

Best Practices for Group Mentorship Programs

Helen Patterson

Ryan: Hi, everyone. Today, we're joined by Helen Patterson. Helen's the founder of Life Works Well, and brings 20 years of passion and experience to creating healthy, high performance and heart-centered cultures. She's worked with top Canadian brands focusing on human resources and employment law. Nowadays, however, she's focused on growing small businesses with purpose-driven missions. Helen also has a book on mentorship in the works, which we hope to get a sneak peek at during our conversation. And we're thrilled to have her with us today to discuss how to run successful group mentorship programs. Helen, thank you for joining us today.

Helen Patterson: Oh, Ryan, thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited about our chat today. Looking forward to it.

Ryan: Great. Amazing. Before we jump into things, to help us learn a little bit more about you and your background, can you share with us a bit about your work and your, your expertise in mentorship? Maybe a little bit about your book too.

Helen Patterson: Oh, for sure. I could go on for days as you know, but we only have a little bit of time. Just really quickly, I just— I love sharing this because I had more of a challenge growing up and didn't have a lot of mentors, role models. I had some, you know, inspiring teachers and things like that. And it wasn't till I got to the workplace that, you know, mentorship. I would see it from time to time, but it didn't work. And then when I was at one of my last corporate jobs, I had heard about this mentor program, but a lot of people didn't know about it. And so, it got me on this passion about why isn't everybody having the opportunity to be mentored in their organization, not just the chosen few, not the high performers, but mentorship for all. So, that's what happened. I got an idea in my head that I was gonna write a book and started researching for the last six, seven years. Everything, mentorship and getting involved with the HR Professional Association. I'm now the chair of mentorship there. I've mentored many ventures in Futurpreneur. I was one of the top five finalists for Mentor of the Year in 2020 Startup Canada. So, I just became immersed in the love of mentoring. And interesting enough, when I started, Ryan, I looked at about 12 platforms back in 2017 when I left ADP Canada. And now there's well over 40, probably more, I haven't— so, it tells you how much it's grown and it's amazing, but there's still limits to it. And I think people, you know, as much as they say it's important, they just have a challenge with how to implement it. So, that's sort of where I develop my love and have been fully immersed. Create a mentor culture is really about helping organizations be able to implement a program not only within their organization, but understanding the various different types. We're gonna talk about group mentoring today.

There's mentor circles, there's top-down traditional, there's reverse. So, I think it's— there's one-on-one and there's groups. So, there's so much opportunity including sponsorship and things. So, we're gonna cover a lot of this today, and so thanks again for having me. I'm really looking forward to diving in.

Ryan: Fantastic. Thank you for the overview. So, as you mentioned, we're talking about group mentorship today. To kick off this topic, there's so much to cover. Could we start by just going over— giving an overview of group mentoring and kind of how you see it different from a traditional one-on-one program?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, it's great. And, you know, one of the things I noticed with a challenge was often organizations were having trouble getting mentors, right? So, the one-on-one model wasn't as sustainable because it was the same mentors and there were too many mentees, and so your time was limited. So, one of the things about group mentoring is you can bring a number of people together. There's a few options, but you can have one mentor doing, you know, several groups of mentees, you can have several mentors that share, taking turns facilitating the groups. And then you can have more of a, what I call a curricula based, where you— it's more formal and it's topic driven, and then you have your experts coming in, so to speak. So, there's a bunch of things that you can do. And that's one of the benefits really is that for time commitment, that's a huge part because the mentor doesn't have to spend, you know, hundreds of hours one-on-one. They can offer multiple, you know, sources of feedback for mentors, and you can, you know, evolve it, but you're also developing those mentee skills in a different setting as well, and the peer group and the communication. So, there's a lot of wonderful benefits for both mentors and mentees. Mentors, obviously, they're facilitating skills, their leadership skills, their ability to create open, safe spaces for people to dialogue and then knowing the different perspectives, bringing in diversity of people. So, for mentees, they get that peer support. I think that often they're maybe a little bit more intimidated sometimes with the one-on-one, especially in a traditional top-down setting. They don't feel as comfortable, you know, until they built the trust with the mentors. So, I think it really just opens up community and connection, which is what we really are looking for, especially after the last few years, there's a lot. I can share also, Ryan, if you're— later on, I can share some resources, send them over to you. I'm sure you have a lot as well on your website and platform, on, you know, a list of more things, benefits as well.

