TACTT Mentorship Scheme – terms of agreement

Introduction

As an organisation that opposes transphobia in therapeutic spaces, we require each of our mentors to uphold the values of the organisation and to practice in an open and non-judgemental way, affirming that no gender or sexuality is inherently better or preferable to any other.

We recognise the right of everyone to freedom of belief and this contract does not require you to hold (or not hold) specific beliefs. Instead, this contract lists and explains the necessary and prohibited behaviours expected of all mentors using this scheme.

By signing up to be a mentor, you agree to behave in accordance with the terms of agreement in all of your interactions with TACTT, and your work as a mentor. You also agree to maintain the terms in public spaces such as social media and anywhere that might be seen or heard by your mentor/mentee(s) and/or TACTT colleagues.

A note on language use in this document

The terms “sex” and “gender” are poorly defined in English language and we therefore use the construction “sex/gender” when discussing related language and behaviours.

The only singular reflexive pronouns in common use in English are “himself” and “herself” and in this document we use the pronoun “themself” as a gender-neutral alternative.

You will find a lot of ‘you will/you will not’ language below. It is what we would hope (and expect) the vast majority of us will be doing all of the time, but in order to protect both mentors and mentees, we have tried to be as explicit as possible.

General

The purpose of the mentoring scheme is to connect trainees with more experienced colleagues, for the purposes of support and professional development. It is not the same as counselling or supervision and does not remove the need for either. Please note that your current insurance may not cover you to provide this service and we recommend that you check with your insurer before commencing. TACTT do not provide this insurance.

Mentoring relies on developing a trusting and professional working relationship based on values such as mutual respect, confidentiality and a commitment to non-oppressive practice.

You agree to support your mentee(s) to decide what is important to them and what they wish to work on.

This means:

Listening to **and** validating their experience without trying to be an expert on their life.

Encouraging self-advocacy and promote self-reliance whilst also recognising the importance of community support and connection.

Recognising that the impact of transphobia intersects with other aspects of self that are oppressed, for example, Blackness or Brownness, gender, disability, social class, sex worker status and neurodivergence.

What this means in practice:

- Adopting a culturally humble approach when collaborating with your mentee. Remaining mindful of differing intersectional experiences and perspectives as they show up in your mentoring relationship. Maintaining awareness of issues of power, non-oppressive practice and the boundaries of your role as a mentor.
- Never using a mentee's neurodivergence to undermine or invalidate their understanding of their (or their client's) sex/gender.
- Committing to seek additional consultation and/or ongoing professional development where appropriate.

Trans-specific

Trans, non-binary and gender expansive people are the experts of their own experience. You agree to never contradict, reframe or debate a mentee's understanding of their own sex and/or gender.

What this means in practice

- Using the language the mentee uses to describe and articulate their sex/gender, for example: male/female/intersex/etc., man/woman/non-binary/genderqueer/etc.
- Using the mentee's personal pronouns, for example, he, she, they, ze, or in some cases their name in place of a pronoun. Whilst it is common practice in English to use the pronouns "they/them" when the sex/gender of a person is unknown, once you know a mentee's (or any other trans

person's) pronouns you agree to use those and not default to "they/them" as a way of avoiding using the correct words. Furthermore, you agree to use your mentee's pronouns and name even when they are not present, whether in speech or in text, or when refer to your mentee or another trans person in the past, including times before their transition.

- Not starting an argument or discussion about your mentee's (or any other person's) use of pronouns or language to describe and articulate their sex/gender.
- Not introducing the contested concept of "biological sex" unless this is language that your mentee introduces to describe themself. In this case you would use the term in the same way as your mentee.
- In the event that you do misgender (not use the mentee's pronouns and other language describing sex/gender) or deadname (using a previous or given name) a mentee, you agree to take accountability for this, to not centre your own feelings and to commit to learning the mentee's correct language and naming conventions.
- Not using old or outdated language (e.g. transsexual) unless that is the language used by your mentee or other trans people (and where that **is** used by one person, remaining mindful of the fact that the term may be contested rather than in general use)
- Not contracting terms like trans woman or trans man into "transwoman" or "transman" unless this is the spelling/format used by your mentee or other trans people
- Never using phrases such as "biological reality", "material reality" or similar to deny the sex/gender of your mentee or any other trans person.
- Never using the phrases "Trans Lobby", "Gender industry" or similar terms to refer to groups of trans people or those who support trans people.

You agree to never frame the rights and needs of trans people as being in conflict with those of cisgender people, particularly cisgender women.

What this means in practice

- Never claiming that trans people are a threat to cisgender people (particularly cisgender women) in any respect, including in sports participation, toilets, changing rooms or other spaces traditionally segregated by sex/gender
- Upholding the right of your mentee to use sex/gender segregated space that corresponds with their understanding of their sex/gender

Experiences of transphobia

The emphasis is to develop a supportive, respectful and safer mentoring relationship which does not echo (or add further to) other experiences of harm.

What this means in practice

- Avoiding denial and minimisation of experiences of transphobia.
- Not pressuring mentees to become more resilient (though support around developing resilience may be asked for and offered)
- Not focusing on the impact of a trans person's transition on others (especially cisgender people)
- Recognising the impacts of transphobia and minority stress* (the impacts that being trans in a hostile society can have - for more information please follow the link)
- Being aware and up to date about the current political climate: it is your duty to educate yourself about the political and social issues currently faced by trans people.
- Avoiding linking random problems to being trans. For instance, avoiding replicating trans broken arm syndrome** (where bias may lead to intrusive questioning and ineffective healthcare)
- Avoiding conflating sexuality with sex/gender

Use of specific words and language we consider to be transphobic

"Rapid onset gender dysphoria" and the "social contagion" of trans identities are not scientifically supported concepts and you agree to not use these terms or any other associated terminology to suggest the 'onset' of trans identities.

You agree to never describe a trans person as, for example, a "biologically male" or as a "biological female", or to describe your mentee or any other trans person in ways that undermine or dispute their expression of their sex/gender, for example, using the term "trans identified man" or "TIM" to refer to a trans woman.

You agree to never describe trans people or any aspect of trans identity as an "ideology"

You agree to never describe your mentee or another person in connection with you work as an "adult human female" or "adult human male"

You agree not to use the language and/or framing of "sex-based rights"

You recognise that the term "TERF" is an acronym meaning Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist and does not constitute a slur

What we are asking for from you

Please make sure you have the correct insurance to cover you in the event of a problem - your current insurer may already provide this

Please make sure you currently have capacity to sign up for a minimum of a year's commitment (we recognise that life is unpredictable and your capacity may change without much notice)

Please make sure that you can commit to regularly meeting your mentee. We would suggest a minimum of once a month but the specifics will be arranged between you.

Concerns, Questions, Support needs

Mentoring is a voluntary agreement which is entered into freely by both parties.

If you have any questions, concerns or support needs at any stage of the process, we encourage you to contact tacttmentorscheme@gmail.com in the first instance. We want to be as supportive as possible in this process.