

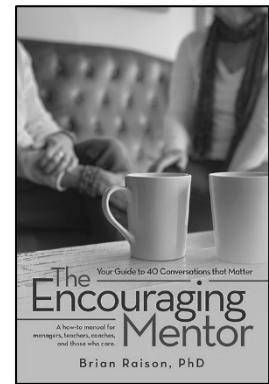
This is an 8-Session Book Club (or Small Group) Discussion Guide for:

The Encouraging Mentor: Your Guide to 40 Conversations that Matter.

A how-to manual for managers, teachers, coaches, and those who care.

By: Brian Raison, PhD (2024, WestBow Press)

About the book: One of the most important things you can do in life is encourage someone. Doing that as a caring mentor increases the impact. The Encouraging Mentor offers step-by-step instructions with proven conversation-starting tools for deep engagement. You can use these with no training. They work with individuals or groups. This book presents an alternative to formal mentoring programs that are sometimes challenging. This *nonformal* mentoring approach—*grounded in adult learning theory*—allows you to deploy tools at the right time to help people (or groups) grow when ready. Free videos and downloads here: <http://encouragingmentor.com>



Book Club / Small Group Discussion Guide [7/20/2024]

Thank you for your interest in reviewing this book in a group discussion. Below is an outline with suggestions that may be helpful. Feel free to modify it to suit your timeframe and interests. Please note, **this guide adds a challenge** to each module, encouraging you to **practice something you've read** (i.e., have a brief mentoring conversation), and then share your real-life experience (good or bad) at the next meeting. It also emphasizes a final homework assignment (the professor in me)... to take what you've discovered and become a nonformal mentor to someone (or two... or three). Thank you again. I'm energized that you are taking action to learn, grow, and then act to make a difference in someone's life. Could anything be more important?

Brian Raison – brian@encouragingmentor.com

SESSION #1: Introductions and Preface

[This session covers pages ix-7. As your initial session, it is a bit protracted. I added additional questions that will help participants get to know each other, make connections, and strengthen subsequent group discussions.]

Forming your discussion group: Recognizing Potential / Specifying our greatest “why”

[This sets the stage. It engages folks in what's most important about mentoring. This is purposeful. This opening also sets the tone *and energy* for discussions. Review the question below. Jot ideas on paper. Discuss. (Then add ideas from others to *your* paper. Tuck the list into your book. Refer to it occasionally in subsequent sessions.)

Question: What are some outcomes we've seen (or personally experienced) because of mentoring?

Debrief: With these outcomes (your generated list) in mind, consider the idea of *potential* as you read through and discuss each of the 40 Conversations. Think about how a mentor can literally change someone's life for the better by engaging them (even briefly) at the right time.

Challenge Question: How do you identify “the right time” to engage or mentor?
[Discuss this briefly. Gather a few ideas and suggestions.]

(Book section) Preface Discussion Questions: [pages ix – xi]

1. Have you ever been at the right place at the right time? Briefly describe your luck, random chance, karma, or higher power intervention.
2. Luck is where preparation meets opportunity. Do you think you can help someone you’re mentoring create their own luck? Why or why not? How might it look?
3. Everyone has potential. Who do you know who could use some encouragement regarding their potential?

(Book section) Introduction Discussion Questions: [pages 1 – 7]

1. Your Personal Connection to Mentoring:
Question: Discuss a time when someone encouraged you. How did it make you feel? What’s your strongest memory of the encouragement?
2. Encourage and Challenge:
Question: Discuss these elements and how they interact. Is the premise correct (that you need both)?
3. Answers Are Cheap. Questions Are the Currency.
Question: Are you any good at asking questions... or do you jump straight to giving advice? What are the implications of each approach?

SESSION #2: Your Approach

[This session covers pages 7 – 22.]

(Book section) Introduction Discussion Questions: (*continued from your first meeting*)

1. Formal, Informal, Nonformal:
Please review this abstract from a journal article (pending publication). Then see discussion questions.

Nonformal Mentoring: In the realm of professional development and employee retention, traditional *formal* mentoring programs can sometimes come across as obligatory rather than engaging. But *informal* mentoring—casual coffee or lunch—rarely incorporates structure, goal-setting, or evaluation. Effectiveness is anecdotal at best. This article proposes a new *nonformal* framework to bridge the gap. It draws upon established methodologies in adult development and transformation (Kegan, 1994) and adult learning literature (Knowles, 1968, 1980, 1984). It includes a component of motivation theory as applied to education (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) as well. The most significant aspect of nonformal mentoring is its grounding in nonformal education and teaching practice (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). Adults want to be involved and have some level of control in what, when, and how they learn (Knowles, 1995). They also like to solve problems, using reasoning skills gained from life experiences (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014). When we add application, i.e., explicitly sharing how they can apply new information (Bloom, 1956) in relevant areas of their own lives, the lessons (and mentoring conversations) become remarkably powerful. This *flexible* nonformal mentoring approach can bolster existing formal programs allowing more personalization and organic relationship development driven by mentee interests and needs.

Question: What do you think of this construct? Could this nonformal approach lead to longer-term relationships? Might conversations “at the right time” resonate more fully? Could you overlay a nonformal structure on an existing formal mentoring program (adding flexibility, multi-modal mentoring, affinity groups, etc.)? Discuss the potential (and see an outline at encouragingmentor.com).

2. Unimaginable Potential and Naming Potential:

Question: What impact might be possible if you observed and named the potential you recognized in someone? Try to think of (and share) an actual person you know, in whom you see potential that they might not yet recognize themselves.