Ryan: Sure. Yeah. If we know anything about HR managers is they're always looking to learn, so by all means, if you send those over, we can include them in the show notes afterwards. When HR managers come together and they're looking to start a mentorship program, a lot of the times they've already ran some kind of pilot program that's usually a one-on-one style approach. If you were to coach an HR manager who's starting a mentorship program for the first time, and they're learning about groups, they're learning about one-on-one and they're trying

to decide which way to go, how would you advise them on how to decide between a one-on-one program or a group program?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, what a great— oh, that's a great question, Ryan. Because I think what happens, you know, in organizations often it's the champion, you know, someone's trying to get a stakeholder, the program manager or an HR leader, or whoever's managing this area within the organization. You know, they think they have to get the business case. And I mean, luckily, now their leaders are actually saying, we want one. So, that's pretty exciting right now. But I think that it's like any other program that you want to implement in your organization and have it stick and have it be successful, you need to take that pause and say, why are we doing this? What is the outcome we want to achieve? And because I think we do have to think about the metrics and the return on investment, especially if you do wanna invest in a platform like together. So, taking that pause and say, what is the outcome we're hoping for? Is it, you know, I think a lot of people are talking about this. Is it attracting, is it engaging? Is it developing skills? Because I think that that's where I think people talk about mentorship, but they're like, well, what is it really? And how does it relate to learning and development? So, I would say, take that pause and say, why are we doing it? And then that way you can say, okay, one-on-one is going to be more suitable because with people we want to create deeper relationships. For group mentoring, I think the benefit of it, again, stepping back, is that you can touch so many more people and you can use it as an L and D initiative, but layer on, you know, some one-on-one as well. And I think that what you need to do as the group program manager is look at like, what are the biggest challenges? Are we finding that people don't know how to communicate? That's a big skill gap in our organization. And so, we wanna use the group mentoring format as a way to get more and more people, but it's not just a, you know, talking head thing where I'm just gonna teach you some skills, and it's really more about diving into the commonalities, but also the unique needs of the mentee. And so, I recommend, again, looking at the broader purpose, but then how do you also develop the individuals and their unique needs? And so, I also recommend linking it to any kind of feedback, feed-forward performance review. So, we can, again, I think it— I hope I answered that question because I think it's really, to me, I think going to be a lot more opportunity if you— like, I'm a fan of the group, as you can hear. Don't be afraid to go for it, because it's just— it get touches on everything. Connection, key skills, facilitation for the mentor. So, again, take that pause, what's the why? What are the outcomes and how we're gonna measure, right?

Ryan: Yeah. That's good advice. Another thing that HR managers will love to understand when they're organizing group program is about matching. So, with one-on-one, the concern is always to make sure that the mentor and the men— like, there's commonalities between the two and they complement one another and they're gonna have a— they're gonna kick off the relationship well. For a group program, it's a little different because there's multiple people together. How would you advise mentorship program managers on organizing groups? Like, the matching and stuff. What do they need to be aware of?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, and, you know, here's the thing. If we want to create really diverse organizations, and I mean diverse in many ways, like diversity of thought, diversity of skills, diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and the focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging right now, I think you don't necessarily have to have like. Right? We want to open up the beauty of different voices and different perspectives. So, I think the matching, that's the nice thing about it too, is I don't think the matching is as critical. What you want to— because here's the thing, the whole thing about equity and inclusion is that, you know, we don't want the old paradigm of, you know, I am this type of person, these are my interests, and so I want— only wanna hang around with people that have the same. So, I think that's where it's nice. I think if it's, again, curricula based, where, you know, the group program is geared to something more technical, like tech skills or something like that, then obviously you're matching people because they all have that need. So, those mentees have that need, and then you need the right expert. So, again, depending on the design of what type of group it is. But I really think that the beauty of the group is that ability to open up yourself and have those mentees be able to participate, and a great facilitator will bring that out of everybody. And there's a little bit more, I guess, richness is the word that comes to me. I don't really usually love that word, but it's just— it brings out so much more impactful dialogue, I'd say.

