**Co mentoring ideas and resources gathered by Lady Kitt, 2020**

Top tips for being co-mentors

·   Nurture creative intimacies

·   Chat boundaries

·   Practice deep listening

·   Ask open questions

·   Consider hierarchies of care

Top Tips for building co mentoring into your work / life:

·   Plan for it

·   Resource it

·   Preach it!

**Top tips for being co-mentors**

1)    Nurture Creative Intimacies

“Creative Intimacies” is a phrase Dan Russell and I use in our work together. It refers to human connections formed through and for creativity, and they exist on a scale. There is more info about our definitions and the scale here:<https://www.lladykitt.com/blank>

Many of the techniques you have grown together during Syllabus V will support these Creative Intimacies and you will already have a good idea of what works well for you collectively and in smaller groups.

There is a link here to some “Together-ness Tools” that may be particularly useful when nurturing and maintaining Creative Intimacies with distance.<https://www.lladykitt.com/together-ness-tools>

2)    Chat Boundaries:

Ø  These will be different for everyone, but it can be extremely useful to think about them and, if possible, have some agreement about what they are before you start. Something that’s really important for me to discuss is confidentiality- is it ok to share what we talk about with others, if so how much, with whom, when, how etc? Boundaries could also be to do with times you will / can contact one another, methods you will use to communicate, where/ how often you’ll meet.

Ø  These may well change over the course of a co-mentoring relationship (or even session!)

Ø  See link to the Social Art Barometer (<https://www.lladykitt.com/social-art-barometer>) , inspired by working with Dan Russell and Mark Bleakley, this is a print / trace -cut- out- &-keep picture of a barometer and a hand with a pointing finger! You can use this to physically pin-point where you feel your co-mentoring sits, on a scale between two opposites/ extremes / spaces/ ideas/ ideals. These scales can be anything that feels relevant/ interesting / important to you. Some I’ve found useful are: “Public<>Private”, “Formal<>Informal”, “Art<>Life”, “Physical wellbeing<>Mental wellbeing”, “Professional<>Personal”, “Social<>Sociable”, the possibilities are endless! More about scales here: <https://www.lladykitt.com/social-practice-1st-aid-kitt>

3)    Practice deep listing:

Ø  Listen to understand and not to immediately respond

Ø  Paraphrase what someone has said to ensure you’ve understood

Ø  Allow for pauses and silences for thinking

There is some more in depth info about how I use deep listening in my practice (particularly as part of Walking and Talking) here:<https://www.lladykitt.com/walk-talk-art-resources>

4)    Open questions:

Ø  Questions that invite more than a “yes” or “no” answer (for example “can you tell me more about that project?”, “what do you think contributes to this challenge?”, “If you have felt like this before, how have you responded?”, “What are you usual coping strategies / mechanisms?”

Ø  Questions that don’t lead the other person to a particular response (for example “How did that make you feel?” instead of “Did you feel excited / anxious/ upset about that?”)

5)    Consider hierarchies of care:

Ø  Hierarchies of care can develop in relationships, in organizations, in projects. For example, Assumptions that disabled / sick people are solely the recipients of care and not providers. Assumptions that certain types of challenges only “happen to” certain “types” of people. Assumptions that certain people are more “at fault” for the challenges they encounter than others- check your assumptions!

Ø  Be aware that in some traditional models of mentoring the “listen-er”/ advisor / mentor can assume a position of superiority / power over the talker/ advise asker / mentee. Remember you are both experts in yourselves, acknowledge and treasure this.

Ø  The challenges shared are something you are working through collectively. You’re supporting one another to work through these- neither one of you will have all the answers, you will build up responses, strategies, tools, resources collaboratively, probably over a long time.

Ø  When suggesting strategies, tools etc. don’t assume certain strategies are “best”. Think about how you phrase suggestions or share things you have found useful. It is an invitation or is it an instruction? Share your enthusiasm for a resource, tool or approach you have used, but understand that it may not be appealing to, or suitable for, the other person.

**Top Tips for building co mentoring into your work / life:**

One: Plan for it

·   Build it into your working week/ month/ year / into projects / commissions

·   Book a time for it, put it in the diary- make it formal!

·   Give yourself time before hand to consider and communicate why you are doing the session and why now? What do you need to discuss/ change/ work out / work through? How do you want to feel by the end of the session?

·   Find a place where you feel safe and comfortable

·   Book time after the mentoring session for yourself to take in the information and implement any changes you feel are important

Two: resource it

·   Organise time, energy and money for co mentoring

·   Arts Council England funding can be used for things like co-mentoring/ wellbeing facilitation.

·   There are often small bursaries / commissions available from various organisations / funds for peer to peer support / network building these can be used for/ can include co mentoring

·   If it’s funded, ensure everyone involved in the co mentoring is getting paid

Three: preach it!

·   Name it, explain it and include it in project plans / commission proposals

·   Encourage the people and organisations that you work alongside, to take care seriously and to embed some of the practices that you use/ find useful into their own processes and practice.

·   Create Care Riders / Access Documents and share these with organisations you work with. I always share my access doc when I sign a new contact, even if it’s with a venue or organisation I already work alongside/ have a relationship with. I find this Access Statement writing guide by Little Cog dead useful :<https://www.littlecog.co.uk/artist-access-statements.html>