice to an unarticulated, felt sense (Gendlin). Listening for joy, presence, relationships (Ueland). Consider carefully one's purpose in listening (Little & Palmer).
3. **Dialogue including listening <u>and</u> voice**: Isaacs' seven collaborative communication skills; thinking together is distinct from *discussion* and *debate* (Isaacs, p. 41); circle of trust (Palmer).

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
  Brookfield discusses four lenses for teachers to use in examining their assumptions: self, students, colleagues, and literature (p. xiii). In ch. 7 "Holding critical conversations about teaching," Brookfield focuses on the essential social aspect of critical reflection: "although critical reflection often begins with autobiographical analysis, its full realization occurs only when others are involved" (p. 140). He provides practical strategies for achieving critical conversations, including the "critical incident approach."

Cornell, A.W. (2001). The power of listening. Paper presented to the 13th International Focusing Conference Shannon, Ireland. http://focusingresources.com/our-library/#articles

  Three purposes for listening. Language suggestions for achieving those purposes in focusing partnerships.

Felten, P., Bauman, H. D. L., Kheriaty, A., & Taylor, E. (2013). *Transformative conversations: A guide to mentoring communities among colleagues in higher education*. John Wiley & Sons.

  "The group's 'project,' so to speak, would be the group's members themselves. That agenda would consist of reflecting on our work and life, remembering our callings, exploring meaning and purpose, clarifying personal values, and realigning our lives with them. The goal of a formation mentoring community would be to use meaningful conversations to reinvigorate ourselves, our work, and by extension, the academy" (p. x).

  Practical and inspiring guide to creating formation mentoring communities at one's institution. Helpful bibliography includes resources on Convening and Facilitation, Dialogue and Conversation, Formation and Spiritual Direction, Mentoring, and Community.

Gendlin, E. T. (2004). Introduction to thinking at the edge. The Folio, 19(1), 1-11. Spring Valley, NY: The Focusing Institute, Inc.

> People have knowledge and ideas within that aren't expressible at first – hemming/hawing, sensing something they can't describe; they need to be "listened" into language. The focusing institute (www.focusing.org) promotes this kind of listening through focusing partnerships.

Isaacs, W. (1991). *Dialogue and the art of thinking together***. New York: Doubleday.**
> This is a complex book with challenging ideas, all of which rest on a deceptively simple proposal and seven seemingly simple habits. The central idea is that as humans, we think and learn best together, in groups. This is a highly relevant idea today, but Isaacs approaches the concept of "group work" as a dialogue that participants engage in deeply. In this way, dialogue (called reflective practice or collaborative communication by John Peters—see below) can be used to resolve extremely difficult conflicts, problems and challenges, and can help us all improve our critical thinking. The habits framework guides us to consider what we are listening for, what our assumptions are that we act on, how we can bring an idea forward within a group, and how we can be aware of what we are truly talking about. "One must listen in a serious way, not just to others' words, but to our own reactions to their words" (190). In all conversation, we have many choices in how we listen and talk, which are diagrammed on page 41. Not every conversation needs to be a dialogue, and not all conversation can be turned into dialogue, especially without willing participants. However, if the group chooses to engage in more productive conversation, then Isaacs' book provides information and lessons on how to create this deep critical thinking with others.

Little, D., & Palmer, M. (2011). A coaching-based framework for individual consultations. *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development***, *29*, 102-115.**
> The authors present a framework of consulting that entails 1. Deep listening; 2. Asking powerful questions; and 3. Prompting action. Their model could also be applied to one-on-one consulting or group coaching.

Magolda, M. B. B., & King, P. M. (2008). Toward reflective conversations: An advising approach that promotes self-authorship. *Peer Review, 10***(1), 8. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/toward-reflective-conversations-advising-approach-promotes-self**
> Practical plan for guiding students to describe and make sense of their experiences through reflection. "The shift to self-authorship occurs when students encounter challenges that bring their assumptions into question, have opportunities to reflect on their assumptions, and are supported in reframing their assumptions into more complex frames of reference."

Palmer, P. J., & Zajonc, A. (2010). *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal: Transforming the academy through collegial conversations***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**
> See ch. 6, "Transformative conversations on campus." This chapter explores "transformative conversations," which is a concept central to work done at the Center for Courage & Renewal. http://www.couragerenewal.org. See also the Circle of Trust® approach, which includes the practice of a "clearness committee."

Peters, J. M. & Schumann, D. (2012). Seven aspects of reflective practice: assumptions and aspects. Unpublished document. The University of Tennessee, Institute for Collaborative Communication, Knoxville, TN.

> Developed initially for work with non-profit organizations in Tennessee, these practices grew from Peters' leadership in graduate studies in collaborative communication at the university, with his focus on Reflective Practice, using Isaacs and others. The seven aspects provide a way to organize training for dialogue. The seven aspects have been used for "informal" dialogue with faculty and community members, for state mediators, mental health professionals and social workers, and local educators. These have also been used in combination with other practices in curriculum for faculty development.

Qualters, D. (1995). A quantum leap in faculty development: Beyond reflective practice. *To Improve the Academy.* Paper 341. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podimproveacad/341

> Presents ways for educational developers to help academics move out of isolation into conversation, from fragmentation to whole, moving from thinking about how to teach to reflecting on who we are and why we teach the way we do. She outlines three practices:
>   1. Reflective practice: draws on Donald Schön's theory of reflection in and on action
>   2. Discussion: summarizes Parker Palmer's call to engage in thoughtful conversation and Brookfield's critical incident exercises.
>   3. Dialogue: quotes Isaacs: "Dialogue is the creative space in which entirely new ways of thinking and acting will emerge. Dialogue is a space of deep thinking, where there is nothing to prove, where well-worn ways of thinking and being can be let go of. In a dialogue there is nothing to be solved and nothing to be defended" (Isaacs, 1992, p. 1).

Ueland, B. (1993). Tell me more: On the fine art of listening. From the book, *Strength to Your Sword Arm: Selected Writings*, Duluth, Minnesota: Holy Cow! Press.

> This inspirational piece raises "why" questions about listening: to achieve one's personal end? Or to do good? Or promote joy (which can include breaking through in relationship to someone who "presents" as self-absorbed and controlling)? Or a combination of both (personal end can be part of greater good)?