Ryan: Yeah. A diversity of perspectives. Quick question two on facilitators, you mentioned a couple times now. Should there be one facilitator leading multiple mentees? Or should there be multiple facilitators, maybe two or three leading a larger group of mentees? What's the best way to organize individual groups within a group mentoring program?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, that's a great question too. And I think, again, looking at your organization and the why, what's the outcome you want to achieve? I really believe this is just this new way of learning. And so, depends on what the needs are. So, if it is, for example, we have identified in certain areas within the organization this lack or this gap. We wanna address that. Then I would say, smaller groups with one mentor, because, again, it's not— say, you had a group of 10, you wouldn't be spending 10 hours one-on-one with each of them on the same common issue. So, you could book, you could still have groups, you know, few groups. So, if it's just one topic, one mentor is fine, but if you're having those larger group, like, you know, there are companies I'm sure that use your platform that are hundreds or thousands of people. And so, you wanna get it as, you know, as broadly as you can, virtual, in person, then I think, you know, you'll be able to bring others. Like, maybe there are five mentors that have the same background and expertise and they can be, you know, you can be looking at it as a, 'in this quarter, we're gonna touch all those people'. If it's different topics, then I'd say bring in the different mentors. And I just think that's a great way. It's like, even if— you know, even if it is initially for emerging leaders, which, again, I think that creates a hierarchy and things like that. Why not offer it up to everybody? But I think that identifying those people that really have that love of giving back and can lead and facilitate, and that's where you wanna find those people that really want to do that. Because, the ones that are voluntold, as you know, it's not really gonna work out. So, I think you also wanna know what the goals of the individuals are. So, those

mentees, so when you're designing your group program, you know, if you've had— and in your engagement survey as an example, this, you know, several people identified they would like to learn more about, you know, analytics or something like that. And so, then you again look at, okay, this has come up, so how do we find the right person? Ideally, it is within the organization because you wanna continue to bring that connection, versus bringing maybe some coaches from outside, but that's an option as well. I've had many people who say they've mentored within an organization, but they were consultants and I thought, okay, there's— that's a topic for another day, because I covered that in the book, the difference between mentors and coaches and sponsors and things like that. But yeah, there's a lot that we could kind of take it in a different direction, Ryan.

Ryan: It seems like, if I'm hearing you correctly, a one mentor to multiple mentees kind of set up is more effective for stuff that's like, focused training. So, talking about like, hard skills, like, one mentor is an expert in analytics, say, mentors a group of employees that are interested in learning that specific skill. In that sense, it would be good to have one mentor, because then it's more of a lecture style to multiple mentees rather than having like, 10 individual sessions, as you said. But for more collaborative open forum discussions, it's better to have two mentors act as, or two or three mentors facilitate a conversation with a larger group of employees and they kind of pull out insights from the group and they create a safe space and they encourage discussion and they ask provoking questions. Am I hearing you correctly in kind of saying that?

Helen Patterson: Yeah. And I think you can have all of them. Right? You can have a number of these different programs. I think the thing is the groups can't be too large, right? So, if you want, like, I don't know where I got the research, I'll have to look it up again, but like, someone had said between three and 32 mentees. Even 32— Yeah. Even 32 seemed high. So, I have to kind of revisit that data. But I think that— because I think it still also goes to what are you trying to accomplish here?

Ryan: Yeah.