(Book section) Your Approach Discussion Questions: [This session covers pages 13 – 22.]

3. What did you think of the “Fold Your Hands” experiment? Might you use it with a group?
4. If the phrase, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is true, what are some ways to convey caring (when initiating a mentoring relationship)?
5. How might “starting with humility” aid a new mentoring relationship?

SESSION #3: Conversations 1-8 (Initiating Growth)

[This session covers pages 23 – 45.]

Advance Preparation (individually): Please read over the pages indicated. Consider one or two conversations that really speak to you. Use this chart (or your own paper/device) to take some notes. **Challenge:** Write a highlight for each. Write name of an individual you might reach out to (but ONLY for one or two conversations). Start slowly. Practice. Then repeat.

Book club discussion: Bring these notes / highlights on conversations that resonated with you. Take turns sharing your favorite (and why). Discuss pros and cons with the group. Ask questions of each other.

Bonus: Share if you (personally) did the exercise. i.e., Did you make a Bucket List? Did you do the Values Review? If so, share insights, ah-ha moments, joy, or frustrations you experienced in doing the activity. Tune in to what your colleagues are saying. Make sure they feel heard before responding. You’re learning and growing together.

The Conversation	Key point / highlight	Potential mentee
1. The Mentoring Launch Conversation		
2. The Being Remembered Conversation		
3. 5-Things to Have, Do, Help, and Be		
4. The Bucket List		
5. The Values Review		
6. Your Personal Mission		
7. Leveraging Gratitude		
8. Building Curiosity		

SESSION #4: Conversations 9-14 (Deepening Connections)

[This session covers pages 46 – 70.]

Advance Preparation (individually): See SESSION #3 instructions. i.e., Do the same prep and use the same discussion techniques as you move through the remaining conversations.

The Conversation	Key point / highlight	Potential mentee
9. From Why? to What?		
10. Helping Your Mentees Feel Safe		
11. What's Your Biggest Fear?		
12. Bravery. Failure. Kindness.		
13. Joy vs Happiness: Finding Fulfillment		
14. Remembering to Listen (to Others and Yourself)		

SESSION #5: Conversations 15-25 (Advancing the Career)

[This session covers pages 71 – 102.]

Advance Preparation (individually): See SESSION #3 instructions. i.e., Do the same prep and use the same discussion techniques as you move through the remaining conversations.

The Conversation	Key point / highlight	Potential mentee
15. Who You Are vs. What You Do		
16. What's Motivating Your Mentee?		
17. Change. Growth Mindset. Ambiguity.		
18. Reframing 6 Stages of a Career		
19. Handling Critics and Criticism		
20. Providing Clarity		
21. Triangulating Your Skills, Abilities, and Interests		
22. The Resume and Cover Letter		
23. Real Interview Tips that Work		
24. The Stay Interview		

25. Financial Health: 2 Keys for Success		
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SESSION #6: Conversations 26-34 (Expanding Points of View)

[This session covers pages 103 – 128.]

Advance Preparation (individually): See SESSION #3 instructions. i.e., Do the same prep and use the same discussion techniques as you move through the remaining conversations.

The Conversation	Key point / highlight	Potential mentee
26. E+R=O (Event + Response = Outcome)		
27. Circle of Control		
28. Hidden Diversity		
29. Seek Diverse Relationships		
30. Building Your Emotional Intelligence		
31. Building Your Social Intelligence		
32. Generation C: Mentoring for Connectivity		
33. Spirituality & Faith Traditions		
34. Changing Perspective: Embracing Possibility		

SESSION #7: Conversations 35-40 (Anytime Prompts)

[This session covers pages 129 – 147.]

Advance Preparation (individually): See SESSION #3 instructions. i.e., Do the same prep and use the same discussion techniques as you move through the remaining conversations.

The Conversation	Key point / highlight	Potential mentee
35. Perspective Shifting		
36. The Charles Schulz Challenge		
37. Building Trust		
38. The Power of Vision		

39. Storytelling		
40. Leading with Humility		
[Extra] 20 Bonus Questions to Use Anytime		

SESSION #8: Teaching & Engagement Strategies

[This session covers pages 149 – 178.]

Advance Preparation (individually): This section outlines why teaching is foundational to mentoring relationships and provides basic, research-based approaches that anyone can use without additional training. Please read over the pages. Consider one or two methods that really speak to you. Use this chart (or your own paper/device) to take some notes. **Challenge:** Consider how or where you might use one or two of these.

Group discussion: Bring your notes / highlights on these teaching methods. Take turns sharing your favorite (and why). Discuss any insights, ah-ha moments, or challenges you experienced when reading. Discuss how or where you might use one or two of these.

Teaching Method	Key point / highlight
1. Reach Before You Teach	
2. Connection Before Content	
3. Recognizing Potential	
4. Creating Serendipity; Believing	
5. Pedagogy vs Andragogy	
6. Transfer of Knowledge	
7. Recognizing 8 Smarts	
8. 12 Considerations for Engagement	
9. Write Your Philosophy Statement	

The Summary (and Homework Challenge)

[This covers page 181.]

Discussion: Share your thoughts on these final questions.

1. Have you ever experienced joy (or a mental lift) when you encouraged someone else? Describe it.
2. Do you believe encouraging someone could improve, or even save, their life? How? Why?

Homework: **1.** Become an encouraging mentor. **2.** Call a member of this group and share from time to time.