Helen Patterson: If it's just connection, if it's— you know, again, like, I facilitated in one organization what we called 'coffee chats'. And we would pick either— it was in the film and television industry, and so we would pick related to diversity. We would pick maybe an indigenous film and then we would bring together people to chat about it. So, as a different, again, way of learning. And so, that could be considered potentially even peer mentoring because you're having an open dialogue and you're learning, you know, mentor circles are very similar as well. But the difference is, in my view, because mentor circles— it's good to probably talk about the distinction here a little bit. Mentor circles are generally, you know, some senior leaders facilitating, you know, maybe the next level leaders potentially. And so, it's those leader, they design them often for what are the challenges that the leaders are facing. And then they have more of a confidential discussion and the peers are actually diving into some issues and

then you have to make sure there's confidentiality and things like that. So, that's a— in a way, it's a form of group mentoring, but it's really more peer to peer or mentor circle because you're sharing. And I'm really a fan. I mean, sometimes you look at it and it's like, aren't they the same? I don't know. I don't think so. I think there's distinctions, but it's how you define what— it all goes back to what are we trying to accomplish here? Really, it's Lear— when you think about it, isn't learning— mentoring learning and giving to each other? We can all learn and give something. So, is that helping you clarify a little bit?

Ryan: It is, yeah. I'm sure that program managers are wondering too if they're just now dipping their toes in the water with group mentoring. You said like, three, four to 32 or something like that. Like, that's a big range. If I was starting a mentorship program and I'm coming to you and I'm asking like, Helen, like, where do I start? Should they be 30— should it be the size of 32 mentees or—

Helen Patterson: Yeah.

Ryan: What would be the sweet spot or kind of high level direction on that?

Helen Patterson: The only way you could do 32 mentees, in my view, and now I have to go look that up because I'm like, I will get that for you in the show notes. But where the— but I think that would be, again, we've identified the needs of the mentees. We've identified say, 32 of them, but you could break that up into eight, like, maybe a group of eight. Because I think the thing is, if you want to encourage communication and dialogue and connection, the smaller groups are better. Right? Because how are you gonna really— if it was a group of 32, you're really just lecturing, like you said. But that's okay too because that's like we— when you think about it, you're giving knowledge. That's what mentoring is about. But for the ones where you want to be able to, part of it is identifying that we want people to be able to communicate and facilitate and discuss complex issues potentially, a smaller group would be better, but you could still rotate the mentors through it because maybe the mentors don't have, you know, two hours a week to give or one hour a week to give. And so, I think it's really, you have to know your organization. You have to know what works there. Is it more formal? Is it laid back? You know, what would work, what didn't. I think that it's just that, it's so, you know, the distinction— but if you had eight mentees along, you're checking in with them. If you really wanna create deep connection, once a month is like the bare minimum. And that even, you know, as long as you're committing to it. So, yeah, I think that I would recommend not necessarily going up that high.

Ryan: Agreed. Yeah. You mentioned too about the topics of discussion and stuff within group mentoring programs. It seems like group mentoring is— there's got to be more thought that goes into setting up the actual groups and what they're gonna talk about and what the purpose of the groups are. If it's more formal or more collaborative. What advice would you give to

program managers who are trying to understand what these groups should be talking about in their sessions?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, I love that. I mean, here's the thing. Sometimes as HR professionals or people in the talent space or the people space, you know, we look and we think, oh, everybody has the same issues. You know, engagement, we've got the surveys, you know, people want flexibility. Who knows, right? But I think it's, again, knowing your organization. Like, hopefully, they're doing pulse surveys or engagement surveys or they're actually having focus groups and dialogue with people to say like, what are the challenges? Because those are great topics, right? So, what is— what are you struggling with as an employee, you know, in that group of mentees, how can we help you alleviate some of that? So, what I've seen in many organizations is the difficult conversations, conflict management, and inability to communicate. Those would be some common issues. Again, go to those sources of information to inform where you wanna focus. And I think for the— for professionals who are newer in their careers, the typical things like how to improve my presentation skills, how to speak up in meetings, how to give feedback for leaders, and what's my next— do I get stretch assignments? Like, that's, you know, again, we're leading maybe into sponsorship a little bit there, but I think look at that and you talk to your other HR colleagues that maybe are dealing with the day-to-day employee relations issues as well. And I think, you know, people skills, obviously if it is management group that you wanna have a group mentoring program for. You know, the emotional intelligence, you know, the creativity, the innovation, like, there's tons of stuff, right? You can have a— just keep rolling those group mentor programs over and over. And even when you think about it, Ryan, what about your onboarding? Right? You know, people used to call it the buddy program for mentoring, but, you know, those new— if it's a larger organ, you have a number of new associates or team members, employees, whatever you call them these days. You know, team is nice. I think that, you know, you could utilize that as a even introducing your company, 'hey, we're, we're creating—' They're learning sessions, and I think the difference is you can watch a video recording, you can read stuff on the website, but without a little bit of someone facilitating and showing what this culture's all about, why not introduce your mission, vision, values, your purpose, passion? Why not bring in these mentors that are not only gonna introduce you to the org, but then, you know, they're gonna be there for a check-in. I would also recommend for the group that there's at least an ability to have at least one check-in during the duration of it, that the person does get some one-on-one with the person facilitating or the few group of the few mentors that might facilitate, because they may be more comfortable. Like, I loved all this, but there was one thing I just didn't wanna talk about with the group.

Ryan: Yeah. It's like the equivalent of going up to your professor after class and asking them a one-on-one question. That's awesome.

Helen Patterson: Yeah. It takes a while to get outta your comfort zone and be vulnerable, especially in those group settings. So, that would be, you know, if we're thinking about some of

the challenges, it's, you know, can people be open and vulnerable, and are they afraid to ask a question because they don't wanna look like silly in front of their colleagues or something like that. Those are, you know, typical, right? So, ideally, we're creating organizations that allow people to make mistakes and, you know, every question is okay. A lot to think about.

Ryan: Yeah. Let's dive into those challenges in a little more detail then. What specific challenges, you mentioned some already, but what challenges should group mentoring program managers be aware of when they're setting these programs up? And what kind of safeguards can they put up? So they're not reactive, but they're proactive in solving these issues?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, that's a great one. I think one of the biggest things that, you know, you have to be able to do as a facilitator, you know, obviously they have to have great listening skills and things like that, but diversity within the group, not everybody likes to speak up. Not everybody feels comfortable or safe yet. So, I think that is a challenge in any kind of meetings. I mean, we have— you know, when you think about dismantling, you know, typical colonial organizations where things were done a certain way, now newer generations are really looking for that safety, that psychological safety within the organization. So, the mentors really need to be comfortable and, you know, so I think that that's where choosing the right mentors is, and the great mentors is really gonna be a bit of a challenge. Again, knowing do they have that skillset to effectively be a mentor in a group setting where there is— like, what about accommodation? Do you even think about that before you set up the meetings? Right? Is the format of the meeting conducive to any kind of individuals that might need some accommodation? Things like that. I think the other thing is ensuring time commitment on both sides. And because, I don't know if you've heard this, Ryan, in the research that together has done and the work with your clients, so many times the one-on-one, people would just miss meetings and oh, we'll reschedule or they didn't commit. So, that again, is how to ensure there's that commitment to the success of it and ensuring those expectations are set up front. This is not just, 'hey, this is— I mean, it's, it should be fun, don't get me wrong, but there is some purpose for this and this is like a great offer that you can give your team members. So, everybody needs to make that a commitment. And then I think you really need to set up those upfront rules of engagement. You know, everybody's— there's an organization that does something called the Circle Way, which I love. And because a mentor circle group mentoring, there are some similarities, but there's some differences as well. But that that way of everybody having a seat at the table, you know, everybody being respectful, all those things, because I think, again, if it's not designed with all of these things that we take for granted in a way, you do need to kind of refresh people's memories. So, I think those are the biggest things, like, really getting people, everybody to feel like they're able to speak up and also able to participate and feel comfortable in this setting.

Ryan: Interesting. I want to transition a bit to talk about employee resource groups, because it is in line with some of the things you've said about creating a safe space and kind of who should

be participating in it. Employee resource groups are a hot topic right now for mentorship program managers because they're trying to understand how ERGs should work with mentorship programs or if they should be a separate thing. Do you have any advice for program managers that are looking to incorporate group mentoring within ERGs?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, that's a great question because, you know, one of the things we want to avoid is just having these performative things, right? As far as commitment to really making change for groups of employees who have been marginalized, haven't had the opportunities, so I think we have to be really careful to look to those groups, because within an ERG, you know, they want a safe space to be able to deal with their own issues, or challenges, right? And so, layering on the ERG members to become mentors is it can be very tricky. It can be tricky. If they — because— so maybe an example would be helpful. Think about if you have, you know, a group, an ERG for black employees, and then you're asking them to then mentor others and take their time. I mean, those are the things that no, that's not their role necessarily unless there's some kind of recognition for that or acknowledgement. That's why I said it's also important to link it to your performance metrics that we expect people to be mentoring. And yes, you don't necessarily wanna be voluntold, but it has to be done in a very equitable, fair way to allow everybody to participate. I think that the ERG groups though would be very beneficial to identify gaps. And so, they can, again, inform maybe what some of those group mentoring topics could be. And then for me, it's a little bit more looking to the ER group members to become and sponsor them more. So, if they do have more exposure to leaders, if they're championed, then I think, you know, you could go to them to say, 'Hey, we really value that you have these lived experiences and we would like you to be able to share that out as a mentor, if you're willing'. And so, that's how I would go about it, linking it. And I think it's very— and it's like, whose responsibility is it to educate people about— especially about the inequities. You know, so that's— that takes a long. Like, I would say like, a really longer time to say, how are we gonna link these two or do we keep them separate?

Ryan: That's good advice. I think one of the big things group mentorship, program manager will be concerned about is what success looks like and how to measure that. It seems like group mentoring can go a lot of different ways. Like, it's very customizable. It all depends on the goals and the why behind these programs. How would you— if you had to list a few best practices for measuring success, how should group program managers go about making sure they're setting the right goals at the start of the program and how to measure those things throughout?

Helen Patterson: Yeah, and we don't wanna forget about that, because so much of it is— I mean, here's the thing. In the profession— and so, anyone watching or listening to this later, you know, a lot of companies have a program manager that isn't necessarily in HR, could be another organization. It depends on how big they are, but oftentimes it's someone within the people and culture area or human resources. And so, everything that is looked at from a people perspective should be measured, right? There is, you know, and you need to set that up upfront.

So, there's two ways. Like, there's qualitative and quantitative, right? So, qualitative, where you're actually serving the participants. So, the mentor and the mentees, and you are asking specific questions about their experience and giving them an opportunity to actually give back. Just any kind of feedback. And then also the participants, managers, both mentors and mentees because has there been any noticeable, you know, difference in— again, you'd look at what the why was of it, but has there been any noticeable like, enhancements to the way people are working now because of being involved in that? So, the qualitative is really free form. You could do focus groups or send them a survey and say, 'Hey, we'd just love to know', you know, just be open and honest, right? We're big fans of transparency even in the group setting. And then the quantitative, I think you probably see that for all the programs, Ryan, that, you know, there's the satisfaction levels, right? Of all the participants and their man— And I would include the managers, like who these people report to. Because, you know, if you had a six month pilot or if it's a year long, like, what were the noticeable improvements, differences, you know, increased strengths or whatever they were looking to gain from the program. Participation numbers is something that people still track. Especially if— you know, this is where the biggest challenge becomes— and I don't understand why don't more people wanna mentor? It's so rewarding. Right? Being the mentor, you are— you feel just as great as people that are learning. Like, the giving back piece of it, whether it's your knowledge, whether it's just like, being a cheerleader. Some people use that term. It's really wonderful and you get so much back from it. So, participation numbers, you can still look at. I would say, measure some diversity. You know, really look at who is— who are the mentors stepping up? And who are the mentees, the mentees? Like, are you— I would say, diversity in everything we do now needs to be measured. Right? We need to— it's just like the women in the workplace right now. And yesterday was International Women's Day, and then we had Black History month before that. Its like, are we moving the opportunities and how— and mentorship often can lead into embracing and changing the organization around diversity. So, really look at your numbers there and who's involved. The promotion rate, I'm sure you have all the studies and all the stats, right? From promotion rates with organizations that did studies that both mentors and mentees are often known to have a higher percentage of promotions. So, you'd wanna measure that. You wanna look at that across the organization. And then I still think linking it to some kind of annual performance evaluation, it's like, are your lived values something that's also measured? Right? Not just all your quantitative statistical, like how many sales I had? Things like that. So, it's being creative and then, again, hiring and retention metrics. Some people will say there's all kinds of things that go into that, but I think it's at least if you have a group in mind or pilot, like maybe it's just one area, you know, really look at that. I don't know if you remember about that. This is the study that everybody— first, every platform, every company that's involved in mentoring, it was the Sun, Microsoft Systems One, it was so long ago, and now we have at least more. But in that group, that was the one thing that they did. They actually looked at the participants within this mentoring program and how they compared to other areas within the organization, and they had higher rates of retention promotion within the groups that were being— people that were being mentored. So, that's very common for all the programs, but so, that's what I would suggest. And I think that's it for now.

Ryan: Great. Yeah, we're almost at time here, but I'd like to end by asking a final question of just, for the leader or professional who's enthusiastic about starting a group mentoring program, what final word of advice would you leave for them before they go and start their program?

Helen Patterson: Oh, do it. I think that this can't just be one of those other check the box program. Because I think, I don't know if you find this, Ryan, but a few years back, even when I started, I didn't see as much out there on mentorship. But now, I think since the pandemic and since that, you know, virtual mentoring, there was a lot of that and people were really talking about it. It's like, just don't do it because you think everybody else is. Like, really take the time to create what I call a mentor culture. So, it's also— it's just in your— to have mentorship, whether it's in a group, one-on-one, reverse, reciprocal, mentor circle. Everyone should have an opportunity. Right? Like, and your whole organization is gonna be lifted up. And don't give up if the leaders say no. Keep at it. Keep at it. Because it's really all about, you know, giving the growth mindset. And so, I think that if you're enthusiastic about it and are a big believer in it, it's gonna be successful. So, just go for it.

Ryan: That's great. Thank you, Helen, for all this advice. This will certainly be invaluable for the program managers starting group mentoring programs. Before we go, where can people go to learn more about you, your work, and potentially connect?

Helen Patterson: Oh, well, thank you again for this opportunity. I really enjoy it. We'll have to chat again sometime. You can follow me on LinkedIn. So, it's 'Helen Patterson' and my company page is called Life Works Well, and my website: LifeWorksWell.ca and I'm on Insta and things like that when I can be, at LifeWorksWell.ca as well. And if you wanna reach out, I love connecting with people, especially if it's talking about mentorship. So, would love to do that. And then stay tuned for later this year, create a mentor culture. It's really about mentoring with heart and create— and starting and creating a ripple effect and passing it on. So, I'm excited because it's going to be also looking at mentoring within organizations, but how can you connect it to your community and the world and your volunteers and giving back. So it's a little different. So, stay tuned for that, and I'm wonderful that together is doing this. I'm really following your org and look forward to seeing what's happening with you as well.

Ryan: Fantastic. Thanks so much, Helen.

Helen Patterson: Thank you. Have a great day.

Ryan: Great.

